



Notice of a Meeting

Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 19 January 2023 at 10.00 am

Room 3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

These proceedings are open to the public

If you wish to view proceedings, please click **on this Live Stream Link**.

Membership

Chair - Councillor Eddie Reeves

Deputy Chair - Councillor Michael O'Connor

Councillors:

Brad Baines
Neil Fawcett
Donna Ford

Damian Haywood
Bob Johnston
Kieron Mallon

Ian Middleton

Notes: ***Date of next meeting:*** 28 April 2023

For more information about this Committee please contact:

Chair

- Councillor
E-Mail:

Committee Officer

- *Bryony Crossland Davies, Committee Officer*
Tel: 07541 719 164 E-Mail:
bryony.crosslanddavies@oxfordshire.gov.uk

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Chandler".

Stephen Chandler
Interim Chief Executive

January 2023

What does this Committee review or scrutinise?

All corporate services and budget scrutiny, including customer services, property, assets, procurement, finance, corporate policy matters such as consultation and public engagement; takes a lead role in scrutiny of the budget and corporate plan.

How can I have my say?

We welcome the views of the community on any issues in relation to the responsibilities of this Committee. Members of the public may ask to speak on any item on the agenda or may suggest matters which they would like the Committee to look at. **Requests to speak must be submitted to the Committee Officer below no later than 9 am 4 working day before the date of the meeting.**

About the County Council

The Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 63 councillors who are democratically elected every four years. The Council provides a range of services to Oxfordshire's 678,000 residents.

These include:

schools	social & health care	libraries and museums
the fire service	roads	trading standards
land use	transport planning	waste management

Each year the Council manages £0.9 billion of public money in providing these services. Most decisions are taken by a Cabinet of 9 Councillors, which makes decisions about service priorities and spending. Some decisions will now be delegated to individual members of the Cabinet.

About Scrutiny

Scrutiny is about:

- Providing a challenge to the Cabinet
- Examining how well the Cabinet and the Authority are performing
- Influencing the Cabinet on decisions that affect local people
- Helping the Cabinet to develop Council policies
- Representing the community in Council decision making
- Promoting joined up working across the authority's work and with partners

Scrutiny is NOT about:

- Making day to day service decisions
- Investigating individual complaints.

What does this Committee do?

The Committee meets up to 4 times a year or more. It develops a work programme, which lists the issues it plans to investigate. These investigations can include whole committee investigations undertaken during the meeting, or reviews by a panel of members doing research and talking to lots of people outside of the meeting. Once an investigation is completed the Committee provides its advice to the Cabinet, the full Council or other scrutiny committees. Meetings are open to the public and all reports are available to the public unless exempt or confidential, when the items would be considered in closed session.

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting

A hearing loop is available at County Hall.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**

To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments.

2. **Declaration of Interests - see guidance note on the back page**

3. **Minutes (Pages 1 - 12)**

To Committee is recommended to **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting held 9 December 2022 and to receive information arising from them.

4. **Petitions and Public Address**

Members of the public who wish to speak at this meeting can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

To facilitate 'hybrid' meetings we are asking that requests to speak or present a petition are submitted by no later than 9am four working days before the meeting i.e., 9am on Friday 13 January 2023. Requests to speak should be sent to bryony.crosslanddavies@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure your views are taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am 2 working days before the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

5. **Updated Strategic Plan and Funding and Budget Proposals 2023/24 - 2025/26 (Pages 13 - 120)**

The Performance and Corporate Services Committee is invited to consider and comment on:

- Proposed Strategic Plan for 2023/24 to 2025/26.
- Updates to revenue budget proposals for 2023/24 to 2025/26 by directorate.
- Proposals for the use of the Budget Priority Reserve.
- Proposed additions to the capital programme.

6. **Cost of Living (Pages 121 - 152)**

The Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider and comment on:

- a) The measures Oxfordshire County Council have put in place to mitigate the effect of the cost of living crisis on residents across Oxfordshire; and
- b) Planned and proposed future measures.

7. **Action and Recommendation Tracker (Pages 153 - 156)**

The Committee is asked to **NOTE** the progress of previous recommendations and actions having raised any questions on the contents.

8. **Committee's Forward Work Plan** (Pages 157 - 162)

The Committee is recommended to **AGREE** its proposed work programme for 2023/24, having heard any changes from previous iterations, and taking into consideration the Council's Forward Plan and any issues arising.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee will be attending a meeting on 17th January 2023 to review the Business Management and Monitoring Report. A verbal update will be provided if there are any issues arising from that which are recommended to be included in the Committee's Forward Work Plan.

Declarations of Interest

The duty to declare.....

Under the Localism Act 2011 it is a criminal offence to

- (a) fail to register a disclosable pecuniary interest within 28 days of election or co-option (or re-election or re-appointment), or
- (b) provide false or misleading information on registration, or
- (c) participate in discussion or voting in a meeting on a matter in which the member or co-opted member has a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Whose Interests must be included?

The Act provides that the interests which must be notified are those of a member or co-opted member of the authority, **or**

- those of a spouse or civil partner of the member or co-opted member;
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as husband/wife
- those of a person with whom the member or co-opted member is living as if they were civil partners.

(in each case where the member or co-opted member is aware that the other person has the interest).

What if I remember that I have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the Meeting?.

The Code requires that, at a meeting, where a member or co-opted member has a disclosable interest (of which they are aware) in any matter being considered, they disclose that interest to the meeting. The Council will continue to include an appropriate item on agendas for all meetings, to facilitate this.

Although not explicitly required by the legislation or by the code, it is recommended that in the interests of transparency and for the benefit of all in attendance at the meeting (including members of the public) the nature as well as the existence of the interest is disclosed.

A member or co-opted member who has disclosed a pecuniary interest at a meeting must not participate (or participate further) in any discussion of the matter; and must not participate in any vote or further vote taken; and must withdraw from the room.

Members are asked to continue to pay regard to the following provisions in the code that *“You must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself”* or *“You must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned.....”*.

Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting should you have any doubt about your approach.

List of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:

Employment (includes *“any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain”*.), **Sponsorship, Contracts, Land, Licences, Corporate Tenancies, Securities.**

For a full list of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and further Guidance on this matter please see the Guide to the New Code of Conduct and Register of Interests at Members’ conduct guidelines. <http://intranet.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/Insite/Elected+members/> or contact democracy@oxfordshire.gov.uk for a hard copy of the document.

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PERFORMANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Friday, 9 December 2022 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 13:50 pm.

Present:

Voting Members:

Councillor Eddie Reeves (Chair)
Councillor Michael O'Connor (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Brad Baines
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Donna Ford
Councillor Damian Haywood
Councillor John Howson
Councillor Kieron Mallon
~~Councillor Ian Middleton~~
Councillor Dan Levy – *substitute*

**Other Members in
Attendance:**

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Councillor Callum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance
Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services
Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council
Councillor Duncan Enright, Cabinet Member for Travel and Development Strategy
Councillor Pete Sudbury, Cabinet member for Climate Change Delivery and Environment
Councillor Jenny Hannaby, Cabinet Member for Community Services and Safety
Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents] are attached to the signed Minutes.

22/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS
(Agenda No. 1)

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Ian Middleton for whom Councillor Dan Levy attended as substitute.

23/22 MINUTES
(Agenda No. 4)

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

24/22 BUDGET PROPSALS 23/24 TO 25/26

(Agenda No. 5)

The Committee was provided with a report which set out the Council's budget proposals for the period 2023/24 to 2025/26. The Committees comments would be included in the Budget and Business Planning report to Cabinet on 24 January 2023 and would also be taken into consideration by Cabinet in setting out the proposed revenue budget for 2023/24 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2025/26.

Cllr Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council, introduced the budget proposals for 2023/24 to 2025/26, outlining and summarising the key aspects of report and presentation. The Leader explained that all budget assumptions and work undertaken for the MTFS were underpinned by the Administration's nine priorities and informed by budget engagement and public consultations, including Oxfordshire Conversation events and a representative residents' survey.

The Leader also reminded that Committee that it was due to consider the refreshed Strategic Plan – based on feedback received from residents - for 2023/24 at its meeting on 19 January 2023.

Cllr Calum Miller, the Cabinet Member for Finance, provided the Committee with an overview of the proposed changes for the MTFS, new budget proposals for 2023/24 – 2025/26, and the updated position for 2023/24 compared to current MTFS, all detailed in the report and presentation alongside directorate-specific proposals.

Issues raised by Members

- The Committee asked several questions regarding the potential 4.99% increase in council tax to support essential service delivery.
- The Cabinet Member for Finance stated that the Autumn Statement assumed that Local Authorities would raise higher council tax levels and take advantage of all local funding available. If the Council did not raise council tax, Government may be more reticent to provide grant funding. There would also be an £8.7m shortfall in the budget. Alternatives to meeting this shortfall were twofold: find further savings in services expenditure, or bridge costs for a single year by drawing on some of the services and balances funds. The latter was advised against.
- Members queried whether the Council would be applying for the 4.99% council tax increase to alleviate the deficit. The Committee sought reassurance that there were contingencies in place if Directorates could not meet service demands within their robust budget envelopes.
- No decision had been made regarding the council tax increase for the subsequent year. The Council used all its contingency allowance in the current

year to support inflationary pressures. It was proposing to reinstate the contingency line for the 23/24 budget and was noted as an item in the Council's recurrent expenditure.

- Regarding demand estimates, Adult Social Care and Children's Services represented significant pressures. There was substantial investment expected through the Oxfordshire Way approach and the Council was working on early intervention to deal with cases quicker, delay or prevent demand arising, reduce cost, and improve outcomes for adults, children and families.
- A Member referred to the predicted in-year planned savings, the £2.1m red-rated savings and the £14m overspend in Children's Services and asked how the Council would respond to those pressures within the budget plan going forward.
- The Cabinet Member explained that the pressures on Children's Services were factored into the Directorate's budget. The in-year pressures reflected demand and inflation. Therefore, the budget presented did account for the underlying shift and pressures on Children's Services. Services were aware of areas in which they did not deliver their savings in 22/23 and that would be factored in going forward. The Council needed to ensure that the savings projected were realistic in terms of balancing the budget for the following year.
- Members asked whether the Council was implementing a way of forecasting the likelihood of Directorates achieving their planned savings in future years.
- In response, the Cabinet Member explained that the process of testing the projected savings was already underway and the savings presented in the report were calculated to be robust and achievable. Some of the savings were an attempt to increase service efficiency and deliver current services with less resource. There were relatively modest expectations of savings from the Children's Services directorate, which faced significant pressures. The Administration recognised the challenge to deliver these savings targets and continued to lobby Government regarding financial pressures. The first funding increase in 12 years for Local Government was offset – partly - by the rise in inflation, thus the Council still faced real term cuts. The Cabinet Member assured the Committee that the impact of achieving these savings on services would be monitored.
- The Committee asked whether the Council benchmarked its demand against other Local Authorities. The Cabinet Member confirmed that service level was compared with its statistical neighbours.
- Members asked how the Council was seeking and listening to the views of its residents, incorporating those views and feedback received into the budget. The Committee also emphasised the importance of engaging with service users.
- The Council had undertaken a significant amount of engagement work during the budget process and learnt a lot about how to most effectively engage with

its residents. The Council valued the Oxfordshire Conversations and found that the main concern of the residents engaged with was Highways. The Administration did, however, want to refine how it achieved engagement with more service users and a wider spread of residents, particularly with regard to the bigger budget items i.e. Adult Social Care and Children's Services. The Leader reiterated that the Council would constantly refine its engagement methods and seek more responses from residents.

- In answer to a query regarding uncertainties surrounding inflation and demand, the Cabinet Member for Finance explained that the Statutory Override was only guaranteed to run until April 2023. Thus, the high costs forecast for the High Needs block could present a problem for the budget if the Council needed to use its reserves that were earmarked for future purposes. However, it was unlikely that the Government would remove the Override and the Council awaited further guidance whilst continuing its work with Government on delivering the Better Value Programme.
- The full package of Adult Social Care reforms was postponed for two years, including the Trailblazer scheme. There were other elements of the reform that were due to be enacted and the Council needed to position itself to respond positively and meet the standards required for a successful bid.
- Members were concerned that the prioritisation of frontline services meant that no additional funds were available to reinvest into the Council's other priority areas.
- The Cabinet Member for Finance agreed to provide the Committee with a written response outlining how the Committee's comments and recommendations from the previous year's budget scrutiny had been incorporated into budget management over the previous 12 months.
- Asked about why the capital budget was less detailed, the Cabinet Member explained that Authorities were incentivised to focus on revenue budgeting due to its link with council tax i.e., how the Council raises and spends its money. Significant amounts of the capital budget were the consequence of grant bids and therefore less flexible and required implementation management rather than budget setting. The Council had established capital governance monitoring arrangements to facilitate a higher degree of accountability for all schemes. However, it was recognised that the Administration needed to hone its focus on the capital budget. Capital schemes were due to be discussed in further detail at the January 2023 meeting of the Committee.
- Given the proportion of red and amber RAG rated savings, the Committee received reassurance that the Council had always had adequate contingencies and balances in place. Notwithstanding, the Committee reiterated the multiple risks and uncertainties regarding demand and inflation and enquired how the Administration modelled demand and inflation and worst- to best- case scenarios.

- The Cabinet Member explained that the budget presented the central case – it was not possible to tweak a model budget based on a set of assumptions. The Council could draw on its contingencies and general balances when necessary.
- In response, Members asked whether the Council should produce budget confidence intervals in greater detail. The Cabinet Member suggested that the Committee could explore this Directorate by Directorate and restated that the Authority always maintained robust contingency balances to cope with uncertainties.
- The Authority had been working hard under considerable pressure to maintain services and was identifying ways for early intervention to improve services for residents at lower cost to deliver its substantial savings.
- A Member suggested the development of a risk register for the clear presentation of risk hierarchy.

ENVIRONMENT AND PLACE

- The Corporate Director for Environment and Place summarised the Directorate's budget proposals.
- The Supported Transport budget was under significant pressure and the Directorate was struggling to meet savings in that area. It was making changes to Home to School Transport and the decarbonisation agenda to help meet its £1.2m red and amber RAG rated savings for 2022/23.
- Following a long process of testing, the Director was confident that the Directorate could achieve its proposed savings for 23/24, particularly within income areas.
- In the instance that the £1.2m savings for 22/23 were not realised, there would need to be a wider conversation about how the Directorate would account for the shortfall and the addition of further savings targets to 23/24.
- Members requested further information on the Climate Impact Review, but this was difficult to quantify owing to the mainstreaming of climate action across the whole Council and difficulty in accounting for individual actions. The Cabinet Member did agree that the Directorate could change the degree to which it reported the impact of revenue proposals on the climate impact. There were other reports which better detailed progress on climate action from a non-financial perspective, and the work being undertaken jointly with Districts and Boroughs. Referring to the recommendation made at the Committee's budget meeting the year previous, Members re-emphasised the importance of providing an effective narrative of how the Council was embedding climate action across the whole organisation to get a sense of how the Council's budget allocations met this corporate priority.

- Members noted the absence of some schemes from the capital programme that were related to the Council's nine priority areas.
- The Corporate Director explained that many of the Council's expenditures were statutory duties, and it was not in a strong position to make discretionary investments in capital schemes. It was however looking for opportunities to release more capital to support these priorities.
- Overall, the Director and Cabinet Members were confident that planned savings would not impact the ability of the climate change team to respond to the climate crisis.

CORPORATE SERVICES

- The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services summarised the overarching themes for Corporate Services in the draft budget proposals.
- A Member asked how the budget was impacted by the termination of the Section 113 shared services agreement with Cherwell District Council. The Head of Financial Strategy agreed to provide the Committee with an analysis of the impact of that decision on the proposed budget, following the meeting.
- The £2.7m proposed savings in the Directorate equated to 4.5% of the entire budget. Cultural Services posed the greatest area of concern, in particular the Library Strategy. The reliance on agency staff represented a further risk and required investment into new strategic resourcing capability to deliver the transformation to a more permanent workforce.
- Parts of Corporate Services had been hollowed out and therefore it was difficult to find further savings in those areas. The Directorate's budget also reflected the end of the Council's long-term partnership with Hampshire IBC. There were also challenges and demand on the Law and Governance team and the budget represented an investment in those areas.
- When asked about the level of confidence the Service had regarding its contract with Hampshire reducing costs, the Director stated that the Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) was working closely with Hampshire and hoping to implement a new applicant tracking system to alleviate the previous recruitment failings of the IBC. The existing contract with Hampshire was under review and the Council was looking to retain some of the former's services, such as Payroll. The Director and Cabinet Member were confident that the restructuring of teams and greater proportion of permanent staff would improve figures. The Service was maximising the use of its Apprenticeship Levy and was committed to improving staff retention and developing staff internally.
- Members wanted to see evidence of a clear cross-Directorate effort to tackle recruitment and agency staffing costs.

- In acknowledgement, the Director stated that there were good organisational strategies in place to meet workforce issues and that each Directorate needed a robust workforce plan.
- Members noted the increased funding for Democratic Services staff and questioned whether this was due to a restructure or an increase in services.
- The Cabinet Member explained that Legal Services had a high level of interim agency staff and permanent and additional staff were needed to support demand. The Interim Chief Executive added that there were several external factors impacting Law and Governance, including increased Scrutiny. Greater Legal capacity was needed to meet demand and the Service's responsibilities around Information Governance had also increased. More investment was needed in these areas over a two-year period.
- A Member asked how the Council determined the level of savings from each Directorate. The Interim Chief Executive explained that the budget setting process began in the summer and there had been a number of iterations on savings. More pressure was put on areas that were further along their transformation programmes.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

- Children's Services was receiving the most significant cash increase of all the directorates however the effect of inflation meant a real-terms budget contraction of 2.8%.
- The Chair asked how confident the Directorate was that it could realise its £3.35m of proposed savings.
- The Director explained that the two drivers for spend were staffing and placements. Regarding the former, a large number of health staff reassigned during the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with an insufficient Early Help strategy put pressure on Children's Social Care. The Council was supporting its partners in the community to deliver Early Help, as part of the collective undertaking approach to Children's Social Care. Caseloads were falling-post Covid and were on target to decrease to a level commensurate with OCC's statistical neighbours.
- The latter overspend was a consequence of high caseloads and the high number of Looked After Children (LAC). The number of LAC was on a declining trajectory which was expected to continue and level with the Council's statistical neighbours the following year, meaning budgets to support that activity could reduce.
- Asked to explain the "noted service efficiencies", the Director described them as modest efficiencies, largely around where vacancies were held in non-statutory posts. There was also a new IT system in the Education Directorate which improved efficiency.

- There was high demand on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Children's Social Care. Work was underway on the Social Care Academy and the delivery of the SEND strategy to improve outcomes for children. The Education Commission was due to independently review the services and make recommendations to Council, that the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee would subsequently consider. The Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services asked that Members acknowledge the pressure their excellent staff were under to support and keep children safe. The Cabinet Member stated that the way in which Children's Social Care and SEND was funded was unsustainable.
- Historically, Oxfordshire had more LAC than its comparable counties. The Service was undertaking a lot of work to move support to edge of care/crisis point to deliver more support to children in their homes and avoid downstream costs. With cultural change and a permanent workforce, better decisions and outcomes for children could be achieved. The Committee emphasised the importance of responding to demand notwithstanding the cost pressures.
- A Member referred to the "Grow Your Own" Strategy and asked what level of confidence the Directorate had that this would generate long-term savings and reduce reliance on agency staff.
- The Director for Children's Services responded that since the new academy structure had been established, only one newly qualified social worker out of 15 had left, indicating the positive impact that investment and support had on the retention of newly qualified workers. The Step Up programme aimed to provide opportunities for people working with/for the Council to take a social work qualification.
- A Member asked whether there would be a cost saving following review of the Council's partnership working with ICB. The Director explained that the review presented an opportunity to re-set expectations and the division of responsibility. The Council could use its existing resources more efficiently and make better investment upstream.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

- Adult Social Care (ASC) presented the Council's biggest spend thus was the largest area of budget cuts across the organisation.
- The Corporate Director for Adults and Housing explained that the opportunities from the investments in the Oxfordshire Way transformation were fundamental to achieving the proposed savings and the programme already creating better outcomes for residents.
- The Chair referred to the 22/23 red and amber RAG rated savings and asked what proportion related to ASC. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care explained that 39% of the Council's red and amber savings were held within ASC, 8.5% of which were amber. A high proportion of savings were achieved

by preventative activities and the Service was intervening early with small amounts of seed funding to abate more expensive care downstream. If the existing transformation trend continued, the Directorate was confident that it would deliver on its savings. Inflation did of course present a risk.

- The majority of ASC budget was pooled with health budgets and a Member queried whether the Directorate looked at potential savings across the whole pathway of care.
- The Cabinet Member responded that the Service's contribution to the pool budget had been scrutinised. They were also working with the IBC to ensure that this joint working saved money and provided better experience and outcomes for residents.
- A Member queried the role of in-house provision within the Oxfordshire Way and whether analysis had been undertaken regarding ongoing costs and potential services being outsourced to partners.
- The Corporate Director explained that the Council's only in-house services were community support services, which focused on investing in communities and upstream prevention work. Partnership work was crucial in the delivery of services; the Corporate Director referred to the Council's partnership with AgeUK, which was delivering better outcomes for residents and reducing reliance on statutory services, as an example.
- The Chief Executive added that the Council was the system leader of the Oxfordshire Way and this approach reduced the need for funded support whilst delivering potential reductions of 3-5% in commission spend and achieving better outcomes.

Cllr Mallon left the meeting at 12:27pm.

Business was adjourned for five minutes and resumed at 12:36 pm.

PUBLIC HEALTH

- Members struggled to get a sense of how the Council's budget was tackling inequality in Oxfordshire and asked whether Cabinet had taken on board the Committee's comments at the previous year's Budget meeting regarding the systematic mainstreaming of equality from the outset of budget development and early intervention.
- The Cabinet Member for Community Services and Safety agreed that equality needed to systematically underpin the budget development. A more detailed Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken in reflection of the budget, but the Cabinet Member acknowledged that equality needed to be considered earlier in the budget setting stage. The Director assured the Committee that Public Health took a strong system view of tackling inequality.

- In response, Members queried whether the Directorate was looking at the outcomes and outputs with regard to Public Health and working collaboratively within a whole-system approach to Public Health.
- The Leader agreed that the Council needed to look at how its policies impacted on the overall health and wellbeing of the population of Oxfordshire. The Cabinet would be thoroughly reviewing how it presented health and wellbeing data in the future. The Leader acknowledged that all work undertaken by the Council had a bearing on people's health and wellbeing.
- The annual contribution to the Community Safety reserve had been cancelled for 2023/24 and the Cabinet Member agreed to provide the Committee with the current balance of that reserve following the meeting.
- Referring to the overall joined-up working across the Council, a Member queried whether Public Health had resource for its joined-up working to achieve improved outcomes.
- The Director explained that the impact of Covid-19 would be increasingly apparent over the ensuing 5-10 years. Public Health had some leverage through the cost of living crisis to enable to look beyond organisational silos and boundaries and work across the Council to take an upstream approach.
- The Chair explained that the Committee expected to make formal recommendations following the budget consultation proposals. The Chair summarised observations made by the Committee during the discussion and thanked Directors and Cabinet Members for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED

- (1) That revenue budget proposals for 2023/24 to 2025/26 by directorate, the proposed changes to fees and charges and the high priority capital schemes subject to business cases be noted.**
- (2) That a report on the Committee's consideration of the budget proposals and subsequent observations be brought before the next meeting of the Committee for agreement, prior to submission to Cabinet for consideration.**
- (3) That the Cabinet Member for Finance write to the Committee outlining how the Committee's comments and recommendations from the previous year's budget scrutiny had been incorporated into budget management over the previous 12 months.**
- (4) That the Head of Financial Strategy provide the Committee with an analysis of how the termination of the Section 113 agreement impacted the proposed budget.**
- (5) That the Cabinet Member for Community Services and Safety provide the Committee with the balance of the Community Safety**

Reserve, following cancellation of the Service's annual contribution to that fund.

Cllr Ford left the meeting at 13:39 pm

**WORKING GROUP
(Agenda No. 7)**

RESOLVED:

The Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) AGREED the revised project plan;**
- (2) AGREED that the Principal Scrutiny Officer seek membership nominations from political groups, for agreement by the Committee at its January 2023 meeting;**
- (3) AGREED that external participants be involved where possible.**

**27/22 WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23
(Agenda No. 8)**

Members received an update on the Committee's proposed work programme for 2022/23.

The Principal Scrutiny Officer informed the Committee that Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees were due to consider the BMMR report. Any recommendations arising would subsequently be considered by the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the work programme be APPROVED;**
- (2) That the Transformation Programme item be removed from the agenda of the January 2023 meeting of the Committee;**
- (3) That the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee revisit budget proposals at its January 2023 meeting, and defer consideration of the Council's proposed capital budget and programme until that meeting. Members were invited to submit their questions to the Committee Officer in advance of the meeting.**

**29/22 ACTION AND RECOMMENDATION TRACKER
(Agenda No. 10)**

The Principal Scrutiny Officer provided an update on the Committee's Action and Recommendations Tracker.

The Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTED** the Action and Recommendation tracker.

Meeting ended at 13:50

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

Divisions Affected – All

Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

19 January 2023

Updated Strategic Plan and Funding and Budget Proposals 2023/24 to 2025/26

Report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Director for Customers, Organisational Development and Resources

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider and comment on:
 - Proposed Strategic Plan for 2023/24 – 2025/26
 - Updates to revenue budget proposals for 2023/24 to 2025/26 by directorate.
 - Proposals for the use of the Budget Priority Reserve.
 - Proposed additions to the capital programme.

Executive Summary

2. This report sets out updates to budget proposals for the period 2023/24 to 2025/26 from those reported to the Committee in December 2022. It provides the opportunity for the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on these.
3. The following annexes are attached to this report:
 - Annex 1 – Budget engagement: feedback from the budget consultation 2023/24
 - Annex 2 – Updated Strategic Plan for 2023/24 – 2025/26
 - Revenue expenditure
 - Annex 3a – changes to revenue pressures following the Autumn Statement
 - Annex 3b – proposed changes to revenue savings
 - Annex 3c – proposed budget increases

- Annex 4a – Overarching Equality Impact Assessment
- Annex 4b – Overarching Climate Impact Assessment

Introduction

4. The [Budget and Business Planning report](#) that was considered as part of the agenda for the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 December 2022 explained that there were inflationary pressures of £27.1m and other demand led pressures totalling £16.7m expected from 2023/24. These included the growing nationwide costs of supporting children and young people; the rising cost of social care and care placements for both children and adults; and a national shortage of social care workers leading to a reliance on agency staff and higher costs. The 2021 Census also confirmed Oxfordshire has a growing and ageing population, which will continue to increase demand on services. The February 2022 update of the OCC housing led-forecasts predict a total population in Oxfordshire of 853,500 by 2030, a growth of 157,600 or 20%.
5. After taking account of proposed savings of £35.0m, there was a budget deficit of £8.7m in 2023/24.
6. The public consultation on the 2023/24 budget proposals ran from 18 November 2022 to 19 December 2022 on the council's digital consultation and engagement platform, Let's talk Oxfordshire. Feedback from the consultation is included in this report.
7. The Local Government Policy statement published on 12 December 2022 set out the government's intentions for the local government finance settlement for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The Government subsequently announced individual local authority funding allocations for 2023/24 on 19 December 2022 as part of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. The final settlement is expected to be received in early February 2023.
8. This report explains the updated funding position based on the information known at this stage as well as changes to the budget proposals published as part of the report for Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 December 2022. These changes reflect feedback from the budget engagement and consultation as well as the observations on the proposals shared by the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
9. In the context of the feedback from budget engagement and consultation and the updated funding position, Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider and comment on the updates to the revenue and capital budget proposals for 2023/24 – 2025/26 and the updated Strategic Plan and Outcomes Framework for 2023/24.
10. The Committee's observations will be included in the Budget and Business Planning report to Cabinet on 24 January 2023, along with the outcome of the

public consultation and engagement. This feedback will be taken into consideration by Cabinet in setting out their proposed revenue budget for 2023/24 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2025/26.

Budget engagement and consultation

11. For 2023/24 the council's engagement and consultation on the budget had four distinct phases, putting residents' views at the heart of the council's budget and business planning from the start to the finish.

- Phase 1: Maximising the use of existing feedback
- Phase 2: Representative residents' survey
- Phase 3: Oxfordshire conversation events
- Phase 4: Public consultation on the substance of the 2023/24 budget (18 November 2022 to 19 December 2022)

Phase 1: Maximising the use of existing feedback

12. To support the early stages of the council's budget and business planning process, digests of residents' and stakeholder feedback were compiled, themed by each of the council's nine strategic priorities. These digests were made available to senior officers, alongside a range of other insight, to inform the early stages of development of directorate budget proposals. This insight is historical and not included in this report.

Phase 2: Representative residents' survey

13. Feedback from the [residents' survey](#) was included as part of the report to Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2022.

Phase 3: Oxfordshire Conversation events

14. Three online Oxfordshire Conversation events took place between 18 and 21 October 2022. The aim was to engage with residents, share emerging budget challenges and to give them the chance to ask cabinet members questions about issues that matter to them. An in-person sounding board with children and young people, incorporating an Oxfordshire Conversation, was also held on 15 October 2022.
15. These four events replaced a much fuller programme of in-person and online meetings, which were cancelled following the death of Her Majesty The Queen.
16. Overall, 194 people signed-up to attend the Oxfordshire Conversation events with 122 of these attending. Nearly 100 questions were submitted in advance, with more posed on the day. Highways, travel and transport matters (speed limits, bus services, cycle provision, traffic filters etc) were by far the dominant themes for discussion although a range of other topics were raised.
17. Twenty-eight children and young people attended the sounding board. Travel and transport, home education, support for neurodiversity and youth service were key themes.

Phase 4: Public consultation on the council's 2023/24 budget proposals

18. Between 18 November and 19 December 2022, the council invited comments on its budget proposals for 2023/24, with a specific focus on its savings proposals. Residents and stakeholders were also signposted to a supporting consultation booklet for background information and to the detailed budget reports published for Performance and Corporate Services Overview Scrutiny Committee. Respondents were encouraged to engage with these detailed supporting documents should they wish.
19. Feedback was primarily collated using an online survey on the council's digital consultation and engagement platform, Let's talk Oxfordshire, with residents and stakeholders also able to submit comments by email or by letter. In total, the council received 559 responses (including 26 email responses).
20. Most people did not give a view on each proposal and instead chose to answer only on those of specific interest to them or simply skipped this section of the survey entirely. The number of respondents engaging on individual savings' proposals ranged from 26 people to 121 people.
21. A summary of the responses received as part of the public consultation (phase 4 of the budget engagement activity) is provided in Annex 1.

Next steps

22. Feedback from the budget consultation and engagement will be taken into consideration by Cabinet in setting out their proposed revenue budget for 2023/24 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2025/26.
23. The consultation report will also be published on the council's digital consultation and engagement platform, Let's talk Oxfordshire, with a link to the meetings. This will be supplemented by a 'you said, we did' update on Let's talk Oxfordshire after decisions have been made.

Strategic Plan and Outcomes Framework

24. The council's Strategic Plan has been reviewed and updated for 2023/24 and is included at Annex 2.
25. The nine strategic priorities are unchanged and the areas of focus have all been refreshed and updated into objectives to reflect the council's current ambitions. The objectives are core to the overall outcomes framework, outlining what good looks like in delivering these outcomes against the existing strategic priorities. The organising structure of the outcomes framework will also include a number of key performance indicators and progress measures which will be reported against to demonstrate progress, highlight and address areas of development.
26. The outcomes framework will represent a high-level overview of the council's priorities. It does not represent all metrics, measures, and targets that the council collects or reports upon. The strategic plan is also underpinned by a series of thematic and service strategies, and service areas produce their own

service or business plans and operational measures. Collectively these documents comprise the county council's performance management framework.

27. The 2023 – 2024 outcomes framework is built from the following organising structure: Nine strategic priorities, 25 commitments and 49 objectives.
28. Supporting the delivery of the objectives, commitments and strategic priorities are a number of key performance indicators and progress measures which make up the outcomes framework that will be agreed ready for reporting in April 2023. This will follow the end-of-year reporting and reviewing of local and national targets ready to include in the 2023/24 outcomes framework and will be included in the bi-monthly Business Management and Monitoring Reports.

Updates to Funding Assumptions

29. The Local Government Policy statement published on 12 December 2022 set out the government's intentions for the local government finance settlement for 2023/24 and 2024/25 and also included updates on council tax referendum limits for each of those years.
30. The Local Government Provisional Settlement was published on 19 December 2022 and included the following updates that need to be considered as part of the final budget proposals for 2023/24.

Council Tax

31. The referendum limit for increases in core council tax will be increased to 3% (from 2%) per year from April 2023. In addition, local authorities with social care responsibilities can increase the adult social care precept by up to 2% (from 1%) per year. The figures of new funding for adult social care published by the government in the autumn statement assumed that this increase would be made.
32. Each 1% increase in council tax compared to the current plan would generate on-going council tax funding of around £4.4m. To help meet on-going inflationary and other pressures it is proposed to increase council tax by 4.99% in 2023/24 and an assumed increase of 4.99% will be included in the MTFS for 2024/25. This will generate £8.9m additional council tax funding in 2023/24.
33. The council tax base is the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in a local authority area adjusted for the assumed rate of collection of council tax. Billing authorities (District and City Councils) are required to provide this information to the precepting authorities and the method used to calculate the tax base is prescribed in regulations. Growth in the tax base of 1.75% per year is assumed in the MTFS reflecting anticipated increases in the number of households in Oxfordshire paying council tax. Updates from the district councils received in

late 2022 confirm that the tax base will grow by 1.99% in 2023/24, generating additional council tax income of £1.1m.

34. In addition to the tax base, the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the billing authorities to determine the estimated surplus or deficit on the council tax collection fund as a result of income from council tax/ratepayers being more or less than originally estimated. Estimates for the forthcoming year are formed from the position for three years, the actual position for the prior financial year, the estimate for the current financial year and an estimate for the forthcoming financial year. Surpluses/deficits are shared between billing and major precepting authorities. The county council's share of surpluses on the council tax collection fund was estimated to be £4.0m for 2023/24 in the current MTFS and was cautious on the basis that there would be on-going impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic on the rate of council tax collection. However, estimated surpluses notified by the district and city councils in December 2022 for 2023/24 total £14.1m.
35. The Provisional Local Government Settlement set out that £100m will be available nationally to provide council tax support to the most vulnerable households. The total for the five Oxfordshire districts is £0.943m. Local authorities are required to put in place Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) schemes to offer council tax reductions to those facing financial hardship. To supplement this local support, the government expects that billing authorities will use their grant allocation to fund further reductions in the council tax liability of individuals receiving LCTS with an outstanding council tax liability, by up to £25. Local authorities are also able to use a proportion of their allocations to determine their own local approaches to supporting economically vulnerable households with council tax bills.

Business Rates and Settlement Funding Assessment

36. The Council also receives general funding from business rates based on the Government's assessment of need. This is known as the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA). The Provisional Local Government Settlement confirmed that the SFA will increase from £72.0m in 2022/23 to £74.7m in 2023/24. Based on previous inflation assumptions, the existing MTFS assumed an increase to £73.4m, so this is a £1.3m improvement.
37. In addition to the SFA, the Council receives compensation for under-indexation of the business rates multiplier by way of un-ringfenced section 31 grants. The current MTFS assumed an increase from 2022/23 of 2.4% in line with forecast CPI expectations. The Provisional Local Government Settlement confirmed an increase equivalent to 10.1% (September CPI) when combined with the SFA increase of £1.3m, the overall impact is an improvement in anticipated grant funding by £10.4m compared to the existing plan.
38. Local authorities have been able to retain the growth in business rates from a baseline of April 2013 up until the point of a business rates reset which was originally planned for April 2020 but has yet to take place. The forecast for retained growth in 2023/24 is £4.0m, £0.9m more than projected.

Grant Funding Updates

Social Care Grant

39. The Autumn Statement set out that £1.265bn in 2023/24 and £1.877bn in 2024/25 will be distributed to local authorities through the Social Care Grant for adult and children's social care. This is repurposed funding that was expected to be used to support the cost of adult social care reform.
40. The council will receive £11.3m new funding in 2023/24 increasing the total to £29.2m. Based on national totals and the same distribution method it is estimated that there could be a further increase to £34.2m from 2024/25 onwards. From 2023/24 £3.5m un-ringfenced funding previously received through the Independent Living Fund will also be rolled into the Social Care Grant.

Services Grant

41. The current MTFs assumes the council's £5.0m share of the Services Grant, which was announced as part of the Spending Review 2021, would be one – off in 2022/23 only as the government set out that this was expected to be a temporary use of the funding available nationally ahead of the implementation of the Fair Funding Review. On that basis the current MTFs assumed that the council's £5.0m share of the un-ringfenced Services Grant would fall out in 2023/24. The Provisional Settlement confirmed that the council will receive £2.8m funding in 2023/24. This is assumed to continue in 2024/25 and 2025/26 but it is unclear what the long term arrangements will be.

New Homes Bonus

42. £2.9m un-ringfenced funding from the New Homes Bonus, which was extended by a further year into 2022/23, was also not expected to continue from 2023/24. The Provisional Settlement confirmed that the council will receive a further £1.7m in 2023/24. As part of the settlement the government have indicated that this will be reviewed before the 2024/25 settlement so this is assumed to be one – off in 2023/24.

Adult Social Care

43. £0.6Bn funding to support hospital discharges is being distributed through the Better Care Fund in 2023/24. The council's share of the national total is £1.5m and is ringfenced to meet new costs.
44. Adult Social Care Market Sustainability and Improvement Funding Grant is intended to "enable tangible improvements to be made to adult social care". Oxfordshire's £5.4m share is 0.95% of the national total. This includes the existing funding (£1.5m in 2022/23) so is an additional £3.8m. This is also ringfenced to meet new costs.
45. The improved Better Care Fund (iBCF) grant will be unchanged at £10.7m.

Public Health Grant

46. The ringfenced funding for Public Health (£32.6m in 2022/23) is expected to continue to increase during the spending review period and individual

allocations will be protected in cash terms. Allocations for 2023/24 are expected to be announced early in 2023 but no final decision had been made on 2023/24 allocations at the time of the Provisional Local Government Settlement.

Household Support Fund

47. The Autumn Statement confirmed that the Household Support Fund will continue for a further 12 months with an additional £1bn of funding, administered via local authorities. No guidance has been received but if the council received the same share of the national allocation as for previous rounds this may total around £6.7m for the year.

Changes to Budget Proposals

Further Pressures arising from the Autumn Statement

48. As set out in the Business Management and Monitoring Report to Cabinet in December 2022 there is real concern over the level of demand for children's social care and a lack of suitable care placements available in the system. More generally the on-going impact of inflation which increased by 10.7% in the 12 months to November 2022, workforce shortages and supply side issues, mean that similar to local households the council needs to pay more to maintain the same level of service provision.
49. Inflation, including the impact of the proposed increase in the National Living Wage from April 2023, and increases in utility and fuel costs, was estimated to increase the council's costs by around £27.1m in 2023/24.
50. The Office for Budget Responsibility now forecasts CPI inflation to be 7.4% in 2023 before falling back to 0.6% from 2024 and returning to closer to the 2% target over the longer run.
51. The government will increase the National Living Wage for individuals aged 23 and over from £9.50 to £10.42 an hour (9.7%) from 1 April 2023. This is higher than the increase that was consulted upon over the summer and assumed in the proposals used for the budget consultation.
52. The impact of the increase in the National Living Wage and higher inflation more generally is expected to increase costs by a further £10.8m in 2023/24. There are also further increases of £2.0m in placement and £2.2m in transport costs in Children's Services as well as an increase of £4.4m relating to heightened demand and complexity across health and social care sectors following the pandemic, and the introduction of the Care Quality Commission Social Care Assurance framework from April 2023. Adding these together costs are expected to increase by a further £19.4m from 2023/24 and by £31.1m¹ over the medium term. The detailed changes in pressures since the report to this Committee in December 2022 arising from the Autumn Statement are included at Annex 3a.

¹ Note rounding difference compared to Annex 3a which shows a total of £31.2m by 2025/26

Table 1: Further Pressures following the Autumn Statement

Directorate	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	Total £m
Adult Services	6.4	6.4		12.8
Children's Services	5.7	2.0	1.7	9.4
Environment & Place	3.4			3.4
Public Health & Community Safety				
Customers, Culture and Corporate Services	1.3	0.9	0.5	2.7
Increase funding for pay award to 4.5% in 2023/24	2.6	0.1	0.1	2.8
Total	19.4	9.4	2.3	31.1

Updated position after the Autumn Statement and Provisional Local Government Settlement

53. Estimated additional funding for 2023/24 compared to that set out in the report to this Committee in December 2022 total £37.1m.
54. £16.9m of this is higher funding compared to the assumptions in the current MTFS. The Services Grant and New Homes Bonus (paragraph 41-42), which were expected to cease will now continue in 2023/24 and will increase funding by £4.5m. Business rates funding (Settlement Funding Assessment and S31 grants) (paragraphs 36-38) is increasing by 10.1% in line with (September CPI) £10.4m more than planned. There is also growth in retained business rates of £0.9m. Higher growth in the council tax base will generate £1.1m additional funding.
55. There is £20.2m of new funding made up of £8.9m from the government's assumption that councils will increase Council Tax to 4.99% and new Social Care Grant funding of £11.3m.
56. After taking account of the existing budget deficit of £8.7m and the new pressures of £19.4m set out in Table 1 and Annex 3a, £9.0m additional funding is available to reduce savings or fund new budget increases. A further £10.1m one – off funding is available as a result of council tax surpluses (paragraph 34).

Proposed Changes to Proposals included in the Budget Consultation

Proposed Changes to Savings

Revenue Support for the Capital Programme

57. A revenue saving of £1.2m (24CC15) relating to the release of £20m of the £90m prudential borrowing for capital schemes agreed as part of the 2022/23 budget was included in the budget that was consulted on. Taking account of

58. feedback to the consultation which supported capital investments to release future savings and reflecting the need to meet future capital requirements needed to achieve the council's priorities, it is proposed that the funding to support this borrowing is reinstated.
59. A number of respondents to the consultation opposed the proposed saving of a £0.8m contribution towards the future costs of replacing Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service vehicles (24PHCS2). The use of the funding would be subject to a future business case for the capital expenditure being agreed.

Other Changes

60. A one – off contribution of £2.3m (24EP12) from reserves that was proposed to be used to support revenue expenditure on a one – off basis will be removed from the revenue proposals.
61. Savings 24CCCS18 and 24CCCS19 both relate to one – off delays to maintenance of the council's buildings from 2023/24 to 2024/25. In light of the updated funding position, and to avoid any increase in future costs as a result of delaying, it is proposed to reinstate the funding for the work in 2023/24 as originally planned.
62. In response to the feedback in the budget consultation an on-going reduction of £0.3m relating to a reduction in supplies and services expenditure and vacancy management in the Library Service (24CCCS26) will be halved in 2023/24 to enable implementation of longer run efficiencies.
63. In addition 24CCCS17, a one off contribution from reserves of £0.1m, has been removed from the proposals.
64. The detailed changes to the proposed savings that were consulted on are included at Annex 3b.

Proposed New Budget Increases

65. In response to feedback received in the budget consultation and in line with the council's priorities, further proposals totalling £3.9m include £0.5m additional on-going funding for Children's Services to improve capacity for Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) reviews and assessments. £2.5m will be used to improve access to public transport and includes £0.3m to support children and young people in cycling and walking to school or college. £0.6m is proposed to be used to improve ditch clearance and support communities in planning flood resilience. £0.1m is proposed to be used to provide on-going resource to accelerate development of a freight strategy for Oxfordshire.
66. It is proposed that £6.8m of the £10.0m one – off funding available through council tax surpluses is used to increase balances back to the risk assessed level for 2023/24 (£30.2m) after taking account of the impact of the forecast overspend in 2022/23. £2.3m is proposed to be used to provide support to low income households with the cost of council tax and other cost of living support

measures in 2023/24. Details on the use of this funding will be developed in due course. £1.0m funding will be used to the Councillor Priority Fund at a total of £15,000 for each councillor to be spent in 2023/24 or 2024/25.

67. The detailed proposed changes are included at Annex 3c.

COVID-19 Reserve

68. A further £0.325m funding from the COVID-19 reserve is proposed to be used in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25 to support additional commissioning and contract activity for social care arising as a result of the on-going impact of COVID-19.

Updated Position for 2023/24 compared to current Medium Term Financial Strategy

69. Table 2 on the next page sets out the revised position for 2023/24 compared to the current plan. The first column shows the budget for 2023/24 assumed in the MTFS agreed by Council in February 2022. The second column then shows the estimated impact of the delay to the changes to Business Rates and Fair Funding Review assumed in the budget that was consulted on. The third column shows the impact of the proposals included in the budget proposals which were consulted upon during November-December. The fourth column shows the changes made following the Local Government Provisional Settlement published in late December 2022 and in response to feedback through the budget engagement and consultation.

Table 2: Current Plan and Revised Budget for 2023/24

	2023/24 Budget Current MTFS	Change to Funding Assumptions	New Budget Increases and Savings (Budget Consultation)	Changes following Provisional Settlement	2023/24 Budget Updated
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Funding:					
Council Tax	456.7			10.0	466.7
Council Tax Collection Fund	4.0			10.1	14.1
Business Rates	76.5	5.3		11.3	93.1
Total Funding	537.2	5.3	0.0	31.4	573.9

	2023/24 Budget Current MTFS	Change to Funding Assumptions	New Budget Increases and Savings (Budget Consultation)	Changes following Provisional Settlement	2023/24 Budget Updated
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Net operating budget 2022/23	520.3				520.3
Directorate Budget Changes					
Existing planned changes	17.2				17.2
New budget increases			37.7	26.5	64.2
New COVID-19 pressures			0.7	0.3	1.0
New savings			-33.8	3.9	-29.9
Subtotal Directorate Changes	17.2		4.6	30.7	52.5
Changes to budgets held centrally	5.0 ²		4.1 ³	7.7 ⁴	16.8
Services Grant				-2.8	-2.8
New Homes Bonus				-1.7	-1.7
Social Care Grant				-11.3	-11.3
Net Operating Budget 2023/24	542.5		8.7	22.6	573.9
Total Funding	537.2	5.3	0.0	31.4	573.9
Budget Deficit	5.3	0.0	8.7	-8.7	0.0

² Planned corporate changes include updates to capital financing costs and interest on balances (+£1.2m), the removal of the one – off assumed funding or the Services Grant and New Homes Bonus (+£7.9m) the removal of a one – off contribution to the Budget Priorities Reserve (-£7.7m) in 2022/23 and other changes to budgeted contributions to/from reserves (+£3.6m).

³ Comprises +£6.0m addition to contingency, less reduction in borrowing costs (-£1.2m) and additional contribution of -£0.7m from the COVID-19 reserve.

⁴ Comprises +£1.2m reinstatement of funding for borrowing costs, +£6.8m budgeted contribution to balances and -£0.3m funding from COVID-19 reserve.

70. Table 3 shows the combined impact of the proposed changes for each directorate and for budgets held centrally.

Table 3: Proposed changes for each directorate and budgets held centrally

	Budget Consultation		Following Consultation					
	Starting Budget Rolled Forward from 2022/23	Add changes in current MTFS	Add new budget increases including new COVID-19 funding	Less new savings	Add new budget increases	Reduce Savings & New Grant Funding	2023/24 Budget	Cash Change in Budget
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	%
Adult Services	213.3	9.7	15.5	-17.5	6.7		227.7	6.8
Children's Services	152.3	5.0	10.9	-3.3	6.2		171.1	12.3
Environment & Place	63.5	1.3	3.8	-4.8	6.6	2.3	72.7	14.5
Public Health & Community Safety	27.3	0.3	0.0	-1.0		0.8	27.4	0.4
Customers, Culture & Corporate Services	64.1	0.9	5.6	-5.5	4.6	0.9	70.6	10.1
Funding for Pay Award and Savings to allocate	0.0	0.0	2.6	-1.6	2.6		3.6	
Directorate Total	520.5	17.2	38.4	-33.8	26.8	4.0	573.1	10.1
Budgets Held Centrally								
Capital Financing Costs	26.1	2.3					28.4	
Interest on Balances	-13.0	-1.1			-2.5		-16.7	
Contingency	1.3	0.0	6.0		1.0		8.3	
Un-ringfenced Specific Grants	-32.4	7.9				-15.8	-40.3	
Insurance	1.4						1.4	
Contribution from COVID-19 Reserve	-8.4	2.1	-0.7		-0.3		-7.3	
Budgeted contributions to General Balances	1.0				5.8		6.8	
Budgeted contributions to reserves	23.8	-6.1		-1.2	2.5	1.2	20.2	
Total Budgets Held Centrally	-0.2	5.0	5.3	1.2	6.5	-14.6	0.8	
Subtotal	520.3	22.2	43.7	-35.0	33.3⁵	-10.7⁶	573.9	10.3

⁵ £19.4m pressures and £13.9m new budget increases (Annex 3a and 3c)

⁶ £5.1m changes to savings (Annex 3b) and £15.8m new grant funding (Services Grant, New Homes Bonus and Social Care Grant).

71. The table shows that the funding for Adult Services will increase by £14.3m (6.8%), Children's Services by £18.7m (12.3%), Environment & Place by £9.2m (14.5%) and Customers, Culture & Corporate Services by £6.4m (10.3%) compared to 2022/23 budgets. CPI inflation was 10.7% in the year to November 2022. The real increases/reductions for each directorate after taking account of inflation are:

	Cash Change in Budget	Real Terms Change in Budget
Adult Services	6.8%	-3.9%
Children's Services	12.3%	1.6%
Environment & Place	14.5%	3.8%
Public Health & Community Safety	0.4%	-10.3%
Customers, Culture & Corporate Services	10.1%	-0.6%
Directorate Total	10.1%	-0.6%

Medium Term Financial Strategy

72. Table 4 on the next page shows the position for 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26, using the assumed council tax increases from the Autumn Statement of 4.99% in each of 2023/24 and 2024/25. An increase of 1.99% is assumed in 2025/26.

Table 4: Medium Term Financial Strategy

	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m
Funding:			
Council Tax	466.7	498.5	517.3
Council Tax Collection Fund	14.1	4.0	4.0
Business Rates	93.1	94.7	96.3
Total Funding	573.9	597.2	617.6
Net operating budget	520.3	573.9	597.3
Directorate Budget Changes			
Existing planned changes	17.2	17.5	20.9
New budget increases	64.2 ⁷	15.5	6.9
New budget increases – demography/inflation		2.0	
New COVID-19 pressures	1.0	-0.4	-0.4
New budget reductions	-29.9 ⁸	-4.4	-0.6
Subtotal Directorate Changes	52.5	30.1	26.7
Changes to budgets held centrally	1.0	-6.8	0.5
Net Operating Budget	573.9	597.2	624.5
Total Funding	573.9	597.2	617.6
Budget Deficit (+) / Surplus (-)	0.0	0.0	+6.8

Changes to Capital Proposals

73. Capital expenditure obtains or improves buildings, vehicles, equipment or other assets owned by the council. The capital programme shows how the Council will use capital expenditure to support the delivery of its priorities.
74. As set out in the report to Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2022, the availability of workforce and materials and inflationary increases in contract prices are increasing the risk to the deliverability and cost of capital schemes.
75. To help address this, a fundamental review of the current capital programme has been undertaken in 2022/23. This review was undertaken against the Council's recently adopted capital prioritisation framework (as set out in the Council's Capital and Investment Strategy). Indicative proposals to utilise funding of £26.2m released through that process were included in the report to Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in

⁷ Comprises the budget increases in Annex 1b of the report to PCSOSC on 9 December 2022 and Annex 3a and 3c of this report.

⁸ Comprises the budget reductions in Annex 1b of the report to PCSOSC on 9 December 2022 and Annex 3b of this report.

December 2022. A further £3.0m relating to climate change priorities is proposed to be funded from the Budget Priority reserve.

Table 5:

Prioritisation Category	OCC Funding (*)	Self – Financing (*)
1: Statutory health & safety & school placements	£15.3m	
2: Generate revenue savings or cost avoidance/reduction	£11.2m – £12.2m	£11m
3: Climate action or active travel	£3.0m	up to £19.6m
Total Council Funding Required	up to £30.5m	up to £30.6m

(*) estimates subject to business cases.

76. As noted in paragraph 57 it is proposed to reinstate revenue funding to support £20m of prudential borrowing. This funding will be added to the capital programme.
77. In December 2022 the council received notification that it had been successful in an application for £5.2m grant funding towards the cost of four homes that would be purchased and adapted for Children We Care For. To utilise all of this funding the council is required to provide match funding of £5.2m. Funding of up to £4.0m was included in the Category 2 proposals in December 2022 so a further £1.2m funding is required to go ahead with all four homes. This is proposed to be funded from the Budget Priority Reserve.
78. £0.7m funding is needed to carry out Category 1 statutory health and safety repair works at Redbridge Waste Recycling Centre.

New Capital Programme Pipeline Proposals

79. Funding of £2.0m is available in the Investment Pump Priming Reserve. £0.2m will be used to provide initial funding to develop plans for the workplace charging levy. £0.8m will be used to provide initial funding for an Energy Efficiency Recycling Fund for OCC Maintained Schools. The remaining £0.8m will be used to provide initial funding for the Low Carbon Business Travel Project (grey fleet).
80. Proposed funding of £0.5m per annum (£1.5m in total from 2023/24 – 2025/26) is included in the revenue budget proposals and will be used to develop transport hubs in locations across Oxfordshire.

Budget Priority Reserve

81. The 2022/23 budget included a £7.7m one – off contribution to the Budget Priorities Reserve. To date £1.4m been agreed to be used as follows:
 - Vision Zero £0.250m
 - Food Strategy £0.250m
 - Low Traffic Neighbourhoods £0.360m
 - Council Tax Hardship Schemes (up to) £0.380m

- Replacement trees on highways £0.185m
82. As noted in paragraphs 74 and 76 is proposed to use £4.2m to fund capital programme pipeline proposals as follows:
- £3.0m to support climate action including tree replacement. The pathway to zero carbon Oxfordshire report recognises a need to plant of 23,000 trees across Oxfordshire by 2050. Between 2015 and 2022 a total of 3,942 highway trees had to be felled as they were at the end of their life, dead or dangerous. These have not been replaced and this funding is to help support the aspirations of the council's tree policy of replacing any tree felled with two new ones.
 - £1.2m to allow the council to unlock the full £5.2m grant offered by government to fund four children's homes.
11. A further £2.3m is proposed to be used to fund the following on a one – off basis:
- £0.5m for the development of community hubs in particular to support children and families through the provision of local services.
 - £1.0m for improvements to highways, cycle-paths and pavements in Oxfordshire on an area by area basis (responding to feedback from the consultation).
 - £0.5m for the further of development of school streets to improve road safety around local schools.
 - £0.1m for further work to develop rail studies
 - £0.2m to continue funding for the Business and Intellectual Property Centre for a further year from 1 April 2023 ahead of identifying on-going funding sources for 2024/25 onwards.
83. £0.6m remaining to support implementation of further initiatives after taking account of £0.8m other funding also available in the reserve.

Business and Budget Planning Process

84. Cabinet will propose their budget on 24 January 2023 taking into account comments from Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2022 and January 2023 as well as feedback from the budget engagement and consultation.
85. Council will meet to agree the Revenue Budget 2023/24; Capital Programme 2022/23 - 2032/33; MTFS 2023/24 - 2025/26 on 14 February 2023.

Risk Management

86. The statutory report of the Chief Financial Officer required under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2002, which forms part of the suite of papers

considered by Council in setting the budget each February, includes a section assessing the key financial risks.

87. In addition to corporate contingency, general balances are also held to ensure that a major incident or emergency can be managed without impacting on other services. The level of balances held is monitored through the Business Management & Monitoring Reports throughout the year and subject to an annual risk assessment undertaken as part of the budget setting process.

Equality & Inclusion and Sustainability Implications

88. The Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on local authorities that, when making decisions of a strategic nature, decision makers must exercise 'due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination... advance equality of opportunity... and foster good relations.'
89. In developing budget proposals, services have considered the potential impact of change with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion, in line with the council's framework "Including Everyone".
90. "Including Everyone" sets out how the council goes further than the protected characteristics in the Equality Act by also considering the impact our decisions might have on people living with social deprivation, rural communities, those leaving care, carers and those in our armed forces community.
91. The Climate Action Framework sets the council's commitment to tackling the climate emergency which is underpinned by the Council's priority to put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work.
92. Overarching summary impact assessments for both climate and equalities, taking into account the overall impact of the revenue budget proposals, are included at Annex 4a and 4b.
93. Following the public consultation, impact assessments will be reviewed and updated as necessary to take into account consultation responses.

Financial implications

94. The Council is required by law to set a balanced budget for 2023/24 before 1 March 2023. Alongside this, there is a requirement under Section 25 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003 for the Chief Finance Officer to prepare a statement on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of reserves. This report is part of the process to achieve these objectives.

Comments checked by:
Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance

Legal implications

95. The Council is required under the Localism Act 2011 to set a council tax requirement for the authority. This report provides information which, when taken together with the previous and future reports up to January 2023, will lead to the council tax requirement being agreed in February 2023, together with a budget for 2023/24, medium term financial strategy covering the period to 2025/26, and ten - year capital programme.
96. The Council has a fiduciary duty to council taxpayers, which means it must consider the prudent use of resources, including control of expenditure, financial prudence in the short and long term, the need to strike a fair balance between the interests of the council taxpayers and ratepayers and the community's interest in adequate and efficient services and the need to act in good faith in relation to compliance with statutory duties and exercising statutory powers.

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant, Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance

Claire Taylor, Corporate Director of Customers, Organisational Development and Resources

Annexes:

- Annex 1 – Budget engagement: feedback from the budget consultation 2023/24
- Annex 2 – Updated Strategic Plan for 2023/24
- Revenue expenditure
 - Annex 3a – changes to revenue pressures following the Autumn Statement
 - Annex 3b – proposed changes to revenue savings
 - Annex 3c – proposed budget increases
- Annex 4a – Overarching Equality Impact Assessment
- Annex 4b – Overarching Climate Impact Assessment

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2023/24 Oxfordshire County Council budget engagement and consultation

1. This report sets out the key findings from Oxfordshire County Council's budget engagement, carried out between 1 August 2022 and 19 December 2022, to support the 2023/24 budget and business planning setting process.
2. Feedback from phases 2 - 4 of the engagement and consultation will be shared as follows:
 - This consultation and engagement annex will be shared with councillors to support the budget setting process at cabinet in January and at full council in February 2023.
 - The report will be published on the council's digital consultation and engagement platform, Let's talk Oxfordshire, with a link to the meetings. This will be supplemented by a 'you said, we did' update on Let's talk Oxfordshire after decisions have been made.
 - A deposit of all consultation responses (suitably redacted to comply with GDPR) will be compiled and made available internally on request.

Executive summary

3. This year, the council's engagement and consultation on the budget has four distinct phases, putting residents' views at the heart of the council's budget and business planning from the start to the finish.
 - Phase one: Maximising the use of existing feedback
 - Phase two: Representative residents' survey
 - Phase three: Oxfordshire conversation events
 - Phase four: Public consultation on the council's 2023/24 budget proposals (18 November to 19 December 2022)

Phase one: maximising the use of existing feedback

4. To support the early stages of the council's budget and business planning process, digests of residents' and stakeholder feedback were compiled, themed by each of the council's nine strategic priorities. These digests were made available to senior officers, alongside a range of other insight, to inform the early stages of development of directorate budget proposals. This insight is historical and not included in this report.

Phase two: representative residents' survey

5. Between 1 August and 26 September 2022, the council undertook a large-scale residents' survey with adults aged 18+. The survey questionnaire covered a range of subjects, including service satisfaction and specific questions on the council's nine strategic priorities, budget and possible council tax levels.
6. The residents' survey was conducted by market research agency Marketing Means, using a postal approach supported by an online survey. In total, 4,900 households were randomly selected to take part and, following two reminders, 1,162 residents responded giving a response rate of 23.9 per cent.

7. Seventy-eight per cent of respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live, with the balance of opinion (net satisfaction) being +68 per cent. This is notably down from the net score of +77 per cent in 2021.
8. Respondents consider the two leading factors in making somewhere a good place to live as health services (51 per cent) and the level of crime (50 per cent). Road and pavement maintenance was selected by 33 per cent of respondents.
9. Perceptions of individual council services vary widely (range 71 per cent - 18 per cent satisfaction). **Road and pavement maintenance** draws the most negative views and is a key focus for improvement in local areas. **Road maintenance** is considered as the most important service we provide in respondents' local areas.
10. **Prioritising the health and wellbeing of residents** is the most popular strategic priority amongst respondents (41 per cent selected in their top two most important priorities), consistent to 2021 (39 per cent) **and play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy** the least (three per cent selected in their top two most important priorities) again consistent to 2021 (two per cent)
11. The two approaches – both of which would be likely to have a direct impact on residents' households - were far less popular, drawing similarly very negative levels of net agreement of -57 per cent and -58 per cent. These were **increasing council tax to generate additional income** and **reducing spending on frontline services**.
12. Findings from the residents' survey show there is little appetite for **council tax increases**. A proposed rise of 4.99 per cent drew a mixed level of agreement, and a net agreement score of -9 per cent. The two larger proposed increases drew significantly more negative views. The balance of opinion (agreement minus disagreement) for a 5.99 per cent increase was -42 per cent and for a 6.99 per cent increase was -56 per cent.

Phase three: Oxfordshire conversations

13. For phase three, between 18 and 21 October, we held three online Oxfordshire Conversation events to engage with residents, share our emerging budget challenges and to give them the chance to ask cabinet members questions about issues that matter to them. An in-person sounding board with children and young people, incorporating an Oxfordshire Conversation, was also held on 15 October.
14. These four events replaced a much fuller programme of in-person and online meetings, which were cancelled following the death of Her Majesty The Queen.
15. Overall, 194 people signed-up to attend the Oxfordshire Conversation events with 122 of these attending. Nearly 100 questions were submitted in advance, with more posed on the day. Highways, travel and transport matters (speed limits, bus services, cycle provision, traffic filters etc) were by far the dominant themes for discussion although a range of other topics were raised.
16. Twenty-eight children and young people attended the sounding board. Travel and transport, home education, support for neurodiversity and youth service were key themes.

Phase four: Public consultation on the council's 2023/24 budget proposals

17. Between 12 noon on 18 November 2022 and 11.59pm on 19 December 2022, the council invited comments on its budget proposals for 2022/23, with a specific focus on its savings proposals. Residents and stakeholders were also signposted to a supporting consultation booklet for background information and to the detailed budget reports published for Performance and Corporate Services Overview Scrutiny Committee. Respondents were encouraged to engage with these detailed supporting documents should they wish.
18. Feedback was primarily collated using an online survey on the council's digital consultation and engagement platform, Let's talk Oxfordshire, with residents and stakeholders also being able to submit comments by email or by letter.
19. In total, the council received **533** completed online survey responses, **0** completed paper surveys (three were sent out) and **26** email responses (multiple submissions from the same person have been grouped as a single response). As was permitted, not everyone answered each question in the online survey and the data in this report focuses on the total number of people who chose to engage with each budget proposal/question.
20. Most people did not give a view on each proposal and instead chose to answer only on those of specific interest to them or simply skipped this section of the survey entirely. The number of respondents engaging on individual savings' proposals ranged from 26 people to 121 people.
21. The savings proposals with the highest engagement were:
 - **Environment and place 24EP13: saving £200,000.** Reduction in the revenue investment needed for the mobilisation of 20mph speed limits. A three-year implementation programme is included in the council's capital programme (121 respondents engaged).
 - **Environment and place 24EP12: saving £2.25 million.** One-off draw down of funding held for the future maintenance of highways in Oxfordshire. This reflects expenditure on highway maintenance associated with development works needing repair over recent years (99 people engaged).
 - **Public health and community safety 24PHCS2: saving £800,000.** Cancel annual contribution to the reserve holding future funding for the replacement of fire appliances on a one-off basis in 2023/24 (98 people engaged).
22. Most savings proposals received a combined higher level of support or neutral views than those against, but as stated above please note that the base size for some is very small.
23. There were 14 exceptions, mostly related to the children's services directorate (10 proposals) focusing on potential staffing reductions, reduction on spend on different types of staffing, recruitment, training, and efficiencies more generally. Two exceptions were for the environment and place directorate, one for culture and corporate services directorate and one was for the public health and community safety directorate.

24. These were:

- **Environment and place 24EP12: saving £2.25 million.** One-off draw down of funding held for the future maintenance of highways in Oxfordshire. This reflects expenditure on highway maintenance associated with development works needing repair over recent years. 57 people against (58 per cent) / 42 people neutral or support (42 per cent)
- **Customers, culture and corporate services 24CCCS26: saving £306,000.** Cultural services (libraries) – reduction in supplies and services expenditure, plus vacancy management. 49 people against (68 per cent) / 23 people neutral or support (32 per cent).
- **Public health and community safety 24PHCS2: saving £800,000.** Cancel annual contribution to the reserve holding future funding for the replacement of fire appliances on a one-off basis in 2023/24. 52 people against (53 per cent) / 46 people neutral or support (47 per cent)
- **Environment and place 24EP15: saving £150,000.** Anticipated increases in on-street parking income. 44 people against (61 per cent) / 28 people neutral or support (39 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS13: saving £240,000.** Children we care for services: reduction in staffing and support costs. 34 people against (77 per cent) / 10 people neutral or support (23 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS16: saving £85,000.** Youth justice and exploitation agency – staffing reduction. 29 people against (74 per cent) / 10 people neutral or support (26 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS5: saving £2 million.** Strengthen the application of thresholds and develop new working practices to safely reduce the number of children the council cares for so activity is more consistent with similar authorities. 28 people against (55 per cent) / 23 people neutral or support (45 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS15: saving £80,000.** Staffing efficiencies in leaving care service within children's social care. 25 people against (64 per cent) / 14 people neutral or support (36 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS21: saving £135,000.** Children with disability team – agency staff reduction. 25 people against (69 per cent) / 11 people neutral or support (31 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS11: saving £67,000.** Efficiencies in early help services within children's social care. 22 people against (61 per cent) / 14 people neutral or support (39 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS23: saving £66,000.** Reduction in funding for project work in children's services. 20 people against (63 per cent) / 12 people neutral or support (37 per cent).

- **Children’s services 24CS22: saving £73,000.** Safeguarding/quality assurance team – agency staff reduction. 18 people against (53 per cent) / 16 people neutral or support (57 per cent).
- **Children’s services 24CS10: saving £113,000.** Efficiencies in education services. 20 people against (56 per cent) / 16 people neutral or support (44 per cent).
- **Children’s services 24CS18: saving £50,000.** Reduction in recruitment and training spend within corporate parenting/countywide services. 15 people against (52 per cent) / 14 people neutral or support (52 per cent).

25. This consultation, alongside the Oxfordshire Conversations, inevitably featured feedback on low traffic neighbourhoods, traffic filters and speed limits, which were hot topics during the consultation period across all the council’s communications channels and are known to divide opinion. Most of the feedback on these issues was overtly negative and critical of the council.

Key findings from representative residents' survey

Introduction

26. Between 1 August and 26 September 2022, the council undertook a large-scale residents' survey with adults aged 18+ to gauge their satisfaction with the council, the services we provide and their local area, as well as asking for opinions on our strategic priorities, how we might make savings and to explore council tax rises.
27. The survey was conducted by market research agency Marketing Means, using a postal approach supported by an online survey. In total, 4,900 households were randomly selected to take part and, following two reminders, 1,162 residents responded giving a response rate of 23.9 per cent.
28. For this report, we are only focusing on the questions relating to service satisfaction, feedback on the council's nine strategic priorities, budget and possible council tax levels. All councillors have had the opportunity to engage with the findings through an optional member briefing on 25 November 2022.

Service satisfaction

29. The survey explored residents' satisfaction with 20 different council services. The list included a mix of universal services (eg waste and recycling, roads and pavement maintenance) and others more specific to certain sub-groups (eg children's education and social care), for which many non-users with little or no experience felt they could not respond and gave a do not know answer.
30. As shown by table 1 below, perceptions of individual council services vary widely (range 71 per cent - 18 per cent satisfaction). Fire and Rescue Service – emergency response draws the highest satisfaction and net satisfaction (total percentage satisfied minus the total percentage dissatisfied). Road and pavement maintenance draws the most negative views.
31. The same question was asked in the council's 2021 residents' survey and only a small number of services showed significantly increased net satisfaction compared with 2021, these were for:
- household waste and recycling centres (+13 percentage points)
 - managing the road network (+five percentage points)
 - parking (+six percentage points)
 - road and transport schemes (+five percentage points).
32. The largest decreases in net satisfaction from 2021 to 2022 were for:
- early years education (birth to four years) (-19 percentage points)
 - countryside services (eg rights of way) (-13 percentage points)
 - fire and rescue service - public safety and road safety advice and support (-11 percentage points)
 - primary education (5 -11 years) (-nine percentage points)
 - trading standards (-ten percentage points)
 - fire and Rescue service - emergency response (-six percentage points)
 - secondary education (over 11 years) (-six percentage points).

Table 1: Satisfaction with county council services (among those could express an opinion)

Service (base totals shown after each service)	% Dissatisfied	% Satisfied	Net % score
Fire and Rescue service - emergency response (862)	7%	71%	+64%
Libraries (879)	9%	67%	+57%
Museums and history service (834)	6%	64%	+57%
Registration of births and deaths, and ceremonies including marriages and citizenship (629)	7%	58%	+51%
Household waste and recycling centres (tips) (1,108)	20%	66%	+47%
Fire and Rescue service - public safety and road safety advice and support (826)	10%	58%	+48%
Primary education (5 -11 years) (592)	15%	54%	+40%
Countryside services (eg rights of way) (993)	18%	55%	+37%
Secondary education (over 11 years) (574)	18%	48%	+31%
Public health (helping people to stay healthy and protecting them from health risk) (899)	20%	43%	+22%
Early years education (birth to 4 years) (526)	22%	39%	+17%
Trading Standards (601)	16%	32%	+16%
Children's social care (protecting and supporting vulnerable children and families) (483)	23%	34%	+12%
Support/care for older people (aged over 65) (666)	30%	35%	+5%
Managing the road network (eg traffic lights, speed limits, traffic and transport) (1,105)	43%	38%	-5%
Support/care for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, and/or mental health problems, general frailty (630)	36%	30%	-5%
Parking (enforcement, controlled parking zones, on-street parking) (1,004)	43%	31%	-12%
Road and transport schemes (eg new or improved junctions, bus lanes, cycle lanes etc.) (1,027)	48%	28%	-20%
Maintenance of pavements (1,114)	61%	22%	-39%
Maintenance of roads (1,132)	71%	19%	-52%

Table 2: Net satisfaction with services (among those could express an opinion)
2021 vs 2022

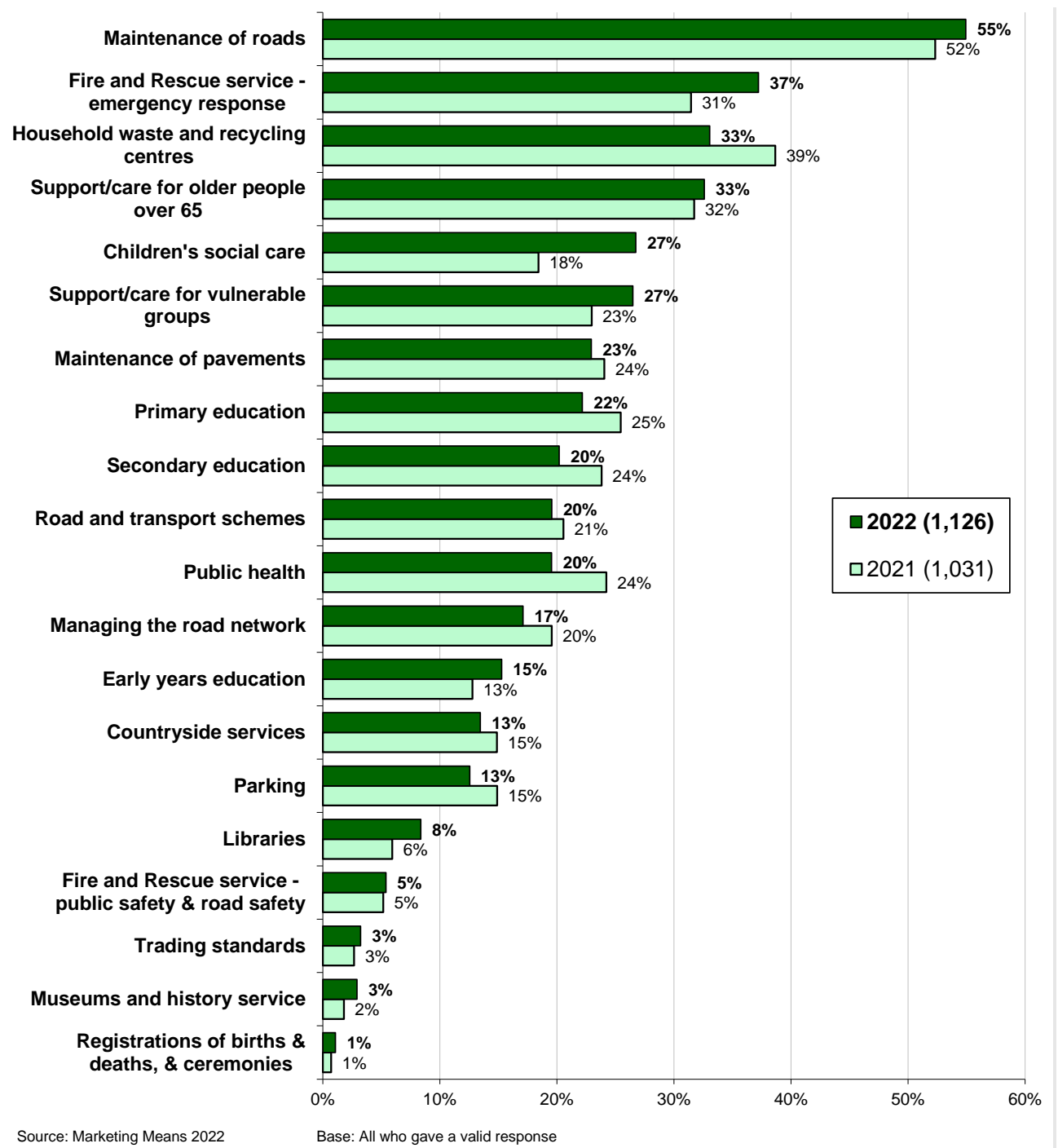
Service (base totals shown after each service, 2021 first, 2022 second)	2021 net % score	2022 net % score
Fire and rescue service - emergency response (767/862)	+70%	+64% ↓
Libraries (787/879)	+53%	+57%
Museums and history service (748/834)	+60%	+57%
Registration of births and deaths, and ceremonies including marriages and citizenship (556/ 629)	+63%	+51% ↓
Household waste and recycling centres (tips) (994/1,108)	+34%	+47% ↑
Fire and rescue service - public safety and road safety advice and support (735/826)	+59%	+48% ↓
Primary education (5 -11 years) (526/592)	+49%	+40% ↓
Countryside services (e.g., rights of way) (884/993)	+50%	+37% ↓
Secondary education (over 11 years) (511/574)	+37%	+31% ↓
Public health (helping people to stay healthy and protecting them from health risk) (799/899)	+25%	+22%
Early years education (birth to 4 years) (465/526)	+36%	+17% ↓
Trading Standards (534/601)	+26%	+16% ↓
Children's social care (protecting and supporting vulnerable children and families) (426/483)	+14%	+12%
Support/care for older people (aged over 65) (593/666)	+4%	+5%
Managing the road network (e.g., traffic lights, speed limits, traffic and transport) (994/1,105)	-10%	-5% ↑
Support/care for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, and/or mental health problems, general frailty (558/630)	-6%	-5%
Parking (enforcement, controlled parking zones, on-street parking) (896/ 1,004)	-18%	-12% ↑
Road and transport schemes (eg new or improved junctions, bus lanes, cycle lanes etc.) (917/1,027)	-25%	-20% ↑
Maintenance of pavements (999/1,114)	-39%	-39%

Service importance

33. When asked which four of the same list of services they felt to be most important for local people in this area, eight of the services were named by at least one in five (20 per cent) of respondents, as shown in chart 1 below which also includes the 2021 findings.

34. By far the most likely to be mentioned as important was **roads maintenance**, selected by 55 per cent of respondents, and which we have already seen was the service that drew the lowest level of satisfaction and net satisfaction.

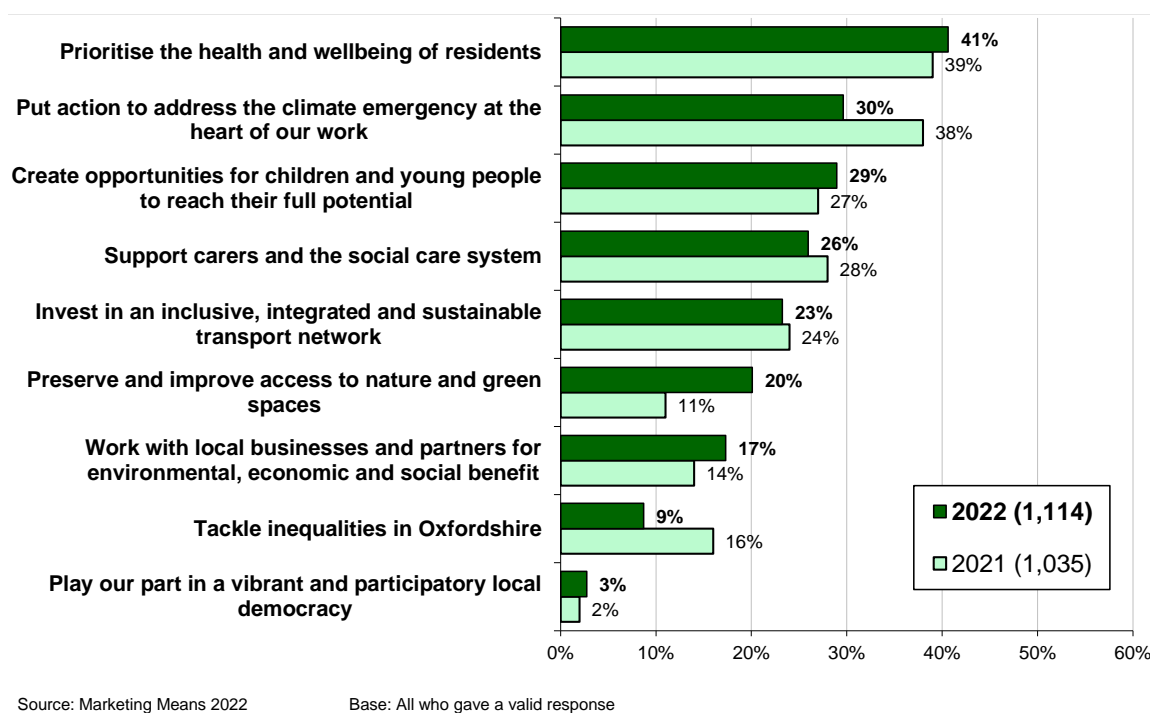
Chart 1: The county council services that respondents perceive are the most important for local people in the local area (option to select up to four)



Council priorities

35. All respondents were asked to read summary notes on the council's nine priority themes and then to select two that they considered to be most important for the council to concentrate on. Chart 2 below (provided by Marketing Means) summarises the results, including comparisons between 2021 and 2022.

Chart 2: Most important priority themes for the council to concentrate on?



36. Prioritising the health and wellbeing of residents is the most popular of the nine strategic priorities amongst respondents (41 per cent), with the reasons given including:

- Need to tackle health and wellbeing / healthcare problem
- More accessible/ faster health care, eg more GPs
- Consider the future / future generations / children are our future
- Healthier society / population has wider / knock on benefits.

37. The next most popular choices were put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of the council's work (30 per cent), creating opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential (29 per cent) and supporting carers and the care system (26 per cent). The only other theme selected by more than one in five respondents was investing in an inclusive, integrated, and sustainable transport network (23 per cent).

38. The largest proportional shift in attitudes towards our priorities between 2021 to 2022 is seen for **preserving and improving access to nature and green spaces**, which has increased significantly from 11 per cent to 20 per cent (although it should be noted that the wording in 2021 referred only to "Improving access to nature and green spaces").

39. The largest proportional decreases since 2021 were for **tackling inequalities in Oxfordshire**, which has fallen from 16 per cent to nine per cent, and for **put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work**, declining from 38 per cent to 30 per cent.

40. Based on the same summary notes on nine different council priorities, respondents were also asked to indicate which two themes they felt were the least important for the council to concentrate on and the most frequently selected priority was **play our part in a vibrant local democracy** (55 per cent).

41. The reasons for this included:

- Council can't or shouldn't affect change / individuals or other bodies should focus on priority instead / Council doesn't have responsibility.
- Priorities aren't as pressing or already underway / should be dealt with after other priorities.
- More important areas of life to get involved with than politics / disengagement from politics.
- Democracy strong / not needing improvement.

42. Table 1 below (provided by Marketing Means) summarises the most important priorities and least important priorities side by side.

Table 3: Most and least important priority themes for the council to concentrate on

	% considered most important (1,114)	% considered least important (941)
Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents	41%	4%
Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work	30%	22%
Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential	29%	7%
Support carers and the social care system	26%	3%
Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network	23%	19%
Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces	20%	18%
Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit	17%	26%
Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire	9%	31%
Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy	3%	55%

Budget engagement

43. To preface the budget engagement section of the questionnaire, respondents were given a brief explanation of the financial challenges that the council faces (using information that was available at the time) and asked how much they agreed or

disagreed with each of a list of nine possible approaches that the council suggested it could take to make savings / generate income.

44. Table 4 below (provided by Marketing Means) summarises the results and shows the feedback split into three groups.

Table 4: Net agreement with different approaches that the council could take to make savings or generate income

Approach (base totals shown after each)	Total % disagree	Total % agree	Net % agreement
Generate additional income by maximising the use of buildings and land the council owns (our assets) (1,109)	3%	86%	+83%
Reduce costs by using digital technology to deliver services more efficiently (1,098)	10%	72%	+61%
Reduce the costs of the contracts we use to provide services (1,105)	11%	64%	+53%
Reduce staffing costs by redesigning services, using fewer agency staff and/or holding vacancies (1,109)	14%	62%	+49%
Use the council's financial reserves (money set aside for unexpected events), to provide one-off funding (1,103)	23%	41%	+18%
Reduce spending on services the council is not legally required to provide (1,089)	24%	38%	+14%
Generate additional income from sales, fees, and charges (1,083)	26%	38%	+11%
Reduce spending on frontline services (1,102)	66%	10%	-56%
Generate additional income by increasing council tax (1,113)	70%	13%	-57%

45. The four most popular approaches drawing net support (total percentage agree minus total percentage disagree) of nearly +50 per cent or higher were:

- Generate additional income by maximising the use of buildings and land the council owns (our assets) (+83 per cent net agreement).
- Reduce costs by using digital technology to deliver services more efficiently (+61 per cent net agreement).
- Reduce the costs of the contracts we use to provide services (+53 per cent net agreement).
- Reduce staffing costs by redesigning services, using fewer agency staff and/or holding vacancies (+49 per cent net agreement).

46. Three approaches drew more mixed views, and a modest net agreement. These were:

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- Using the council's financial reserves (+18 per cent net agreement).
- Reducing spending on services that do not legally need to be provided (+14 per cent net agreement).
- Generating more income from sales, fees and charges (+11 per cent net agreement).

47. By far the least palatable approaches were:

- Reduce spending on frontline services (-56 per cent net agreement).
- Generate additional income by increasing council tax (-57 per cent net agreement).

48. When respondents were asked to suggest other ways in which the council could save money and/or generate income very few people chose to put forward an idea. None were mentioned by more than four per cent of respondents.

30. Some of the comments reflected or built on some of the nine approaches set out in the previous question, eg different ways of making more efficient use of staff with some possible staffing cuts, cutting back on any non-essential spending, selling off assets, and improving contractors or bringing services back in-house.

49. Just over one per cent put forward suggestions related to the need to invest in some services/ activities now to avoid more expensive consequences in future, with examples including preventing fly tipping or maintaining home visits by carers.

50. Focusing specifically on council tax, respondents were provided with supporting information and asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the council should consider increases of 4.99, 5.99 or 6.99 per cent to help fund adult social care and other key services.

51. All three suggested levels drew general disagreement and, as shown by table 5 below, net agreement scores of -9 per cent, -42 per cent and -56 per cent respectively. A third of respondents agreed with the idea of a 4.99 per cent increase. Some of the most frequent comments supporting people's views related to how current cost of living pressures and/or the already high level of council tax meant that council tax should not be increased, but others accepted that a rise was inevitable to help the council address a shortfall in funding, especially if the money raised is ringfenced for specific uses.

Table 5: Net support for possible council tax increases the council could consider to help fund adult social care and other services

Levels of increase in council tax (base totals shown after each)	% disagree	% agree	% don't know	Net % agreement
4.99 per cent increase , which is equal to an additional £82.42 per year or £1.59 per week in council tax on a Band D property (1,103)	43%	34%	6%	-9%
5.99 per cent increase , which is equal to an additional £98.93 per year or £1.90 per week in council tax on a Band D property (1,074)	59%	17%	6%	-42%
6.99 per cent increase , which is equal to an additional £115.45 per year or £2.22 per week in council tax on a Band D property (1,078)	68%	12%	6%	-56%

Phase 3: Oxfordshire Conversations and sounding board

52. Between 18 and 21 October, the council held three online Oxfordshire Conversation events to engage with residents, share our emerging budget challenges and to give them the chance to ask cabinet members questions about issues that matter to them. An in-person sounding board with children and young people, incorporating an Oxfordshire Conversation, was also held on 15 October.

53. These four events replaced a much fuller programme of in-person and online meetings, which were cancelled following the death of Her Majesty The Queen.

Oxfordshire Conversations feedback

54. Overall, 194 people signed-up to attend the Oxfordshire Conversation events with 122 of these attending. Nearly 100 questions were submitted in advance, with more posed on the day. Highways, travel and transport matters (speed limits, bus services, cycle provision, traffic filters etc) were by far the dominant themes for discussion. A range of other topics were raised also raised including budget, cost of living, climate action, the impact of COVID-19 on young people and planning matters. Many of the questions were very detailed and had multiple points a number were outside the remit of the council.

55. The events were lively and representatives from the Cabinet responded to the questions posed. Work continues to provide answers to unanswered questions.

Sounding board feedback

56. Twenty-eight children and young people attended the sounding board who were from a range of different areas and backgrounds. The young people were provided with the opportunity to feedback to councillors the issues that are important to them.

57. Diagram one summarising the feedback as captured by the graphic facilitator on the day. Travel and transport were key issues mentioned including mention of low traffic neighbourhoods, 20 mph speed limits, transport to school and access to bus services (particularly in rural areas) a recurring theme. Home education, support for neurodiversity and youth service were also mentioned.

Diagram 1: Key issues for young people expressed at the sounding board



Phase 4: budget proposals consultation

Executive summary

Approach

58. Between 12-noon on 18 November 2022 and 19 December 2022, the council invited comments on its budget proposals for 2022/23, with a specific focus on its savings proposals. Residents and stakeholders were also signposted to a supporting consultation booklet for background information and to the detailed budget reports published for Performance and Corporate Services Overview Scrutiny Committee. Respondents were encouraged to engage with these detailed supporting documents should they wish.

59. Feedback was primarily collated using an online survey on the council's digital consultation and engagement platform, Let's Talk Oxfordshire, with residents and stakeholders also being able to submit comments by email or by letter.

60. The budget consultation was actively promoted to a wide range of audiences using multiple channels (media briefing and news story on the county council website, social media and other digital platforms including paid for advertising) and to staff, councillors, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action and Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to help them spread the word to their contacts.
61. Promotional posters were distributed to libraries, town and parish councils, community centres, children's centres and village halls and the budget consultation appeared three times in Your Oxfordshire, the council's direct e-newsletter.
62. The social media posts stimulated some comments, related to traffic and transport matters including 20mph zones, traffic schemes generally, low traffic neighbourhoods, bus gates and traffic filters. Others took time to comment that the council wastes money, that engagement in consultation is ignored and other matters not related to this exercise. Where genuine questions were raised, we responded to clarify any misunderstandings and provide helpful information.
63. When respondents were asked how they found about this consultation (multiple responses were permitted), a direct email from the council (214 mentions) and Facebook were by far the most frequently mentioned channels.
64. In total, the council received **533** completed online survey responses, **0** completed paper surveys (3 were sent out) and **26** email responses (multiple submissions from the same person have been grouped as a single response). As was permitted, not everyone answered each question in the online survey and the data in this report focuses on the total number of people who chose to engage with each budget proposal/question.
65. Ninety-five per cent of survey respondents (506) identified themselves as Oxfordshire residents and two respondents said they were members of the public living elsewhere. The remainder five per cent (25) identified as stakeholders: district, city or county councillors, parish or town councillors or representatives, business representatives, council employees, groups/organisations or as another type of stakeholder.
66. Collectively these respondents are referred to as stakeholders in the report and key (as opposed to residents). A breakdown of who responded to the survey is shown in table 6 below and a detailed respondent profile is set out later in this section of the report. A summary of the responses to the survey for councillors, businesses and groups/organisations is also provided later on in this section of the report.

Table 6: How people responded

	Number
As an Oxfordshire resident	506
As a member of the public living elsewhere	2
As a parish meeting representative, parish councillor or town councillor	3
As a county council employee	11
As a county councillor	2

As a district or city councillor	1
As a representative of a business	1
As a representative of a group or organisation	5
Other	2
Base: All respondents (533)	

Views on savings proposals

67. The survey gave people the opportunity to give their views on 62 of the savings proposals put forward the council, which were segmented by directorate. For the savings proposals presented, respondents were invited to express if they supported, were against or were neutral towards each and give comments. The distribution of engagement by directorate is shown in table 5.

68. To provide context this section of the survey was prefaced provided before about the current status of the of council's finances, stating that we had yet to work through the implications of the government's autumn statement announced on 17 November and the local government settlement expected in mid-December.

Table 5: Distribution of engagement with directorate's savings proposals

Directorate	Number of proposals presented	Number of people commenting
Adult services	11	93
Children's services	19	101
Environment and place	11	215
Public health and community safety	1	98
Customers, culture and corporate services	15	125
Other corporate services	5	96
Base: All commenting on one of more savings proposal (318)		

Summary of findings

69. Most people did not give a view on each proposal and instead chose to answer only on those of specific interest to them or simply skipped this section of the survey entirely. The number of respondents engaging on individual savings' proposals ranged from 26 people to 121 people.

70. The savings proposals with the highest engagement were:

- **Environment and place 24EP13: saving £200,000.** Reduction in the revenue investment needed for the mobilisation of 20mph speed limits. A three-year implementation programme is included in the council's capital programme (121 respondents engaged).
- **Environment and place 24EP12: saving £2.25 million.** One-off draw down of funding held for the future maintenance of highways in Oxfordshire. This reflects

expenditure on highway maintenance associated with development works needing repair over recent years (99 people engaged).

- **Public health and community safety 24PHCS2: saving £800,000.** Cancel annual contribution to the reserve holding future funding for the replacement of fire appliances on a one-off basis in 2023/24 (98 people engaged).

71. Most savings proposals received a combined higher level of support or neutral views than those against, but as stated above please note that the base size for some is very small.

72. There were 14 exceptions, mostly related to the children's services directorate (10 proposals) focusing on potential staffing reductions, reduction on spend on different types of staffing, recruitment, training, and efficiencies more generally. Two exceptions were for the environment and place directorate, one for culture and corporate services directorate and one was for the public health and community safety directorate.

73. These were:

- **Environment and place 24EP12: saving £2.25 million.** One-off draw down of funding held for the future maintenance of highways in Oxfordshire. This reflects expenditure on highway maintenance associated with development works needing repair over recent years. 57 people against (58 per cent) / 42 people neutral or support (42 per cent)
- **Customers, culture and corporate services 24CCCS26: saving £306,000.** Cultural services (libraries) – reduction in supplies and services expenditure, plus vacancy management. 49 people against (68 per cent) / 23 people neutral or support (32 per cent).
- **Public health and community safety 24PHCS2: saving £800,000.** Cancel annual contribution to the reserve holding future funding for the replacement of fire appliances on a one-off basis in 2023/24. 52 people against (53 per cent) / 46 people neutral or support (47 per cent)
- **Environment and place 24EP15: saving £150,000.** Anticipated increases in on-street parking income. 44 people against (61 per cent) / 28 people neutral or support (39 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS13: saving £240,000.** Children we care for services: reduction in staffing and support costs. 34 people against (77 per cent) / 10 people neutral or support (23 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS16: saving £85,000.** Youth justice and exploitation agency – staffing reduction. 29 people against (74 per cent) / 10 people neutral or support (26 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS5: saving £2 million.** Strengthen the application of thresholds and develop new working practices to safely reduce the number of children the council cares for so activity is more consistent with similar

authorities. 28 people against (55 per cent) / 23 people neutral or support (45 per cent).

- **Children's services 24CS15: saving £80,000.** Staffing efficiencies in leaving care service within children's social care. 25 people against (64 per cent) / 14 people neutral or support (36 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS21: saving £135,000.** Children with disability team – agency staff reduction. 25 people against (69 per cent) / 11 people neutral or support (30 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS11: saving £67,000.** Efficiencies in early help services within children's social care. 22 people against (61 per cent) / 14 people neutral or support (39 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS23: saving £66,000.** Reduction in funding for project work in children's services. 20 people against (63 per cent) / 12 people neutral or support (37 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS22: saving £73,000.** Safeguarding/quality assurance team – agency staff reduction. 18 people against (53 per cent) / 16 people neutral or support (47 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS10: saving £113,000.** Efficiencies in education services. 20 people against (56 per cent) / 16 people neutral or support (44 per cent).
- **Children's services 24CS18: saving £50,000.** Reduction in recruitment and training spend within corporate parenting/countywide services. 15 people against (52 per cent) / 14 people neutral or support (48 per cent).

74. Some people chose to give comments to support their views, others did not. In total, 302 respondents commented on one of more savings proposal. At the end of each directorate budget proposals section, respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments on any of other budget proposals including proposed budget increases. In total, 257 respondents made comments in this section as shown in table 6 below.

Table 6: Number of people commenting on other budget proposals by directorate

Directorate	Number of people commenting
Adult services	120
Children's services	105
Environment and place	146
Public health and community safety	42
Customers, culture and corporate services	90
Other corporate services	42
Base: All commenting on one of more other directorate budget proposals (257)	

Views on savings proposals presented for adult services

75. Eleven proposals were presented for detailed views for the adult social care directorate and the sentiment towards each is shown in chart 3. The number of people engaging with different proposals was low ranging from 34 to 53 with people most engaging with saving proposal 24AD3 (53 people engaged) and savings proposal 24AD4 (52 people engaged).

Chart 3: views on savings proposals presented for adult services



76. For all the adult social care directorate savings proposals presented, the majority of people were supportive or neutral towards each of the proposals presented as opposed to against.
77. The following proposals were supported outright by the small number of people who engaged ranging from 64 per cent to 53 per cent agreement:
- **24AD12: saving £1.75 million.** Work with residents, the voluntary sector, health partners and community groups to deliver The Oxfordshire Way. This means that people will be enabled to live healthy lives in their own homes for as long as possible. We will ensure that people do not enter into residential care when there is a better outcome that they could achieve by accessing equipment, technology or Extra Care Housing. 25 people support (64 per cent) / 4 people neutral (10 per cent) and 10 people against (26 per cent)
 - **24AD5: saving £1.81 million.** Population changes: the impact of the Oxfordshire Way – our approach to helping people live healthy lives in their own homes for as long as possible – on improved outcomes for people means reductions in demand for services are expected to continue in 2023/24 and beyond. 23 people support (58 per cent) / 5 people neutral (13 per cent) and 12 people against (30 per cent)
 - **24AD11: saving £460,000.** Ensure that residents in need of support are offered solutions that are proportionate to their needs and keep them at the heart of their communities, by offering them opportunities in extra care housing instead of residential care. 20 people support (54 per cent) / 5 people neutral (14 per cent) and 12 people against (32 per cent)
 - **24AD6: saving £65,000 from 2024/25.** Maximise the use of supported living accommodation within Oxfordshire so that people are able to remain close to home. 20 people support (53 per cent) / 7 people neutral (18 per cent) and 11 people against (29 per cent).
78. Only one proposal had proportionally more responses against the proposal (23) than actively support (19) and this was **24AD4 (the council is committed to supporting people to live independent healthy lives in their own homes. Our programme of reviewing care packages will ensure that residents are supported to maximise all the opportunities that are available to them in the community to achieve better outcomes).**
79. Of those people who expressed a wide range of points including questioning the achievability of the saving and being generally concerned about service reductions and the impact on people. Some people felt this proposal was too vague and not properly explained.
80. Another proposal had an equal number of responses supporting (19) as against the proposal (19). This was 24AD3 (Due to a national shortage of qualified social workers and occupational therapists, recruitment into operational social work teams can take time. Adult services is launching a refreshed approach to recruitment, including investment in new professional leadership and development roles specifically the principal social worker and principal occupational therapist. As this approach is

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embedded there is expected to be a one-off saving in 2023/24 while vacancies are filled).

81. Sixteen people provided supporting comments, to explain why they were against this saving. Only one common theme emerged, shared by five people. This was that they wanted the new recruitment process to be geared towards frontline staff (not senior staff). Again, some people felt this proposal was too vague and not properly explained.
82. The number of comments people made to support their views on each savings proposal is shown in table 7. The detailed comments will be available on deposit for all councillors to read.

Table 7: summary of engagement with adult social care savings proposals presented

Saving	Response	Comment
24AD3: Due to a national shortage of qualified social workers and occupational therapists, recruitment into operational social work teams can take time. Adult services is launching a refreshed approach to recruitment, including investment in new professional leadership and development roles specifically the principal social worker and principal occupational therapist. As this approach is embedded there is expected to be a one-off saving in 2023/24 while vacancies are filled.	53	42
24AD4: The council is committed to supporting people to live independent healthy lives in their own homes. Our programme of reviewing care packages will ensure that residents are supported to maximise all the opportunities that are available to them in the community to achieve better outcomes.	52	42
24AD5: Population changes: the impact of the Oxfordshire Way – our approach to helping people live healthy lives in their own homes for as long as possible – on improved outcomes for people means reductions in demand for services are expected to continue in 2023/24 and beyond.	40	21
24AD6: Maximise the use of supported living accommodation within Oxfordshire so that people are able to remain close to home.	38	21
24AD7: Shared Lives - increase the number of people who can find a home through the shared lives scheme. Build further on the success of the service to provide options for respite for a wider range of individuals.	34	16
24AD10: Fund more prevention activities through the Better Care Fund to meet the shared priorities of the health and social care system.	36	19
24AD11: Ensure that residents in need of support are offered solutions that are proportionate to their needs and keep them at the heart of their communities, by offering them opportunities in extra care housing instead of residential care.	37	16
24AD12: Work with residents, the voluntary sector, health partners, and community groups to deliver The Oxfordshire Way. This means that people will be enabled to live healthy lives in their own homes for as long as possible. We will ensure that people do not enter into residential care when there is a better outcome that they could achieve by accessing equipment, technology, or Extra Care Housing.	39	22
24AD13: The Oxfordshire health and social care system is dedicated to supporting people to return home to continue their recovery after a period of hospital-based care. The council will work with system partners to ensure that where people do require a period of bed-based recovery in a nursing home or community hospital, they are supported to return home as quickly as possible. This is by accessing the full range of statutory and voluntary services that can support people to remain independent and healthy in their own homes.	45	28
24AD14: Interim care pathway flats - pilot opportunity to use a small number of flats in new extra care schemes for hospital discharge.	38	18
24AD16: Use public health reserve on a one-off basis in 2023/24 to fund eligible adult social care expenditure.	40	26
Other comments		120
Total respondents for directorate	93	169

Views on other adult social care budget proposals

83. All respondents were given the opportunity to comment on any other budget proposals for adult social care and 120 people chose to do so. Most could not be grouped into themes but where possible:
- 12 people said the council should maintain or increase adult services spend and/or services.
 - 10 people suggested the council consider staffing costs and structure to improve value.

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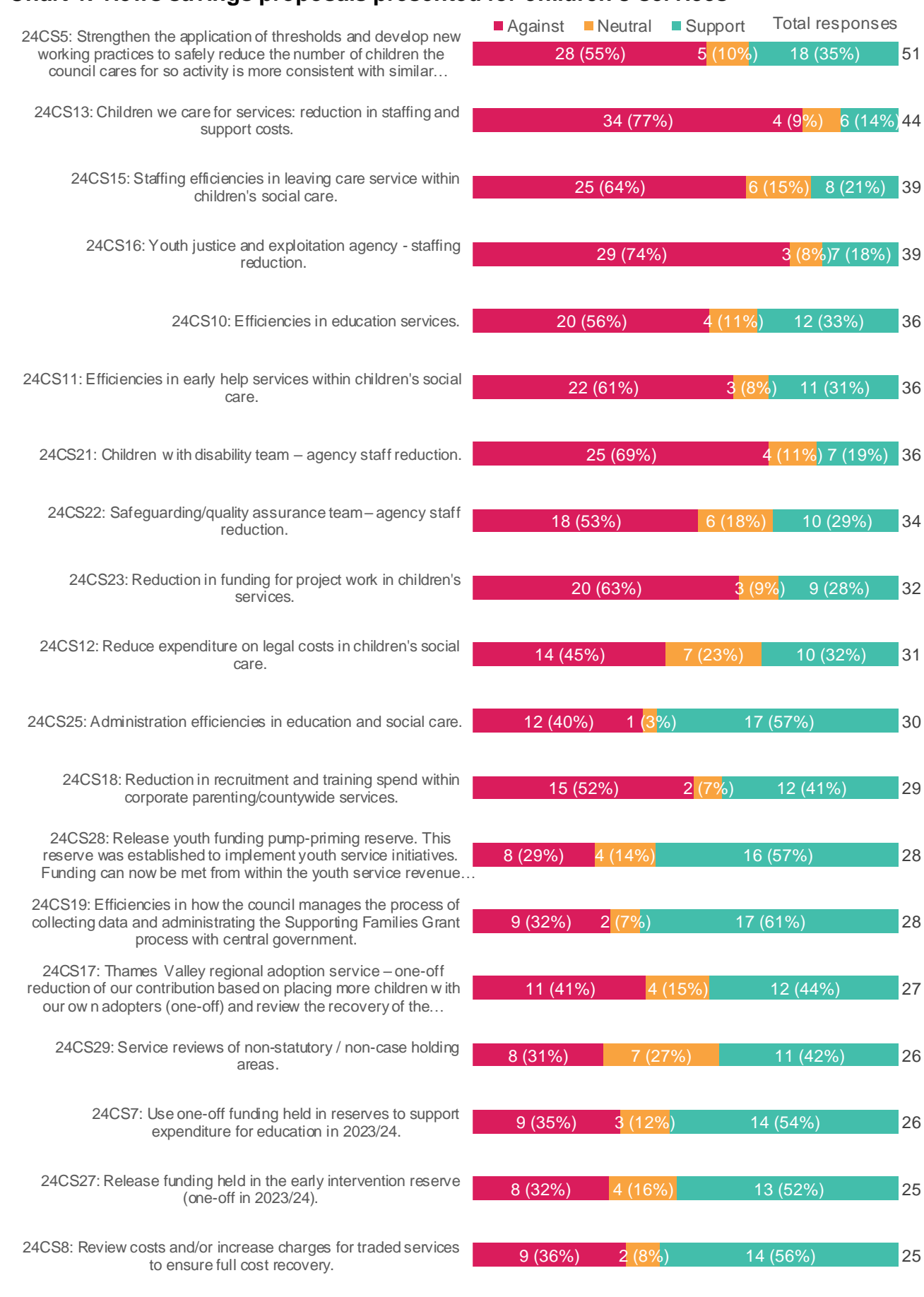
- Five people said the council should increase council tax to fund adult social care.
- Six people noted the importance of the voluntary and community sector in supporting council services.
- Five people were surprised to learn that adult social care makes up such a large proportion of the council's budget.

84. Although not relevant to the question, 17 people used the space to express disagreement with the council's traffic management measures.

Views on children's services savings proposals

85. Nineteen proposals were presented for detailed views for the children's services directorate and the sentiment towards each is shown in chart 4. The number of people commenting on different proposals was low ranging from 26 to 51, with people most engaging with savings proposals 24CS5 (51 people engaged) followed by 24CS13 (44 people engaged).

Chart 4: views savings proposals presented for children's services



86. For children's services directorate savings proposals presented:

- Five savings proposals were supported outright by the small number of people who engaged ranging from 61 per cent to 52 per cent support
- Nine had more people supportive or neutral towards them rather than against
- Ten savings proposals had a majority of respondents against them, from the small number of people who engaged ranging from 52 per cent to 77 per cent against

87. The following proposals were supported outright:

- **24CS19: saving £120,000.** Efficiencies in how the council manages the process of collecting data and administrating the Supporting Families Grant process with central government. 17 people support (61 per cent) / two people neutral (seven per cent) and nine people against (32 per cent).
- **24CS28: saving £500,000.** Release youth funding pump-priming reserve. This reserve was established to implement youth service initiatives. Funding can now be met from within the youth service revenue budget (one-off in 2023/24). 16 people support (57 per cent) / four people neutral (14 per cent) and eight people against (29 per cent).
- **24CS7: saving £60,000.** Use one-off funding held in reserves to support expenditure for education in 2023/24. 14 people support (54 per cent) / three people neutral (12 per cent) and nine people against (35 per cent).
- **24CS8: saving £95,000. Review costs and/or increase charges for traded services to ensure full cost recovery.** 14 people support (56 per cent) / two people neutral (eight per cent) and nine people against (36 per cent).
- **24CS27: saving £200,000.** Release funding held in the early intervention reserve (one-off in 2023/24). 13 people support (52 per cent) / four people neutral (16 per cent) and eight people against (32 per cent).

88. The ten savings proposals which had a majority of respondents against them ranging from 52 per cent to 77 per cent against were:

- **24CS13: saving £240,000.** Children we care for services: reduction in staffing and support costs. 34 people against (77 per cent) / 10 people neutral or support (23 per cent).
- **24CS16: saving £85,000.** Youth justice and exploitation agency – staffing reduction. 29 people against (74 per cent) / 10 people neutral or support (26 per cent).
- **24CS5: saving £2 million.** Strengthen the application of thresholds and develop new working practices to safely reduce the number of children the council cares for so activity is more consistent with similar authorities. 28 people against (55 per cent) / 23 people neutral or support (45 per cent).

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- **24CS15: saving £80,000.** Staffing efficiencies in leaving care service within children's social care. 25 people against (64 per cent) / 14 people neutral or support (36 per cent).
- **24CS21: saving £135,000.** Children with disability team – agency staff reduction. 25 people against (69 per cent) / 11 people neutral or support (30 per cent).
- **24CS11: saving £67,000.** Efficiencies in early help services within children's social care. 22 people against (61 per cent) / 14 people neutral or support (39 per cent).
- **24CS23: saving £66,000.** Reduction in funding for project work in children's services. 20 people against (63 per cent) / 12 people neutral or support (37 per cent).
- **24CS22: saving £73,000.** Safeguarding/quality assurance team – agency staff reduction. 18 people against (53 per cent) / 16 people neutral or support (47 per cent).
- **24CS10: saving £113,000.** Efficiencies in education services. 20 people against (56 per cent) / 16 people neutral or support (44 per cent).
- **24CS18: saving £50,000.** Reduction in recruitment and training spend within corporate parenting/countywide services. 15 people against (48 per cent) / 14 people neutral or support (52 per cent).

89. There were commonalities across in the comments expressed across all the savings proposals for children's services. People who explained why they had said they were against individual savings, simply thought that these were not a good idea, a false economy. Some people felt these proposals were too vague and lacked evidence to enable meaningful comment others felt the children's services was already underfunded and needs more investment.

90. The number of comments people made to support their views on each savings proposal is shown in table 8. The detailed comments will be available on deposit for all councillors to read.

Table 8: summary of engagement with adult social care savings proposals presented

Saving	Response	Comment
24CS5: Strengthen the application of thresholds and develop new working practices to safely reduce the number of children the council cares for so activity is more consistent with similar authorities.	51	43
24CS7: Use one-off funding held in reserves to support expenditure for education in 2023/24.	26	13
24CS8: Review costs and/or increase charges for traded services to ensure full cost recovery.	25	12
24CS10: Efficiencies in education services.	36	27
24CS11: Efficiencies in early help services within children's social care.	36	26
24CS12: Reduce expenditure on legal costs in children's social care.	31	19
24CS13: Children we care for services: reduction in staffing and support costs.	44	33
24CS15: Staffing efficiencies in leaving care service within children's social care.	39	28
24CS16: Youth justice and exploitation agency - staffing reduction.	39	28

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24CS17: Thames Valley regional adoption service – one-off reduction of our contribution based on placing more children with our own adopters (one-off) and review the recovery of the council's overheads as hosts of the regional adoption agency.	27	15
24CS18: Reduction in recruitment and training spend within corporate parenting/countywide services.	29	15
24CS19: Efficiencies in how the council manages the process of collecting data and administering the Supporting Families Grant process with central government.	28	15
24CS21: Children with disability team – agency staff reduction.	36	26
24CS22: Safeguarding/quality assurance team – agency staff reduction.	34	21
24CS23: Reduction in funding for project work in children's services.	32	18
24CS25: Administration efficiencies in education and social care.	30	18
24CS27: Release funding held in the early intervention reserve (one-off in 2023/24).	25	9
24CS28: Release youth funding pump-priming reserve. This reserve was established to implement youth service initiatives. Funding can now be met from within the youth service revenue budget (one-off in 2023/24).	28	13
24CS29: Service reviews of non-statutory / non-case holding areas.	26	12
Other comments		105
Total respondents for directorate	101	162

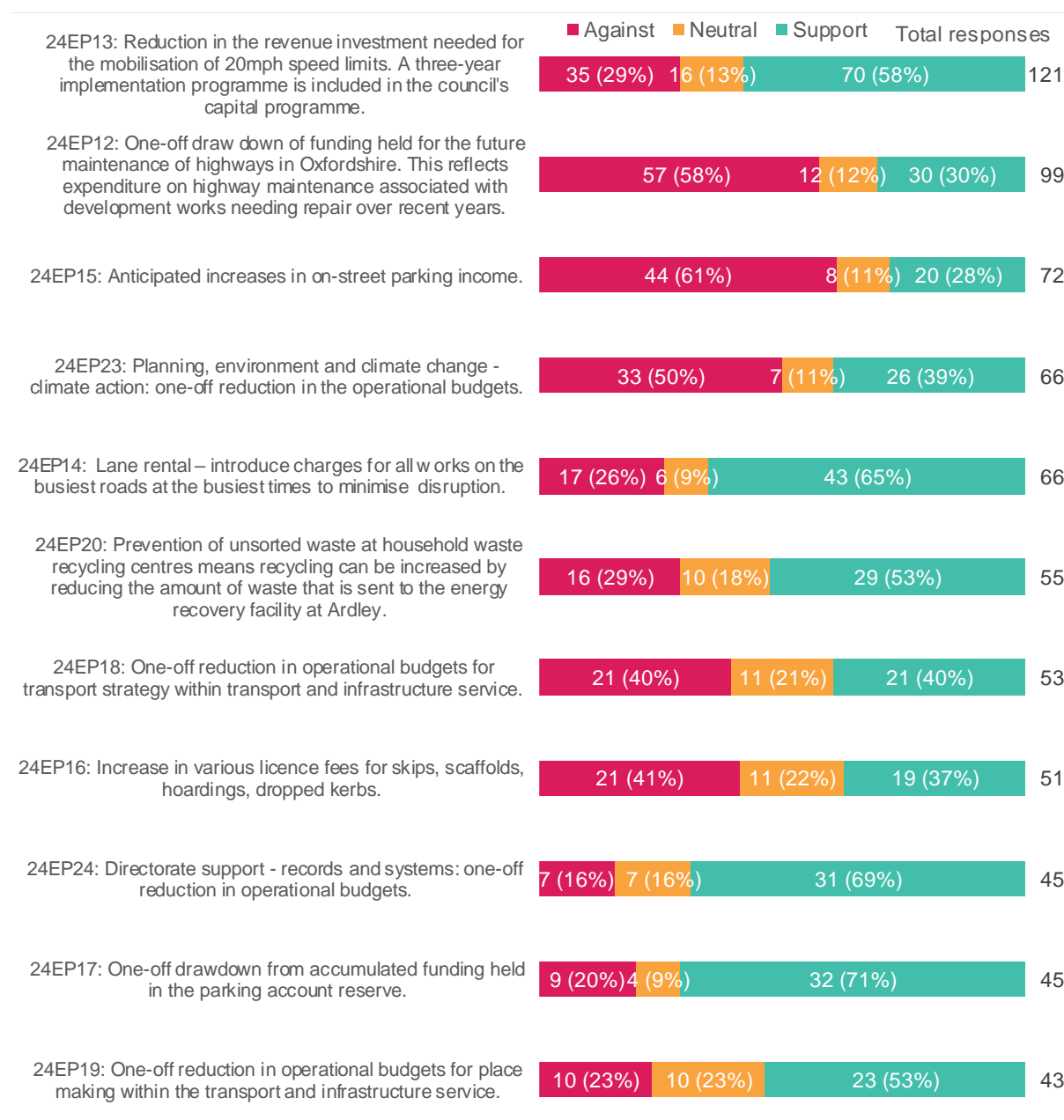
Other views on children's services budget proposals

91. All respondents were given the opportunity to comment on any other budget proposals for children's social care and 105 people chose to do so. Overall, there were 43 comments calling for children's services to be properly funded and resourced such as, "We cannot take chances with our children's wellbeing."
92. Most other comments could not be grouped into themes and when they could they were for less than five people.
93. Although not relevant to the question, 15 people used the space to express disagreement with the council's traffic management measures.

Views on environment and place savings proposals presented

94. Eleven proposals were presented for detailed views for the environment and place directorate and the sentiment towards each is shown in chart 5. The number of people commenting on different proposals was low ranging from 43 to 121, with people most engaging with savings proposals 24 EP13 (121 people engaged) followed by 24EP12 (99 people engaged).
95. For environment and place directorate savings proposals presented:
- Six savings proposals were supported outright by the small number of people who engaged ranging from 69 per cent to 53 per cent support.
 - Eight had more people supportive or neutral towards them rather than against.
 - Opinions on two savings proposals was finely balanced with the same or nearly the proportions of engaged respondents for and against.
 - Two savings proposals had a majority of respondents against them, from the small number of people who engaged ranging from 52 per cent to 77 per cent against.

Chart 5: views on savings proposals presented for environment and place



96. More people engaged with savings proposals 24 EP13 (121 people) and 24EP12 (99 people engaged) than any other savings proposals in the consultation.

97. **For 24EP13: saving £200,000. Reduction in the revenue investment needed for the mobilisation of 20mph speed limits. A three-year implementation programme is included in the council's capital programme:** A majority supported this savings proposal, but a review of the comments indicate 84 of the 101 people who gave comments were negative towards the implementation of the 20mph scheme in the county generally. They wanted the scheme to be discontinued saying that it creates more pollution and traffic and that it was not possible to police/enforce. It was felt that more efficiencies could be made by the removal of the implementation of the scheme as a whole.

98. The remaining comments were neutral or supportive in tone. They were supportive of the idea of 20mph areas. However, this was caveated that it should be implemented in areas of most need such as around schools or high pedestrian areas. In addition, some mentioned that that the scheme should be paused while we are in a national time of financial crisis and that money needs to be spent on other areas for now.

99. **For 24EP13: saving £200,000. Reduction in the revenue investment needed for the mobilisation of 20mph speed limits. A three-year implementation programme is included in the council's capital programme:** A majority supported this savings proposal, but a review of the comments indicate 84 of the 101 people who gave comments were negative towards the implementation of the 20mph scheme. They wanted the scheme to be discontinued saying that it creates more pollution and traffic and that it was not possible to police/enforce. Generally, it was felt that more could be made by the removal of the implementation of the scheme as a whole.

100. The remaining comments were neutral or supportive in tone. They were supportive of the idea of 20mph areas. However, this was caveated that it should be implemented in areas of most need such as around schools or high pedestrian areas. In addition, some mentioned that that the scheme should be paused while we are in a national time of financial crisis and that money needs to be spent on other areas for now.

101. **For 24EP12: saving £2.25 million. One-off draw down of funding held for the future maintenance of highways in Oxfordshire. This reflects expenditure on highway maintenance associated with development works needing repair over recent years** – a majority were against this savings proposal - a majority were against this savings proposal, but a review of the comments indicate that it is because people want investment in the highways. 41 of the 99 people who gave comments were critical of the state of Oxfordshire's road network and 13 people wanted funding to be increased.

102. The following proposals were supported outright:

- **24EP17: saving £250,00. One-off draw down from accumulated funding held in the parking account reserve.** 32 people support (71 per cent) / 4 people neutral (9 per cent) and 9 people against (20 per cent).

- **24EP24: saving £40,000. Directorate support - records and systems: one-off reduction in operational budgets.** 31 people support (69 per cent) / 7 people neutral (16 per cent) and 7 people against (16 per cent).
- **24EP14: saving £2.15 million from 2024/25. Lane rental – introduce charges for all works on the busiest roads at the busiest times to minimise disruption.** 43 people support (65 per cent) / 6 people neutral (9 per cent) and 17 people against (26 per cent).
- **24EP13: saving £200,000. Reduction in the revenue investment needed for the mobilisation of 20mph speed limits. A three-year implementation programme is included in the council's capital programme.** 70 people support (58 per cent) / 16 people neutral (13 per cent) and 35 people against (29 per cent).
- **24EP19: saving £40,000. One-off reduction in operational budgets for place making within the transport and infrastructure service.** 23 people support (53 per cent) / 10 people neutral (23 per cent) and 10 people against (23 per cent).
- **24EP20: saving £200,000 from 2024/25. Prevention of unsorted waste at household waste recycling centres means recycling can be increased by reducing the amount of waste that is sent to the energy recovery facility at Ardley.** 29 people support (53 per cent) / 10 people neutral (18 per cent) and 16 people against (29 per cent).

103. The two savings proposals which had a majority of respondents against them ranging from 61 per cent to 58 per cent against were:

- **24EP15: saving £150,000. Anticipated increases in on-street parking income.** 44 people against (61 per cent) / 28 people neutral or support (39 per cent)
- **24EP12: saving £2.25 million. One-off draw down of funding held for the future maintenance of highways in Oxfordshire. This reflects expenditure on highway maintenance associated with development works needing repair over recent years.** 57 people against (58 per cent) / 42 people neutral or support (42 per cent)

104. Feedback on savings proposals 24SP12 have already been summarised. For those against the anticipated increase in on-street parking income, 39 people made comments. Of these, 10 people felt that parking charges were already too high, 13 people expressed concerns about the negative impact on shopping/leisure destinations in Oxford with some people saying it is making the city inhospitable. Seven people were against parking charges per se, with some criticising the council for being anti-car.

105. One response was from a stakeholder group representing Jericho business owners, replicating a letter already sent to the Chief Executive. It sets how the change in parking zones has already impacted traders, how many have received complaints from customers, the impact of bus route changes in the area. The letter

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asks the county council to look at the parking charges for the area again, with a view of making the charges ‘fairer’ and in line with other shopping districts in Oxford for the 2023 budget.

106. The number of comments people made to support their views on each savings proposal is shown in table 9. The detailed comments will be available on deposit for all councillors to read.

Table 9: summary of engagement with the environment and place savings proposals presented

Saving	Response	Comment
24EP12: One-off draw down of funding held for the future maintenance of highways in Oxfordshire. This reflects expenditure on highway maintenance associated with development works needing repair over recent years.	99	80
24EP13: Reduction in the revenue investment needed for the mobilisation of 20mph speed limits. A three-year implementation programme is included in the council's capital programme.	121	105
24EP14: Lane rental – introduce charges for all works on the busiest roads at the busiest times to minimise disruption.	66	43
24EP15: Anticipated increases in on-street parking income.	72	53
24EP16: Increase in various licence fees for skips, scaffolds, hoardings, dropped kerbs.	51	24
24EP17: One-off draw down from accumulated funding held in the parking account reserve.	45	17
24EP18: One-off reduction in operational budgets for transport strategy within transport and infrastructure service.	53	33
24EP19: One-off reduction in operational budgets for place making within the transport and infrastructure service.	43	23
24EP20: Prevention of unsorted waste at household waste recycling centres means recycling can be increased by reducing the amount of waste that is sent to the energy recovery facility at Ardley.	55	29
24EP23: Planning, environment and climate change - climate action: one-off reduction in the operational budgets.	66	35
24EP24: Directorate support - records and systems: one-off reduction in operational budgets.	45	15
Other comments (Environment and Place Services)		146
Total respondents for directorate	215	290

Other views on environment and place budget proposals

107. All respondents were given the opportunity to comment on any other budget proposals for environment and 146 people chose to do so. Key themes were:

- 12 people asked us to continue to prioritise projects that would benefit the environment, walkers and cyclists.
- 13 people said areas such as social care or existing road maintenance should be prioritised over transformative projects in the environment and place directorate.
- Some people put forward suggestions for additional revenue such as increase parking permits, fines and enforcement (6 people).
- Others thought savings could be achieved through reducing expensive infrastructure projects, pause climate and net zero work while budgets are tight (8 people)

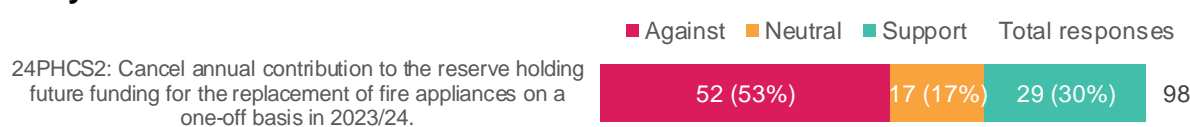
108. Although not relevant to the question, 54 people felt there was too much focus on low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) projects, bus filters and/or 20 mph zones with some suggesting the projects should stop. A significant number of negative comments were

focused on LTN's and 20 mph zones, with one comment suggesting that the money spent on these projects should be diverted to adults and children's social care.

Views on public health and community safety proposals presented

109. Only one proposal was presented for detailed views for the public health and community safety. Ninety-eight respondents engaged with it, with slightly more against the proposal 52 people (53 per cent) than either neutral or supportive (46 people or 47 per cent)

Chart 6: views on the saving proposal presented for public health and community safety



110. The number of comments people made to support their views on each savings proposal is shown in table 10. The detailed comments will be available on deposit for all councillors to read.

Table 10: summary of engagement with the public health and community safety proposal presented

Saving	Response	Comment
24PHCS2: Cancel annual contribution to the reserve holding future funding for the replacement of fire appliances on a one-off basis in 2023/24.	98	70
Other comments		42
Total for directorate	98	99

111. Forty-one people against the proposal shared their reasons. Of these, eleven people felt this it would be dangerous or irresponsible to reduce spending on fire appliances, nine people thought this was a short-sighted proposal, not without risk or counterproductive and five people were overtly against any funding reductions related to public safety.

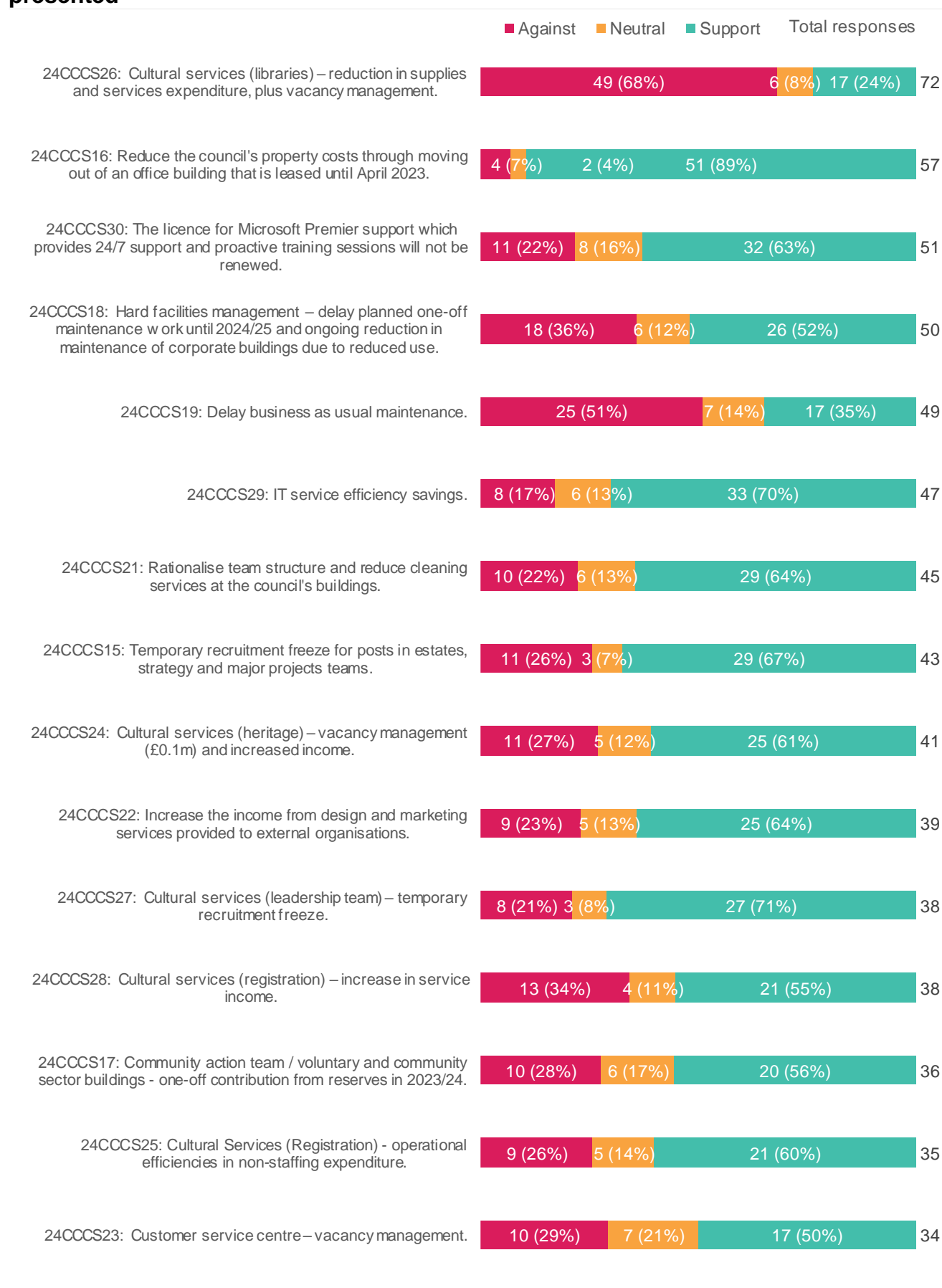
Other views on public health and community safety budget proposals

112. All respondents were given the opportunity to comment on any other budget proposals for public health and community safety and 42 people chose to do so. As before, wide range of themes were covered however, a sizeable number did not directly relate to the question asked
113. Better pay for emergency and care staff, more support for the fire and rescue services and to consider linking with neighbouring services were mentioned by very small numbers of respondents.
114. Although not relevant to the question, eight people used the space to express disagreement with the council's traffic management measures.

Views on customers, culture and corporate services savings proposals presented

115. Fifteen savings proposals were presented for detailed views for the customers, culture and corporate services and the sentiment towards each is shown in chart 7. The number of people commenting on different proposals was low ranging from 72 to 34, with people most engaging, by far, with savings proposal 24 CCCS26 (72 people engaged).

Chart 7: Views on customers, culture and corporate services savings proposals presented



116. For customers, culture and corporate services savings proposals presented:
- Twelve savings proposals were supported outright by the small number of people who engaged ranging from 89 per cent to 52 per cent support.
 - Fourteen savings proposals had more people supportive or neutral towards them rather than against.
 - Two savings proposals had a majority of respondents against them ranging from 51 per cent to 68 per cent.
117. The following proposals were supported outright:
- **24CCCS16: saving £611,000. Reduce the council's property costs through moving out of an office building that is leased until April 2023.** 51 people support (89 per cent) / two people neutral (four per cent) and four people against (seven per cent).
 - **24CCCS15: saving £79,000. Temporary recruitment freeze for posts in estates, strategy and major projects teams.** 29 people support (67 per cent) / three people neutral (seven per cent) and 11 people against (26 per cent).
 - **24CCCS17: saving £116,000. Community action team / voluntary and community sector buildings rent concession – fund from budget priority reserve on a one-off basis in 2023/24.** 20 people support (56 per cent) / 6 people neutral (17 per cent) and 10 people against (28 per cent)
 - **24CCCS18: saving £410,000. Hard facilities management – delay planned one-off maintenance work until 2024/25 and ongoing reduction in maintenance of corporate buildings due to reduced use.** 26 people support (52 per cent) / six people neutral (12 per cent) and 18 people against (36 per cent).
 - **24CCCS21: saving £256,000. Rationalise team structure and reduce cleaning services at the council's buildings.** 29 people support (64 per cent) / six people neutral (13 per cent) and 10 people against (22 per cent).
 - **24CCCS22: saving £20,000. Increase the income from design and marketing services provided to external organisations.** 25 people support (64 per cent) / 5 people neutral (13 per cent) and 9 people against (23 per cent)
 - **24CCCS24: saving £118,000. Cultural services (heritage) – vacancy management (£0.1m) and increased income.** 25 people support (61 per cent) / 5 people neutral (12 per cent) and 11 people against (27 per cent)
 - **24CCCS25: saving. £43,000. Cultural services (registration) – operational efficiencies in non-staffing expenditure.** 21 people support (60 per cent) / 5 people neutral (14 per cent) and 9 people against (26 per cent)
 - **24CCCS27: saving £80,000. Cultural services (leadership team) – temporary recruitment freeze.** 27 people support (71 per cent) / 3 people neutral (8 per cent) and 8 people against (21 per cent)

- **24CCCS28: saving £10,000. Cultural services (registration) – increase in service income.** 21 people support (55 per cent) / 4 people neutral (11 per cent) and 13 people against (34 per cent)
 - **24CCCS29: saving £239,000. IT service efficiency savings.** 33 people support (70 per cent) / 6 people neutral (13 per cent) and 8 people against (17 per cent)
 - **24CCCS30: saving £110,000. The licence for Microsoft Premier support, which provides 24/7 support and proactive training sessions, will not be renewed.** 32 people support (63 per cent) / 8 people neutral (16 per cent) and 11 people against (22 per cent).
118. Two savings proposals had proportionally more responses against the proposal than actively support:
- **24CCCS26: saving £306,000.** Cultural services (libraries) – reduction in supplies and services expenditure, plus vacancy management. 49 people against (68 per cent) / 23 people neutral or support (32 per cent).
 - **24CCCS19: saving £200,000.** Delay business as usual maintenance. 25 people against (51 per cent) / 24 people neutral or support (49 per cent).
119. Of the people provided supporting comments as to why they were against this saving proposal **24CCCS26** (38 people), nearly were making comments regarding the importance of the library service to them or to their community and were against funding being reduced for this service.
120. With regards to savings proposal **24CCCS19**, of the people provided supporting comments as to why they were against this saving proposal (14 people), nearly all thought this was a short-sighted savings that is likely to result in more expenditure in the long-term.
121. The number of comments people made to support their views on each savings proposal is shown in table 11. The detailed comments will be available on deposit for all councillors to read.

Table 11: summary of engagement with the customers, culture and corporate services savings proposals presented

Saving	Response	Comment
24CCCS15: Temporary recruitment freeze for posts in estates, strategy and major projects teams.	43	21
24CCCS16: Reduce the council's property costs through moving out of an office building that is leased until April 2023.	57	34
24CCCS17: Community action team / voluntary and community sector buildings - one-off contribution from reserves in 2023/24.	36	10
24CCCS18: Hard facilities management – delay planned one-off maintenance work until 2024/25 and ongoing reduction in maintenance of corporate buildings due to reduced use.	50	23
24CCCS19: Delay business as usual maintenance.	49	19
24CCCS21: Rationalise team structure and reduce cleaning services at the council's buildings.	45	17
24CCCS22: Increase the income from design and marketing services provided to external organisations.	39	16
24CCCS23: Customer service centre – vacancy management.	34	11
24CCCS24: Cultural services (heritage) – vacancy management (£0.1m) and increased income.	41	13
24CCCS25: Cultural Services (Registration) - operational efficiencies in non-staffing expenditure.	35	11
24CCCS26: Cultural services (libraries) – reduction in supplies and services expenditure, plus vacancy management.	72	47

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24CCCS27: Cultural services (leadership team) – temporary recruitment freeze.	38	12
24CCCS28: Cultural services (registration) – increase in service income.	38	12
24CCCS29: IT service efficiency savings.	47	15
24CCCS30: The licence for Microsoft Premier support which provides 24/7 support and proactive training sessions will not be renewed.	51	22
Other comments		90
Total for directorate	125	173

Other views on customers, culture and corporate services budget proposals

122. All respondents were given the opportunity to comment on any other budget proposals for environment and 90 people chose to do so. A wide range of comments were made, the key themes emerging were:

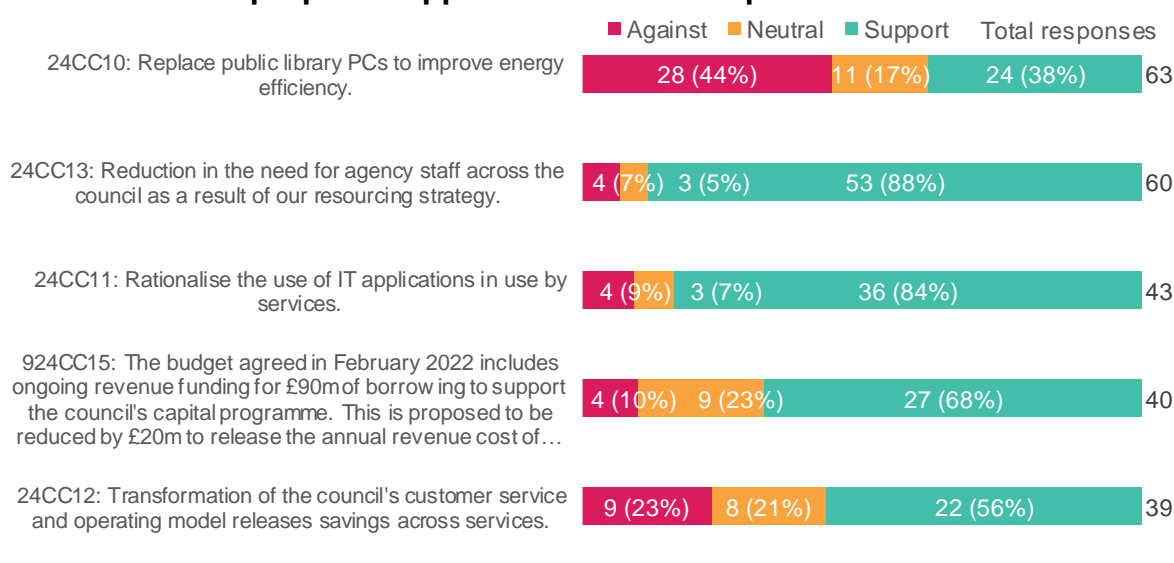
- Fourteen people suggested the council consider reducing staffing costs with one suggesting more staff are needed.
- Ten people expressed concern about cuts to libraries and cultural services.
- Nine people suggested the council should make better use of its buildings to save money.

123. Although not relevant to the question, five people used the space to express disagreement with the council's traffic management measures.

Views on other corporate services savings proposals presented

124. Five other savings proposals were presented for detailed views for corporate services and the sentiment towards each is shown in chart 8. The number of people commenting on different proposals was low ranging from 63 to 39, with people most engaging with savings proposals 24CC10 (63 people engaged) and 24CC13 (60 people engaged).

Chart 8: views on proposed approaches in the Corporate Services directorate



125. All of the savings' proposals presented in this section of the survey had more people supportive or neutral towards them as opposed to against, although very few people engaged. All, with the exception of **24CC10: saving £84,000 - replace**

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public library PCs to improve energy efficiency, all savings proposals had majority support.

126. With regards to savings proposal 24CC10, reviewing the 24 comments for those against this saving, people were sceptical about the savings figure quoted whilst others wanted the machines to be used until the end of their life.
127. The number of comments people made to support their views on each savings proposal is shown in table 12. The detailed comments will be available on deposit for all councillors to read.

Table 12: summary of engagement with other corporate services savings proposals presented

Saving	Response	Comment
24CC10: Replace public library PCs to improve energy efficiency.	63	40
24CC11: Rationalise the use of IT applications in use by services.	43	9
24CC12: Transformation of the council's customer service and operating model releases savings across services.	39	13
24CC13: Reduction in the need for agency staff across the council as a result of our resourcing strategy.	60	39
924CC15: The budget agreed in February 2022 includes ongoing revenue funding for £90m of borrowing to support the council's capital programme. This is proposed to be reduced by £20m to release the annual revenue cost of financing that element of the borrowing. Depending on the funding available by then, this is expected to be reinstated in 2026/27.	40	14
Other comments (Corporate Services)		42
Total for directorate	96	109

Other views on other corporate services budget proposals

128. All respondents were given the opportunity to comment on any other budget proposals for environment and 42 people chose to do so, including 11 people who gave overall support to the savings offered in this area '*all these proposals look sensible*'. Only one other theme received five or more mentions, and this was invest in staff / people / buildings (6 mentions).

General comments on the budget

129. Section three of the survey invited other comments on the county council's budget and 155 people engaged with this opportunity. Several of the comments could not be put into themes and were mentioned by five or fewer people.
130. Of the themes emerging, 21 people said the council shouldn't raise council tax in the current economic circumstance, while conversely 12 people said they supported an increase in council tax. Seven people made direct comments about inadequate central government funding for local government.
131. Fourteen people explicitly said front line services should be protected. Twenty-two comments were ideas for suggested efficiencies including nine people who said the council should reduce staff costs and five people said the council should reduce councillor expenses. Four people said they don't think the council listens.

132. Again, a proportion of respondents (48 people) took the opportunity to express their views on traffic management matters. Nineteen people made negative comments about low traffic neighbourhoods, there were nine negative comments about traffic filters and five negative comments about speed limits.

Other ideas for savings

133. Section four of the survey invited ideas for how the council can make savings. Participants were reminded of the council's financial situation as a prompt and overall, 207 people responded.
134. Fifty-nine people proposed ideas for efficiencies. These included: privatising more services, reducing spend on external consultancies, making better use of council properties, sharing more services with district councils, and digitising services and interactions where appropriate. Twenty-four people said the council should reduce staffing costs.
135. Fourteen people suggested measures for income generation. Ideas included: charging more for some services including weddings, better enforcement of parking and traffic violations, charging for parking permits in more areas, and renting out unused council-owned office and meeting space.
136. Twenty-one people commented on council tax, with ten of those people supporting an increase for some bands or an increase in council tax across all bands.
137. Over a third of respondents (78 people) used this section of the survey as opportunity to express comments on traffic management issues. This included 27 people who made negative comments about low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs), 16 people who made negative comments about traffic filters and 13 people made who negative comments about 20 mph speed limits.
138. This section of the survey was also used by people to make critical comments about the council on other matters including the council's climate action approach and how well it listens to people and communities more generally. Six people made negative comments about the council and more generally about matters related to inclusivity and diversity.

Budget proposals respondent profile

139. Ninety-five per cent of survey respondents (506) identified themselves as Oxfordshire residents and two respondents said they were members of the public living elsewhere. The remainder five per cent (25) identified as stakeholders: district, city or county councillors, parish or town councillors or representatives, business representatives, council employees, groups/organisations or as another type of stakeholder.
140. Collectively these respondents are referred to as stakeholders in the report (as opposed to residents). A breakdown of who responded to the survey is shown in table 6 below and a detailed respondent profile is set-put later in this section of the report.

Table 13: How people responded

	Number
As an Oxfordshire resident	506
As a member of the public living elsewhere	2
As a parish meeting representative, parish councillor or town councillor	3
As a county council employee	11
As a county councillor	2
As a district or city councillor	1
As a representative of a business	1
As a representative of a group or organisation	5
Other	2

Awareness of consultation

141. Respondents were most likely to have found about this consultation through a direct email from the council (231 mentions) or on Facebook (129 mentions).

Table 14: source of awareness of the consultation

	Number
Facebook	130
Twitter	27
Instagram	1
LinkedIn	4
NextDoor	62
Oxfordshire.gov.uk website	42
Email from Oxfordshire County Council	233
Local news item (newspaper, online, radio, tv)	5
Oxfordshire county councillor / District councillor	10
Parish or town councillor	12
Local community news item	7
Poster / information in local library / local community group / organisation	2
Friend/relative	15
Other (please specify)	7
Base: All respondents selecting all that apply (533)	

Geography

142. The consultation received at least one response from each postcode district in Oxfordshire except OX27 (north of Bicester). Proportionally however, those living in postcode districts OX1 – OX4 (Oxford and surrounding areas) were the most likely to participate (233 people – 44%).

Map 1: respondent profile by postcode district

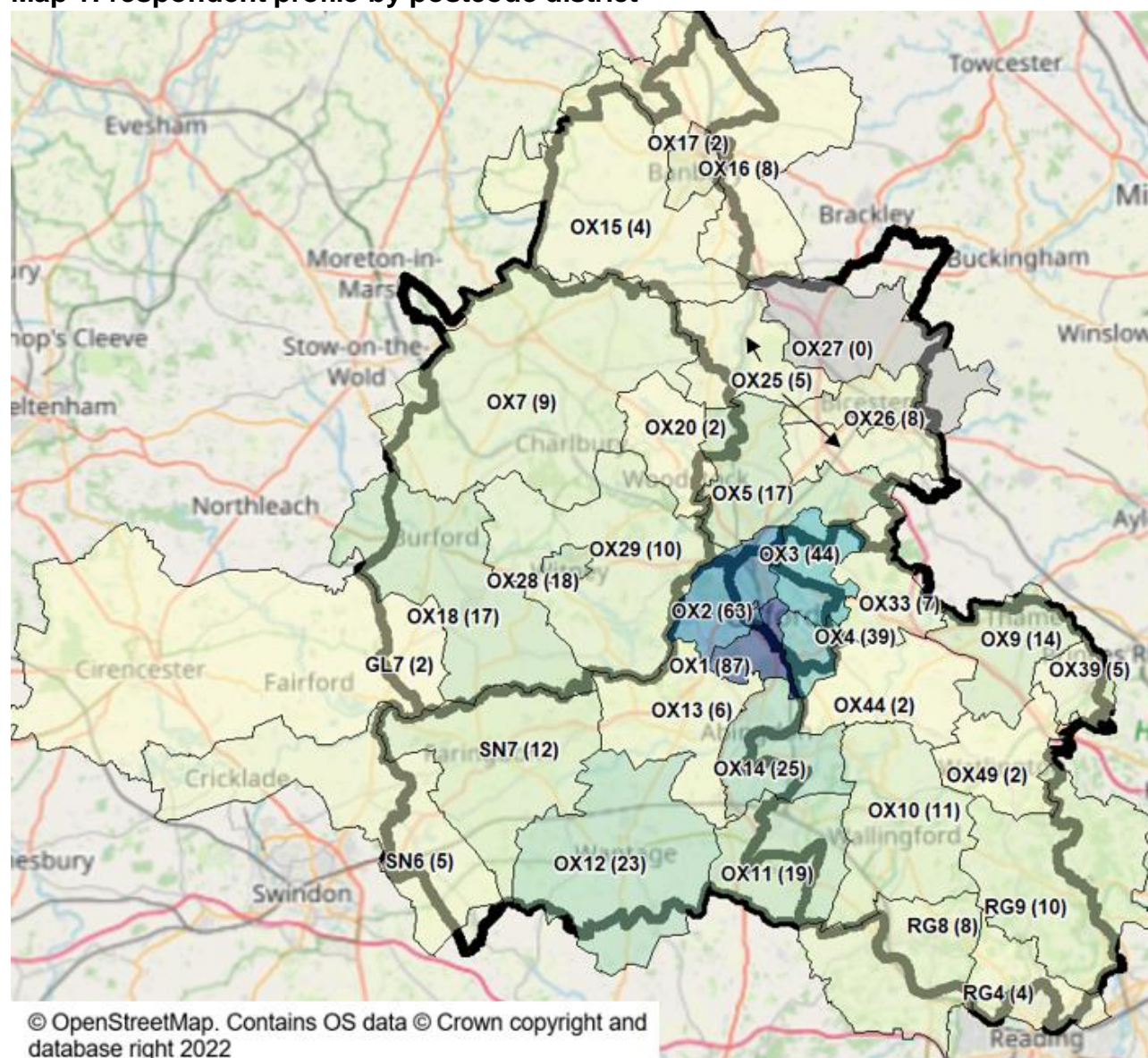


Table 15: respondent profile by postcode district

Main settlement	Postcode districts	Number
Oxford	OX1	233
	OX2	
	OX3	
	OX4	
Abingdon	OX14	25
Wantage	OX12	23
Didcot	OX11	19
Witney	OX28	18
Kidlington	OX5	17
Thame	OX9	14
Faringdon	SN7	12
Wallingford	OX10	11
Bicester	OX26	8
Banbury	OX16	8

Other Oxfordshire	Number
GL7	2
OX7	9
OX13	6
OX15	4
OX17	2
OX18	17
OX20	2
OX25	5
OX29	10
OX33	7
OX39	5
OX44	2
OX49	2
RG4	4
RG8	8
RG9	10
SN6	5

Blank/non-Oxfordshire
45

Age

143. All age groups (under 16 years - 75 years and over) were represented in the respondent profile, however a large majority of survey respondents (92 per cent or 433 people) were aged over 35 years and only eight per cent (40 people) were aged under thirty-five. We had one young person aged under 16 years respond.

Table 16: respondent profile by age

	Number
Under 16	1
16 - 24	7
25 - 34	32
35 - 44	79
45 - 54	91
55 - 64	107
65 – 74	100
75 or over	56
Prefer not to say	45
Blank	15
Base: All respondents (533)	

Sex

144. Slightly more men (238) than women (205) completed the survey.

Table 17: respondent profile by sex

	Number
Female	205
Male	238
Prefer not to say	68
I use another term	2
Blank	20
Base: All respondents (533)	

Gender reassignment

145. Most survey respondents said their sex was the same as registered as birth. Four people said it was not.

Table 18: respondent profile by sex registered at birth

	Number
Yes, same as birth	437
No, not same as birth	4
Prefer not to say	68
Blank	24
Base: All respondents (533)	

Sexual orientation

146. Most survey respondents identified as straight/heterosexual (348) and 35 identified as another sexual orientation.

Table 19: respondent profile by sexual orientation

	Number
Straight/Heterosexual	348
Bisexual	13
Gay or Lesbian	15
Prefer not to say	127
Other	7
Blank	23
Base: All respondents (533)	

Race

147. Most survey respondents (379) identified as white British, Irish, or any other white background, whilst 32 respondents identified as having another ethnic group or background.

Table 20: respondent profile by ethnic group or background

	Number
Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or any other Asian background)	11
Black or Black British (Caribbean, African, or any other Black background)	3
Chinese	1
Mixed (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, and any other mixed background)	7
White (British, Irish, or any other white background)	379
Prefer not to say	98
Other ethnic group or background	10
Blank	24
Base: All respondents (533)	

Religion

148. Two hundred and seventeen survey respondents identified as having a current religion with most stating that their current religion was Christian (192 people).

Table 21: respondent profile by religion

	Number
Buddhist	4
Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	192
Hindu	4
Jewish	2
Muslim	5
Sikh	0
No religion	185
Prefer not to say	107
Any other religion	10
Blank	24
Base: All respondents (530)	

Disability

149. One in five respondents (97) identified as having a long-term illness, health problem or disability that either limited their day to day activities a lot (29) or a little (68).

Table 22: Respondent profile by long-term illness, health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months

	Number
Yes – day-to-day activities limited a lot	29
Yes – day-to-day limited a little	68
No	345
Prefer not to say	70
Blank	21
Base: All respondents (533)	

Carer

150. Fifty-two respondents identified as a carer.

Table 23: Carer status

	Number
Yes	52
No	391
Prefer not to say	65
Blank	25
Base: All respondents (533)	

Marriage and civil partnership

151. More than double the number of respondents identified as being married or in a civil partnership (288), than not (120).

Table 24: Respondent profile by marriage or civil partnership

	Number
Yes, to being married or in a civil partnership	288
No	120
Prefer not to say	93
Blank	32
Base: All respondents (533)	

Pregnancy and maternity

152. Thirteen respondents identified as pregnant, on maternity leave or returning from maternity leave.

Table 25: Respondent profile by pregnancy and maternity

	Number
Yes to being pregnant, on maternity leave or returning from maternity leave	13
No	409
Prefer not to say	80
Blank	31
Base: All respondents (530)	

Summary of stakeholder views to the budget proposals consultation

153. Although these views are counted in the sections preceding, below is a high-level summary of the feedback from councillors, businesses, groups and organisations. It does not include the two responses from county council staff members or from people who identified as stakeholders generally.
154. The key messages from these stakeholder groups identified above are as follows:
- One councillor commented generally on the council's budget proposals for adult services, stating that it doesn't feel right to cut adult services at all. They felt that the list of proposed reductions was reasonable and hoped they materialise without negative impacts on vulnerable and older adults.
 - Two groups/organisations commented generally on the budget proposals for adult services stating how important collaboration is with the third sector to deliver efficiencies and that they would welcome dialogue. One organisation also suggested the council should increase council tax to fund social care.
 - One councillor commented on proposal **24CS12: saving £150,000. Reduce expenditure on legal costs in children's social care.)** They felt that cuts to legal services might leave children without mechanisms to resolve and improve their situations.
 - Three councillors commented generally on the council's savings proposals for children's services. One was deeply concerned about cuts in services as had parishioners trying to access services (possibly a EHC assessment) and finding it difficult. Another recognised the existing challenges around funding for SEND and that any savings from efficiencies should be channelled back into services and felt central government should be challenged regarding funding. The third recognised it is horrible to have to make reductions in staffing and training and recognised that it had been 'forced on the council'.

- One business responded to savings proposal **24EP12: saving £2.25 million. One-off draw down of funding held for the future maintenance of highways in Oxfordshire. This reflects expenditure on highway maintenance associated with development works needing repair over recent years.).** They were critical of the state of the county's roads based on their professional experience. They also expressed their dislike for the 20mph schemes and low traffic neighbourhoods.
- The same business commented on proposal **24EP13: saving £200,000 Reduction in the revenue investment needed for the mobilisation of 20mph speed limits. A three-year implementation programme is included in the council's capital programme),** requesting that all spending on 20mph limits is stopped immediately.
- One group of businesses responded to savings proposal **24EP15: saving £150,000 Anticipated increases in on-street parking income.** Their response is captured earlier in the report.
- One councillor commented generally on the council's budget proposals for environment and place services, stating you need to spend more, not less on things.
- Two councillors commented on proposal for **public health and community safety, 24PHCS2: saving £800,000. Cancel annual contribution to the reserve holding future funding for the replacement of fire appliances on a one-off basis in 2023/24.)** One questioned, would this increase the increase the chances of non-working fire appliances and the other questioned where will the money come from in future to resume this reserve contribution.
- Two councillors commented generally on the budget proposals for customers, culture and corporate services. One stated that the reduction in office-based working gives the council and opportunity to dispose of sites that could be used for housing and work with districts and towns councils on shared office accommodation in local centres. The other stated we need more staff, not fewer.
- Four councillors made general comments on the council's budget proposals. One stating that we should be increasing spending to address growing needs, but recognises the council is not at fault. Another recognised the impact of government cutbacks on communities, and another felt the system was the wrong way round with regards to how funding is awarded. The fourth recognised the difficult position the council is in with having to making savings.
- One business used this section to criticise speed limits again and low traffic neighbourhoods.
- One organisation referenced that adaptation to climate change did not feature in the council's budget proposals.

155. We also welcomed feedback in writing as part of the consultation on the council's budget proposals. Twenty-one email responses from members of the public were submitted and a further four responses from stakeholders. Their key messages from these are summarised below.

Email submissions from members of the public

156. Of the 21 email responses, a majority (16) submitted **negative comments about transport and traffic restrictions** (including low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs), 20mph speed limits, traffic filters and housing infrastructure fund 1 (HIF1)). People expressed that abandoning transport proposals and existing schemes could reduce the budget deficit or reduce council tax increases. Some people felt they had no benefit to local people and damage businesses.
157. The remaining five responses cover:
- New homes and questioning why developers are not obliged to pay the council in return for housing developments.
 - Council tax increases and the negative effect on people's finances.
 - Adult social care and support for learning disabilities – reductions in budgets having a huge impact on the lives of those with disabilities and their carers.
 - Early years services should be prioritised - investing in early years is to the long-term benefit of everyone.
 - The need to modernise the council, reduce expenditure on senior management and reduce salary costs.
158. There is also criticism of the budget consultation itself regarding its complexity and the ability to understand many of the proposals.

Email submissions from stakeholders

Submission one:

Parish transport representative”

States that over the last few years there have been reduced bus passenger numbers because of covid and bus subsidies that ended in July 2016. With public transport as a County Council priority area, has a suggestion to create a levy (between 5p-10p) on commercial bus routes, in addition to the current fares. Considers this money should be ring fenced to put back into areas that need/have subsidies removed. Feels this proposal would help the reduction of bus routes, particularly in the villages.

Submission two and three

A young carers charity

Trustee: Considers that the growing numbers of young carers are not acknowledged within the budget consultation, failing to make provision for this demographic. States that as a group they have poorer outcomes and are at risk of developing long term needs. Asks if the statutory responsibilities of county council and its strategic partners have a more specific profile in the council’s planning for this group of Oxfordshire residents.

“Independent strategy & development consultant” and trustee: Considers that Oxfordshire County Council and partners are failing to make provision for young carers. States that in their opinion, the council’s budget proposals not only risk failure to meet statutory duties under the Children & Families Act (2015), but also fails the national direction of travel to tackle health inequalities. States that within these households there are multiple needs to both the young carers and those they care for, all of which fall into the protected characteristics. This is illustrated in the NHS Core20Plus5 reports. Feels that the public would have to look very hard to find glean the council is out of step with the national picture, from the consultation materials provided.

Submission four:

Rail specialist interest group

States that the group strongly support priority 5 of the council’s vision. While the group recognise the financial pressures the council is under, they consider it vital that none of the budget changes inhibit this and maximum effort must continue into leveraging in funds from DfT and other parts of central government to further this aim. The group strongly supported the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study produced by Network Rail in consultation with county council and others which set out a number of vital investments at Cowley, Hanborough, Didcot and Wantage/Gove and “we welcome the work started, with the support of the county council, into reinstating a rail line to Eynsham, Witney and Carterton”.

The group is very pleased to see the provision of £250,000 in the 2022-23 budget towards progressing these schemes including the development of business cases. The group

Annex 1 – Budget Consultation Report 2023-24

considers any underspend should be carried forward to contribute to the similar Government funding initiatives. However, the group is against the 2023-24 budget proposal 24EP18 to reduce funding for this work by £50,000 as it may impact on the continuation of this development work on the priority rail schemes for Cowley, Hanborough, Wantage/Grove station and the Witney/Carterton branch.

Strategic plan

2023 - 2025

Leading positive change
by working in partnership
to make Oxfordshire a
greener, fairer and
healthier county.

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OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL

ABOUT THIS PLAN

Our strategic plan 2023 - 2025 sets out our vision to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.

Oxfordshire is a county full of ideas, innovation, inspiration and an ambition to deliver. It is a great place to live, work, learn and raise a family.

The county has many strengths: It is home to world-class academic and research institutions; we have one of the strongest economies in the UK, with over 400,000 jobs and 30,000 businesses; and our vibrant rural and urban communities are supported by an active voluntary and community sector. These make Oxfordshire a very special place.

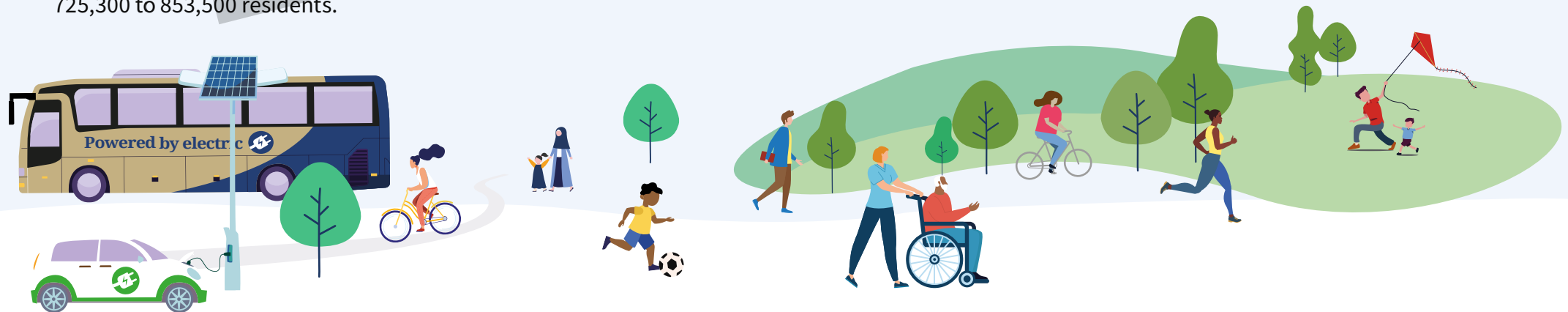
However, the county does face challenges, which our strategic plan needs to address. It has a growing population, which puts pressures on our services. Oxfordshire's population grew by 71,500 (10.9 per cent) since the last census in 2011, when it stood at 653,800 residents. This level of increase was above the growth seen across England (6.6 per cent).

Between now and 2030, Oxfordshire's population is expected to rise from 725,300 to 853,500 residents.

Oxfordshire's strong economy has also led to it becoming one of the most expensive places to live in the country. There is a shortage of affordable and social housing, and the growth in population has led to increasing congestion on our roads. The county includes ten neighbourhoods that fall within the 20 per cent most deprived in England.

We want to make sure that everyone in Oxfordshire can take full advantage of what the county has to offer. Our strategic plan sets out our vision and the nine cross-cutting priorities that we are committed to, and describes how we will deliver them.

A separate measures framework accompanies our strategic plan to help monitor and measure our progress. Both will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure we are continuing to meet the needs of our residents.





LEADER'S FOREWORD

We want to make sure that everyone in Oxfordshire can take advantage of the opportunities that our vibrant, diverse and innovative county has to offer.

We have a vision to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. This means working closely with our residents, partners and wider communities to make Oxfordshire the very best place it can be. Our vision for the county is centred around strong local communities, healthy places to live, and a zero-carbon economy that benefits everyone. Oxfordshire is a place focused on equality and inclusivity – it has to work for everyone.

Tackling climate change underpins all we do. The climate emergency is the biggest challenge the planet faces and we are committed to not only reaching our own net zero target as a council by 2030 but to enabling Oxfordshire to be carbon neutral by 2050 at the latest.

Investing in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network is also key to driving climate action and tackling inequality. We understand that cars still have a role to play in our transport system, but we want to make it quicker, cheaper and safer for residents across the county to leave their cars at home and travel actively by walking or cycling or by using alternative sustainable modes of transport, such as buses. This will make our streets cleaner, safer, and less congested and help those who need to use cars to make their essential journeys.

We are focused on tackling inequality and disadvantage; working with our partners locally and speaking up for Oxfordshire nationally; investing in people; using our resources wisely; speaking up for Oxfordshire; and being inclusive and open.

Including everyone means providing inclusive services with equal access for all; working with communities to tackle disadvantage, inequality, public health and care issues; and providing an inclusive workplace with equality of opportunity. We want to enable people across the county to be happy, healthy, safe and successful, from getting the best start in life to ageing well and

remaining as independent as possible for as long as possible.

We also want to ensure that our decision-making process is inclusive and open to scrutiny. We are making it easier for communities to make their views known on the issues that matter to them so that as many voices as possible are heard.

This strategic plan is by no means the end of the process – it is just the beginning. We will review it annually, including our supporting policies, service plans and ways of working, to ensure that we deliver our priorities in line with our principles and the needs of our residents.

With our ambitious plans for climate action and tackling inequality, change is inevitable, which will mean doing things differently. That is why we need to build the foundations for positive change and action by working closely with our partners and our residents. This will enable us not only to protect the Oxfordshire that we all love, but to provide the greatest opportunities possible for every resident to live their best life.

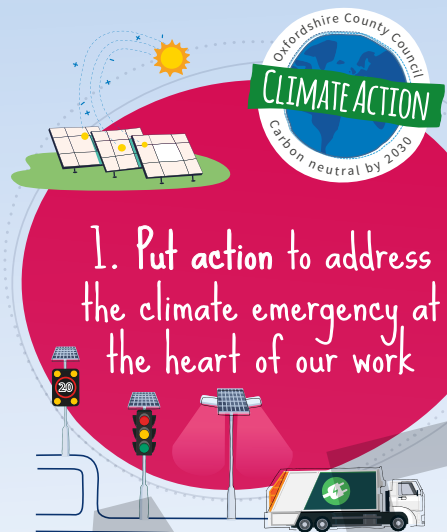
Councillor Liz Leffman
Leader of Oxfordshire County Council

OUR NINE PRIORITIES

Our vision:

To lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.

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3. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents

Illustration of a person on a bicycle and a family walking.

4. Support carers and the social care system

Illustration of a person in a wheelchair and a person sitting on a yellow ball.

5. Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network

Illustration of a green bicycle and a blue electric bus labeled "Powered by electric."

6. Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces

Illustration of a person playing a ball in a park with trees and birds.

7. Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential

Illustration of a group of children standing together.

8. Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy

Illustration of a globe growing out of a plant and a speech bubble.

9. Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit

Illustration of a person holding a solar panel and a green leaf icon with a lightning bolt.



THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Our strategic priority

Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work

Page 87

Our commitments

We will lead by example, setting ambitious targets to reduce our own carbon emissions and aligning our carbon net zero commitments to the principles of the Climate and Ecology Bill. Our environmental and planning ambitions will prioritise climate action and community resilience.

GREENER

Our objectives

- Implement together with partners the county's 'pathways to zero carbon' route map, a comprehensive plan for decarbonising Oxfordshire.
- Bring our own buildings, operations and supply chains to net zero by 2030, and support the retrofit of residential homes to improve energy efficiency.
- Accelerate work on supporting biodiversity and nature recovery in parallel with adaptation to climate change, including potential impacts of extreme weather and supply chain disruption.
- Support community and business activity to cut carbon emissions and accelerate a shift to a resilient and locally focused zero carbon economy.
- Support and promote a shift towards active travel (walking, cycling and use of public transport), reducing the need for private cars and accelerate the transition to electric vehicles by expanding charging capacity across the county.
- Work with partners to continue to build a greener, more resilient and fairer renewable energy network.
- Deliver our LED street lighting replacement programme to further reduce the energy, visual and environmental impacts of street lighting.



Our strategic priority

Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network

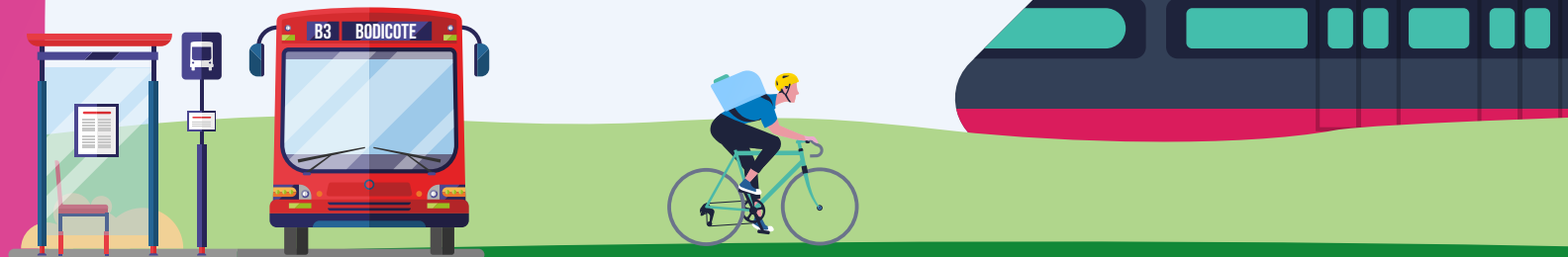
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Our commitments

We will create a transport network that makes active travel the first choice for short journeys and invest in public transport to significantly reduce our reliance on car journeys. In areas of planned housing growth, we will prioritise active and public transport over road capacity for cars.

Our objectives

- Prioritise active travel and public transport on the existing and planned highway network to support healthy lifestyles and address inequalities in transport.
- Develop and approve priority local transport and connectivity plan part 2 — area travel plans.
- Deliver our commitments within the bus service improvement plan and enhanced bus partnership.
- Develop and implement a plan for improved strategic routes for freight, including exploring rail and reducing large vehicle movements on non-strategic roads.
- Deliver the countywide 20mph programme in line with our agreed policy.



NATURE AND GREEN SPACES

Our strategic priority

Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces

Page 89

Our commitments

We will work with partners to provide safe, clean and green spaces across the county that support the physical and mental wellbeing of our residents. We will take action to protect and increase biodiversity, supporting nature recovery, in both rural and urban environments.

Our objectives

- Support and enable the activities from Oxfordshire's community action groups to improve local environments and make nature more accessible.
- Develop a countywide nature recovery strategy, including a tree and woodland plan that involves taking part in the Queen's Green Canopy programme, and support the development of a new local nature partnership for Oxfordshire.
- Improve the amount and distribution of accessible and safe natural green space within Oxfordshire in conjunction with partners.
- Ensure our public rights of way network is safe and effectively maintained.



INEQUALITIES

Our strategic priority

Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire

Page 90

Our commitments

We will work with our partners and local communities to address social, economic, health and educational inequalities focusing on those in greatest need. We will seek practical solutions for those most adversely affected by the pandemic. We will support digital inclusion initiatives that give our residents the skills, connectivity and accessibility to our services and provide alternative options for those who cannot access our services digitally.

Our objectives

- Address the drivers and impact of disadvantage through practical plans delivered with partners to create a more inclusive and sustainable Oxfordshire.
- Work with those communities most at risk of poor health, gathering insight to understand the causes of poor health and developing funded action plans to improve residents' health.
- Implement the delivery plan for Oxfordshire's digital inclusion strategy together with partners, including how assistive technology can support vulnerable groups to access services and lead a better quality of life.
- Provide technology to improve processes around signposting, self-assessment and information about sources of help for local residents.
- Deliver support programmes to help mitigate the impact of ongoing rises to the cost of living, including launching a crisis fund to support those in most financial need.
- Address local health inequalities through the establishment of a Health Inequalities Forum for Oxfordshire within the new integrated care system.



Our strategic priority

Play our part in a vibrant and participatory local democracy

Page 9

Our commitments

We are committed to taking decisions in an open and inclusive way. We will engage and listen to Oxfordshire residents. We will be open to scrutiny and regularly provide progress updates. We will put the impact on the climate and future generations at the heart of decision making. We will manage our own resources carefully.

Our objectives

- Build greater confidence in our consultation and engagement processes by clearly describing how residents' feedback will be used and where it has helped shape policy or decision-making.
- Provide regular opportunities for residents to engage in open dialogue with cabinet members, including Oxfordshire Conversation Q&A events.
- Improve our approach to equality and climate impact assessments, ensuring that we set out the effects of our decisions on particular groups of residents.
- Demonstrate the contribution of each scrutiny committee to the development of policy and decision-making through the publication of an annual report.



LOCAL BUSINESSES AND PARTNERS

Our strategic priority

Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit

Our commitments

We will help Oxfordshire become a recognised centre of innovation in green and sustainable technologies. We will use our purchasing power for environmental, social and economic benefit and ensure that our pandemic recovery planning supports sustainable job creation.

Our objectives

- Work with partners, including the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), to enable long-term job creation for local businesses through apprenticeships and business support.
- Promote career pathways in health and social care for local people and encourage those who are looking to change their careers to start their own enterprises in the sector.
- Work with suppliers to maximise additional social and environmental value, as part of our progressive procurement policy and development planning processes, which will benefit local communities.
- Facilitate research and collaboration between businesses, the universities, OxLEP and our health and local authority partners to maintain Oxfordshire as a centre of innovation, turning ideas into real-life solutions in areas including transport, climate, energy and healthcare.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Our strategic priority

Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents

Page 93

Our commitments

We will work with the health and wellbeing board and our partners to deliver and support services that make a vital contribution to our residents' physical and mental wellbeing. We will support the wellbeing of those in our communities who have been affected, physically and mentally, by COVID-19 and will continue to support our volunteers and the voluntary sector.

Our objectives

- Lead on an update to the Oxfordshire health and wellbeing strategy, which includes: implementing the domestic abuse strategic action plan, combatting the harm caused in local communities from illicit drug use, making Oxfordshire smoke free by 2025, promoting better mental wellbeing and preventing self-harm and suicide.
- Maximise access to the opportunities provided by libraries, museums, nature and green spaces and other services to support the health and wellbeing of residents.
- Provide a long-term support offer for our voluntary and community sector partners through the implementation of the voluntary and community sector strategy, enabling a strong, diverse and vibrant voluntary and community sector in Oxfordshire.
- Address worsening rates of unhealthy weight in Oxfordshire, including addressing a range of underlying factors that cause this trend.



CARERS AND SOCIAL CARE

Our strategic priority

Support carers and the social care system

Our commitments

We will engage nationally to push for a fair deal for the funding of social care. Locally, we will support carers, including young carers, and help those who want to live independently. We will work with communities, in collaboration with the health and social care system and voluntary sector to explore new ways to provide services. We will focus on preventative services, helping people to stay active and supported at all stages of their lives.

Our objectives

Champion strengths-based approaches across the health and social care system to reduce demand and ensure resources are used as effectively as possible:

- Invest in assistive technology and apps which promote independence and enable self-assessment where appropriate.
- Work with service users and providers to find new ways to promote self-directed support, increasing choice and control for individuals.
- Help people to live independently and support themselves through personal and local facilities, using the Oxfordshire Way approach.
- Facilitate access to resources across communities through social prescribing and other referral routes that divert demand away from statutory services.
- Focus resources on areas of high deprivation to tackle social isolation and reduce health inequalities.
- Co-produce with carers a refreshed all-ages carers strategy for the health and social care system, which improves carers' wellbeing, and invest in practical solutions to help carers maintain their caring roles.
- Co-produce a refreshed workforce development strategy that addresses challenges around recruiting and retaining social care workers, focusing on outcomes for our residents, evaluating what we do well and what we can continue to improve.
- Prepare for care quality commission assurance, working with residents and partners to triangulate evidence and further embed continuous improvement.



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Our strategic priority

Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential

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Our commitments

We will support all our children and young people, and their families, to achieve their very best and to prepare them for their future. This includes safeguarding and supporting those more vulnerable and with additional needs. We will continue to work with partners to provide help early so children and families are less likely to be in need.

Our objectives

- Support the emotional mental health and wellbeing of children and young people by increasing the number of interventions in schools and places which young people frequent.
- Expand the range of provision for young people and increase take-up in areas of high deprivation.
- Deliver our children's home programme to provide more places in Oxfordshire.
- Increase activity that supports pupils with special educational needs and disabilities to have their needs met in mainstream school settings and deliver our special school capacity expansion programme.
- Work with partners to increase early help, ensuring that children's needs are met earlier.
- Support families to care for their children at home where it is safe to do so, integrating assessments and support in the community to prevent children needing to come into the care system.
- Respond to the findings of our newly established Education Commission.



WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Ways of joint working developed during the COVID-19 pandemic are helping the council and its partners to respond swiftly and comprehensively to complex and urgent new challenges facing our communities.

Tackling the cost of living crisis

Working with our local authority partners and the voluntary and community sector, we will continue to bring forward new initiatives to support our most vulnerable residents during the ongoing cost of living crisis. By ensuring that funding is used as close to communities as possible and collaborating with our partners, we are making our money go further and maximising the benefit for residents.

Welcoming displaced Ukrainian families

We will continue to support those who have sought refuge from the war in Ukraine and help them integrate into our communities. We will also continue to support the many local households who have so generously opened their doors to those in need. With partners, we have established a dedicated joint team to oversee our response to the government's Homes for Ukraine programme and are working to ensure that those who wish to remain in Oxfordshire in the long term can do so.



COUNCIL FUNDING AND SPENDING

Where the money comes from

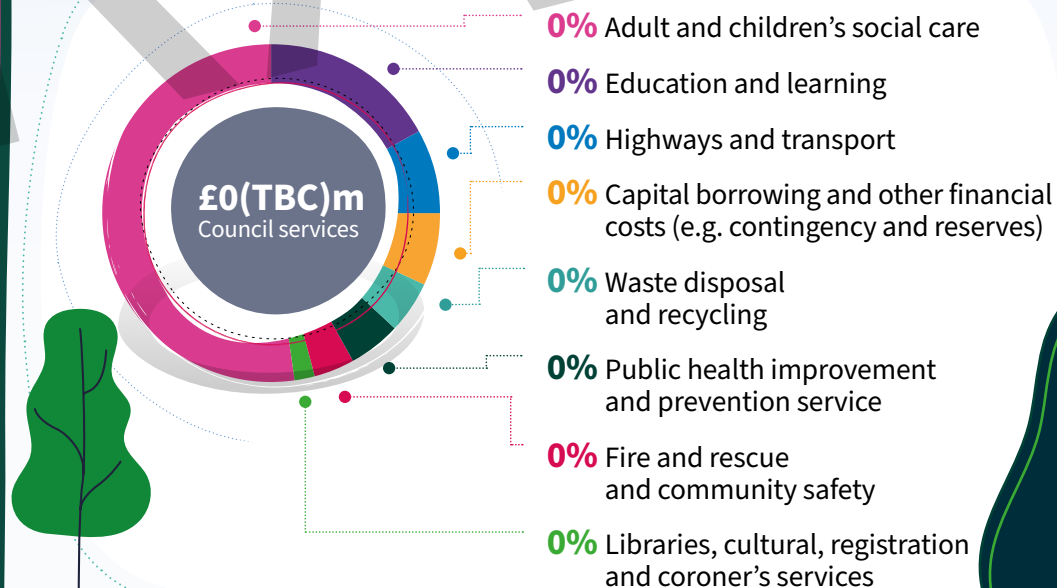
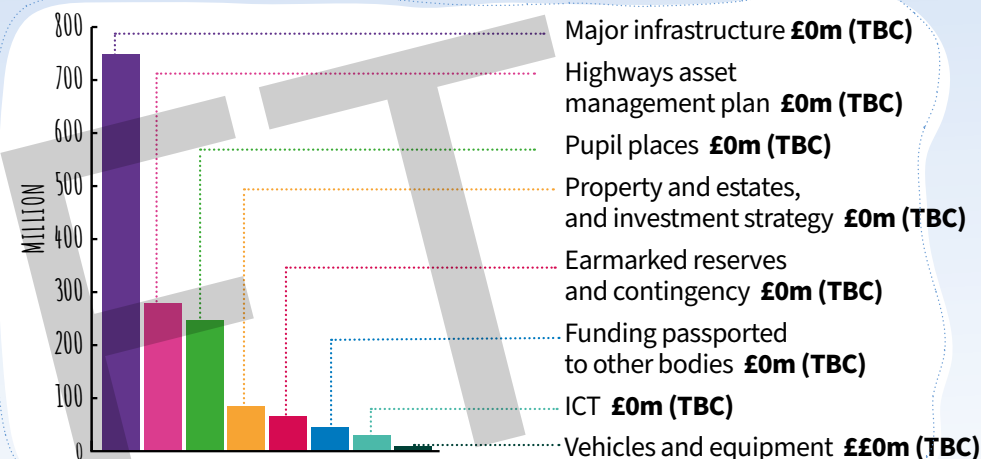
For 2023/24, xx per cent of the county council's funding for services will come directly from council tax, with the rest coming from charging for services and government grants.

This has increased steadily over the last ten years as central government has cut grants to local government. In 2010/11, 28 per cent came from council tax.



What we spend on council services

In 2023/23, the council will spend £0(TBC) million on services – our gross expenditure budget. In addition, we will also spend £0(TBC) million on maintained schools, which covers teachers and running costs, and comes directly from the government.



The figures below show broadly how we will spend our budget on services in 2023/23.

All data to be updated as part of Council tax leaflet 2023/24 prep – mid Feb 2023





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To find out more about how you can take part in local democracy by asking questions or making statements at council meetings, visit: oxfordshire.gov.uk/council

You can apply, book, find, report and pay for a range of services on the county council's website: oxfordshire.gov.uk

LET'S TALK

Have your say in consultations about changes to council services or policies at: letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk

SIGN UP

For monthly news and updates from across the county, sign up to Your Oxfordshire and get the latest direct to your inbox.
oxfordshire.gov.uk/newsletter



New Budget Pressures following the Autumn Statement

Reference	New Budget Pressures following the Autumn Statement	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000
	Adult Services				
24AD1 increase	Social Care Package inflation	2,000	6,400		8,400
24AD17 New	In the context of heightened demand and complexity across health and social care sectors following the pandemic, and the introduction of the CQC Social Care Assurance framework from April 2023, it is proposed that this additional funding is made available to Adult Social Care to help manage the risk these challenges pose. Further work is required to identify exactly how the funding will be utilised, however it is clear that some targeted action will be required to address known areas of risk, ahead of CQC inspection. In addition there is a need to expand the permanent workforce both inside and outside of the council, and that financial risk is increasing with demand and complexity beyond that previously anticipated as part of the budget proposals	4,400			4,400
	Total Adult Services	6,400	6,400	0	12,800
	Children's Services				
	<u>Home to School Transport Inflation</u>				
24CS30 New	The most recent mainstream bus tenders saw bids on average coming in at 32% greater than the medium term contracts previous run. These are deemed presentative of the rest of the market and the full impact will be seen over the medium term as cohorts of contracts are tendered. This pressure exceeds that of the 12% incorporated into the budget strategy process.	213	213	213	639
24CS31 New	As the DPS award system has no fixed contract inflation, there is pressure to upgrade the system in place to help support the SEND market stability and either incorporate a temporary fix, as well as to consider inflation as part of the routine contract estimated at 6% per annum. This pressure exceeds the one year inflation figure in the budget strategy for this area.		305	305	610
24CS6 increase	Inflation: funding for estimated inflationary increases to the cost of care.	1,300			1,300
	<u>Other Pressures</u>				
24CS32 New	Home to School Transport: Based on the demographic growth forecast from Newton, both SEN and Post 16 are seeing a significant increase in the number of students needing EHCPs. 33% of students with plans require transport and the student increases are estimated as follows (2022/23) 15%, (2023/24) 10%, (2024/25) 11% and (2025/26) 9%. This pressure is on top of the £1.3m demographic growth already in the MTFP.	2,200	1,500	1,200	4,900
24CS4 increase for risk	Reflecting national trends the number of children we care for has increased and placement costs are higher. Part of the increase arises from a higher number of children requiring very high cost support due to lack of suitable placements both locally and nationally	2,000			2,000
	Total Children's Services	5,713	2,018	1,718	9,449

Reference	New Budget Pressures following the Autumn Statement	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000
	Environment & Place				
	<u>Highways Maintenance</u>				
24EP2 increase	Highways Maintenance - increased pressure based on the new OBR RPI forecast	712			712
	<u>Waste Management</u>				
24EP26 New	Waste Management - increased pressure based on the new OBR RPI/CPI forecast	1,273			1,273
	<u>Street Lighting and Street Furniture Energy</u>				
24EP1 increase	24EP1 assumes that the on-going effect of inflationary increases for energy costs in 2022/23 is £1.2m in 2023/24. The basket rate for the KW/hr for 2023/24 is now estimated to increase by a further 45%. That will increase costs a further £1.4m above the available budget.	1,400			1,400
	Total Environment & Place	3,385	0	0	3,385
	Customers, Culture & Corporate Services				
24CCCS31 New	Property Facilities Management - additional contract inflation of 11% based on the OBR inflation projection set out in the Autumn Statement.	100	100	50	250
24CCCS32 New	Property Cleaning - in-year contract inflation pressure (£140k) plus additional contract inflation of 11% in 2023/24 following the OBR projection set out in the Autumn Statement	280	0	0	280
24CCCS33 New	Property Catering - additional food and utilities inflation resulting in an increase cost for school meal which can't be recovered due to restriction on price increase on school meal. This follows the increased inflation projection set out by the OBR in the Autumn Statement	250	100	50	400
24CCCS1 increase future years	Utilities - the planned increase is based on an additional 10% during 2024/25 and a further 1.5% during 2025/26 as per the OBR inflation projection set out in the Autumn Statement.	0	350	55	405
24CCCS34 New	Landlord & Tenant - additional contract inflation of 11% in 2023/24 and 10% for the following 2 years based on the OBR inflation projection set out in the Autumn Statement	537	370	370	1,277
24CCCS35 New	Coroners - increase rates	75			75
24CCCS36 New	Core infrastructure support for the Voluntary & Community Sector	75			75
	Total Customers, Culture & Corporate Services	1,317	920	525	2,762
	Corporate Changes				
24CC16	Increase pay award to 4.5% in 2023/24 (from 3.5% assumption)	2,600	100	100	2,800
	Total Corporate Changes	2,600	100	100	2,800
	Subtotal Inflation Changes	10,815	7,938	1,143	19,896
	Subtotal Other Changes	8,600	1,500	1,200	11,300
	TOTAL NEW BUDGET PRESSURES	19,415	9,438	2,343	31,196

Proposed Changes to Savings

Reference	Changes to Savings	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000
	Public Health & Community Safety				
24PHCS2 remove	Reinstate one-off contribution to capital for replacement Fire & Rescue Service vehicles	800	-800		0
	Total Public Health & Community Safety	800	-800	0	0
	Environment & Place				
24EP12 remove	Commuted Sums - remove one-off draw down of funding held for the future maintenance of highways in Oxfordshire. This reflects expenditure on highway maintenance associated with development works needing repair over recent years.	2,250	-2,250		0
	Total Environment & Place	2,250	-2,250	0	0
	Customers, Culture & Corporate Services				
	<u>Estates, Assets & Investments</u>				
24CCCS17 remove	Community Action Team / Voluntary and Community Sector buildings - remove one - off contribution from reserves in 2023/24	116	-116		0
24CCCS18 remove	Remove one-off delay in hard Facilities Management maintenance work	410	-410		0
24CCCS19 remove	Remove one - off delay to business as usual maintenance	200	-200		0
24CCCS26 reduce	Cultural Services (Libraries) - reduction in supplies & services expenditure, plus vacancy management - reduce saving on one - off basis to enable implementation.	153	-153		0
	Total Customers, Culture & Corporate Services	879	-879	0	0
	Corporate Changes				
24CC15 (add back funding to support capital programme)	The budget agreed in February 2022 includes on-going revenue funding for £90m of borrowing to support the council's capital programme. This was proposed to be reduced by £20m to release the annual revenue cost of financing that element of the borrowing but this will be reinstated so the whole £90m is available to support the capital programme.	1,200			1,200
	Total Corporate Changes	1,200	0	0	1,200
	TOTAL PROPOSED CHANGES TO SAVINGS	5,129	-3,929	0	1,200

Proposed Budget Increases

Reference	New Budget Increases	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
		£000	£000	£000	£000
	Children's Services				
24CS33 New	SEND: additional staffing to improve capacity for Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) Reviews and assessments	500			500
	Total Children's Services	500	0	0	500
	Environment & Place				
	<u>Improving Public Transport for our residents</u>				
24EP27 New	Countywide Community Transport Initiatives	1,200			1,200
24EP28 New	Park & Ride – extension of current ticket offer (includes estimate of City revenue loss)	500			500
24EP29 New	Improve Children's Transport Options (Active Travel Animators). Expand the team in Supported Transport to work with young people and their families to develop Active Travel options.	300			300
24EP30 New	Transport Hubs (revenue funding for capital expenditure of £0.5m per year for three years in locations across Oxfordshire including e-bike hire, car club promotion etc). Funding will fall out in 2026/27.	500			500
	<u>Improving the Travel Experience for Residents</u>				
24EP31 New	Improvements to travel information	100			100
24EP32 New	Flooding and Drainage – tackling the worst areas prone to flooding – practical projects with Parish Councils and proactive ditch clearance. Build the team to support flood resilience across communities in Oxfordshire	600			600
24EP33 New	Resource to develop Freight Strategy (1 FTE)	60			60
	Total Environment and Place	3,260	0	0	3,260
	Changes funded from the increase in council tax collection fund surpluses				
	Customers, Culture & Corporate Services				
24CCCS37 New	Councillor Priority Fund (£15,000 per councillor to be used over two years) and two year administration cost	1,015	-1,015		0
24CCCS38 New	Council Tax Support Schemes/Cost of Living Measures	2,300	-2,300		0
	Total Customers, Culture & Corporate Services	3,315	-3,315	0	0
	Changes to Budgets held Centrally				
24CS16 New	Increase balances to risk assessed level	6,800	-6,800		0
	Total Changes to Budgets held Centrally	6,800	-6,800	0	0
	TOTAL PROPOSED BUDGET INCREASES	13,875	-10,115	0	3,760

Oxfordshire County Council

Budget and Business Planning 2023/24

Overarching climate impact review of 2023/24 budget proposals

Context & Background

1. This overarching climate impact assessment provides an assessment of the potential impact of proposed changes to the budget on the council's ability to meet climate action commitments.
2. The [strategic plan 2022 - 2025 \(pdf format, 3.6Mb\)](#) sets out the council's vision to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. This commitment is strengthened further by the Councils' priority to 'put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work'. The council's adopted climate action framework also commits the council to:
 - Being carbon neutral in its operations by 2030
 - Enabling a zero-carbon Oxfordshire by 2050
3. The council has a cross-organisational work programme to deliver on these commitments. The latest report on this programme can be found at [Decision - Climate Action Update | Oxfordshire County Council](#). In the 22/23 budget setting process the council made additional investment of £0.824m in climate action and resilience measures including:
 - Supporting community activity to cut carbon emissions and helping the transition to electric vehicles (EVs), as well as increasing its capacity as the lead flood authority for Oxfordshire.
 - Supporting plans to develop a countywide nature recovery strategy, develop a tree and woodland strategy and support the development of a new local nature partnership for Oxfordshire.
 - Investing in supporting the retrofitting of residential homes to improve energy efficiency and support the delivery of a zero-carbon route-map for the county.
 - Working work with partners to expand EV charging capacity across the county and sustain the benefits of Project Local Energy Oxfordshire (LEO). Project LEO is running energy trials in the county to help build a greener (zero carbon), more flexible and fairer electricity system.

4. It is currently unclear what the impact of the national financial position will be on delivery of the national Net Zero Strategy (both through financing and bringing forward supportive policy). This is outside the scope of this report but will be a key factor in enabling the delivery of local climate objectives as the council bids for both capital and revenue funding for climate action. Decisions made by central government in this context will also influence private sector investment in this area.

Purpose of a Climate Impact Review

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

Revenue Proposals Climate Impact Review

7. As identified within the budget and business planning report, issues and volatility in the wider economy, including the ongoing impact of inflation which increased by 10.7% in the year to November 2022, workforce shortages and supply side issues mean that similar to local households the council needs to pay more to maintain the same level of service provision.
8. No revenue proposals were identified as materially negatively impacting the council's overall ability to meet its climate action commitments.
9. A one-off reduction in revenue budget for the climate action service (24EP23) is proposed. This is offset by a multi-year commitment to increase staff resource in this area agreed in the 2021/22 budget setting process. The one-off reduction will be delivered through less reliance on consultancy resource made possible by greater in-house capacity.
10. The impacts of national government policy on removing charges for DIY waste (24EP9) will be monitored and any negative impacts be addressed through the waste partnership. The national influence of limited care placements locally and nationally (24CS4) may create pressures on need to travel both for our staff and families. This may in part be mitigated through the council's low carbon business travel project set out in the capital programme.
11. A number of proposals will positively contribute to the delivery of climate commitments;
 - Prevention of unsorted waste at Household Waste Recycling Centres will increase diversion to recycling (24EP20)
 - The council is now predicting lower overall growth in waste tonnages driven by a range of national and local factors (24EP21 and 24EP22)
 - The council is investing in staff resource to continue the decarbonisation and resilience of its estate particularly in buildings and fleet. Proposals are also

included associated with increasing efficiency operation of the fleet asset, reduction of property footprint and more efficient use of office space and replacement of ICT with more efficient equipment (24CCCS3, 24CC10, 24CC05, 24CCCS16 and 24CC07)

- The council is investing in measures to improve public transport services for residents including rural services
- The council is investing in measures to make active travel more accessible for example supporting active travel options for young people and developing Transport Hubs
- The council is investing in practical projects working with Parish Councils to improve drainage and reduce flooding in the worse impacted areas.

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

Capital Proposals Climate Impact Review

13. A fundamental review of the current capital programme has been undertaken, prioritising the schemes and initiatives using the framework included at Annex 4a. This includes an assessment of schemes contributing to Climate Action or Active Travel (Prioritisation Category 3).
14. Climate Impact Assessments of the proposals in Annex 4b will be carried out as full business cases are developed following our capital governance process. Potential climate impacts have been identified from the information available to us at the current time.
15. No capital proposals were identified as materially negatively impacting the council's overall ability to meet its climate action commitments.
16. The central Oxford property strategy looks to rationalise our property estate as less overall office space is required, reflecting new ways of working. Funds generated will be used to re-invest in the remainder of our property portfolio including upgrading existing buildings, investing in energy efficiency measures and renewables, development of green infrastructure and essentially providing comfortable working environments for staff.
17. When procuring homes for vulnerable children within the County the priority criteria is to find a house in a safe location. However, provision has been made in the overall budget to bring any homes purchased up to a good energy efficiency rating. Homes are generally within suburban areas with good access to public transport.
18. Low carbon business travel - a strategic intervention is included in the budget to reduce carbon associated with necessary operational high mileage business travel. Although, certain roles currently require frequent travel this represents only a small fraction of staff (approx.1%) who are high mileage operational users. This measure therefore needs to be taken forward in the context of a wider travel management plan working with services to reduce overall mileage, explore alternative travel options within teams and promote and enforce the travel hierarchy. Further actions

should be included in the annual renewal of the councils Carbon Management Plan in May 23.

19. Several investments support active travel by making the option safer and more accessible i.e. the Vision Zero programme and repair works to the Thames Towpath.
20. A site for a replacement mortuary has not yet been identified, however, due to the nature of the facility it is likely that a new build will be required. This will be built in accordance with our net zero carbon building standards policy.
21. The utility spaces in 4 out of 6 of our designated gypsy and traveller sites will be upgraded improving both facilities for residents and energy efficiency at the sites.
22. The expansion of special schools – as these schools are classed as free schools and therefore building works are designed, planned and executed by the Department for Education (DfE) and not Oxfordshire County Council. The DfE has adopted net zero carbon requirements for its schools.
23. Provision has been made within the programme for investment in transitioning the council's fleet to electric vehicles, reducing the impact of the council's front line business travel, and delivering the councils property strategy which support the council's commitment to be net zero by 2030.
24. Provision is also made for piloting an energy efficiency loan scheme for maintained schools to support schools to invest in energy efficiency improvements.
25. £3m has been prioritised for further climate priorities. The pathway to zero carbon Oxfordshire report recognises a need to plant 23,000 tree's by 2050 across Oxfordshire. Many organisations and landowners are working on this and this investment will help the council to meet its own tree policy aspiration of replacing every highway tree felled, with two new ones. Between 2015 and 2022 a total of 3,942 highway trees had to be felled as they were at the end of their life, dead or dangerous. These have not been replaced and this funding will support the aspirations of the council's tree policy of replacing any tree felled with two new ones.
26. £24m of investment need in decarbonising our estate has been added to the capital pipeline for consideration to fund from 2024/25 supporting meeting our net zero targets and increasing the resilience and energy efficiency of our estate, following decisions made in our property strategy in 2023/24.
27. Investment in household waste recycling centres is also identified in the capital pipeline for future consideration, following agreement of a household waste recycling centre strategy. This investment will in part support more sustainable management of waste through greater provision for recycling and reuse.

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Oxfordshire County Council

Budget and Business Planning 2023/24

DRAFT Overarching Equality Impact Assessment

Context and Purpose

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

This assessment sets out the equalities impact of our revenue budget proposals for 2023/24.

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

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

These protected characteristics are:

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

Including Everyone – an inclusive Oxfordshire

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

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

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

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

Equality Impact Assessments

All council decisions are reviewed for equality impact at the appropriate level of detailed analysis, depending on the potential service impact of the proposed change. This allows for the review of the potential impacts of new and updated policies and service delivery decisions on those with protected and/or additional characteristics. Where there is potential for material service impact, a formal Equality Impact Assessment is completed.

This Overarching Equality Impact Assessment is made in support of the council's whole Budget and Business Planning proposals for 2023/24. It provides summary information on the equalities impacts which the council's budget proposals might have if the proposals are approved and implemented. It also gives an indication of how we might mitigate any potential negative impacts.

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

Overarching Equality Impact Assessment – approach

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

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Where a potential material service impact has been identified, an initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. These individual Equality Impact Assessments are available as part of the background papers. Following the public consultation, impact assessments will be reviewed and updated as necessary to take into account consultation responses.

Background Papers

One detailed Equality Impact Assessment has been published with the Budget Report as a background paper:

- Increase in parking income due to factors such as usage fees and locations

Public Consultation

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

At present there are no public consultations planned on individual 2023-24 savings proposals.

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate / Service Area	All Directorates and Service Areas
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed change).	This assessment sets out the overall impact that the revenue budget and business planning proposals have on a range of equality and diversity characteristics, including the nine protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010. The assessment also summarises any mitigations that have been planned or put in place to reduce or remove any potentially negative impacts.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	This impact assessment provides an overview of the 2023/24 revenue budget and business planning proposals and so comments on existing programmes as well as new proposals.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community?	<p>This assessment covers the overall revenue budget and business planning proposal for Oxfordshire County Council for 2023-24. It seeks to highlight key evidence and intelligence that the council has used to assess the impact of its budget proposals on the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>In line with our equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI) framework, the council has also assessed the impact on those living in rural areas, those living with social deprivation, armed forces communities, carers and those leaving care, and Social Value.</p> <p>This assessment has not identified any bias, unfair advantage or disadvantage to any groups or individuals. Where potential negative impacts have been identified, mitigations have been put in place to reduce impact.</p> <p>A summary of the impacts of the budget proposals on climate change outcomes have been set out in a separate overarching Climate Impact Assessment.</p>
Completed By	Steven Fairhurst Jones
Authorised By	Chloe Taylor
Date of Assessment	November 2022

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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><u>Oxfordshire County Council's vision</u> is to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.</p> <p>We want to make sure that everyone in Oxfordshire can take advantage of what the county has to offer. Our strategic plan explains our nine cross-cutting priorities and commitments to achieve our vision and sets out our areas of focus.</p> <p>Our nine priorities are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work. 2. Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire. 3. Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents. 4. Support carers and the social care system. 5. Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network. 6. Preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces. 7. Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential. 8. Play our part in a vibrant local democracy. 9. Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit. <p>In recent years Oxfordshire County Council has delivered significant savings both in response to reductions in government funding and in order to release funds to reinvest in meeting rising demand. This budget and business planning round has been impacted due to the financial pressures on the council and local authorities as a whole, given the national and international economic situation. All local authorities face significant increases in inflation that are driving up costs and price increases in energy, fuel and materials. This year, the Government is not expected to update budgets in light of soaring inflation, so we are facing a significant funding shortfall in 2023-24.</p>
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	<p>The council is also facing other demand-led pressures, which include the growing nationwide costs of supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities; the rising cost of social care and care placements for both children and adults; and a national shortage of social care workers leading to a reliance on agency staff and higher costs.</p> <p>The recent Census also confirms Oxfordshire has a growing and ageing population, which will continue to increase demand on services.</p> <p>In addition, the financial impact of implementing the government's adult social care reforms is unclear and could add to these pressures. Finally, on top of this, the long-term financial impact of supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities, particularly those with high needs, remains uncertain. The support is managed by the council but is funded separately through the government's dedicated schools grant, which has been consistently less than the sum required in Oxfordshire.</p>
<p>Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>This impact assessment covers all savings proposals across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health and Community Safety • Adult Social Care • Children's Services • Environment and Place • Customers, Culture and Corporate Services <p>Details of proposals are set out in the main Budget and Business Planning papers.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and</p>	<p>In considering the impact of budget proposals before they are formally agreed, the council undertakes a detailed process of democratic and community engagement. For equalities this includes:</p>

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<p>stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of health and wellbeing needs, and the associated Equalities Briefing, to consider the impact of proposals as they are drawn up and in the development of this overarching assessment. The council's JSNA can be found here; • Using data and intelligence gathered through implementing our Including Everyone Framework on equalities, diversity and inclusion, which can be found here; • Directorates follow the council's approach to undertaking Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA). This includes considering at an early stage what impacts each proposal might have on the nine protected characteristics or on wider community groups, and subsequently setting out greater detail, including any actions identified to mitigate negative impacts. Where potential impacts are assessed as significant, individual Equalities Impact Assessments have been published to aid understanding and outline mitigations. • A public consultation process is being undertaken for the budget proposals. EIAs will be updated as necessary following the budget consultation to take account of responses. • A democratic process including agreement of proposals by Cabinet, analysis and comment on those proposals by Performance Scrutiny Committee, and adoption of a budget by Full Council. Each of these stages provides an opportunity to invite comment and engagement from the public and representatives of particular organisations or population groups.
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Section 3: Impact Assessment

<p>Assessing the evidence and impact on those with the protected and additional characteristics</p>	<p>Demographic data has been taken from the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2022 unless otherwise stated.</p> <p>Age: As of mid-2020 there were a total of 696,800 residents in Oxfordshire (49.9% were male and 50.1% were female). Compared with England, Oxfordshire had a higher proportion of residents aged 15-19 (40,702), 20-24 (49,745) and 75+ (62,782) but a lower proportion of 30-34 year olds (41,419). There were</p>
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18,620 people aged 85+ which is 0.2% higher than the England average. The 65+ population is predicted to increase by 18% by mid-2030. Oxford's two universities had 35,260 full time students registered for the academic year 2020-21 which will account for some of the residents in the younger age profile.

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

Disability: In 2020-21 around 20% of people in the South East region have a disability, equating to an estimated 153,300 people in Oxfordshire. For children the most common impairments are social or behavioural, while mobility impairments are the most common in adults. In November 2021 there was a total of 49,653 disability-related benefits claimed in Oxfordshire, and 1,661 adults receiving long-term social care for learning disabilities from the council's Adult Social Care services as of April 2022.

The proposal to increase parking income includes better management of on-street parking demand in central locations could initially result in reduced parking availability for people with disabilities. The relevant service team will address this with mitigation as set out in the detailed EIA.

Gender Reassignment: In 2021-22, there were 802 applications for gender recognition certificates in the UK (up from 466 in 2020-21), but this will be under-representative of those whose gender identity does not match the sex they were registered with at birth. There is limited information available on gender identity at a local level, but a research study suggests that there were 56 referrals for treatment of gender dysphoria made between 2004 and 2009 to the Department of Psychological Medicine at the John Radcliffe Hospital.

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

Pregnancy and maternity: There were 6,931 live births in Oxfordshire in 2020. The county has an above average proportion of births to older mothers.

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

Marriage and civil partnership: At the time of the 2011 Census there were 128,400 married households in Oxfordshire and 682 registered same-sex civil partnerships. Same-sex marriage became legal in 2014. In 2019 in Oxfordshire there were 2,880 marriages of opposite-sex couples and 64 same-sex marriages.

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

Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality: In the 2011 Census, 107,000 people in Oxfordshire were of an ethnic minority background. This was an increase of 60,900 from 2001. The JSNA highlights that around 16% of the county's population is from an ethnic minority background. More recent data from January 2022 highlights that 29% of pupils in primary schools in Oxfordshire were from an ethnic minority background; this rose to 58% of children in primary schools in Oxford. The top first languages other than English were Polish, Urdu, Portuguese, and Arabic.

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

Religion or Belief: JSNA data on religion and belief is based on the 2011 Census where this question was voluntary. The proportion of Oxfordshire residents who responded stating that they had a religion was 65%. Of these respondents, 93% said they were Christian, 3.7% were Muslim, 0.9% were Hindu, 0.8% were Buddhist, 0.4% were Jewish and 0.3% were Sikh.

The proposal to increase parking income includes better management of on-street parking demand in central locations, which could initially result in restricted availability to uncontrolled parking around religious sites. The relevant service team will address this with mitigation as set out in the detailed EIA.

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Sex: As of mid-2020 there were 347,569 (49.9%) males and 349,311 (50.1%) females living in Oxfordshire.

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

Sexual Orientation: There is limited data on sexual orientation, defined as people who identify as heterosexual/straight, gay / lesbian, bisexual or another sexual orientation. The JSNA estimates that there was a total of 18,446 people aged 16+ in Oxfordshire identifying lesbian, gay or bisexual in 2020.

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

Rural Communities: 85 out of 407 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Oxfordshire are ranked within the most deprived 10% nationally on the geographical access to services (defined as road distance to a post office, primary school, GP and supermarket) in 2019. People aged 65+ made up 20% of the population in Oxfordshire's four rural districts, compared to 13% of the population in the city centre (18.8% of the overall population).

The proposal to increase parking income could impact both positively and negatively on rural communities. The relevant service team will mitigate impacts as they are identified.

Armed Forces: In April 2021 there were 9,480 regular armed forces personnel stationed in Oxfordshire and in March 2021 there were 6,606 recipients of pensions/compensation under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, War Pension Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme in the county.

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

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Carers: In 2020-21 there were a total of 4,275 carers in Oxfordshire who were registered and receiving a service in the form of a carer's assessment or direct payment from a pooled budget. The 2011 Census estimated that there were 61,100 unpaid carers in Oxfordshire and as of March 2022, the county council was supporting 271 young carers (aged between 0-15).

The proposal to increase parking income could impact both positively and negatively on carers. The relevant service team will mitigate impacts if they are identified.

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

This impact assessment has identified no specific impact of our budget and business planning proposals on Care Leavers.

Areas of Social Deprivation: Oxfordshire has low levels of deprivation relative to England. However, there are nine areas in Oxford City, six in Banbury and one in Abingdon which fall within the 20% most deprived areas in the country, with one of the Oxford City areas falling within the 10% most deprived. These communities are often more frequent users of many public services.

The overall budget proposals have been developed with the objective of effectively targeting services so that we continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and fulfil our statutory duties, with most impact on those living with social deprivation.

The proposal to increase parking income could impact both positively and negatively on areas of social deprivation. The relevant service team will mitigate impacts if they are identified.

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

Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

19 January 2023

Cost of Living Update

Report by Robin Rogers, Programme Director (Partnerships and Delivery)

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider and comment on:**
 - a. The measures Oxfordshire County Council have put in place to mitigate the effect of the cost of living crisis on residents across Oxfordshire.
 - b. Planned and proposed future measures.

Executive Summary

2. Residents across Oxfordshire are feeling the impact of significant increases in the cost of living not met by increases in income. Inflation is currently concentrated in energy and food costs, leading to disproportionate impact on those on the lowest incomes. The Government has announced a range of measures to support households. However, these measures will not be able to meet all need and there is significant risk that some households will be put under severe pressure with long-term financial, economic, and social consequences. This report summarises how Oxfordshire County Council has applied resources locally worked in partnership with other organisations, to help mitigate the effect of this crisis on Oxfordshire residents.

Overview

3. This item provides an update on Oxfordshire County Council's responses to the cost of living crisis. It gives an update on the measures the Council has implemented to help residents, reflects on lessons learnt to date, and outlines planned and proposed work. Finally, it briefly considers the Council's work as compared to the role of county councils nationally.

The Cost of Living Crisis

4. Pressures on the costs of living have been rising for some time. Inflationary pressures (driven significantly due to increasing prices of fuel, energy and food) along with low wage growth (especially for lower earners) has created a challenging environment for households. Inflation has an unequal impact: those earning the least (including those reliant on state benefits) experience the most significant and detrimental impact. This extends to ethnic minorities, those with disabilities, and low-income families with children.
5. A short briefing note on the drivers underpinning the cost of living crisis, and related research, is enclosed at **Annex 1**.
6. It is within this context that Oxfordshire County Council and its partners are operating. This background underpins the Council's approach to alleviating the crisis across Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire County Council: Response

Overview

7. While local authorities have a crucial role helping residents during this challenging time, this is a national issue which the Council cannot resolve alone. Indeed, as the County Councils Network notes, "whilst councils are doing their utmost, we also recognise that we do not hold all the answers and navigating the present crisis will be complex, with strong partnership working between the public sector, the government, and the private sector necessary."¹ Significant national schemes are in place as part of the overall cost of living response. However, locally focussed activity can add an additional layer of support in identifying those most in need within our own local circumstances. Many of the factors driving the crisis and options for responding are not within the control of the Council and, so, partnership work is and has been key to the Council's response, as outlined below.
8. In that context, this section outlines measures implemented and planned by Oxfordshire County Council to mitigate the effect of the cost of living crisis on Oxfordshire residents.

¹¹ [New report shows how county authorities are helping their communities through the cost of living crisis - County Councils Network](#) p.3

Response Measures

9. In September 2022, a report was provided to Cabinet outlining implemented, ongoing, and proposed measures. Measures that had been implemented or were ongoing included the second round of the Household Support Fund, the continuation of the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF), support for the voluntary and community sector and grants to Citizens Advice, Better Housing Better Health, and the Care Workers Charity. Proposed measures included establishing an in-house crisis support service, expanded council tax reduction and hardship fund schemes, using our libraries as warm spaces, and providing two £100,000 grants to the voluntary and community sector. This section provides an update on these measures.
10. Officers adopted the following approach when developing these schemes:
 - Targeting limited funding towards the most financially at risk;
 - Working in partnership by putting resources where they have maximum impact e.g., by delegating funding to the City and District Councils and to the voluntary and community sector where they are the most effective delivery partners;
 - Delivering timely and sustainable responses by building on existing and proven models where available (e.g., by expanding Better Housing Better Health) and interventions which support people to support themselves, in line with core corporate approaches, including The Oxfordshire Way (e.g., support to advisory services);
 - Protecting community infrastructure e.g., VCS support and the Community Building Energy Support Scheme;
 - Moving forward to deliver tactical responses at the same time as developing longer term, strategic measures.
11. The set-of schemes outlined have been developed through engagement with City and District councils, the voluntary and community sector, local advisory agencies, Children's Trust, the Health and Well Being Board, and internal Council colleagues in Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Education, and Public Health. In particular, schemes were informed by the Cost of Living roundtable where statutory and VCS partners shared their experiences of the cost of living crisis and their suggestions for moving forward.
12. The development of the following programme of support also integrated learning from support provided during Covid-19 and previous work on the cost of living. This includes the importance of clear communication, the need for partnership working and providing funding to the most impactful stakeholder,

awareness that increased complexity reduces the take-up of schemes, and the risk that the one-off funding streams, including the Household Support Fund, will end at some point, creating 'cliff-edges' for residents where funding will cease abruptly. For example, some parents, who have only been in the early years or school system long enough that their children have always been entitled to free school meal vouchers during holiday periods, experience this to be the normal level of support available.

Summary of Support

13. Table 2 below provides a summary of the specific cost of living funding provided so far in 2022/23:

Scheme	Description	Status	Value	Funding Source
Support for Families, Children, and Schools				
Free school meal equivalent support	£15 per eligible child per week of school holiday for 6 holiday weeks (May half-term and Summer 2022). Including Early Years Providers. Schools may provide at their discretion even if students not eligible for FSM.	Delivered	£1,800,000	HSF 2
Free school meal equivalent support	As above, for October half-term, Christmas vacation, and February half-term.	Funding delivered for October / December	£1,000,000	HSF 3
Early Years Support Grant	Equivalent support for eligible younger children paid in a single grant of £60.	Funding delivered	£98,400	HSF 3
Targeted support for vulnerable groups				
Support for low-income pensioner households	£85 vouchers for 11,000 low-income pensionable households.	Delivered	£935,000	HSF 2
Council Tax Hardship Grants	Providing match funding to city & district councils to increase the support available for those residents in exceptional circumstances of financial hardship by providing discretionary assistance with their council tax.	In delivery	£380,000	Drawn down from budget priorities reserve, agreed September 2022
Emergency Welfare Schemes	Delegated to City and District Councils, including additional administrative costs. To help VCS deliver support including food services/hubs and application-based emergency support. Including £140,000 specifically to 656 pensioner households.	Round 2: Delivered Round 3: In delivery	£620,000 £559,712	HSF 2 HSF 3

Support for Voluntary & Community Sector

Community Building Energy Support Scheme (CBESS)	£100,000 grant funding administered via Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF) to help VCS organisations with energy costs this winter.	Grant determinations announced	£100,000	One off bring-forward of revenue funding, agreed September 2022
Contribution to Oxfordshire Community Foundation's cost of living grant round	£106,000 funding provided to OCF's cost of living grant round to support community – In addition OCF contributed £100,000 from funds held and raised an additional £85,000 in leveraged philanthropic funding.	Grant determinations announced	£106,000 (Creating total grant round of £291,000)	As above
Rent holiday	Rent holiday for 18 VCS organisations occupying Council premises for 2022/23 and 17 organisations in 2023/24.	Ongoing	£116,000	Agreed revenue budget 2022/23 and proposed 23/24
Grant to Citizens Advice	£210,000 grant to Citizens Advice to maintain debt and benefits advice services until June 2023. The Council also provided £50,000 to Citizens Advice to support with the costs of administration.	Delivered	£260,000	Cost of living revenue funding agreed February 2022 HSF 2
Grant to Care Workers Charity	£322,00 to the Care Workers Charity, providing crisis grants for the most in need and 'Blue Light Cards' for all eligible.	Delivered	£322,000	COVID funding
Grants to Better Housing better Health	Support for Better Housing Better Health , a local energy advice and retrofit service which helps keep residents warm and well at home and improves the energy efficiency of their homes. This includes a telephone and a home visit service, the latter being unique to Oxfordshire.	Ongoing	£500,000	Various sources across the Council and city/district partners including £245,000 cost of living funding agreed February 2022

Table 2: Summary of support being implemented by Oxfordshire County Council

14. In addition, the Council has supported a range of schemes across business areas which, although Cost of Living is not the only driver, have impact on the most vulnerable residents' day to day bills. These include:
- The Holiday Activity Fund: provided 30,000 places of positive, activity holiday child-care with the provision of quality food for lower income families
 - On-going investment in retrofit insulation programmes, focusing on low income households and maximising the draw-down from national grant schemes
 - The £500,000 community capacity voluntary and community sector grant scheme, supporting grass-roots initiatives across the County to support vulnerable adults to stay connected in their communities

Forthcoming schemes

15. To complete the third round of Household Support Fund a further suite of interventions is planned for the final quarter of 2022/23 to support financially impacted groups. These include:
- Residents who don't qualify for key national cost of living schemes but are nevertheless in financial need;
 - Additional funding for schools to support families with key day to day needs (in addition to the Free School Meal grant);
 - Families of children who have disabilities or are severely ill;
 - Vulnerable adults we can identify as the most financially in need;
 - Carers, including low-income carers, Shared Lives carers, and foster families;
 - Hospital discharge leavers;
 - Other priority groups.
16. A fourth round of Household Support Funding has now been announced for 2023/24, allowing continuation and refinement of the interventions made so far. In addition, further measures for 2023/24 are under consideration as part of the business and budget planning process, as set out elsewhere on this agenda.

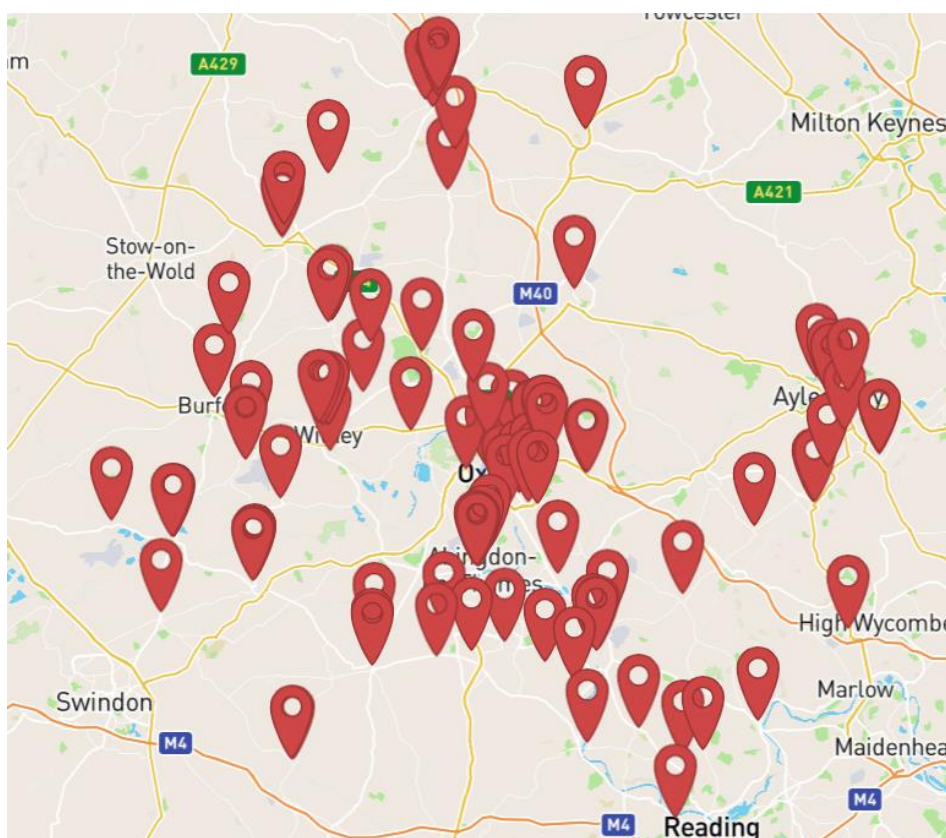
Warm Welcome

17. The County Council has supported organisations helping to provide warm and welcoming spaces this winter and, as usual, all 44 of our libraries are open as warm, welcoming, and safe spaces for the public. The Council agreed a co-ordinated approach with the city and district councils. The County Council and its city and district partners have encouraged all organisations offering a warm space or warm welcome to sign up to the national [Warm Welcome Network](#). To support their offer as a warm space, the County Council



funded the CBESS grant scheme to support local community organisations with energy costs.

18. [Oxford City Council](#) and Cherwell District Council, who felt that a hyper-local provision would be beneficial, have also developed their own local warm space/warm welcome networks and maps, recognising the need for such spaces to be organised around communities and networks at a hyper-local level. This was not felt to be appropriate in South Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire, and Vale of White Horse District Councils given the rurality of such regions.



Screenshot of Oxfordshire from the national Warm Welcome Network

19. The Council's 44 libraries have continued to offer a range of activities and events to residents and, as always, were open and welcoming to the public this winter. To enhance this offer, officers developed provision of warm drinks across all 44 libraries for three months (January to March) to accompany existing library activities. This should encourage residents to access support and engage in existing activities so that they maintain social connection this winter.
20. Officers opted for "Warm Welcome" rather than "warm bank" or "warm space" on the basis that it is less stigmatising and more welcoming. "Warm welcome" focuses on supporting existing activities and opportunities to avoid loneliness

and isolation as well as keeping healthy and well. Residents can also access help and support as well as accessing free wi-fi and open-access PCs.

Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector

21. In September 2022, Cabinet agreed to provide two grants to the voluntary and community sector to support important community organisations during the cost of living crisis.
22. By supporting the voluntary and community sector, the Council could continue its commitment to strengthening the sector as a whole and have greater confidence in ensuring that grants were allocated to grassroots organisations able to make a sharper impact at a local level. In addition, it supported existing community infrastructure during a difficult winter. This is of particular relevance to groups supporting residents, including community food services, money and debt advice, networks for older people and vulnerable adults and those working with families in need.
23. The first was to contribute to the Oxfordshire Community Foundation's Cost of Living grant funding round. The Council provided a total of £106,000 which was matched by OCF to the effect of £100,000. Since the launch of the scheme, OCF raised a further £80,000. Out of a total of 85 applications received (and £315,034 requested), 41 projects were funded. Future monitoring of the outcomes could inform further cost of living work across our respective organisations.
24. The second was to establish a bespoke fund, the Community Building Energy Support Scheme (CBESS), to support community organisations with energy costs to allow them to continue providing support and activities that contribute to wellbeing this winter. Given the need to establish the fund at pace, and a lack of requisite skills and resources within the Council at the time, the Council formally partnered with Oxfordshire Community Foundation to codesign and administer the scheme with the Council and, informally, with Community First Oxfordshire to sharpen our collective understanding of community organisations across County. Further details on CBESS are provided below.
25. Throughout the process the Council remained alert to the pressures and potential lack of capability within voluntary sector organisations to complete the application form. Consequently, the form was purposefully short and simple.
26. CBESS received 138 applications asking for a total of £295,855 out of an available sum of £100,000 investment from the Council.
27. The grant panel arrangement determined the merits of each application in respect of the established broad criteria while ensuring that money was

disbursed across the County. Challenging decisions were made which resulted in all monies being spent across 105 different projects. Due to oversubscription of the scheme, additional criteria were needed to ensure funding was prioritised for those organisations most aligned to the scheme's policy intentions.

28. Applications which failed to secure funding failed due to one or more of the following reasons:
 - Not completing the application form completely or well enough to understand services provided and their beneficiaries;
 - Organisation applying was not a community/voluntary sector organisation;
 - Had already received funding to cover some/all operating costs within other funding rounds (Cost of Living or Community Capacity);
 - Organisations operating outdoor activities;
 - Organisations operating pre-school facilities or similar (and therefore had recourse to other funds).
29. The process led to various lessons learned:
 - a. Partnering with OCF enabled best delivery of scheme. The Council lacked the capacity and some of the capabilities required at that time to undertake a grant round which, as anticipated, was oversubscribed.
 - b. Despite efforts to provide funding across the Council, there were various 'cold spots' across the County where few or no applications were received for CBESS. Those areas included Wantage and Grove, Abingdon, Witney and Chipping Norton. The Council's continued response to the cost of living must better understand Oxfordshire's community infrastructure / assets.

Support for Staff

30. The annual pay award for 2022/23 was agreed as an increase of £1,295 across all pay scales back dated to 1 April 2022. The offer was designed to ensure those on the lowest salaries benefited the most, with staff on scale points one to three receiving a salary increase of over 10 per cent. The proposal has been accepted by trade unions and the pay award, backdated to 1 April 2022, was paid at the end of December.
31. A one off payment was made to the lowest paid staff who incurred the highest levels of mileage due to the nature of their roles during 21/22. Those eligible were contacted by early October. To mitigate the impact of fuel costs in the longer term, a project is being implemented to transform the Council's fleet management to shift to more electric vehicles in line with the Council's commitment to climate action.

32. In response to rises in the cost of living, the Council is also introducing additional financial and wellbeing support for our workforce. The service is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and will be available in the next eight weeks. This service is at no cost to the Council. Resources will include:
- A wide range of educational resources to support financial wellbeing which are provided in a range of different formats to suit different learning styles and different financial situations.
 - A range of 'help to save' schemes directly deducted from salary
 - Responsible lending schemes
 - Advance – this give employees access to their pay as it is earned to help support emergencies and better budgeting.

Communications, Information, and Engagement

33. On the 6 October, representatives met around a virtual roundtable from across Oxfordshire's voluntary and community sector, NHS, local schools, county, city, and district councils to discuss a collaborative response to the Cost of Living crisis. Their key take-aways included:
- This is not just a short-term crisis: it will become a long-term crisis
 - The situation is urgent and widespread
 - There are many new groups of people in need
 - Communication is crucial: information must be visible and accessible
 - We must work collaboratively and locally
34. The Council's communications strategy was developed with this feedback in mind. The focus is on flagging up the support, advice, and resources available to residents across the county. This is a cross-county campaign, involving all district and city council partners, to amplify the message. There are two aspects to this campaign:

Council corporate activity – including the allocation of funding, the agreement of policies, news about delivery of packages of support with partners. This is being delivered through the press, social media, and residents' e-newsletter.

Countywide signposting and support – practical signposting and support provided through social media, digital channels, and posters. The Council's role is to clearly articulate the help on offer and provide a central place for people to come to find out information.

35. All residents continue to be directed to the Council's dedicated cost of living webpage where they can find support: **www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/living**

36. The Council's digital campaign is focused around three themes:

- Saving you money
- Keeping you warm and safe
- Supporting your family

This campaign continues to respond to new opportunities and help available to residents. Alongside this, the Council has provided a toolkit to district and city partners with digital assets, graphics, and messaging to ensure we jointly take a co-ordinated approach.

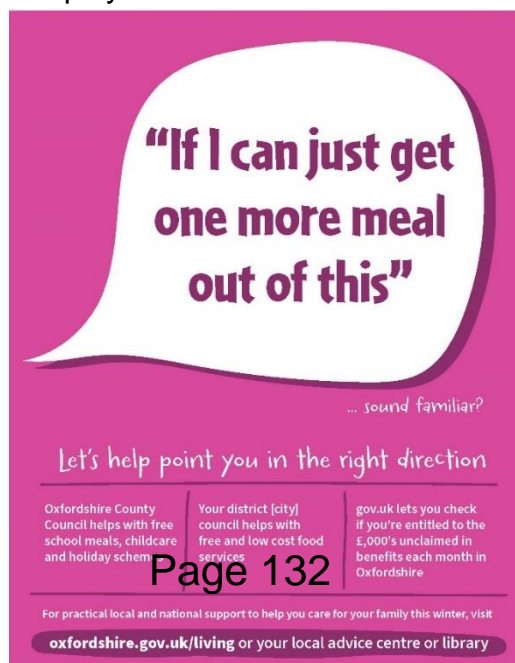
37. The Council has already received some good preliminary feedback on its campaign and messages.

38. The Cost of Living roundtable clearly fed back the importance of being aware of digitally excluded residents and the importance of posters and community activity. As a result, the Council sent out over 4,000 posters to over 600 locations across the County, including:

- Libraries
- Parish & Town Councils
- Village & Community halls
- Children's Centres
- GP practices
- Care providers
- Faith groups

Councillors can request posters [here](#).

39. Posters were also emailed to key VCS partners, including Oxfordshire Community Foundation, Community First Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Association, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, and Oxford Hub. The Council has also provided written content for use in community newsletters—again, to ensure a co-ordinated and joint-up approach. An example poster is displayed below:



Impact

40. Given the rate of change in circumstances and the range and complexity of national schemes in place, disaggregating the impact of one-off cost of living funding at the local level is not practical. However, informal feedback is clear that relief funding has positive impact on individuals.
41. For example, parent and school leaders continue to feedback that support ahead of school holidays remains an important resource for families. The City and Districts have committed the full delegation of local support funding in every round of funding, showing that need is being addressed. In addition, for the support offered to pensioner households, uptake of these vouchers is currently around 87%.
42. The Council has received a number of unsolicited positive responses to this support, with some letters saying:

“I write to offer my sincere gratitude for this payment, which will be of considerable benefit to my circumstances. Thank you.”

“It was such a welcome surprise to receive the support payment. The cost of living energy crisis has been an ongoing worry. Thank you for this help, much appreciated indeed!”
43. In building the business case for longer term interventions there is an opportunity to build in mechanisms for more formal impact assessment. For example, the programme mandate for the Better Housing Better Health programme incorporates impact measurement has dedicated funding to assess the health impact of this investment. Better Housing Better Health+ has completed 162 home visits so far. The National Energy Foundation operates in nine counties, but the BHBH home visit service only operates in Oxfordshire. Of those BHBH+ helps, about 75% have long-term health conditions, about 60% are over 65, and 43% and 37% are on means-tested and non-means-tested benefits respectively. At least 40% of BHBH calls provide support to social housing tenants.
44. The newly established crisis support service will incorporate regular and continuous reporting so that the Council can continually adjust criteria against the needs and experiences of residents.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

45. Providing a response to the cost of living crisis over the last six months has involved many challenges and led to lessons learned, summarised below.
46. The biggest challenge faced is that local efforts can only address a limited number of priority needs. Where national funding is provided, there is a conflict between the priorities which can be accommodated. For example, the Government has asked local authorities to provide support to those residents not qualifying for national cost of living payments because their benefits are locally provided. However, this provision must be balanced alongside other groups experiencing significant cost of living impact, including families with children and residents with disabilities.
47. An additional key challenge involves access to data about individuals, with the Council lacking an existing financial relationship with many individuals it has been asked to support, rendering it very difficult to provide support. To remedy this, the council is procuring a new system with the ability to safely pay directly into bank accounts at large scale.
48. Another challenge is the ability to accurately assess need. This is in part due to the fragmented nature of data ownership, with DWP and city and district councils owning significant data about individuals and their circumstances, but not the Council. This renders it difficult, as an upper-tier authority, to administer support directly to those in need. To enhance the Council's ability to target support in changing circumstances, Cabinet have agreed to implement a new Crisis Support Scheme in early 2023/24 to enable application-based schemes. This will allow the Council to provide support based on the level of need as detailed in the application. This will ensure that targeted support is provided at the appropriate level and that support is not only provided to those already known to the Council, but also those not already known. Funding will be derived from national schemes as they are confirmed in addition to the Council's four year funding agreed through the budget setting process in February 2022.
49. Another challenge is the short-term nature of the Household Support Fund and predecessor funding streams, lasting just 6 months and needing to be spent within that period, often with extremely limited advance notice. However, the fourth iteration of the Household Support Fund (HSF 4) from April 2023 has already been announced and is expected to last 12 months. Pending formal confirmation, this will allow for longer-term planning for the year ahead (see below). The Council has also mitigated this challenge by dedicating £500,000 of revenue funding to the ongoing impacts of the cost of living for 2022/23 and the three subsequent financial years.

Future Measures

50. With the above lessons learned in mind, the Council plans to deploy local and national resources to continue best supporting residents in need and providing the best value for money. This will include:
- **Implementing an in-house Crisis Support Scheme.** This will enable application-based support where residents can apply for emergency funding based on need. This will help provide support to digitally excluded residents, residents with unique circumstances, and residents who are unknown to the Council. This will bring the Council into line with other local authorities in terms of available provision. A procurement process is underway and officers hope this will be operational in Q1 2023/2024.
 - **Further work on maximising benefits.** The latest estimates show that between £55m and £75m of core government benefits go unclaimed in Oxfordshire each year. Communications and marketing about unclaimed benefits across Oxfordshire will continue. Building on this, officers are scoping out the possibility of a data-led approach to determine which households might be eligible for but not claiming benefits. This would be used to maximise the impact of benefit take-up schemes.
 - **Supporting city and district councils to deliver two central government schemes which will help those using alternative fuels.** The Council will support the City and District Councils to work closely with the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial strategy to provide the £400 energy rebate to households who do not have a direct relationship with their energy provider (including those in care homes, park homes, caravan sites, permanent traveller or boater addresses). The Council will also support the City and District Councils to work with DBEIS to deliver the £200 alternative fuels payment to households whose main source of fuel is not mains gas or electricity, such as those reliant on LPG or oil fuel.
 - **Investigate new support to vulnerable groups in acute need,** which may include low-income young people, those missing out on national schemes, and victims of domestic abuse.

What is the role of a county council during the cost of living?

51. This section considers the Council's response in light of the County Councils Network (CCN)'s *County Spotlight* on the role of county councils during the cost of living crisis, produced in June 2022.² This report highlighted best practice across county councils. Key points from this report are outlined below as a benchmark for the Council's work mitigating the effect of the cost of living.
52. The report highlighted various key guiding principles for counties, building on their unique position as upper-tier authorities:
 - Provide support to those most in need
 - Build on work learned from COVID-19
 - Combine local with strategic
 - Provide support quickly
 - Deliver comprehensive 'pan-county' schemes
53. The report also noted various limitations that counties face, namely significant inflationary costs / financial pressures as well as a lack of power over economic growth, housing, transport, and skills.
54. In terms of practical support, the report particularly highlighted the crucial role of upper-tier authorities in disbursing the Household Support Fund effectively. They underline the need to "support those at the sharp end of the cost of living crisis" using data insights to identify priority groups. Exemplar support included distribution of food vouchers, support for elderly people at risk of fuel poverty, and supporting communities. The Council has offered all of the above during 2022/23 in the form of free school meal holiday vouchers, 11,000 £85 vouchers to low-income pensionable households, and two grant rounds for community and voluntary organisations.
55. Below are listed the various forms of help highlighted by CCN—and whether/how the Council has provided this type of support:

² [New report shows how county authorities are helping their communities through the cost of living crisis - County Councils Network](#)

CCN suggested activity	Oxfordshire County Council response
Distributing food and fuel vouchers Vouchers for gas electric bills to low-income families	Distributed millions of pounds of food vouchers Procurement of fuel vouchers in train
Direct payment to local schools, colleges, and early years providers	Provided £15/eligible child per week for October half-term, Christmas holidays, and Feb half-term—for all schools, colleges, and early years providers
Freezing adult education and transport prices	Transport cost measures addressed in partnership with national schemes and additional proposals outlined through the 23/24 budget process.
Funding for care leavers	Additional dedicated support last provided during Christmas 2020. Care Leavers eligible through local welfare schemes and potential to provide support as part of HSF 4 and through the new crises fund.
Targeted support for those with disabilities and special needs	Yes, provided as part of four dedicated schemes for families with children with disabilities, vulnerable adults in receipt of care, adults with long-term health conditions identified by BHBH, and Shared Lives families. All funded by HSF 3.
Targeted funds to children in care and young carers	Support for carer families including families who have fostered children and low-income carers
Providing slow cookers, white goods, and electrical equipment	£15,000 discretionary pot to Better Housing Better Health to provide all three as part of our local energy advice service Discretionary funding for hospital discharge includes provision of all three
Free books and activity packs for households	The Council continues to support the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) scheme, providing 30,000 places and specific local advice and activity provided through Public Health and VCS funding
Grant funding for food banks and community pantries	Provided via emergency welfare funding delegated to City & district councils Also supported by CBESS grants
Funding to domestic abuse charities	Additional support to-be implemented through Public Health funding.
Financial support to voluntary groups and CAB	Dedicated cost of living support plus administrative support via delegated funding to city & districts and funding through VCS sustainability grant and community capacity grant.

Engagement and Governance

56. The proposed schemes have been developed in consultation with City and District councils, the voluntary and community sector, local advisory agencies, the NHS, and internal Council colleagues in Adult Social Care, Children's Services, CEF, and Public Health.
57. The proposed schemes have been developed following the Cost of Living roundtable where statutory and VCS partners shared their experiences of the cost of living crisis and their suggestions for moving forward. They also take into account lessons learned during Covid-19 and prior cost of living support.
58. The development of the Education Welfare Grant took into account a consultation with the Head Teachers Executive.

Financial and Staffing Implications

59. The full costs of the schemes herein, including identified administrative costs, will either be supported through the nationally provided HSF grants or through previously agreed corporate funding. Funding available for specific cost of living interventions is sourced as set out within the report and agreed either through the revenue setting process or specific decisions authorising additional funding, including the Cabinet report from September 2022. Additional proposals for further cost of living interventions, if required, will be included in budget proposals submitted to Cabinet for 2023/24 in January 2023. There are therefore no direct financial implications of this report.
60. Officer time from the existing programme team has been required to develop the schemes and further internal resources, including from corporate finance, service teams, digital and customer teams, corporate strategy, and communications.
61. Where specific additional administrative costs have been identified, these have been recovered from grant schemes, where permissible.
62. The on-going impact of increases in the cost of living on staff members themselves remains of concern and in addition to the measures set out in this report, will remain under review and reported through regular staffing reporting.

Comments checked by:

Bick Nguyen-McBride, Assistant Finance Business Partner, bick.nguyen-mcbride@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

63. Where funding is provided from national government for specific interventions, the Council is required to disperse funding in accordance with binding grant conditions. Where the Council is working in partnership with third parties to deliver interventions funded in such a way, appropriate grant agreements or contracts are in place to ensure that the grant conditions are complied with.

Comments checked by:

Paul Grant, Head of Legal (Deputy Monitoring Officer),
paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Sustainability Implications

64. Where possible, interventions to support with the costs of energy have been designed to additionally reduce energy usage and carbon production in the longer term, e.g., the Better Housing Better Health programme.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

65. The scheme is designed to meet the needs of the most economically disadvantaged residents in Oxfordshire, including low-income families and young children, residents with disabilities or long-term health conditions, hospital leavers, elderly residents, carers and those in care, and asylum seekers.
66. The new proposals outlined herein have taken multiple approaches to meet the needs of vulnerable residents with essential costs, especially energy, this winter.
67. To ensure the scheme provides support to the most in need, officers have recommended using existing criteria to identify vulnerable residents, such as free school meal eligibility, carer status, and receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction. In the case of Free School Meal equivalent support, support is extended at the discretion of schools to ensure the scheme supports those who do not quite qualify for existing free school meal criteria.
68. Discretion is at the heart of many elements of the schemes, which are designed with flexibility so that local professionals can exercise discretion to support a need that would not otherwise be met. This includes the Free School Meals+ programme, Hospital Discharge Support Fund, funding for Better Housing Better Health, and energy cost support for children with disabilities.

69. Nevertheless, there remain various groups which this proposal has been unable to support. This includes cohorts where some residents remain unknown to the Council, including carers (many of whom do not identify as carers) and adults with disabilities who do not receive care or support from the Council. Other cohorts include lower-income younger persons, care leavers, those on prepayment cards, and home schooled students. Officers plan to target support towards these groups as part of the recently announced HSF 4, for which the Council should have the ability to open application-based support for cohorts unknown to the Council, so long as HSF 4 guidance provides the flexibility to support these cohorts. Officers anticipate that this should be possible.
70. By including an open access application process through the City and District emergency welfare schemes, support can be made available for those who may not be able to access existing support programmes. The County Council's agreements with the City and District Councils includes the requirement for the recipient councils to have due regard to issues of equality and access in the design of their local schemes.

Annex 1: Oxfordshire Cost of Living Background, January 2023

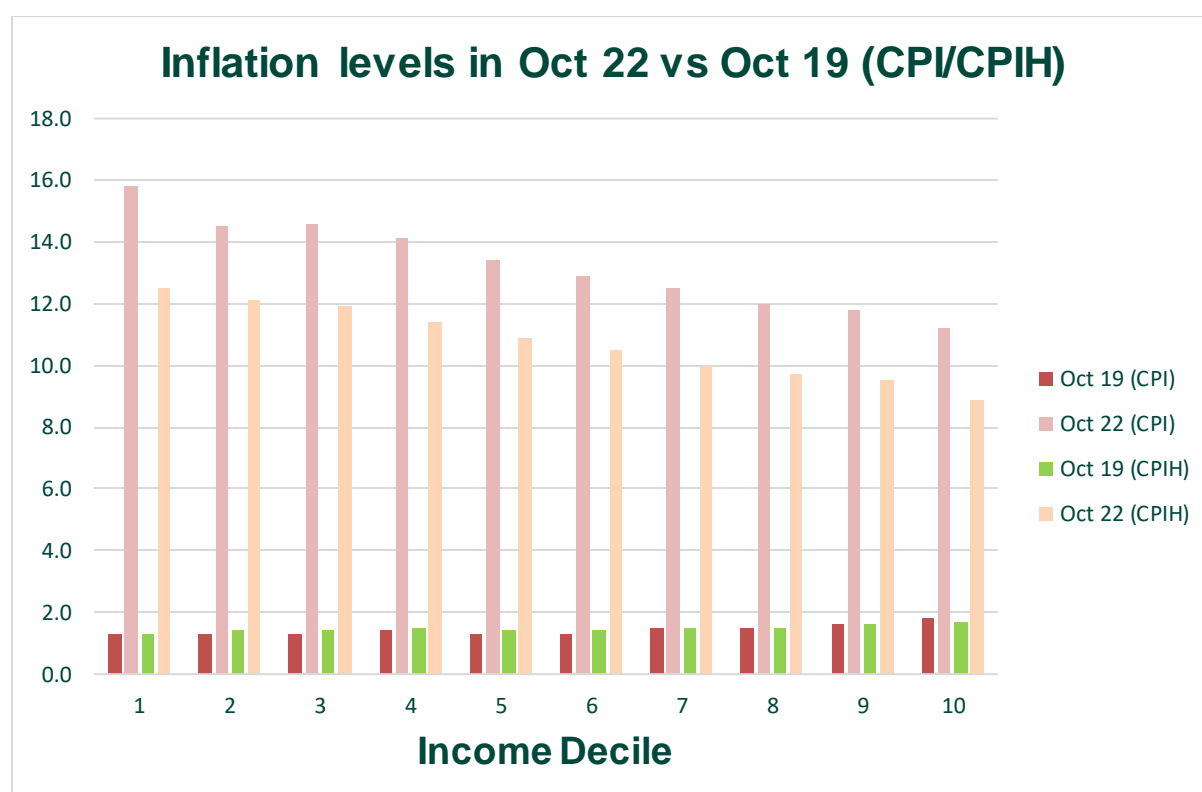
Robin Rogers, Programme Director (Partnerships and Delivery)

Contact Officer: Jamie Slagel, National Management Trainee, Cost of Living Response Co-ordinator, jamie.slagel@oxfordshire.gov.uk

10 January 2023

Annex 1: Oxfordshire Cost of Living Background, January 2023

1. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose by 10.7% in the 12 months to November 2022, marginally down from 11.1% in October 2022 but still higher than 10.1% in September 2022.³ October's rate is the highest on record, which began in January 2006. ONS's indicative estimates suggest that this is probably the highest CPI rate since October 1981. The Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing (CPIH) annual inflation rate rose by 9.3% in November 2022, slightly down from 9.6% in October (the highest since December 1980) but still higher than 8.8% in September.⁴
2. However, the cost of living crisis does not affect everyone equally: these pressures more adversely affect low income households, as can be seen below. Each bar represents the inflation level for each income decile in October 2022 vs October 2019. Decile "1" is the lowest-income decile; decile "10" the highest income.



Data source: ONS⁵

³ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/latest>

⁴ [Consumer price inflation, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

⁵ Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 16 November 2022, ONS website, article, [Inflation and the cost of living for household groups, UK: October 2022](#)

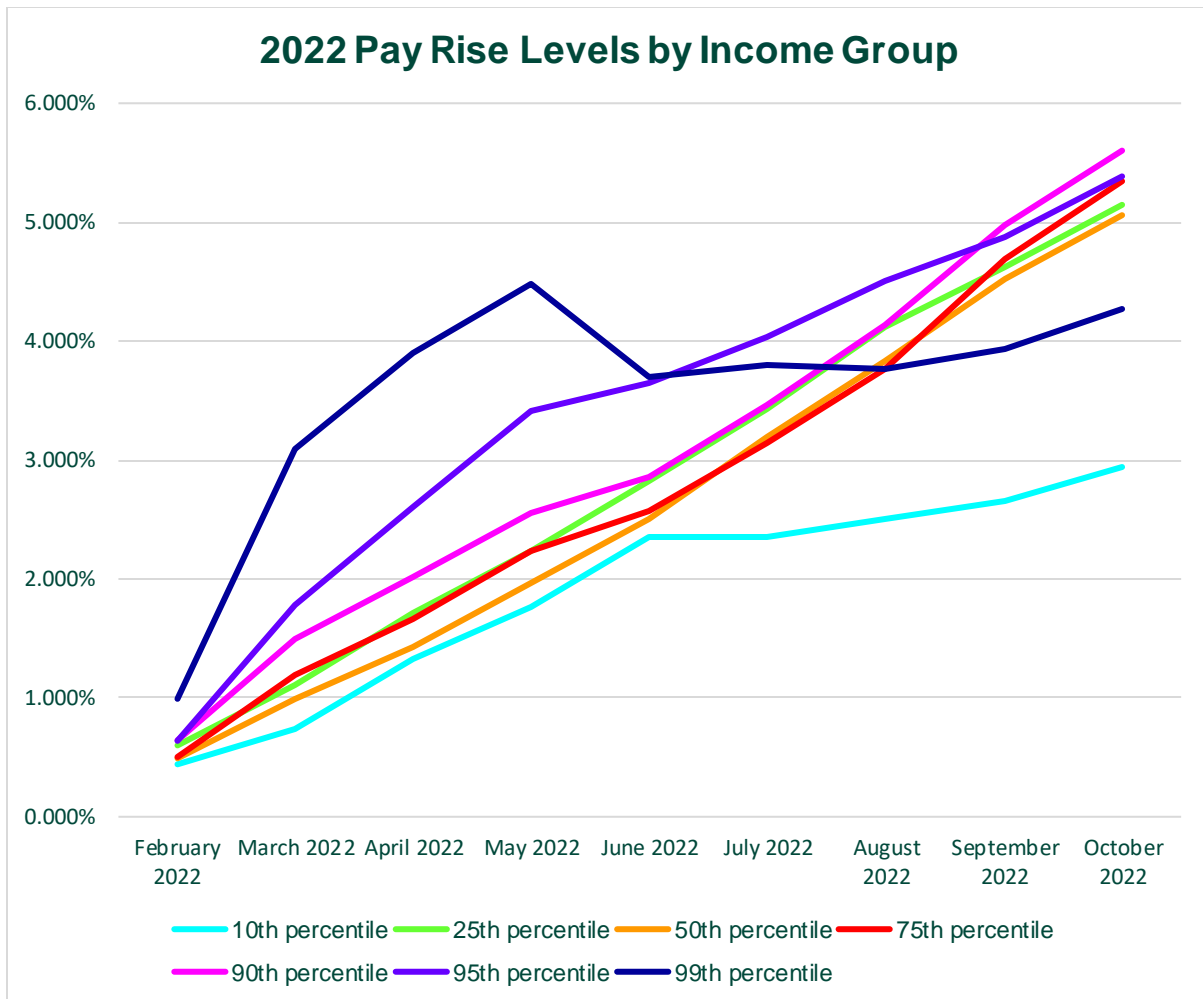
3. The steepness of the graph shows just how much higher inflation is for lower income households than higher income households experience. For the most deprived decile, CPI is 15.8% and CPIH is 12.5% (CPIH includes while CPI excludes housing costs).
4. These inflation rates are the highest for decades—however, they are reaching their peak. November saw a lower inflation rate than the previous month. However, while this does mean that the cost of living is no longer accelerating, prices are still increasing significantly. So, pressures will continue to mount on households across the UK and Oxfordshire.
5. Wage increases have failed to increase in line with inflation. The BBC reported that in the 12 months to September, regular pay only rose by 5.7% and, adjusted for rising prices, fell by 2.7%.⁶ In the 12 months to November 2022, median pay only rose by 8%.⁷ The BBC also recorded a record gap between pay rises in the private vs public sectors (2.2% vs 6.6%).⁸ The OBR expects that, overall, real post-tax household income will fall by 4.3% in 2022-23, the biggest fall since comparable records began in 1956.⁹
6. But again, pay rises have not been equal. The graph below shows the percentage increase in median pay for various income groups since the start of 2022:

⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-63624996>

⁷ [Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-63624996>

⁹ [Economic and fiscal outlook - November 2022 - Office for Budget Responsibility \(obr.uk\)](#)



Source: ONS, *Employee earnings in the UK: 2022*¹⁰

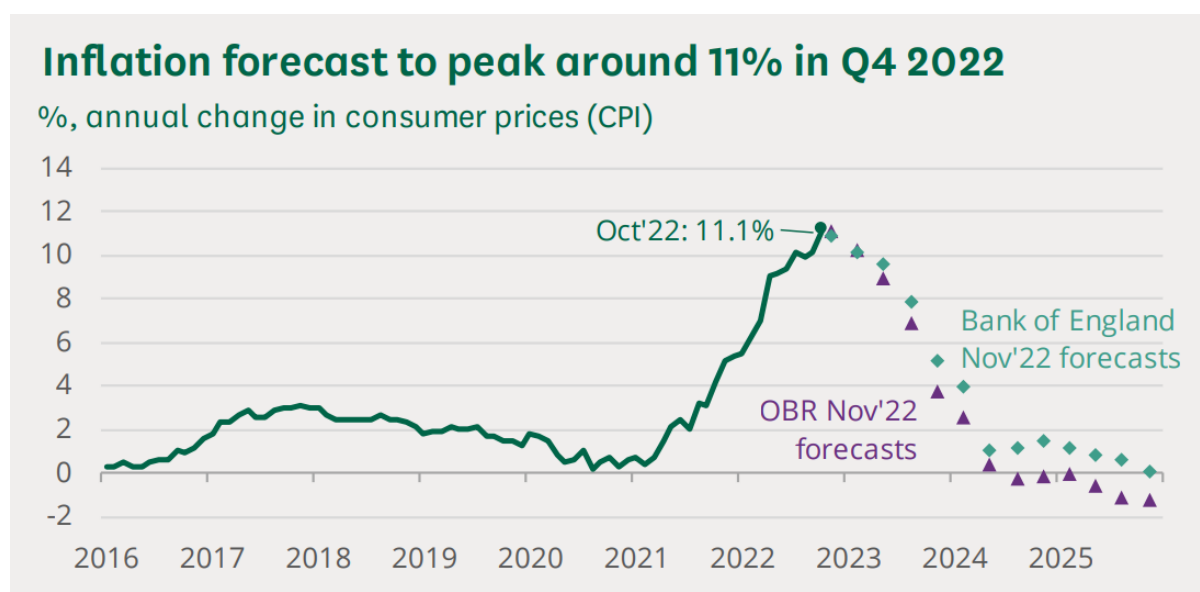
7. The 10% of households on lowest incomes have experienced the lowest percentage increase in their median income—while the top 10%, top 5%, and top 25% have seen the greatest percentage increase, respectively. The cost of living crisis has hit the lowest income households the most. In short, not only are the lowest income households the least equipped to tackle pressures, they are also experiencing high levels of inflation while receiving the lowest level pay rises.

8. These pressures are certainly reflected in the experiences of the British public. In the ONS' public opinions and social trends survey of Great Britain (8th to 20th November 2022), 94% of all persons said their cost of living has increased over the last 12 months—stable across all income quintiles. This is up from 91% in the previous response period (26th October to 6th November 2022). Of those who said their cost of living had increased over the last 12 months, 86% experienced increased gas/electricity bills and 96% paid more for their food

¹⁰ [Employee earnings in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandearnings/articles/employeeearningsintheuk2022), Data from: [Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandearnings/articles/earningsandemploymentfrompayasyouearnrealtimeinformationseasonallyadjusted)

shop. This is marginally down from the previous response period (26 Oct - 6 Nov) at 91% and 97% respectively. 79% paid more for fuel, marginally up from 76% in the previous response period. 63% said they were using less fuel in the home during both response periods. 76% of all persons said their cost of living has increased compared to one month ago, marginally down from 77% in the previous response period. 76% said they have been somewhat (25%) or very worried (51%) about the rising costs of living in the past two weeks—marginally up from 75% (25%, 50%) in the previous response period.¹¹

9. These stark figures have led to difficult decisions for millions of households across the UK. In Joseph Rowntree Foundation's most recent report, they found that, since June, 7.2 million households (62%) have been going without essentials: going hungry, skipping showers, or lacking adequate clothing. 4.7 million households (41%) are in arrears with at least one household bill—the average being above £1,600 per household. 4.3 million (37%) are going without essentials *and* in arrears with at least one household bill. Finally, over 3 million households (28%) could not afford to keep their home warm.¹²
10. The Office for Budget responsibility's latest forecast suggests that October represented peak inflation rate: inflation rates will no longer continue to rise. The Bank of England's and the OBR's forecasts are displayed below:



Sources: ONS [monthly outturn data](#) up to Oct 2022, then quarterly forecasts from OBR, [Economic and fiscal outlook – Nov 2022](#), and Bank of England [Monetary Policy Report, Nov 2022](#) Note: Quarterly forecasts based on market expectations of interest rates

¹¹ All data sets here: [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: household finances - Office for National Statistics](#)

¹² All figures from: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/59381/download?token=cLtv8-Zf&filetype=briefing>

11. While inflation rates may not continue to rise, prices will. This follows a period of severe economic shock to households across the UK and Oxfordshire. While some households will be able to soak up this impact—by cutting down on luxuries, leaning on savings, or relying on friends and family—many will not. This will lead to what the Joseph Rowntree Foundation call ‘economic scarring’: when residents have stopped saving, start taking on bad debts to pay bills, and reduce or stop pension contributions and insurance payments. In October 2022, 22% of *all* working households were in this situation.¹³

Energy and Fuel

12. The largest cause of inflation is energy, despite government interventions. The price of gas increased by 128.9% in the 12 months until October 2022 while the price of electricity increased by 65.7% in the same period.¹⁴
13. In October, the Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) increased to £2500 pa for an average household—almost double the winter 2021/22 price guarantee. However, the Chancellor announced that the energy price guarantee will rise to £3,000 for a typical household in April 2023.
14. This has led to increased fuel poverty, with latest estimates suggesting that 8.6 million households (32%) will be in fuel poverty by April 2023.¹⁵ Cold homes, which result from fuel poverty and/or decreased energy consumption, can lead to respiratory conditions, cardiovascular diseases, poor mental health, dementia, hypothermia, problems with childhood development, and death. Indeed, the Institute of Health Equity estimates that, in 2019, the NHS spent at least £2.5bn on treating illnesses directly linked to cold homes. The Institute of Health Equity also estimated that England saw 63,000 excess winter deaths in 2020-21, of which 10% were directly attributable to fuel poverty and 21.5% were attributable to cold homes. This was higher than the Northern European average.
15. In addition to the Energy Price Guarantee and the Energy Bills Support Scheme, the government has provided winter fuel payments, cold weather payments, the warm home discount, the Household Support Fund, and has announced further cost of living payments for 2023.

¹³ [Going under and without: JRF's cost of living tracker, winter 2022/23 | JRF](#)

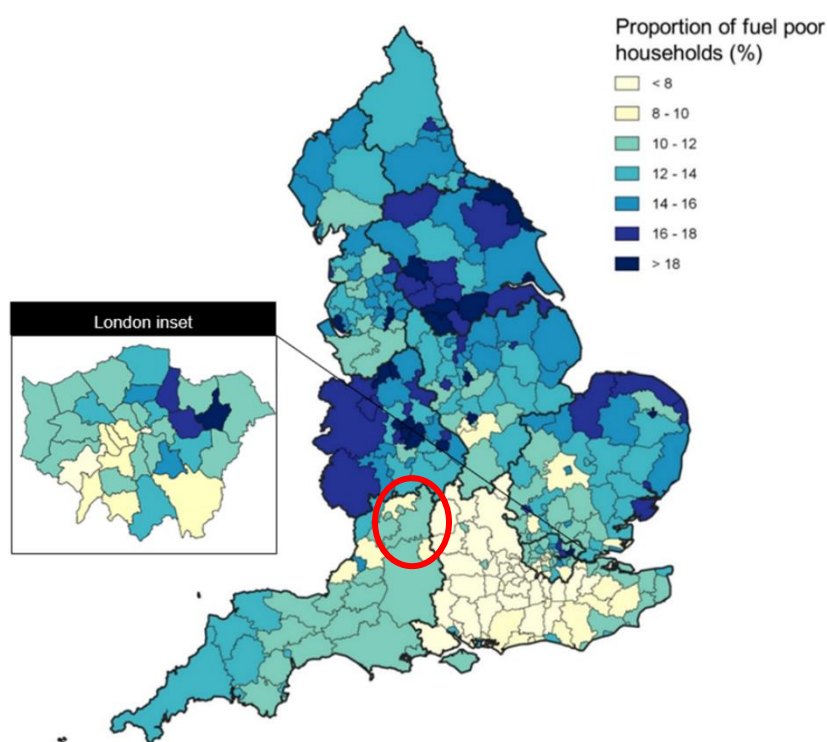
¹⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/october2022>

¹⁵ <https://www.endfuelpoverty.org.uk/coalition-responds-to-chancellors-autumn-statement/>

16. In 2020, the last time official statistics were available, Oxfordshire had an estimated 22,861 households in fuel poverty, a rate of 8.1% compared with 8.6% in the South East.¹⁶ See breakdown by local authority below:

Fuel Poverty (2020) ¹⁷		
District	Count	Rate
Cherwell	4,826	7.8%
Oxford City	6,651	11.0%
South Oxfordshire	4,129	7.0%
Vale of White Horse	3,809	7.1%
West Oxfordshire	3,446	7.3%
Oxfordshire	22,861	8.1%

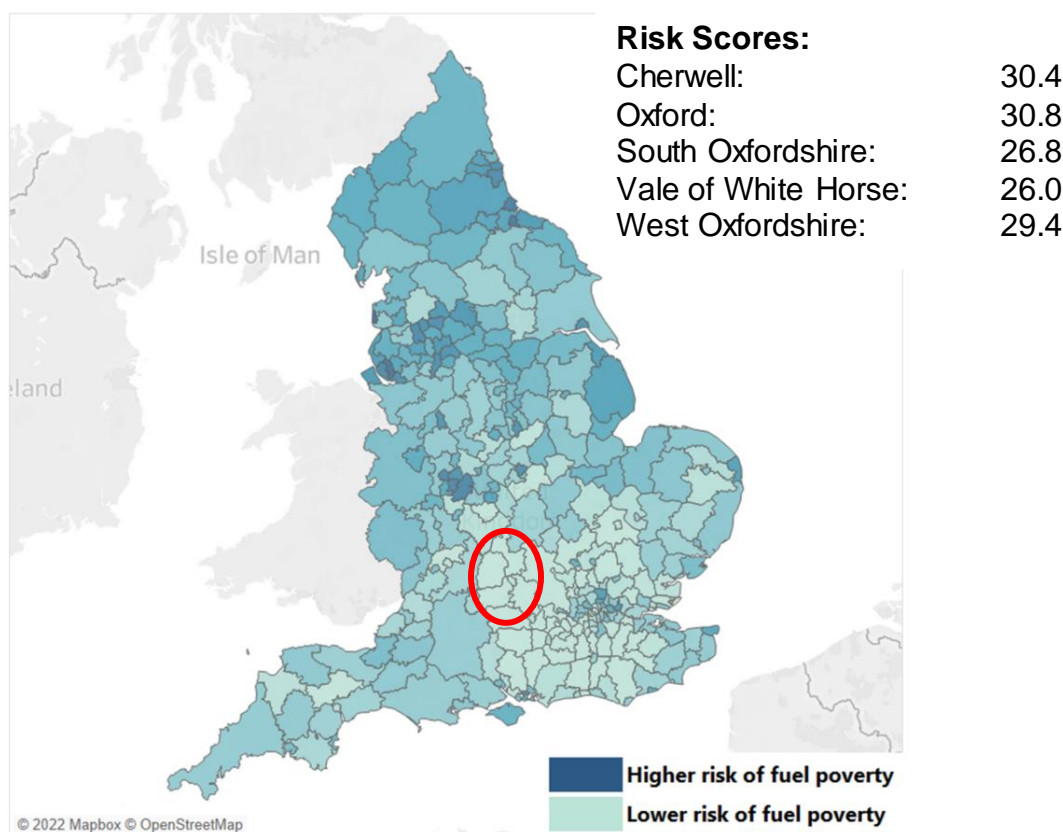
17. Government analysis of this data suggests that fuel poverty rates are low in Oxfordshire compared to the rest of England, although relatively high in Oxford:



¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-data-2022>

¹⁷ A household is considered to be fuel poor if: (a) they have a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating (FPEER) of band D or below; **and** (b) if they were to spend their modelled energy costs, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

18. More recent work by the Open Data Institute has provided risk scores to local authorities.¹⁸ Oxfordshire has a lower risk of fuel poverty according to this:



19. There remain challenges in Oxfordshire, with greater difficulty improving home energy efficiency and greater dependence on LPG and oil fuel in rural areas. In addition, the high proportion of private renting in Oxford city means a lesser ability to retrofit and/or improve household energy efficiency. It is estimated that 55,000 households across Oxfordshire rely on off-grid energy sources, with roughly 20,000 of those using off-grid energy as their main energy supply.

Food

20. Inflation for food and non-alcoholic beverages is at its highest rate since September 1977: 16.5%.¹⁹ This is particularly felt by low income groups who were already reliant on more affordable food items, such as in-house brands, and so are unable to switch to more affordable items to cushion rising costs. Over the course of the last year, The Food Foundation reports a 100% rise in

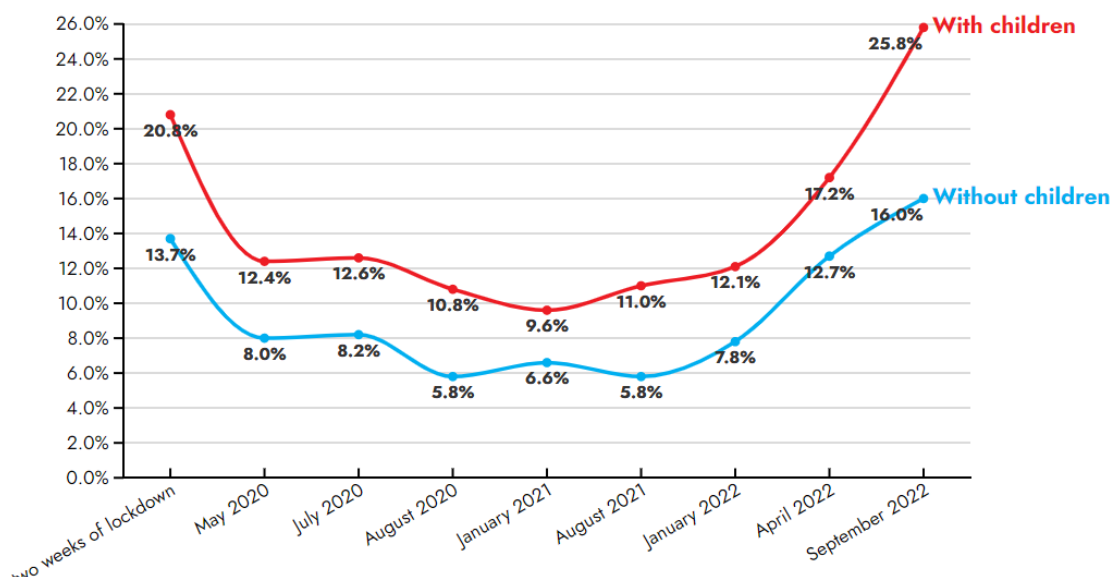
¹⁸ https://theodi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Fuel-poverty-and-data-infrastructure_ODI-report.pdf

¹⁹ [Consumer price inflation, UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

food insecurity, with 4.7 million households (8.8%) being food insecure. This includes over ¼ of households with children:

Food insecurity has increased more in households with children

Percentage of households experiencing food insecurity*:



* 1-month recall period

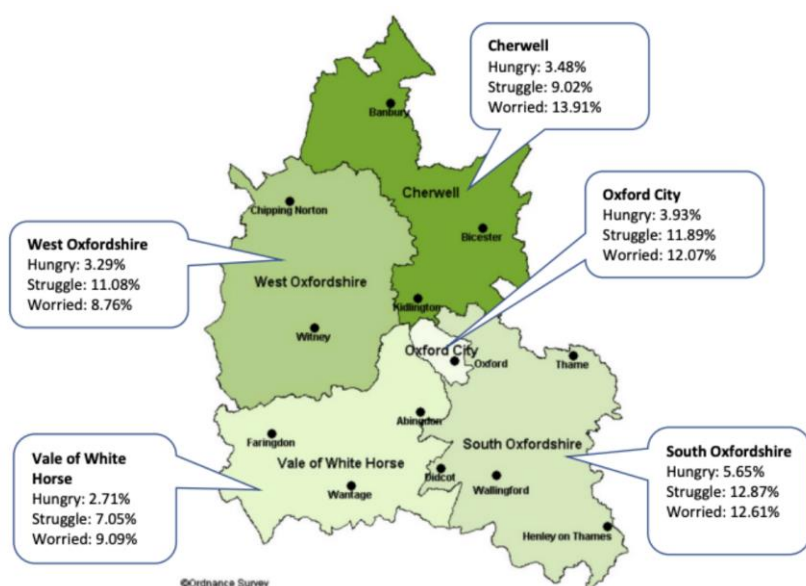


Source: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking>

21. Teachers have reported that 15% of families in their school have approached them asking to be referred to a foodbank.²⁰ At the same time, the number of children eligible for free school meals is not increasing at the same rate because the eligibility criteria have been frozen, despite the high levels of inflation.
22. Similarly, a record number of people asked CA for a food bank referral at the start of December 2022 (5188)—2.3x higher than 18 months ago and almost 1.4x as high as just one month ago.²¹
23. In 2021, this is what food insecurity looked like in Oxfordshire:

²⁰ [PowerPoint Presentation \(suttontrust.com\)](#)

²¹ [CA cost of living data dashboard | Flourish](#)



22

24. Updated figures have not been released since the cost of living crisis began. However, evidence from Good Food Oxfordshire suggests there has been a 25-30% increased usage of food services between August 2021 and November 2022, amounting to 100,000 - 125,000 more people across Oxfordshire accessing food services.

Vulnerable groups

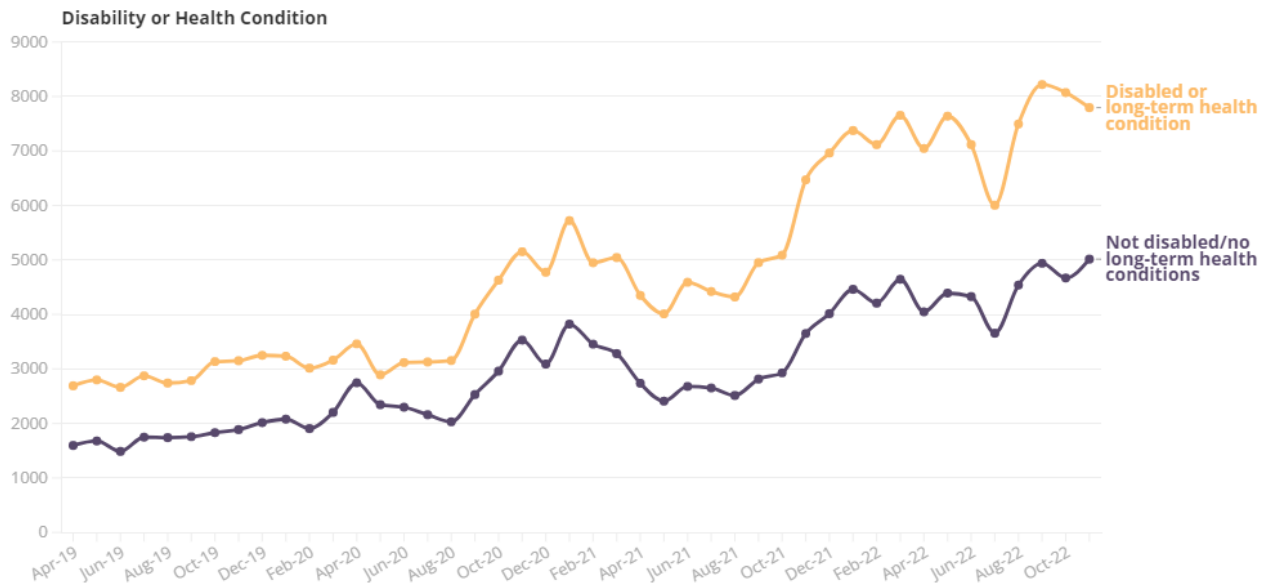
25. The data is clear: across society, those with disabilities and ethnic minorities are being harder hit than others. For example, the graph below shows the number of people with or without disabilities/long-term health condition whom Citizens Advice referred to foodbanks:

²² https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s59430/Item_10_Oxon_Food_Strategy.pdf, Adapted from Sheffield University Research into [UK local good insecurity of adults, January 2021](#) (Moretti, Whitworth and Blake, 2021)

Hungry: those who have been hungry at least once in the previous month but were unable to get food; **Struggle:** those who cut back on food, skipped meals, received support from their community with food essentials, couldn't get to shops/delivery, or were too ill to get food; **Worried:** those who worry about being able to adequately supply the food they need for themselves and their families.

The number of people we are referring to food banks by demographic group

Disability or Health Condition ▼



[You can access this visualisation directly here](#)

Note: Totals may vary across these charts as the same demographic information is not disclosed for all people we help. Data for England and Wales.

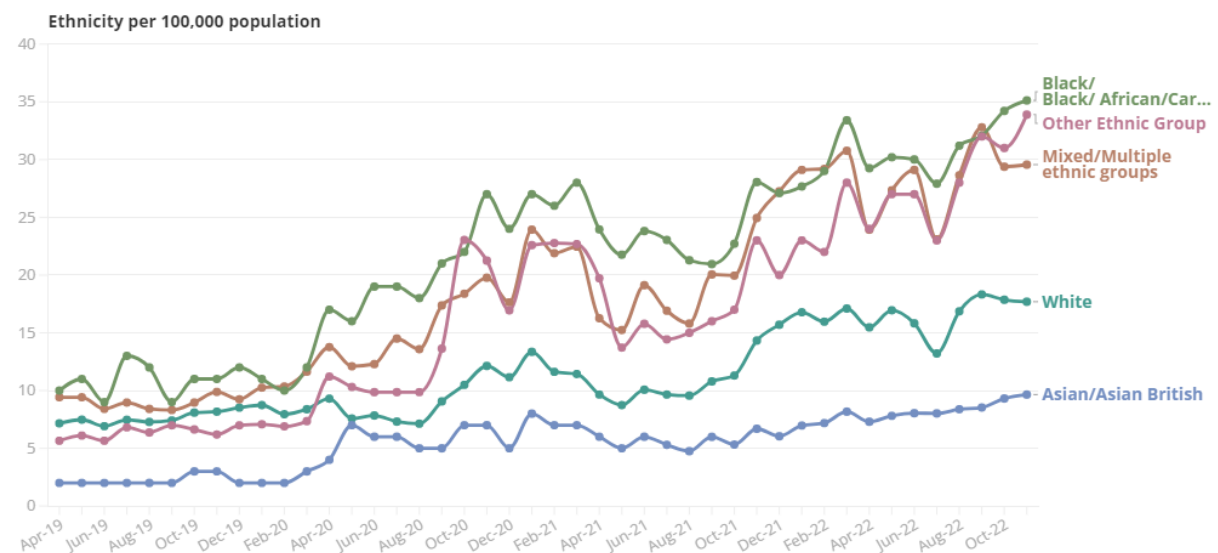
citizens
advice

Source: [Branded Food Bank trends by Demographics | Flourish](#)

26. And the same, for different ethnicities:

The number of people we are referring to food banks by demographic group

Ethnicity per 100,000 population ▼



[You can access this visualisation directly here](#)

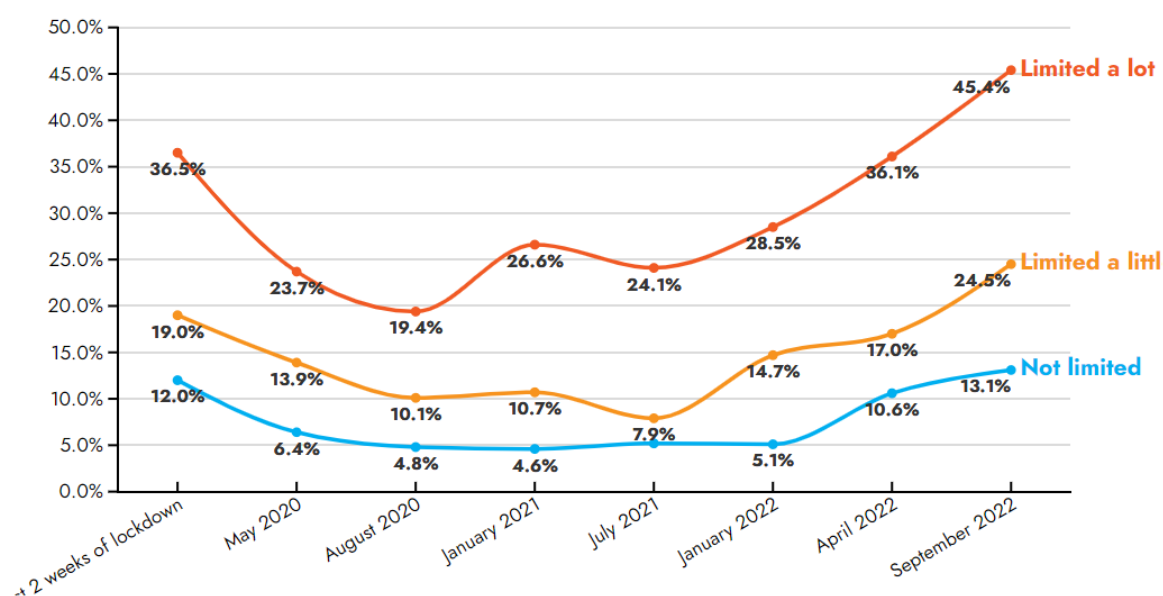
Note: Totals may vary across these charts as the same demographic information is not disclosed for all people we help. Data for England and Wales.

citizens
advice

27. It is clear from these graphs that, with the exception of Asian citizens, those from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to be referred to food banks than white people. A similar trend can be seen regarding numbers accessing crisis support.
28. The Food Foundation had very similar findings, showing a wide—and ever-growing—food insecurity gap between people with disabilities and those without.

There has been a widening of inequalities experienced by people with disabilities

Percentage of households experiencing food insecurity* according to level of disability:



* 1-month recall period



Source: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking>

29. The ONS's surveys reinforce this message: over half (55%) of disabled adults reported finding it difficult to afford their energy bills (vs 40% of non-disabled people). The disparity is similar among those finding it difficult to afford their rent or mortgage: 36% of disabled people, compared with 27% of non-disabled people.²³
30. The Sutton Trust have also reported significant knock on effects on children in schools. Following a survey of teachers, they found that 74% of all pupils were unable to concentrate or tired in lessons (72% in the South East). They also found that 35% came into school hungry (33% in SE), 50% came without adequate winter clothing (48%), and 25% could not afford equipment (23%). 62% of teachers said that the cost of living crisis would lead to an increase in

²³ [What have we learned about the experience of disabled people? | National Statistical \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/people-and-work/disabilities/articles/what-have-we-learned-about-the-experience-of-disabled-people/)

attainment gap between students (19% said this would be small, 27% modest, and 16% substantial).²⁴

‘Crisis point’

31. The cost of living crisis is affecting almost every member of society across Oxfordshire, but it is particularly affecting the most vulnerable members of society. This is especially true of those lowest income families. Resolution Foundation, explain that “low-income families are far more likely to have no savings: in fact, the lowest tenth of families by income were four-times more likely to have no savings than families in the top income decile prior to the pandemic”.²⁵ Their greater exposure to the cost of living crisis is deepened by the fact that 32% of such families would need to rely on family and friends to cope with rising costs. The situation since Resolution Foundation published their report has, if anything, worsened: the ONS’ public opinions and social trends survey of Great Britain (08-20 November 2022) shows that 30% of all households, and 48% of the most deprived quintile, cannot afford to pay an unexpected but necessary expense of £850. Meanwhile, 46% of all households and 56% of the most deprived quintile will not be able to save money between November 2022 and November 2023.²⁶
32. Given that the cost of living crisis is affecting everyone, this means many households’ family and friends can no longer help them: “the cost of living crisis is worse for poorer households not just because they face higher inflation, not just because they have fewer savings to draw down on, but also because their mechanism for coping with a lack of savings is less available.”²⁷ In short, many households have reached a precarious position of financial fragility which leaves them just short of crisis point.

²⁴ [PowerPoint Presentation \(suttontrust.com\)](#)

²⁵ [Arrears fears • Resolution Foundation](#), p.8.

²⁶ [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: household finances - Office for National Statistics](#)

²⁷ [Arrears fears • Resolution Foundation](#), p.8.

Action and Recommendation Tracker

Performance & Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Eddie Reeves, Chair | Tom Hudson, Principal Scrutiny Officer, tom.hudson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The action and recommendation tracker enables the Committee to monitor progress against agreed actions and recommendations. The tracker is updated with the actions and recommendations agreed at each meeting. Once an action or recommendation has been completed or fully implemented, it will be shaded green and reported into the next meeting of the Committee, after which it will be removed from the tracker.

KEY	No progress reported	In progress	Complete
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Recommendations:

Meeting date	Item	Action/recommendation	Personnel	Completion date	Last reviewed	Update/response
30/09/22	Citizens' Jury	That the Council develops a clear plan as to how any future Citizens' Juries would best be incorporated within the wider policy-development and decision-making processes of Council.	Claire Taylor (Accountable) Simon Harper (Responsible)		11/01/23	The Head of Governance has signed up to a training session on Deliberative Democracy and its implications on the role and practice of local authorities for 28 th February. This training is also open to other council officers and is a first step in scoping how to incorporate Citizens' Juries into wider processes effectively.

KEY	No progress reported	In progress	Complete
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Actions:

Meeting date	Item	Action/recommendation	Personnel	Completion date	Last reviewed	Update/response
30.09.22	Work Plan	Change consideration of the work plan to the start of the meeting	Tom Hudson		11.01.23	This request has been noted but the specific practicalities of the current Budget meeting make it inadvisable to implement. The change will be made for the next meeting.
30.09.22	Work Plan	Invite Future Oxfordshire Partnership members to attend the briefing on	Tom Hudson		11.01.23	The organisation of this briefing has not progressed but will be after this meeting.
	Work Plan	That a report on the Committee's consideration of the budget proposals and subsequent observations be brought before the next meeting of the Committee for agreement, prior to submission to Cabinet for consideration.	Tom Hudson	20.12.22	11.01.23	Complete – presented to Cabinet on 20 Dec 2022 <i>(No recommendations were made at the 9 December 2022 meeting of the Committee)</i>
09.12.22	Work Plan	That the Cabinet Member for Finance write to the Committee outlining how the Committee's comments and recommendations from the previous year's budget scrutiny had been incorporated into budget management over the previous 12 months.	Cllr Miller and Lorna Baxter		11.01.23	Owing to greater changes in the budget than forecast staff resource has not been available to facilitate this request but a verbal response will be provided at the meeting.

KEY	No progress reported	In progress	Complete
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		That the Head of Financial Strategy provide the Committee with an analysis of how the termination of the Section 113 agreement impacted the proposed budget.	Kathy Wilcox		11.01.23	Owing to greater changes in the budget than forecast staff resource has not been available to facilitate this request but a verbal response will be provided at the meeting.
09.12.22	Work Plan	That the Cabinet Member for Community Services and Safety provide the Committee with the balance of the Community Safety Reserve, following cancellation of the Service's annual contribution to that fund.	Cllr Hannaby (accountable) Tom Hudson (responsible)		11.01.23	This contribution has been reinstated to the budget. The expected balance at year end will be £2.42m

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Work Programme

Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Eddie Reeves, Chair | Tom Hudson, Principal Overview Scrutiny Officer,
tom.hudson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Topic	Relevant strategic priorities	Purpose	Type	Lead Presenters
19 January 2023				
Strategic Plan	All	Committee reviews proposed revisions to Strategic Plan, including flagship priorities and transformational objectives and understands the priorities and emphases which underpin them.	Overview and scrutiny	<p>Liz Leffman, Leader of the Council</p> <p>Claire Taylor, Corporate Director – Customer, Organisational Development & Resources</p> <p>Susanna Wintersgill – Director of Strategy, Insight and Comms</p>
Budget 2023/24: impact of consultation and local government finance settlement; and Capital & Investment Strategy	All	Committee reviews Capital & Investment Strategy and changes proposed to draft budget and MTFS in light of public consultation and provisional local government finance settlement and makes	Overview and scrutiny	<p>Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance</p>

		recommendations as appropriate.		
Cost of Living	<p>Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>Prioritise the health and wellbeing of residents.</p> <p>Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.</p>	<p>Committee to review a report covering:</p> <p>This item will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay very brief context on the cost of living crisis and its impact in Oxfordshire • Give an update on the measures Oxfordshire County Council have implemented to help residents during the cost of living crisis – and how it has worked with partners • Provide a preliminary report on the impact of these measures • Outline what work is ongoing / planned for the future • Include brief comparison to neighbours • Encourage discussion about how to develop a long-term approach to tackling what is a long-term problem. 	Overview and scrutiny	<p>Councillor Mark Lygo, Cabinet Member for Health and Equalities</p> <p>Claire Taylor, Corporate Director – Customer, Organisational Development & Resources</p> <p>Robin Rogers, Programme Director</p>



28 April 2023

Social Value Policy	Local Businesses and Partners	Committee reviews the implementation, operation and impact (on costs and quality and social value generated) of the council's social value policy and its consistency with social value policies of other Oxfordshire local authorities and makes recommendations as appropriate.	Scrutiny	Councillor Calum Miller, Cabinet Member for Finance Lorna Baxter, Director of Finance
Consultation and Engagement Strategy, and update on the progress against the LGA Review on Communications Actions	Local Democracy	Committee reviews the implementation of the council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy. Issues to include: the degree to which consultation with young people has been prioritised, the outcomes of Oxfordshire Conversations, and the methodology which is used to develop a credible reading of public opinion from non-representative qualitative data. An update on progress made against recommendations made in the LGA Review on Communications will also be provided	Scrutiny	Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services Claire Taylor, Corporate Director – Customer, Organisational Development & Resources Susanna Wintersgill – Director of Strategy, Insight and Comms
Human Resources		Committee reviews implementation and impacts of Delivering the Future Together,	Scrutiny	Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet

		draft workforce strategy, workforce productivity measures and data and makes recommendations as appropriate.		Member for Corporate Services Claire Taylor, Corporate Director – Customer, Organisational Development & Resources
14 July 2023				
Tackling inequality	Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire	Committee to review the council's approach to, and performance in relation to, tackling inequality; and make recommendations as appropriate, Specific issues for consideration to include whether the council voluntarily adopting the Equality Act 2010 socio-economic duty could further equality, diversity and inclusion, and whether a specific policy is necessary.	Overview & Scrutiny	Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services Claire Taylor, Corporate Director – Customers, Organisational Development & Resources
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Topic may be deprioritised if alternative topics come forward in the meantime)	Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire	Committee reviews the implementation and impact of the 22/23 EDI action plan and the draft 24/45s action plan.	Overview and Scrutiny	Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services Claire Taylor, Corporate Director – Customers, Organisational Development & Resources



Approaches to Organisational Change?	All	Scope TBC		<p>Councillor Glynis Phillips, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services</p> <p>Claire Taylor, Corporate Director – Customers, Organisational Development & Resources and all other Corporate Directors to contribute</p>
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Sub-groups				
Name	Relevant strategic priorities	Description	Outcomes	Members
<p>Democratic Process Working Group</p> <p>(Scheduled for Feb)</p>	Local Democracy	To review the key elements of support for democratic processes at Oxfordshire County Council.	Reviews the support for the council's democratic processes and makes recommendations.	TBC

Briefings					
Date	Topic	Relevant strategic priorities	Description	Outcomes	Presenters
TBC	Growth Deals	Local Business and Partners; Transport; Health	Briefing on the council's proposed use of its remaining	Members understand how the council is	Bill Cotton, Corporate Director –

		and Wellbeing; Inequalities; the Climate Emergency; Carers and Social Care; and Nature and Green Spaces.	allocation of Growth Deal funding.	prioritising initiatives and which are being prioritised.	Environment and Place
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