

To: **Members of the Cabinet**

Notice of a Meeting of the Cabinet

Tuesday, 24 February 2026 at 2.00 pm

Room 2&3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

If you wish to view proceedings online, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#).



Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

February 2026

Committee Officer: **Chris Reynolds**
Tel: 07542 029441; E-Mail: chris.reynolds@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Membership

Councillors

Liz Leffman	Leader of the Council
Neil Fawcett	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Resources
Tim Bearder	Cabinet Member for Adults
Andrew Gant	Cabinet Member for Transport Management
Sean Gaul	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Kate Gregory	Cabinet Member for Public Health and Inequalities
Jenny Hannaby	Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and Safety
Ben Higgins	Cabinet Member for Future Economy and Innovation
Dan Levy	Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation
Judy Roberts	Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action

*The Agenda is attached. Decisions taken at the meeting
will become effective at the end of the working day on 2 Marc 2026
unless called in by that date for review by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.
Copies of this Notice, Agenda and supporting papers are circulated
to all Members of the County Council.*

Date of next meeting: 17 March 2026

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Declarations of Interest

- guidance note below

3. Minutes (Pages 9 - 18)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2026 (CA3) and to receive information arising from them.

4. Questions from County Councillors

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am three working days before the meeting, ask a question on any matter in respect of the Cabinet's delegated powers.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member, and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

5. 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. Requests to speak should be sent to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that 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.

6. Appointments

7. Reports from Scrutiny Committees (Pages 19 - 38)

Cabinet will receive the following reports:-

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on Oxfordshire Unpaid Carers Strategy

Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee report on Social Value Policy

8. Social Value - New in-house approach (Pages 39 - 80)

Cabinet Member: Finance, Property and Transformation

Forward Plan Ref: 2025/252

Contact: Max Button, Sustainable Supply Chain Officer

Max.button@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Report by Director of Finance and Commercial Services **(CA8)**

This item updates the existing Social Value Policy and significantly changes the way the Council deals with social value, moving away from working with a third party to an entirely in house system. This allows the Council to better align its social value priorities with Council strategic objectives.

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to

a) Approve the Oxfordshire County Council Social Value Policy (Annex 1).

b) Agree to move the council's social value approach in- house, transitioning away from third- party delivery and/or platforms, to enable a more streamlined approach that better aligns to the council's Strategic Plan 2025–2028 priorities.

9. Climate Action Framework 2025-2030 (Pages 81 - 142)

Cabinet Member: Place, Environment and Climate Action

Forward Plan Ref: 2025/147

Contact: Ariane Crampton, Climate Policy and Partnership Manager

Ariane.crampton@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Report by Director of Economy and Place **(CA9)**

Refresh of the Council's Climate Action Framework. The previous one was adopted 2020.

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:-

a) Approve the Oxfordshire Climate Action Framework 2026-2030.

10. HR & Cultural Change - Quarterly Employee Data Report- Quarter 3 2025-26 (Pages 143 - 152)

Cabinet Member: Resources and Deputy Leader

Forward Plan Ref: 2025/035

Contact: Nathan Phillips, Data and Insight Team Manager

Nathan.phillips@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Report by Director of HR & Cultural Change **(CA10)**

Quarterly staffing report providing details of key people numbers and analysis of main changes since the previous report.

Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to note the report.

11. Forward Plan and Future Business (Pages 153 - 160)

Cabinet Member: All

Contact Officer: Chris Reynolds, Senior Democratic Services Officer,

chris.reynolds@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The Cabinet Procedure Rules provide that the business of each meeting at the Cabinet is to include “updating of the Forward Plan and proposals for business to be conducted at the following meeting”. Items from the Forward Plan for the immediately forthcoming meetings of the Cabinet appear in the Schedule at **CA11**. This includes any updated information relating to the business for those meetings that has already been identified for inclusion in the next Forward Plan update.

The Schedule is for noting, but Cabinet Members may also wish to take this opportunity to identify any further changes they would wish to be incorporated in the next Forward Plan update.

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to note the items currently identified for forthcoming meetings.

12. For information only - Cabinet response to Scrutiny items (Pages 161 - 164)

Infrastructure Funding Statement and s.106

Movement and Place Plans

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships

- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.
- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

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Agenda Item 3

CABINET

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 27 January 2026 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.05pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Leffman – in the Chair
Councillor Neil Fawcett
Councillor Tim Bearder
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Sean Gaul
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Ben Higgins
Councillor Dan Levy
Councillor Judy Roberts

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillors Liz Brighthouse OBE, Imade Edosomwan, Glynis Phillips, James Robertshaw, Liam Walker and Tony Worgan

Officers:

Whole of meeting Martin Reeves (Chief Executive), Lorna Baxter (Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer), Anita Bradley (Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer), Paul Fermer (Director of Environment and Highways), Chris Reynolds (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

The Cabinet considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting, and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda, reports and schedule, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

1/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kate Gregory.

2/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda Item. 2)

There were none.

3/26 MINUTES

(Agenda Item. 3)

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 and 16 December 2025 were approved as a correct record.

4/26 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

(Agenda Item. 4)

See annex.

5/26 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item. 5)

8 – Budget and Business Planning 2026/27 – 2030/31

Robin Tucker

9 – Oxfordshire Learning Disability Plan 2025-2035

Cllr Jane Hanna

10 – My Life My Choice Councillor Deal

Cllr Jane Hanna

11 – Movement and Place Plans – Science Vale

Robin Tucker

6/26 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item. 6)

There were no appointments to report to this meeting.

7/26 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

(Agenda Item. 7)

Councillor Glynis Phillips, Chair of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the following reports:-

- a) Budget and Business Planning
- b) Fix my street
- c) Business Management and Monitoring Report (Public Health Focus)
- d) Parking Permits

Councillor Liz Brighouse OBE, Chair of the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the following reports:-

- a) The Virtual School
- b) Attainment
- c) Fostering

Cabinet noted the reports and will respond in due course.

8/26 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLANNING 2027/28 - 2030/31

(Agenda Item. 8)

Cabinet had before it a report which was the culmination of the Budget and Business Planning process for 2026/27 to 2030/31 and set out the Cabinet's revenue budget for 2026/27, medium term financial strategy to 2030/31, capital programme to 2035/36 plus supporting policies, strategies and information.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, presented the report.

Councillor Levy explained the impact of the Fair Funding Review, which resulted in a £24.1 million reduction in government grants, necessitating a 4.99% annual council tax rise and difficult choices to maintain a balanced budget amid rising demand and cost pressures.

Despite funding constraints, the budget included significant investments in Children's Services (£18 million increase), home-to-school transport, educational psychologists, and capital projects such as libraries and road maintenance, while also requiring savings and efficiency measures.

During discussion, members discussed the implications of the funding formula, the need for local flexibility, and the importance of strategic investments.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Leffman seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:

1. In relation to the Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (Section 4);
 - a) approve the Review of Charges for 2026/27 (Annex A, page 1 - 58, 67) and in relation to the Registration Service, the charges for 2027/28 (Annex A, page 59 – 62) and 2028/29 (annex A page 63 – 66);
 - b) receive any recommendations and observations from Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - c) approve the Financial Strategy for 2026/27 (Section 4.5);
 - d) approve the Earmarked Reserves and General Balances Policy Statement for 2026/27(Section 4.6), including the creation of a new Lane Rental reserve and the renaming of the Demographic Risk Reserve to the High Needs DSG Deficit Risk Reserve;

- e) approve the use of retained business rates from EZ1 Science Vale Growth Accelerator and EZ2 Didcot Growth Accelerator as set out in paragraph 169-172 and Annex B;
- f) note that following any funding changes as a result of the final Local Government Finance Settlement and information from the district and city councils in relation to business rates or council tax will be managed as set out in Paragraph 10; and
- g) delegate to the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer), in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, the authority to make any appropriate changes to the proposed budget not covered by Paragraph 10.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND Council to:

- h) approve a Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2026/27 to 2030/31 as set out in Section 4.1 (which incorporates changes to the existing Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Section 4.2);
- i) agree the council tax and precept calculations for 2026/27 set out in Section 4.3 and in particular:
 - (i) a precept of £567,372,274;
 - (ii) a council tax for band D equivalent properties of £2,006.78.

2. In relation to the Capital and Investment Strategy and Capital Programme (Section 5);

RESOLVED to recommend Council to:

- j) approve the Capital and Investment Strategy for 2026/27 – 2036/37 (Section 4.1) including:
 - (i) the Minimum Revenue Provision Methodology Statement (Section 5.1 Annex 1);
 - (ii) the Prudential Indicators (Section 5.1 Annex 2) and
- k) approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2026/27 (Section 5.2); and
 - (i) continue to delegate the authority to withdraw or advance additional funds to/from external fund managers to the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer);
 - (ii) approve that any further changes required to the 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation;

- (iii) approve the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators; and
- (iv) approve the Specified Investment and Non - Specified Investment instruments as set out in Section 5.2.
- l) approve the changes to the capital programme and new capital proposals for inclusion in the Capital Programme and proposed pipeline schemes (Section 5.3)
- m) approve the capital programme (Section 5.4)

9/26 OXFORDSHIRE LEARNING DISABILITY PLAN 2025 - 2035

(Agenda Item. 9)

Cabinet had before it a report on the Oxfordshire Learning Disability Plan, a 10-year strategy for adults, including the transition into adulthood. The Plan focused on four key themes and four cross-cutting areas. Planned reviews at regular intervals would ensure its effectiveness and adaptability, with any necessary revisions applied based on needs and demands at that time.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adults, presented the report.

The Head of Joint Commissioning – Live Well described the year-long co-production process involving My Life, My Choice, Oxfordshire Family Support Network, and experts by experience, resulting in a ten-year plan with regular reviews and dynamic action plans monitored by a co-chaired improvement board.

Extensive engagement included focus groups, surveys, world café events, and story sharing, with over 160 participants (including people with learning disabilities, carers, staff, and professionals) contributing to the plan's content and priorities.

The plan was structured around four themes—having a good life, health and wellbeing, having a place to live, and homes not hospitals—and addressed transitions, employment, technology-enabled care, and inclusion, with subgroups ensuring ongoing input from lived experience.

Councillor Bearder moved and Councillor Leffman seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

RESOLVED to acknowledge the development of the new co-designed Oxfordshire Learning Disability Plan 2025 – 2035 for adults, the co-produced Dynamic Work Plans and progress on work so far.

10/26 MY LIFE MY CHOICE COUNCILLOR DEAL

(Agenda Item. 10)

Cabinet had before it a report on “County Councillor Deal” created by a team of learning-disabled people (Campaign Champions) focusing on three key areas of life they want the council’s work to focus on. The My Life My Choice

Campaign requested that the Leader of the Council endorse the three pledges of the Campaign Champions. MLMC asked the County Council to concentrate its efforts on these commitments to support individuals with learning disabilities.

The three pledges were:

Pledge 1: Social Care – Workforce and Support

Pledge 2: Education and Employment

Pledge 3: Good Places to Live.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adults, presented the report.

My Life, My Choice representatives presented their priorities and expectations for partnership, focusing on empowerment, inclusion, and co-production.

The Cabinet formally acknowledged and endorsed the compact, agreeing to work with My Life, My Choice on the three pledges aligned with the Learning Disability Plan, and noted that the commitment may be reviewed depending on local government reorganisation outcomes.

Councillor Bearder moved and Councillor Leffman seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **Acknowledge and endorse this report developed with My Life My Choice (MLMC) Campaign Champions.**
- b) **Confirm the council's commitment to work with the MLMC Community Champions on the three pledges that they have set out as part of the Councillor Deal where these fall within the council's remit and where they are within the scope of the Oxfordshire Learning Disability Plan 2025-2035 (see annex 1a and 1b).**

Following endorsement, the Cabinet agreed to a short break to sign the compact and take a commemorative photograph, marking the formalisation of the partnership.

11/26 MOVEMENT AND PLACE PLANS - SCIENCE VALE

(Agenda Item. 11)

Cabinet had before it report seeking Cabinet approval for the Science Vale Movement and Place (MAP) Plan. These Plans will replace the current "Area Strategies" as adopted in 2016, as part of Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4).

Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, presented the report. Councillor Roberts explained the plan's shift towards integrating transport and place-making, connecting employment

and housing, and repurposing infrastructure to benefit local communities, with a commitment to ongoing community and locality engagement.

Councillor Roberts moved and Councillor Higgins seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to: -

- a) Approve the adoption and publication of the Introduction Chapter (Annex A) providing overarching and context information for all Movement & Place Plans, which supports all specific Movement & Place Plans.**
- b) Approve the adoption and publication of the Science Vale Movement and Place Plan (Annex B), and its subsequent supporting documents at B1- B4) (e.g. summary, delivery plan etc).**

12/26 LTCP MONITORING REPORT 2024-2025

(Agenda Item. 12)

Cabinet had before it a report summarising the delivery and performance for the year 2024-2025 against the Council's ambition as set out in the Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).

Councillor Judy Roberts, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, presented the report.

Councillor Roberts explained the main points outlined in the report including progress against key performance indicators and areas identified for improvement, particularly in rural cycling infrastructure and data interpretation. The monitoring report was revised for clarity and accessibility, tracking headline targets such as car trips, vehicle miles, emissions, and digital connectivity, with mixed results due to post-pandemic behavioural changes.

Councillor Roberts noted difficulties in interpreting trends due to pandemic effects, with car trips up but vehicle miles down, and highlighted positive trends in emissions reduction and digital connectivity.

During discussion, a member raised concerns about rural cycling infrastructure, urging the use of the report to identify opportunities for new cycle tracks.

The Director of Environment and Highways referred to forthcoming national metrics and guidance that might further enhance monitoring.

Councillor Roberts moved and Councillor Gant seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:

- a) **Approve the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan Monitoring Report 2024-2025, as detailed in Annex B, for formal publication.**
- b) **note the progress made on delivering the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (“LTCP”) to date.**

13/26 REVENUE UPDATE AND MONITORING REPORT (NOVEMBER 2025)

(Agenda Item. 13)

The budget for 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2027/28 was agreed by Council on 11 February 2025. £53.6m new funding to meet inflationary and demand pressures in 2025/26 was included as part of the budget along with £6.9m investments and £30.3m savings.

Cabinet had before it a report setting out the current revenue forecast as at end of November 2025 and expected outlook for the financial year and included updates on:

- financial risks which are being managed in 2025/26;
- savings and investment position; and
- funding notified since the budget was agreed in February 2025.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, presented the report.

Councillor Levy reported a £2 million underspend for 2025–26, with pressures in adult social care, children's placements, and fire and rescue, offset by central budget underspends and higher interest income. The Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Deficit remained a significant concern.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Lefman seconded the recommendations and they were approved.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) **Note the report and annexes.**
- b) **Note that £1.2m funding for investments relating to Rail and Flood planning agreed as part of the budget in February 2025 will be transferred to the Budget Priorities reserve for use in 2026/27 (paragraph 22).**
- c) **Note anticipated supplementary estimate requests to be funded from General Balances relating to:**
 1. **c£0.5m Bicester Motion (paragraph 14)**
 2. **c£2.2m Woodeaton School deficit balance write off due to transfer to academy status (paragraph 34)**
- d) **Approve the write off of 16 Adult Social Care contribution debts totalling £0.477m as detailed in paragraph 31.**

- e) **Note the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block 2025/26 forecast and accumulated deficit position (paragraphs 35 - 39).**
- f) **Approve the creation of a new Budget Reserve and the addition of £5.5m forecast additional interest on balances in 2025/26 (paragraph 40).**
- g) **Note Local Government Re-organisation and Devolution update (paragraph 41 -42)**

14/26 CAPITAL PROGRAMME APPROVALS - JANUARY 2026

(Agenda Item. 14)

The 2025/26 Capital Programme was approved by Council in February 2025 and is updated during the year through the quarterly capital programme and monitoring reports. Cabinet had before it a report setting out change requests requiring Cabinet approval that would be incorporated into the agreed programme and included in the next update to Cabinet.

Councillor Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation presented the report. Councillor Levy said that the inclusion of £5 million for the Dukes Cut Bridge project was essential for the A40 improvements and future transport schemes

During discussion, members acknowledged the importance of the scheme for the county's future development.

Councillor Levy moved and Councillor Roberts seconded the recommendation, and it was approved.

RESOLVED to approve the inclusion of £5.0m funding into the capital programme for Duke's Cut Wolvercote Bridge Works.

15/26 DELEGATED POWERS REPORT FOR OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2025

(Agenda Item. 15)

There was no use of delegated powers during this period.

16/26 FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

(Agenda Item. 16)

The Cabinet considered a list of items for the immediately forthcoming meetings of the Cabinet together with changes and additions set out in the schedule of addenda.

RESOLVED to note the items currently identified for forthcoming meetings.

17/26 FOR INFORMATION ONLY: CABINET RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY ITEM

(Agenda Item. 17)

Cabinet noted the responses to the following Scrutiny items:-

Business Management and Monitoring Report (Children, Education and Families Focus)

Budget and Business Planning

.....in the Chair

Date of signing

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET 24 February 2026

Oxfordshire Unpaid Carers Strategy Report of the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
 - a) Note the recommendations contained in the body of this report and to consider and determine its response to the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and
 - b) Agree that, once Cabinet has responded, relevant officers will continue to provide each meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a brief written update on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations for 12 months, or until they are completed (if earlier).

REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND

2. In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, People Overview & Scrutiny Committee requires that, within two months of the consideration of this report, the Cabinet publish a response to this report and any recommendations.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

3. The People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered how Oxfordshire County Council supports Unpaid Carers in Oxfordshire under the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2023, and the Oxfordshire County Council's Strategic Plan 2025 to 2028 at its meeting on 15 January 2026.
4. The Committee would like to thank Karen Fuller, Director of Adult Social Services, Isabel Rockingham, Head of Joint Commissioning – Age Well, and Jordan Marsh, Commissioning Officer for preparing and introducing the report, and for attending to answer questions.

SUMMARY

5. The People Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the Oxfordshire Unpaid Carers Strategy, welcoming officers' emphasis on the essential contribution unpaid carers make to the health and social care system. The Committee noted that, despite carers providing an estimated 7.9 billion hours of care nationally, fewer people identify themselves as carers, limiting the Council's ability to offer statutory assessments and support. Strategic priorities presented to the Committee included improved identification across health and community settings, clearer information and guidance, and more personalised support plans to enable people to live independently at home for longer.
6. In discussion, Members explored the barriers that unpaid carers face in accessing support, including inconsistent recognition across GP practices, limited awareness of entitlements such as congestion-charge exemptions, and challenges for those who are digitally excluded. The Committee also highlighted differing needs across age groups, ethnic backgrounds, and rural or urban communities.
7. The Committee were informed that a new contract with Carers Oxfordshire, who deliver the core support to unpaid carers, was currently in the procurement phase. Officers reported that, working alongside Carers Oxfordshire, progress had been made with closer GP partnership and community led engagement. Members of the Committee expressed their interest in seeing the proposed carers strain index by Carers Oxfordshire as part of the new contract.
8. The Committee welcomed improvements to hospital discharge processes, strengthened feedback mechanisms, and the development of flexible support offers.
9. The Committee makes two recommendations focused on reviewing the timing of support sessions, exploring lifestyle-offer schemes linked to Carers ID cards, and ensuring consistent GP-level outreach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10. Members of the Committee reported feedback from unpaid carers that many cannot attend support sessions scheduled around mealtimes, medication routines, school runs, or bedtime, even when they are otherwise motivated to engage. While some daytime provision works for a subset of carers, a significant cohort needs evening, early-morning, weekend, or drop-in/on-demand options to participate. Officers confirmed that flexibility varies and acknowledged that timing is a barrier to uptake, particularly for those juggling employment alongside caring.

11. The Committee also noted that “asynchronous” support (e.g., recorded workshops, bite-size videos, messaging forums, and resource libraries) can meet carers where they are, without obliging them to choose between care duties and support. Given the Council’s strategic aim to intervene earlier and more personally, underpinned by the new contract’s carers strain index, the Committee considers that aligning availability with real-world caring patterns is central to achieving better outcomes and preventing crisis.

Recommendation 1: That the Council Carers Oxfordshire to review the timings of the support on offer, to ensure support is available outside of main caring duty times and to consider what asynchronous support could additionally be provided.

12. The Committee discussed the potential for the Carers ID card to confer practical recognition and access to benefits that tangibly ease day-to-day pressures. Members observed that national programmes like the Blue Light Card are currently restricted to paid professionals, yet unpaid carers shoulder substantial responsibilities and could benefit from similar recognition and modest cost-of-living reliefs. Officers referenced existing discretionary payments and noted that any expansion must be evidence-led, value-for-money, and integrated with the core offer delivered through Carers Oxfordshire.
13. The Committee therefore considers it appropriate for the Council to develop a structured appraisal of options (e.g., participation in established lifestyle-offer schemes, local partnership discounts, or enhanced uses of the ID card in health and care settings), including equity, administrative feasibility, and measurable benefit to carers, then reported back with a clear rationale for joining or not joining such schemes. This would provide transparency to carers and ensure consistency across the system.

Recommendation 2: That the Council gives further consideration to the use of the Carers ID card and its participation in lifestyle-offer schemes.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION

14. The Committee does not intend to revisit this item during this municipal year, however, retains a strong interest in the Council support of unpaid carers in Oxfordshire due to their significant contribution to society. The issue of unpaid carers remains high on this Committee’s interests and priorities. The Committee recognises that it cannot bind next year’s Committee but hopes that the work arising from recommendation 2 would be scrutinised during the 2025/26 municipal year.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. Under Part 6.2 (13) (a) of the Constitution Scrutiny has the following power:
‘Once a Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter a

formal report may be prepared on behalf of the Committee and when agreed by them the Proper Officer will normally refer it to the Cabinet for consideration.

16. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2.3 (v) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Scrutiny Committees.

Anita Bradley
Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex: Pro-forma Response Template

Background papers: None

Other Documents: None

Contact Officer: Ben Piper
Senior Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer
ben.piper@oxfordshire.gov.uk

February 2026

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: Oxfordshire Unpaid Carer Strategy
Lead Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adults
Date response requested:² 17 March 2026

Response to report:
Enter optional text here

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. That the Council works with the newly commissioned partner to review the timings of the support on offer, to ensure support is available outside of main caring duty times		

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received
² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

and consider what asynchronous support could be offered in addition.		
2. That the Council gives further consideration to the use of the Carers ID card and its participation in lifestyle- offer schemes.		

Divisions Affected – All

CABINET 24 February 2026

Draft Social Value Policy Report of Performance and Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to —
 - a) Note the recommendations contained in the body of this report and to consider and agree its response to them, for inclusion within the Council budget papers, and
 - b) Agree that, once Cabinet has responded, relevant officers will continue to provide each meeting of the Performance and Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a brief written update on progress made against actions committed to in response to the recommendations for 12 months, or until they are completed (if earlier).

REQUIREMENT TO RESPOND

2. In accordance with section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, the Performance and Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee requires that, within two months of the consideration of this report, the Cabinet publish a response to this report and any recommendations.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

3. The Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the draft of the Council's new Social Value Policy, which largely sought to bring much of the activity around social value in procurement in-house, at its meeting on 16 January 2026.
4. The Committee would like to thank Cllr Dan Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation, Martin Reeves, Chief Executive, Ian Dyson, Director for Financial and Commercial Services, and Max Button,

Commercial Excellence Lead, for attending the meeting and responding to questions.

SUMMARY

5. The Cabinet Member and Officers introduced the new Social Value Policy by outlining its purpose and the strategic direction it would set for Oxfordshire County Council. The policy sought to ensure the Council's procurement and commissioning activities delivered benefits that extended beyond strict financial return. It was intended to embed social value into all contracts so that local priorities, such as sustainability, inclusion, and economic development, were actively supported through public spending. By positioning social value at the centre of procurement, the Council aimed to strengthen community outcomes and promote long-term wellbeing for residents.
6. The Director for Financial and Commercial Services discussed how the policy would operate in practice. He explained that it would provide a clear framework for Officers, enabling consistent assessment and maximisation of social value within procurement processes. The policy was designed to ensure Officers had accessible guidance, measurable outcomes and transparent evaluation methods, so that consideration of social value became a routine element in decision-making. He noted that embedding these principles required sustained cultural change, supported through training and ongoing oversight.
7. The Commercial Excellence Lead added that the policy would strengthen the Council's ability to work constructively with suppliers and partners, encouraging innovation and collaboration. He highlighted that meaningful social impact depended on strong relationships and the ability to track, monitor and report on commitments. Building a cycle of continuous improvement was essential, ensuring that the policy delivered real change rather than becoming a procedural formality.
8. In response to the introduction, the Committee explored ideas around broadening the concept of social value beyond procurement, the size of contract the social value policy would apply to, enforcement powers of social value commitments, and the balance of social value outputs in the policy in regards to the Council's strategic objectives.
9. The Committee makes ten formal recommendations. Largely, they reflect the fact that to extract the greatest value from the Council's social value activity it must be aligned with other partners all pulling in the same direction: internally beyond simply procurement, and externally beyond simply the Council. In addition, the Committee makes a number of other suggested improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS & OBSERVATIONS

Internal Alignment

10. The most fundamental comment by the Committee relates to the Council's approach to social value. The Committee appreciates that the Council has a responsibility to have a social value policy, which regulates how legislation over social value in procurement is delivered. The policy achieves that.
11. Nonetheless, what was much less clear to the Committee was how the Council intends to engage on developing social value and community wealth building in a cross-cutting, holistic manner of which procurement is simply one element. The remainder of this report picks up on a number of these issues, but in order to get the most social value and to contribute towards a fairer economy the Council's economic strategy, its transport policy, its partnerships, its use of data, and the way it uses its estate are all factors which must work in tune with one another. The Committee would like to see greater clarity over how the Council is coordinating these facets of its work to draw the maximum benefit available, and many of the recommendations following in this report illustrate areas which may wish to be touched on.

Recommendation 1: That any policy on supporting social value through procurement should form part of a wider policy on generating social value and supporting community wealth building across all the Council's functions, and that the Cabinet should commit to a holistic approach and next year produce a social value report which goes beyond procurement.

12. The Committee is pleased to see that the Council is reviewing and improving on its existing Social Value policy in its new draft. Although social value is fundamentally rooted in the needs of a particular place and must be bespoke, there are lessons to be learned by those who have developed and implemented impactful social value policies elsewhere.
13. The Durham Pound initiative has reported £15.5m worth of spending on local skills and employment, seen £21.8m spent within the county, and reduced car miles in their contracts by 90,000.¹ Preston, probably the most famous in this arena, has seen local spend increase by £75m in a little over a decade and was declared 'Most Improved City' in 2018.² The Manchester Social Value policy has seen the establishment of the Good Employment Charter, and the Council has adopted the socio-economic duty as a lens through which to judge all of its decision-making.³
14. If the Council is to emulate the scale of these successes, the Committee encourages it to learn from those who have trodden this path before, as well as the work it itself previously commissioned from the Centre for Local

¹ [Microsoft PowerPoint - Agenda Item 7 - Durham County Council Social Value Annual Report 2023-24 COSMB Final.pptx](#)

² [A new approach to social value launched by Preston City Council - Preston Partnership](#)

³ [Appendix 1 - 2025 Social Value Policy.pdf](#)

Economic Strategies which promotes a more holistic community wealth building approach.⁴

Recommendation 2: That in developing and implementing its new social value policy, the Cabinet should draw on the experience of best-practice councils including Durham, Manchester and Preston, as well as the 2023 commissioned report from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies.

15. One area of feedback relates to the degree to which the draft policy presented to the committee gave as much priority to environmental concerns as the Council does in its strategic plan. It was claimed in the report submitted to the committee that the draft plan ‘supports climate and sustainability ambitions through priorities that can drive environmental sustainability and local regeneration outcomes, consistent with the council’s Climate Action Framework.’ On questioning by the Committee, the only example which could be provided was a criterion which related to sustainable regeneration. The Committee is far from against sustainable regeneration, but it is clear that this should not be the singular environmental output of the Council’s social value policy. The Committee would like to see development of additional Themes, Outcomes, and Measures (TOMs) to broaden the environmental responses to climate change made through the social value policy.

Recommendation 3: That the Cabinet considers, when developing a new set of Themes, Outcomes, and Measures (TOMs) for application in Oxfordshire, how these reflect its commitments to putting climate change at the heart of everything it does as well as safeguarding the wellbeing of future generations.

16. The following recommendation is an illustration of what the Committee seeks when it argues in favour of leveraging a more bespoke approach and integrating with other aspects of the Council’s work. The Council has done very detailed, positive work and engaged with a broad variety of stakeholders to develop its Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This has mapped biodiversity priorities, identified the species most under threat, and outlined what actions could be taken to have the greatest impact on protecting and restoring the county’s natural environment.

Recommendation 4: That the Cabinet considers how its new social value policy can support delivery of the Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

17. The recommendation above also illustrates another issue the Committee wishes to raise: the importance of having ready-made projects with proven impacts relating to the Council’s priorities around social value.
18. As referenced above, with all the best will in the world, the primary purpose of many organisations is not social value but to run a business and it is unfair to

⁴ [CLES Report - https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=71841&ISATT=1#search=%22CLES%22](https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=71841&ISATT=1#search=%22CLES%22)

expect that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) would have a strong understanding of what activities should be delivered or how best they can be. The Council, on the other hand, holds vast amounts of information about the needs of the area and its residents, and is in a far better position to take an informed view on the interventions which would make a particular difference locally.

19. The Committee's view is that there is great benefit in having the Council be responsible for establishing and (potentially, but not necessarily) delivering meaningful social value interventions for organisations to participate in, rather than time limited interventions by organisations themselves. Not only does this maximise the effectiveness of the resources put towards social value, but it also improves the accessibility for businesses by reducing the bureaucratic burdens on them. A further benefit is that the Council can create targets based on its priorities, and have greater influence over where resources are deployed by creating more opportunities in top-priority areas over lesser-priority areas.

Recommendation 5: That the Cabinet should set targets and make available to organisations proven, impactful projects which focus on the key priorities the Council would like to address in relation to social value

20. Community Asset Transfer and the leasing of buildings to the Voluntary and Community Sector is a topic which the Committee considered in November 2024.⁵ The CLES report stated its view that the Community Asset Transfer at the Council policy was 'under-utilised'. The report submitted in November 2024 stated that demand for leased buildings, previously the preferred option, had fallen significantly, with no new requests since Covid. Whilst the report made clear that few suitable buildings were available, the paucity of demand suggests a possibility that the Council may not be identifying or promoting the opportunities that do exist well enough. Given the changes in governance with Local Government Reorganisation, Council finances via the Fairer Funding Review, as well as policies initiatives such as the Marmot Place and the grant funding for the revitalisation of children's centres, the needs of the county and its social sector are evolving. The Committee encourages the Cabinet to review how land disposals may be used to meet these changing requirements.

Recommendation 6: That the Cabinet specifically considers the opportunities to support social value through the disposal of land and property and ensure policy is developed around this, especially around Community Asset Transfer.

Alignment with Partners

21. As an institution, the level of the Council's expenditure marks it as one of the most significant organisations in the county. However, when pitted against the

⁵

<https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s73313/20241105%20CAT%20and%20VCS%20Lease%20-%20PCSOCS%20v3.5.pdf>

combined expenditure of other anchor institutions such as the NHS trusts and ICB, universities and colleges, armed forces, and major private employers such as the Mini factory and Unipart its contribution is fairly modest. There are a number of reasons why this relative lack of scale is important, and why it is important to partner with other anchor organisations to maximise collective impact.

22. The first is simply coverage. It does take time, effort and possibly money for companies to understand, consider and integrate social value to the way that they deliver their contracts. The Council having a unilateral policy will mean that to access its contracts businesses must give thought to its priorities. There are, however, a huge volume of other contracts available which don't reflect these priorities. This means there is less impetus to make the investment in knowing how to be socially valuable. A multilateral, common policy between partnering anchor institutions on the other hand forms a significantly greater portion of local work, and therefore would encourage organisations who otherwise might not feel it is worth their while to engage with the process. (A shared policy also makes it easier for them to do so, a point raised in the CLES report where feedback from suppliers described the local procurement landscape as 'siloes' and 'fragmented').
23. In addition to this, a risk of not being one of the largest-spending anchor institutions trying to pursue its own policy is that if companies have to choose between multiple options, they will likely choose those with the highest potential returns. If a company is going to invest in optimising its social value credentials in order to maximise the likelihood of winning a contract, the gravitational pull of NHS budgets make their visions and processes around social value the ones most likely to be accorded to, and not the Council's.
24. Working in partnership with fellow anchor institutions is therefore critical if it is to increase competition between companies over social value metrics, and to avoid the pitfalls of having a non-aligned social value policy. The Council may not be one of the largest spenders, but it has influence through its convening powers and existing partnerships, particularly now that the role of the Local Enterprise Partnership has come in-house. The Committee would like to see the Council taking a lead in this area particularly.

Recommendation 7: That the Cabinet should work alongside fellow anchor institutions in the public and private sector to align their policies to maximise social value generation and their collective impact on the wider Oxfordshire economy through their purchasing power.

Other Improvements

25. The threshold for contracts at which the social value policy becomes live is £100k, and the Committee understands that there are good reasons for that: an increase in the cost of monitoring for smaller returns, and putting bureaucratic barriers on the small, local employers who are the types of

business the social value policy would want to support. Nonetheless, when looked at from a purely numerical perspective, £50k is still a lot of money, let alone £99k, and for a Council seeking to maximise its social value impact for there to be no consideration whatsoever of wider social benefits from such contracts does potentially leave some beneficial outcomes unrealised. By way of comparison, Preston has a lower threshold at £74,999.⁶ The Committee does appreciate that the level set is a very nuanced judgement, but it is of the view that the current level may not leverage the Council's position as a major procurer locally to its maximum potential. The Cabinet is asked to review whether lighter-touch social value requirements for smaller contracts could realise greater social value overall.

Recommendation 8: That the Cabinet considers having a light-touch set of social value requirements for smaller contracts

26. The balance of weightings in a procurement are an expression of the Council's priorities, and are a response to the competing requirements that a contract must fulfil. The product or service must be of sufficient quality to do the job it is intended to do, it must be delivered at the lowest cost to local tax-payers, and the way the contract is delivered align with and contribute towards broader social value goals. This is a difficult balance to strike; the level of the lesser-weighted areas must be sufficient that they meaningfully impact the overall result (and thus contractor behaviour), but not at greatly increased cost or risk of poor-quality outcomes. The Council nor its residents are well-served by well-meaning companies delivering an expensive or poor service.
27. Recognising this challenge, the Council has set its weighting at 10%, which is the statutory minimum. If the Council seeks to be ambitious in changing the behaviour of suppliers to increase the social value of its contracts, the Committee finds it incongruous that this is best delivered by assigning it the minimum legal weighting it can; Manchester and Preston, social value exemplars, have standard levels of 20%.⁷ The Committee seeks that the Cabinet review this to ensure that the level it is set at accurately reflects its priorities.

Recommendation 9: That the Cabinet reconsiders the proposed social value weighting which is currently set at the statutory minimum of 10%.

28. The Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has shown an ongoing interest in the Council's development of its approach to social value, having considered it twice in the last three years. Indeed, the new policy before Cabinet reflects a number of the Committee's previous recommendations – that social value should become more tailored and be delivered in-house.

⁶ [A new approach to social value launched by Preston City Council - Preston Partnership](#)

⁷ [Appendix 1 - 2025 Social Value Policy.pdf](#) and [A new approach to social value launched by Preston City Council - Preston Partnership](#)

29. One of the previous recommendations made which has not been adopted concerns the forms of ownership of organisations delivering contracts on behalf of the Council. It is the view of the Committee that the ownership structure of an organisation has inherent social value. Whilst not determinative on its own, a co-operative structure, for example, with its democratic decision-making and shared ownership is more liable to take a broader, social view than one in private ownership. Likewise, social enterprises, which are established with the intention of delivering social value alongside profit are also more likely to show higher levels of social value added. The draft policy recognises this, giving an exemption from social value requirements where 'The project is seeking quotes solely from Voluntary, Charity, or Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations who, by their nature, deliver inherent social value to the local communities that they serve.'
30. It is the view of the Committee that this exemption is too narrow, in that it does not recognise other inherently valuable forms of ownership, nor does the exemption provide any benefit when inherently beneficial types of organisation are competing against less-beneficial forms of enterprise. The Committee encourages the Cabinet to ensure that its design of social value measures incentivises the more social and inclusive forms of ownership.

Recommendation 10: That the Cabinet should ensure that its choice of social value measures incentivises inclusive forms of ownership, including co-operatives and social enterprises.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION

31. The Committee appreciates that Cabinet is making its decision at the same meeting as these recommendations are presented. Should Cabinet wish to do so, the Committee would welcome further informal engagement on how to implement its ideas and maximise the value of the Council's position as a local anchor institution.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

32. Under Part 6.2 (13) (a) of the Constitution Scrutiny has the following power: 'Once a Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter a formal report may be prepared on behalf of the Committee and when agreed by them the Proper Officer will normally refer it to the Cabinet for consideration.'
33. Under Part 4.2 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Procedure Rules, s 2 (3) iv) the Cabinet will consider any reports from Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Anita Bradley
Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex: Pro-forma Response Template

Background papers: None

Other Documents: None

Contact Officer: Tom Hudson
Scrutiny Manager
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Tel: 07791 494285

February 2026

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Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

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Issue: **Draft Social Value Policy**

Lead Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Levy, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation**

Date response requested:² **24 February 2026**

Response to report:

Enter text here.

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Response to recommendations

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
<p>1. That any policy on supporting social value through procurement should form part of a wider policy on generating social value and supporting community wealth building across all the Council's functions, and that the Cabinet should commit to a holistic approach and next year produce a social value report which goes beyond procurement.</p>		
<p>2. That in developing and implementing its new social value policy, the Cabinet should draw on the experience of best-practice councils including Durham, Manchester and Preston, as well as the 2023 commissioned report from the Centre for Local Economic Strategies.</p>		
<p>3. That That the Cabinet considers, when developing a new set of Themes, Outcomes, and Measures (TOMs) for application in Oxfordshire, how these reflect its commitments to putting climate change at the heart of everything it does</p>		

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

<p>as well as safeguarding the wellbeing of future generations.</p>		
<p>4. That the Cabinet considers how its new social value policy can support delivery of the Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p>		
<p>5. That the Cabinet should set targets and make available to organisations proven, impactful projects which focus on the key priorities the Council would like to address in relation to social value</p>		
<p>6. That the Cabinet specifically considers the opportunities to support social value through the disposal of land and property and ensure policy is developed around this, especially around Community Asset Transfer.</p>		
<p>7. That the Cabinet should work alongside fellow anchor institutions in the public and private sector to align their policies to maximise social value generation and their collective impact on the wider Oxfordshire economy through their purchasing power.</p>		
<p>8. That the Cabinet considers having a light-touch set of social value requirements for smaller contracts</p>		

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

9. That the Cabinet reconsiders the proposed social value weighting which is currently set at the statutory minimum of 10%.		
10. That the Cabinet should ensure that its choice of social value measures incentivises inclusive forms of ownership, including co-operatives and social enterprises.		

CABINET

Tuesday 24 February 2026

Social Value - New in-house approach.

Report by Director of Financial and Commercial Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to**
 - a) Approve the Oxfordshire County Council Social Value Policy (Annex 1).
 - b) Agree to move the council's social value approach in- house, transitioning away from third- party delivery and/or platforms, to enable a more streamlined approach that better aligns to the council's Strategic Plan 2025–2028 priorities.

Executive Summary

2. This report seeks endorsement of a new Social Value Policy that will move the council's social value approach in-house, away from third-party delivery. Subject to Scrutiny Committee comments, the policy will progress through the council's decision-making pathway.
3. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires contracting authorities to consider how relevant contracts might improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area, and how they will take action to achieve this. This added benefit is usually achieved through a social value clause within the contract.
4. Stakeholder feedback indicates that the current third-party approach (which assesses social value proposals and captures proxy values of social impact on behalf of The Council) has been perceived as costly and administratively burdensome, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, and uptake has been low. The new in-house approach removes the annual third-party cost of £19,200 (including Value Added Tax (VAT)) and will use existing Council tools, Officers and processes, requiring no new software licences.

5. The policy establishes five local social value priorities and a proportionate mechanism for applying social value in qualifying procurements, including a default 10% tender weighting for contracts above £100,000 total value, by selecting two priorities (5% each). It also strengthens contract management, transparency and annual reporting through an annual Social Value Statement.

Background Context

6. The Council seeks to maximise the wider economic, social and environmental benefits that can be delivered through procurement activity, alongside core contractual delivery. These wider benefits are commonly referred to as social value.
7. Previously the Council has used the Social Value Portal, a third-party tool used for assessment of supplier proposal and the collection of social value data. Whilst this system has enabled the development of the Council's social value way of working, The Council would like to move these operations in house to better align social value with the Council's strategic priorities.
8. The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–2028 sets out a vision for a greener, fairer and healthier Oxfordshire. The updated Social Value Policy is intended to align procurement activity to these strategic priorities and support delivery of local outcomes.
9. The approach also aligns to the Council's Climate Action Framework, the Including Everyone: Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework, and supports the Council's ambition to become a Marmot Place by contributing to action that reduces health inequalities.
10. The priorities listed below will enable The Council to communicate more effectively with anchor organisations to develop a more cohesive approach to Social Value within the county. The policy includes a commitment to periodic review, so it remains current with changing legislation, market conditions and local priorities. This would allow the policy to develop post local government reorganisation and will allow flexibility should anchor organisations wish to follow this model or wish to collaborate on a combined approach.

Proposal: New Social Value Policy and In- House Operating Model

11. Approval is sought for the Oxfordshire County Council Social Value Policy (Annex 1). The policy updates the Council's way of working with suppliers by taking the social value approach in-house.

Key elements of change include:

- Removal of third- party fees associated with the current social value platform.
- A more streamlined evaluation approach that is proportionate and focused.
- Reduced administrative burden for contract managers and suppliers, decreasing time and cost across the procurement and contract management lifecycle.

12. The policy sets out five default local social value priorities. For each qualifying procurement, two priorities will be selected to ensure they are achievable for the supplier/sector and material impact can be measured. These priorities will act as themes for which the Service Area, in conjunction with the Commercial and Procurement professional, will design questions to target specific actions to develop the social value within that theme. The questions will be designed that they are relevant to the procurement, the supply base and to ensure they are achievable within the contracts life.

1. **Early Careers Opportunities:** Create pathways for young people aged 16–24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and new entrants into the workforce.
2. **Supported Employment:** Enable residents facing barriers to employment to access meaningful work, supporting a fairer and more inclusive county.
3. **Local Area Regeneration:** Invest in places and spaces, enhancing community wellbeing and supporting environmental sustainability.
4. **Youth Engagement and Support:** Inspire and empower school- aged children (5–16), ensuring they have the support and opportunities to thrive.
5. **Healthy Lives; Healthy Future:** Promote the health and wellbeing of residents, supporting both physical and mental health, and preventative approaches.

Mechanism: When and How Social Value Applies

13. For procurements with a total value above £100,000, tenders will include two selected social value priorities weighted at 5% each, providing a combined social value weighting of 10%.
14. Suppliers will be required to submit a Social Value Delivery Plan (SVDP) as part of their tender response. The SVDP will set out commitments, milestones and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) measures for the life of the contract. The SVDP will also set out the estimated cost of implementing the social value within the contract.
15. The policy provides defined exemptions where applying the standard weighting may not be appropriate, including where procurements are limited to voluntary, charity or social enterprise (VCSE) organisations, or where contract duration is less than 12 months.

Contract Management, Non- Compliance and Service Credits

16. Social value delivery will be monitored through regular contract management. Reporting frequency will be determined on a contract-by-contract basis, proportionate to contract value, duration and the nature of commitments.
17. Where delivery falls behind schedule, the council will agree reasonable adjustments through a Social Value Delivery Plan review and record changes through normal change control.
18. Where suppliers fail to improve following remediation, the council may apply contractual service credits. Service credits relating to social value will be capped so that they do not exceed 10% of the contract's total value. Service credits will be pooled and ring-fenced and shared across the five Social Value Priorities. Responsibility for administering and allocating pooled credits will sit with the Commercial and Procurement team.

Governance, Transparency and Reporting

19. The council will periodically review the Social Value Policy, particularly to reflect relevant changes in legislation or public procurement policy. It will also be possible to update the five criteria relating to the Council's strategic priorities to ensure that social value delivery remains current to the needs of the county.
20. To communicate progress and performance, the council will publish an annual Social Value Statement, with information gathered by a light-touch annual supplier survey completed with contract managers.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

21. The proposal supports delivery of the Strategic Plan 2025–2028 by aligning procurement and commissioning activity to local priorities that contribute to a greener, fairer and healthier Oxfordshire.
22. The proposal supports climate and sustainability ambitions through priorities that can drive environmental sustainability and local regeneration outcomes, consistent with the council's Climate Action Framework.
23. The proposal supports the Including Everyone: Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework by reducing barriers to supplier participation and enabling targeted outcomes that support inclusive communities and opportunity.
24. The proposal supports the council's Marmot Place ambition by enabling procurement-led contributions to addressing the wider determinants of health, including employment, early years and healthy living interventions.

Financial Implications

25. The in-house approach removes the current annual third-party cost of £19,200 (including VAT). No new tools or software licences are required, as the new approach will use existing council systems and resources included with Commercial and Procurement redesign
26. Any pooled service credits applied under the policy will be ring-fenced to support projects aligned to the five Social Value Priorities.

Comments checked by:
Drew Hodgson
Strategic Finance Business Partner
drew.hodgson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

27. The Council has duties and responsibilities under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, the Procurement Act 2023, the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 and the Local Government Act 1988 when it seeks to gain social value from the award of public contracts. The Council must consider how what is being procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area and how to secure that improvement.
28. Where the Council sets social value award criteria, the criteria must be related to the subject matter of the contract and be proportionate. The Council must have regard to the National Procurement Policy Statement which sets delivering social and economic value as a priority.
29. Under Section Local Government Act 1988, section 17 (1) The Council must not take into account non-commercial considerations in relation to its public supply or works contracts. However, by virtue of s17(11), s17(1) does not prevent the Council from exercising any function regulated by section 17 with reference to a non-commercial matter to the extent that the authority considers it necessary or expedient to do so to enable or facilitate compliance with a duty imposed on it by the Procurement Act 2023 or section 1 of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.
30. The Council's Contract Procedure Rules, Rule 8.1 requires officers to consider all factors relevant to their requirement, including environmental and social considerations, including social value benefit where appropriate, so far as this is lawful.
31. The proposed policy supports compliance with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 by embedding consideration of economic, social and environmental wellbeing into relevant procurements. Implementation will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's obligations under the above mentioned legislation and associated regulations and guidance, ensuring award criteria remain relevant and proportionate to the subject matter of each contract.
32. Relevant contract clauses will be prepared by Legal Services and included in contracts to ensure that all parties fully understand the new social value approach and the obligations of each party.

Comments checked by: Jayne Pringle, Principal Solicitor (Contracts)
jayne.pringle@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

33. Implementation will complement the recently completed Commercial and Procurement Redesign. Officers from the Commercial Excellence and Contract Management teams will support the rollout of the policy and the new way of working, including templates, guidance and proportionate assurance. This

resourcing approach also supports risk mitigation by enabling consistent application and improved support for contract managers.

34. Communications and guidance will be published and maintained via the Hive intranet platform, helping colleagues to access up-to-date information as quickly as possible.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

35. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the Social Value Policy and updated way of working (Annex 2). The assessment identifies no adverse impacts and anticipates positive impacts, including enhanced employment opportunities for residents facing barriers to work. The assessment will be reviewed in November 2027.

Sustainability Implications

36. The policy includes priorities that can support environmental sustainability and local regeneration. This complements the council's wider climate commitments and Climate Action Framework.

Risk Management

37. Key risks and mitigations include:

- Implementation risk: inconsistent application across procurements. Mitigation: rollout support through the Commercial Excellence and Contract Management teams, standard templates and guidance, wide scale comms plan and proportionate 121 assurances.
- Supplier delivery risk: suppliers over- commit or under- deliver. Mitigation: require SMART commitments within Social Value Delivery Plans, proportionate reporting, and remediation steps before using service credits.
- Measurement risk: difficulty evidencing outcomes. Mitigation: use a balanced set of qualitative and quantitative measures and consistent reporting through an annual Social Value Statement.

Consultations

38. Development of the policy has been informed by engagement with internal stakeholders, including commissioning teams for Adults and Children's services, Legal, Climate Action, Senior Policy Leads, current contract managers, and the Commercial and Procurement team.

Oxfordshire County Council Social Value Policy

Commercial & Procurement Service

January 2026



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council (“the Council” and “OCC”) is committed to creating a greener, fairer and healthier county. The Council recognise that every decision it makes, particularly in how it procures goods, works, and services, has the potential to deliver benefits beyond the normal delivery of the contract and financial value. These additional benefits, known as *social value*, enables the authority to strengthen the local economy, enhance the Oxfordshire ecosystem, and improve the wellbeing of communities.

This policy sets out the Councils approach to embedding social value into all relevant procurement and commissioning activities, ensuring OCC is a key partner, employer and place-shaper of choice for the county. It explains what social value means in practice and how the Council will work collaboratively with suppliers and partners to achieve it. A key aim of this policy will be to increase spending with local suppliers, which would support the local economy and job market.

Adoption of this policy will provide benefits that meet the Council’s Strategic Priorities, as detailed in the Council’s Strategic Plan 2025-2028, the Climate Action Framework and the Including Everyone: Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (“EDI”) Framework. Additionally, social value supports the County’s ambition to become a Marmot Place by reducing health inequalities. More information about these initiatives can be found on the Council website.¹

What is Social Value?

Social value refers to any additional economic, social, or environmental benefit generated through Council activities, including the procurement of goods, works, or services from the Council’s suppliers and their supply chains. To maximise these added-value benefits and enhance current practice, OCC and its suppliers will plan how contracts and projects can deliver social value outcomes in a flexible, proportionate, and relevant manner, as outlined in this policy.

As the outputs of this policy focus on social impact, the metrics used to measure these impacts may vary. Both qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to provide a balanced assessment of the social value outcomes.

Examples include:

- **Qualitative:** case studies, testimonials, narrative reports, and stakeholder feedback.
- **Quantitative:** number of local people employed, apprenticeships created, or volunteer hours contributed.

All metrics should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) to ensure clarity, accountability, and comparability. This approach allows the Council to capture not only the scale of delivery but also the depth and quality of the impact on communities.

¹ www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legislative Context

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012² (“the Act”) came into force in January 2013, cementing the responsibilities of a contracting authority when procuring contracts that are subject to the public procurement regulations (Procurement Act 2023³). The Act requires and encourages councils to take into account the ‘economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the relevant area’ in its procurement activity.

Social Value Local Priorities

The following 5 Social Value priorities form the default questions for all tenders at OCC. Only two criteria can be selected from the priorities to ensure Social Value is not unduly diluted and still has a material impact on our award decisions. When selecting two of the priorities, Service Areas must consider which of the criteria would be best delivered upon by their supplier base. This reasoning must be documented in the Procurement Strategy and should be tested through market engagement. Questions must be wholly related to the criteria selected and be able to demonstrate the social added value at the end of the contract term. Example questions will be included in guidance.

1. Early Careers Opportunities

Objective: Create pathways for young people, aged 16-24, currently not in education, employment or training (NEET)⁴ and new entrants into the workforce, supporting Oxfordshire’s ambition to be a place where everyone can reach their full potential.

Key aspects of this objective:

- How will the supplier provide apprenticeships, internships, graduate schemes, or work experience placements for Oxfordshire residents?
- How will the supplier ensure opportunities are accessible to those in areas of deprivation or high unemployment, as identified in community health profiles and the Marmot framework?
- Suppliers must quantify commitments, which could be done via number of individuals supported, duration of placements, or employment outcomes.

This objective supports OCC’s priorities to create opportunities for children and young people, tackle inequalities, and work with local businesses for economic and social benefit.

² [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act 2012](#)

³ [Procurement Act 2023](#)

⁴ [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\), UK - Office for National Statistics](#)

2. Supported Employment

Objective: Enable Oxfordshire residents facing barriers to employment to access meaningful work, fostering a fairer and more inclusive county.

Key aspects of this objective

- How will the supplier support people with disabilities, care leavers, carers, veterans or those with health or social challenges into employment?
- What tailored training, mentoring, or support will the supplier provide throughout the life of the contract?
- Suppliers must quantify commitments with measurable outcomes such as number of supported employees, retention rates or number of hours spent with disadvantaged individuals.

This objective directly addresses OCC's commitment to tackle inequalities, support carers, and prioritise health and wellbeing for all residents.

3. Local Area Regeneration

Objective: Invest in Oxfordshire's places and spaces, enhancing community wellbeing and supporting environmental sustainability⁵.

Key aspects of this objective:

- How will the supplier contribute to the regeneration of local areas—such as improving green spaces, community facilities, or public infrastructure?
- How will the supplier support and work with partners to deliver against the objective above – augmenting or expanding existing programmes of work for greater impact?
- Will the supplier make company assets, land or buildings available for community use at or below market rate?
- Suppliers are requested to describe the scale and impact of the proposed activities, proportionate to contract value (bearing in mind this makes up 5% of the overall social value criteria).

This objective aligns with OCC's priorities to preserve and improve access to nature and green spaces, address the climate emergency, and support community resilience.

4. Youth Engagement and Support

⁵ It is expected that suppliers look to meet or exceed council objectives on improving environmental sustainability. Details on council environmental objectives can be found in the [Environment and Planning](#) pages along with supplier expectations being outlined in the [Ethical Procurement Policy](#).

Objective: Inspire and empower Oxfordshire's school aged children (aged 5-16), ensuring they have the support and opportunities to thrive.

Key aspects of this objective:

- How will the supplier engage with local schools and youth groups such as Scout or Cadet groups and local charities (e.g., career talks, STEM demonstrations, site visits, work experience or preparing for the future such as personal finance talks or interview technique)?
- How will the supplier target areas of high deprivation, as outlined on the [Oxfordshire Data Hub](#)⁶, or need such as SEND in this age bracket?
- In order to measure the engagement the supplier must provide the type of engagement and milestone goals.

This supports OCC's commitment to help children and young people reach their full potential and to tackle inequalities in education and opportunity.

5. Healthy Lives; Healthy Future

Objective: Promote the health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire residents, supporting both physical and mental health.

Key aspects of this objective

- How will the supplier support community health and wellbeing initiatives such as community activities to support mental health, support healthy lifestyle options, such as stop smoking, physical activity, substance use, healthy eating or create healthy and safe environments, such as homes, communities and workplaces.?
- How will the supplier support and work with partners, including VCSE groups based in Oxfordshire, for example through sponsorship, volunteering, mentoring related to health and wellbeing
- The supplier must outline their approach (potentially referencing theory of change and logic model⁷) and expected outcomes. Reference should be made to, areas of inequalities suppliers are able or intend to focus on. The [Oxfordshire Data Hub](#) should be used to provide accurate metrics.
- Suppliers must quantify their impact on the local area through a trackable metric in order for effective management of this objective.

This objective directly supports OCC's priorities to prioritise health and wellbeing, address health inequalities as a Marmot Place, and invest in preventative approaches and services.

⁶ This free resource is managed by Oxfordshire County Council and provides location specific information on the local Economy, Environment, Health and Social indicators.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/evaluation-in-health-and-wellbeing-creating-a-logic-model>

Social Value Mechanism

When procuring contracts above £100,000 in total value, Council contracts will be required to include two criteria from the five listed priorities above, each weighted at 5%, giving a combined social value weighting in a tender of 10%.

Questions and Evaluation

Procurement leads will work with service areas to choose the priorities best suited to their supplier base and design questions that suppliers must answer in their bid. These will be assessed in the same manner as quality questions in the supplier bid.

As part of their response suppliers will be required to produce a Social Value Delivery Plan (SVDP) which outlines how the supplier will meet the social value priorities selected by the Council. This should include a timeline of actions that will be taken, including key milestones, how these actions will be delivered and what SMART metrics will be used to measure the success of the implementation throughout the lifetime of the contract. Upon contract award this plan will be clarified with the supplier within the implementation phase of the contract.

A template for a SVDP can be found in Appendix 2.

Exemptions

In certain circumstances, applying the standard 10% social value weighting will not be appropriate. Commercial & Procurement Leads may deem (in consultation with the service) Social Value inappropriate for a procurement due to one of the below scenarios:

- i. The project is seeking quotes solely from Voluntary, Charity, or Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations who, by their nature, deliver inherent social value to the local communities that they serve.
- ii. The planned contract duration is less than 12-months which limits the opportunity to deliver social value initiatives. In this situation there will be no expectation for suppliers to deliver incremental social value however we would still take a supplier's inherent social value into account during the evaluation process.

Inherent social value is defined as “the natural, positive contribution that micro, small, and medium sized enterprises, as well as VCSEs, make to their local communities simply by operating as they are. This value arises from their embeddedness in the local economy, their support for local employment, and their role in sustaining community networks — benefits that cannot be replicated solely through additional financial investment.”

Unlike larger organisations, these businesses and VCSEs are often deeply rooted in their communities and already deliver social benefits through their everyday activities. Therefore, they will not always be expected to provide additional commitments on social value within their contracts, as their core operations inherently generate these positive outcomes.

For short term contracts (less than 12 months in length) social value will still be expected from a supplier in line with the stated priority. However, due to the short delivery window incremental delivery is not expected, meaning that a suppliers can deliver their social value at any point in the

contract. This also extends to call of contracts to ensure that suppliers do not overcommit to social value initiatives. For short term contracts a supplier's inherent social value will be taken into account.

The governance process for approving any exemptions is through the existing Commercial Strategy template and approvals. Social Value will be considered on a case-by-case basis for each project. Even in cases where the above exemptions apply, it is OCC's legal and regulatory duty to maximise value for Oxfordshire residents, our environment, and our economy. In the case of social value, this extends to the qualitative impact and suppliers offering additional value beyond their inherent social value will score more highly in the evaluation process.

Contract Management

Assessment of social value delivery will be performed as part of regular contract management with assistance from the Commercial & Procurement service in line with OCC's Contract & Supplier Management Framework.

Contract managers should regularly review the suppliers SVDP to ensure that the deliverables are reasonable and on track, with any issues from a supplier being raised to the contract manager in the first instance.

The frequency of reporting will be determined by the contract manager and can vary depending on the spend, length of contract or the nature of the Social Value commitments. For example, reporting may be annual, quarterly or monthly.

Non-Compliance

It is recognised that unlike deliverables as part of the contract specification social value may not be delivered at regular intervals. This may be due to funding cycles, practical limitations (such as school leavers being available around September every year) and aspects outside of a supplier's control. Suppliers will be advised through the tender documentation to factor this into their SVDP.

Should a supplier fall behind their agreed schedule of delivery or is unable to complete a delivery due to change in circumstances a meeting should be held promptly with the relevant contract manager and Commercial & Procurement lead to complete a SVDP review. Minor reasonable adjustments to the deliverables should be considered and made where appropriate, aiming to stay within the original social value priority where possible. This review should be documented through the normal contract change control process to capture the new agreed deliverables.

In the case that suppliers fail to improve following a SVDP review, the decision may be made by Commercial & Procurement to apply the contractual service credits. The value of these service credits will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the value is proportional to the contract value and will be set as part of the tender exercise.

OCC reserves the right to audit any social value deliverables throughout and at the end of a contract to ensure that social value has been delivered to the agreed standard (as outlined in the SVDP).

Service Credits

Service credits will be applied to suppliers if there is clear evidence that they have not delivered the agreed social value after appropriate remediation steps, or if they have been found, through audit, to report their social value delivery inaccurately.

The value of service credits will be fairly matched to the extent of the supplier's non-delivery, and will be determined individually for each situation. These values will be calculated using the approach set out in Appendix 2 of this document, and in every case, the total amount of service credits relating to social value will not exceed 10% of the contract's total value.

All service credits will be ringfenced and shared equally across the five Social Value Priorities. The funds from these credits will be used for projects proposed by service areas, providing those projects directly support a social value priority.

Governance

Oxfordshire County Council will periodically review this Social Value Policy in line with any relevant changes in legislation or public procurement policy.

To further communicate this Policy's performance and progress to all stakeholders, the Council will release an annual Social Value Statement to outline key areas of focus, future targets, successes and to communicate key messages to staff, partners, suppliers and other locally based organisations impacted by the Council's social value performance.

As part of the social value commitment undertaken by OCC and the supplier, an annual survey will be sent out to suppliers, completed with the contract manager. This will allow the Council to obtain accurate and current information for the Social Value Statement.

Appendix 1: Social Value Delivery Plan Template

Below is an example of a Social Value Delivery Plan Template (SVDP) which includes key elements which need to be detailed by the supplier. Whilst it is encouraged to use the standardised template for bidding, suppliers may wish to provide this Delivery Plan in another format for contract management (such as Excel or a dashboard)

Ref	Priority	Action	By When?	Impact Measure	Committed Value (£)
1	Which of OCC's Social Value Priorities are you responding to?	What specific action(s) will you be taking?	What milestones will exist / when will you complete your action?	How will we measure the successful social impact you will have through delivery of this action(s)?	Please outline how much this action will cost over the life of the contract.
2					
3					
4					

Appendix 2: Social Value Non-Delivery Calculations

For each contract two social value priorities should be selected, these are weighted at equal importance, 5% each. If both priorities are fully delivered, no service credits are due. If there is partial or non-delivery, each social value priority will be calculated separately.

The supplier provided metric (from the SVDP) will be used to measure the delivery percentage for each priority.

Calculation Equation

$$\text{Service Credit (£)} = \text{Agreed Action Value} \times (1 - \text{Delivery \%})$$

Where:

Agreed Action Value = The cost/value agreed in the SVDP.

Delivery % = Delivered Value ÷ Promised Value × 100.

(1 – Delivery %) = Proportion of undelivered commitment.

Worked Example

Contract Value: £1,000,000

80% delivery on apprenticeships and 60% delivery on community health. % gained from contract management metrics and metrics provided by the supplier.

Actions and Agreed Values from SVDP:

Social value action	Agreed value (£)
Apprenticeships	£12,000
Community health workshops	£8,000
	Total £20,000

Delivery Performance:

Action	Promised	Delivered	Delivery %	Non-Delivery %	Service credit (£)
Apprenticeships	10	8	80%	20%	20% of £12,000 = £2,400
Community health workshops	200 hrs	120 hrs	60%	40%	40% of £8,000 = £3,200
					Total Service Credit Due: £5,600



Oxfordshire County Council
Equalities Impact Assessment

Social Value Policy

11/11/25

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Commercial and Procurement
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	New Social Value Policy and way of working
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	Existing policy, with major update
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>The new social value policy updates our way of working with suppliers by taking our social value offering in house. This allows OCC to better customise its social value offering to better suit its corporate objectives and deliver the best for Oxfordshire residents.</p> <p>Key aspects of change include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Removal of fees to use Social Value Portal Platform -More streamlined evaluation approach -Removal of admin for contract managers and suppliers, decreasing admin time and cost of procurement involvement.
Completed By	Max Button
Authorised By	Richard Scarlett
Date of Assessment	11/11/25

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>The social value mechanism will be</p> <p>The measure we would like suppliers to deliver on are as follows:</p> <p>Early Careers Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objective: Create pathways for young people, aged 16-24, currently not in education, employment or training (NEET) and new entrants into the workforce, supporting Oxfordshire's ambition to be a place where everyone can reach their full potential. <p>Supported Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objective: Enable Oxfordshire residents facing barriers to employment to access meaningful work, fostering a fairer and more inclusive county. <p>Local Area Regeneration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objective: Invest in Oxfordshire's places and spaces, enhancing community wellbeing and supporting environmental sustainability. <p>Youth Engagement and Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objective: Inspire and empower Oxfordshire's school aged children (aged 5-16), ensuring they have the support and opportunities to thrive.
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	<p>Healthy Lives; Healthy Future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective: Promote the health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire residents, supporting both physical and mental health.
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>Key aspects of change include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Removal of fees to use Social Value Portal Platform -More streamlined evaluation approach -Removal of admin for contract managers and suppliers, decreasing admin time and cost of procurement involvement.
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities</p>	<p>Feedback from internal and external stakeholders identified the need to change our approach, as many found the existing social value approach too onerous and costly (especially for SMEs).</p> <p>Internal stakeholders found the online platform difficult to use and therefore uptake was low. Only 53 of our suppliers are/ or have been on the portal which is a very small in comparison to our total supplier base.</p>

<p>or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>We have previously worked with a third party which we decided against for this update due to the complexity of agreements, added cost and lack of flexibility when considering social value deliverables.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enhanced employment opportunities through SV measures			
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Armed Forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Carers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other Council Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Social Value ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Overhaul of SV measures to ensure ease of delivery for supplier and better aligned outcomes to OCC strategic priorities.			

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

Section 4: Review

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

Review Date	November 2027
Person Responsible for Review	Max Button
Authorised By	Richard Scarlett

Commercial & Procurement

Ethical Procurement Policy

July 2025

Review Date: July 2026



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Executive Summary

This Ethical Procurement Policy is designed to guide the organisation towards sustainable and ethical procurement practices. This policy is crucial for achieving our goal of net zero carbon emissions and promoting social responsibility.

The policy prioritises suppliers who demonstrate strong environmental practices and contribute to reducing carbon footprints. It ensures that all suppliers adhere to ethical labour practices, including fair wages and safe working conditions. Innovation is encouraged, promoting solutions that support sustainability and ethical practices. The policy ensures that transparency in procurement processes is maintained to build trust and accountability.

Officers are encouraged to interact with the relevant procurement resources on the intranet and procurement officers early in the procurement cycle. This policy encourages the collaboration and early engagement of suppliers to ensure this policy can be met. It will be the responsibility of the service area to ensure that this policy is complied with throughout the procurement and contract management lifecycle.

Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council (“OCC” and “the Council”) is committed to acting with integrity, transparency and fairness in all commercial and business dealings. The Council places ethics, accountability and good conduct at the heart of its procurement procedures and strives to obtain the ‘best for Oxfordshire’ outcome in every sourcing and/or purchasing decision.

This policy sets out the approaches and resources the Council can use to ensure its procurements and contracts are managed in an ethical way. These should be applied in specific, appropriate and proportionate ways, as determined by the team managing the procurement and/or contract.

Suppliers the Supply Chain and Regulation

The Council proactively works with its suppliers to maintain high ethical standards when conducting business together. In OCC contracts, this is achieved through contractual obligations, at least in the areas where law and ethics meet. OCC requires that, in performing their contracts, suppliers must comply with all applicable legislation including case law. OCC also requires that suppliers at least use their best endeavours to meet governmental codes of practice and best practice guidelines.

Compliance

Compliance with modern slavery and/or equality legislation for example are mandatory where the supplier engages staff, subcontractors, agents, independent contractors or consultants in the delivery of services. As compliance with the law is also a contractual obligation, it means that any breach of applicable legislation is also a breach of the OCC contract, which could lead to a claim in damages where a supplier breaches

legislation. This ensures our suppliers are clear on OCC's expectations and minimum required standards.

In addition to the general requirement to comply with all applicable legislation, OCC contracts contain specific requirements relating to equal opportunity, equality and non-discrimination on grounds of race, gender, age etc in the provision of services or in the employment of persons for the purpose of performing the services. Suppliers are also expected to assist OCC in meeting its own duties under the Equality Act 2010. OCC contracts also contain health and safety obligations and reporting requirements as standard.

Regulation

Throughout its procurement activities the Council must abide by the Procurement Regulations, including but not limited to Public Contracts Regulations 2015, The Public Procurement (Amendments, Repeals and Revocations) Regulations 2016, Concession Contracts Regulations 2016, The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 and the Procurement Act 2023.

As per the Procurement Regulations the Council has the right to include questions relating to ethical procurement topics in the selection element of its Invitation to Tender (ITT) process. As a result, the Council bears the right to exclude a tenderer from progressing further in the ITT process should one or more of its responses be deemed as mandatory or discretionary grounds for exclusion. The Council is also enabled to prevent a tenderer from progressing further in a particular ITT process if it fails to provide a satisfactory response to and/or meet a standard set out in one or more of the pass/fail questions (whether or not these relate to ethics).

Supply Chains Due Diligence & Termination

These high ethical standards apply equally to all types of sourcing (goods, works and services) and to all third-party suppliers regardless of their location around the world. If a supplier is found to have breached these standards, an investigation will follow and, if necessary, the commercial relationship will be terminated.

OCC expects its suppliers to maintain these high ethical standards within their own supply chains. They are expected to report back any instances of unethical behaviour to the Council, so that appropriate mitigating steps can be taken. The supplier will also be expected to conduct their own investigation into the unethical behaviour of their sub-contractor(s) and, if necessary, to terminate those commercial relationship(s) accordingly.

Sustainability in Supply Chain

Ethical procurement is a system of policies and practices that help uphold the organisations commitment to social, environmental and legal ethics. This area of the policy looks at three factors that help shape this commitment and how OCC actions through procurement can result in positive change.

Background

The Councils supply chain has been identified as a key part in meeting OCCs Biodiversity Duty and Net Zero targets in the 2020 Climate Action Framework (and its Beyond Net Zero commitment), with the supply chain being a key aspect of the targets. This Ethical Procurement policy aims to build upon, improve and replace previous Supply Chain Emissions Policy, which built upon requirements set out in PPN 06/21.

To improve upon previous policy, this policy introduces the ‘Silver’ contract threshold in alignment with the new Procurement Contract and Supplier Management Framework. This establishes strategic categorisation of suppliers in relation to risk and expenditure, with risk factors including climate change impacts and emissions levels of suppliers in relation to OCC total supply chain emissions. The latest framework thresholds can be found on the intranet.

During the procurement process service areas are encouraged to collaborate across the extended supply chain for decarbonisation opportunities including innovation funding.

Carbon

Following the Supply Chain Emissions Policy, this Ethical Procurement Policy will ensure that OCC’s supply chain is increasingly aligned to Paris Agreement decarbonisation by seeking to work with suppliers who already have science based accredited targets.

We will look to work collaboratively with suppliers to establish cost-effective low carbon principles and specifications in council contracts to drive down supply chain emissions, including in lower value contracts. OCC will also support suppliers who need to outline their actions within a statutory Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP). OCC is continuously acting within its contracts to improve reporting standards and expects all suppliers to find the best way to report and reduce both its carbon emissions, impact on biodiversity and impact on circular economy.

OCC has taken one step further to develop a Beyond Net Zero commitment as all credible decarbonisation pathways that maintain our climate within earth’s safe operating space require removal at very significant scale of carbon emissions already in our atmosphere, over and above acceleration of emissions reduction. Therefore, actions will need to be undertaken by our partners throughout the supply chain to sequester carbon within Oxfordshire and beyond to help meet this target.

Biodiversity

Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is a key consideration for OCC's supply chain, recognising that healthy biodiverse ecosystems are critical in maintaining clean air, water, food and a stable climate and therefore underpin our ability to adapt to climate change and support health and wellbeing. OCC has a duty to further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. OCC is developing a Biodiversity Action Framework which will set out our policy approach to biodiversity including how we will seek to address biodiversity conservation and enhancement through our supply chain alongside carbon emission reductions.

Circular Economy

Circular Economy is an emerging priority for national government and a key pillar in OCC's supply chain as it enables the Council to maximise its waste reduction and improve its resource use, which has a positive impact on our resilience as a county and our impact on Oxfordshire's overshoot in use of global resources. Within this procurement process, OCC will assess the need for procurement of a good or service following the waste/ circularity hierarchy, (Refuse, Reduce, Replace, Redesign, Remanufacture, Repair, Repurpose, Recycle and Dispose) and carbon reduction hierarchy, and where practical giving priority to businesses whose operations provide best value through the longevity of its products, giving OCC the option to both use long term or give second life to its procured goods. OCC aims to empower suppliers to innovate throughout the life of their contracts through trials of new materials in products and services, including construction and roadworks, and end of life schemes. These are key in ensuring OCC's resource use is kept at a minimum, whilst keeping essential development in this space within Oxfordshire.

Requirement

It is highly recommended that all OCC contracts adhere to this policy as a standard. However, any contract classified as silver or higher must address all three sustainability aspects outlined in this section within the Sustainability Strategy, with a particular emphasis on reporting carbon emissions including scope 1, 2 and to the best extent possible scope 3 emission.

Staff Responsibilities

When working for the Council, all staff are expected to act with the highest standards of ethics, integrity, transparency and fairness in all commercial and business dealings. All staff will declare and register any Directorships or offices they hold in other organisations, in accordance with their conditions of employment. All Council staff will recuse themselves from any sourcing and/or purchasing decisions where they have a conflict of interest (whether previously declared or not). Failure to comply with these requirements may result in disciplinary action.

All staff working for the Council, including Procurement Hub staff, are expected to be accountable for their actions and to abide by:

- The organisational Code of Conduct (see Annex 1 below), which includes the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy, and
- when procuring and/or managing contracts on behalf of the Council, the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (“CIPS”) Code of Conduct (see Annex 1 below).

All Council staff, including those working for the Procurement Hub, will report any acceptable gifts or hospitality, in line with the Councils’ Gifts and Hospitality procedures, and will return any gifts and/or refuse any offers of hospitality that are not allowable under such procedures. Failure to do so may be a criminal offence.

All staff working for the Council will not allow their decision-making to be influenced by any accepted gifts or hospitality; all commercial and business decisions will be made freely and fairly in line with our stated aim of obtaining the ‘best for Oxfordshire’ outcome.

Council staff should direct any questions or requests for guidance on ethical matters relating to their conditions of employment to their line manager in the first instance. Questions or requests for guidance on ethical matters relating to procurement or contract management activities can be directed to their usual Procurement Hub contact and/or to an appropriate representative from Legal.

Modern Slavery

OCC defines modern slavery as the abuse and/or exploitation of human persons (adults and/or children), which may occur in one or more of the following ways:

- Forced labour and labour exploitation (e.g. working for little or no pay)
- Sexual exploitation
- Criminal exploitation (e.g. county lines, cuckooing, organised crime)
- Human trafficking
- Domestic servitude and slavery (i.e. this can include coercive control)
- Other forms of exploitation, such as:
 - Forced marriage
 - Illegal or forced adoption
 - Forced begging
 - Forced benefit fraud
 - Organ removal.

OCC strongly condemns modern slavery and is committed to opposing it, both in the local Oxfordshire area and in its supply chain. The Council asserts that an individual's human rights should always be respected and that includes having freedom of choice in all aspects of their lives, including where they live and work, and in those with whom they associate.

Where evidence comes to light that may indicate modern slavery is taking place in OCC's local and/or global supply chain, the Council and its suppliers will take every appropriate action, wherever possible, to:

- Identify and refer victims for safeguarding, support and recovery
- Work with their Police Partnerships to disrupt modern slavery and support prosecution of criminal activities (where jurisdictions allow),
- Promote community safety and reduce the risk of further instances,
- Work together with suppliers and sub-contractors to manage the overall risk of modern slavery in the supply chain, until the lowest possible risk level is achieved and maintained in a sustainable way.

Modern slavery is a complex, global issue that is constantly changing, and appropriate training is required to ensure staff are prepared to tackle it within their roles. All procurement staff regularly undertake CIPS training on Ethical Procurement, which includes a module on modern slavery. All staff at the Council undertake regular Safeguarding training, which also covers topics relating to modern slavery.

Modern Slavery Assessment Tool

Central Government has made available a Modern Slavery Assessment Tool which it encourages public sector organisations to use 'with existing suppliers' (rather than during the tendering process). However, OCC is mindful of enabling fair and open access to all types of suppliers wishing to work in the public sector and thus of avoiding the creation of barriers to entry or of building in onerous administrative activities that may cause e.g. MSMEs to leave the sector altogether. As such, care needs to be taken in deciding which areas of purchasing and categories of supplier are most

suitable for such an assessment to take place. This is not a tool to be used across the board or with every supplier in a given procurement category.

As an indication, the following areas of purchasing and/or categories of supplier may have higher risks of modern slavery and, as such, greater justification for making a request to such suppliers to use the Modern Slavery Assessment Tool. This list is not exhaustive, but rather demonstrates the most common risks:

- Goods (particularly textiles, clothing and footwear) manufactured wholly or in part in developing countries, particularly where there is no set minimum wage in their country of operation;
- Labour in industries where 'off the books' or cash-in-hand work is prevalent, e.g. farm labour, construction labour, cleaning or housekeeping, portering or orderly work, kitchen work, and so on;
- The logistics and haulage industry (particularly those taking shipments across borders) is at a higher risk of exposure to e.g. human trafficking, goods and drug smuggling and other organised crime offences. This is either by being intentionally involved or, more often, through poorly managing the security of their vehicles and containers at border crossings.

Where a Procurement Hub Category Manager and a Service Area representative have together decided that a particular area of purchasing or category of suppliers poses a greater than average risk of modern slavery occurring within the OCC supply chain, they should ask those particular existing suppliers to use the Modern Slavery Assessment Tool. Once responses have been received, these should be reviewed in full, and any recommendations should be acted on as early as possible. If any suppliers or their sub-contractors (and so on) are found to have committed any modern slavery offences (or to have knowingly ignored or enabled the commission of such offences by others), then the commercial relationship should be terminated. Where relevant, the information should be passed onto law enforcement authorities in the supplier's or sub-contractor's county of operation.

Fair Employment Practices

When conducting business with third parties, OCC has high expectations that these organisations will uphold appropriate standards in their employment practices, that protect both Council employees' and their own employees' individual rights to fair treatment in the workplace. As a minimum, these standards should meet all legal obligations in the given organisation's main country of operation and should comply with all contractual obligations set out in the relevant purchasing agreement.

Appropriate standards for upholding employees' individual rights to fair treatment in the workplace include but are not limited to the following core principles:

- A healthy and safe working environment, with a supportive and transparent culture that promotes appropriate work-life balance for all employees;
- Working conditions that are fair and legal, complying with all relevant laws and any union agreements, and where possible align with industry best practices;
- Encouraging open communication in a collaborative workplace, where diverse voices are welcome and considered essential to the organisation's success;
- Professional development opportunities, including training, coaching and mentoring, are available to all and at least partly funded by the organisation;
- A published set of core policies that clearly explain the various rights and obligations that apply to either or both the employer and the employees, and which should include both grievance and whistleblowing procedures;
- Keeping employees fully informed in advance of significant changes to the organisation, enabling employees to contribute their views on such changes and, where possible, adjusting the planned approach accordingly.

OCC strongly discourages its suppliers and supply chain from engaging in unethical employment practices, such as that commonly known as 'Fire and Rehire'. Such practices are ethically unacceptable, even where technically permitted by law.

Companies wishing to update employees' terms and conditions, for example, could instead explore appropriate options through consultation processes, and should engage with trade unions where relevant. Through proper communication and consultation, a mutually acceptable proposal can be found, that balances business needs and viability with employees' rights and welfare.

Reporting and Whistleblowing

All staff of the Council have a duty to raise concerns about unethical behaviour and/or law-breaking and/or breach of contract, including suspicions about instances of modern slavery, by following the Council's Whistleblowing Procedure. Confidentiality will be respected as far as possible, in line with that Procedure.

Any staff member of a supplier or sub-contractor may raise concerns about unethical behaviour and/or law-breaking and/or breach of contract, including suspicions about instances of modern slavery, by making a report to their usual Procurement staff contact, or to that contact's line manager. Confidentiality can be requested and will be respected as far as possible, in line with the Council's Whistleblowing Procedure.

Members of the public may also make such a whistleblowing report by following the instructions set out [here](#). Again, confidentiality can be requested and will be respected as far as possible, in line with the Council's Whistleblowing Procedure (arrangements for the public).

All such reports (as set out in this section) will be investigated thoroughly and actions will be taken as set out in the Council's Whistleblowing Procedure. If necessary, disciplinary action will be taken against relevant employees, and/or relationships with commercial partners, suppliers or sub-contractors will be terminated.

Reference Documents

[The Public Contracts Regulations 2015](#)

[The Public Procurement \(Amendments, Repeals and Revocations\) Regulations 2016](#)

[The Concession Contracts Regulations 2016](#)

[The Health Care Services \(Provider Selection Regime\) Regulations 2023](#)

[Procurement Act 2023](#)

[PPN 06/21](#)

[Technical standard for Completion of Carbon Reduction Plans](#)

[Complying with the biodiversity duty - GOV.UK](#)

[Climate Action Framework | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

[Organisational Officers Code of Conduct](#)

[CIPS Code of Conduct](#)

[Modern Slavery Assessment Tool](#)

[Procurement Policy Note – Taking Account of Carbon Reduction Plans in the procurement of major government contracts](#)

[OCC Cabinet 17-12-24 Beyond Net Zero](#)

[Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#)

[The Bribery Act 2010](#)

[The Employment Rights Act 1996, as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#)

[The Equality Act 2010](#)

[The Human Rights Act 1998](#)

[The Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)

[The Public Contracts Regulations 2015](#)

[Whistleblowing: Guidance for Employers and Code of Practice 2015](#)

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CABINET – 24 February 2026

Climate Action Framework 2026 - 2030

Report by the Director of Economy and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:**

- a) Approve the Oxfordshire Climate Action Framework 2026-2030.

Executive Summary

2. The Oxfordshire Climate Action Framework (CAF) 2026 – 2030 (Annex 1) sets out the council's vision and priorities for a greener, fairer, and healthier county as per the [Strategic Plan 2025 - 2028](#). Building on significant progress since the previous CAF in 2020, the framework aims for carbon neutrality¹ of the council's own estates and operations by 2030 and a net zero Oxfordshire as early as possible in the 2040s as set out in the Strategic Plan. It integrates carbon emissions reduction, resilience to climate impacts, nature recovery, and waste reduction, emphasising collaboration, community empowerment, and economic resilience.
3. The CAF refresh provides an update on the county's greenhouse gas emissions, and an overview of the council's roles and responsibilities with regards to climate action. It then examines the council's progress and priorities under nine key themes:
1. Fair Transition
 2. Enabling a green economy
 3. Built environment
 4. Movement and connectivity
 5. Energy
 6. Natural environment and land use
 7. Waste and resources
 8. Our Own Estate: Zero carbon council and beyond
 9. Engagement and capacity building

¹ Definitions for 'carbon neutral', 'net zero' and other technical terms can be found in the glossary of the Climate Action Framework 2026 - 2030

4. The CAF also refreshes the council's approach to governance of its climate action programme, the most significant change being moving from six monthly to annual reporting to Cabinet every autumn.
5. A graphically designed version of the CAF will be made available in due course.

Background

6. The current [OCC Climate Action Framework](#) was published in 2020, after the council declared a climate emergency in 2019 alongside many other local authorities across the UK. Since then, the council's response to the climate crisis has become more developed. The 2020 CAF reflects a moment in time when climate action as a standalone service at the council was in its infancy, and the council was just beginning to understand the scale of the challenge to reach net zero for its estate and operations and for the wider county.
7. Since then, teams across the council have developed the following relevant strategies and initiatives:
 - [Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#)
 - [Biodiversity Action Framework](#) and [Action Plan](#)
 - [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)
 - [Green Prospectus](#)
 - [Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire \(PaZCO\)](#)
 - [Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan](#)
 - [Climate Adaptation Route Map](#)
 - [Circular Economy Plan](#)
 - Climate Engagement Plan
 - Carbon Management Plan
8. The Retrofit Action Plan, Local Area Energy Plan and Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy are underway. Over 500 colleagues are carbon literacy trained, and climate outcomes are integrated into some key strategies.
9. The wider policy and social context has changed significantly since 2020 which the CAF refresh aims to address.
10. Devolution may present new regional opportunities for delivery. Through both the Local Area Energy Planning Process and following the launch of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the council is looking to better define the strategic scale investment needs in the county for this agenda.
11. The Local Outcomes Framework was published in early February 2026, and contains key climate-related outcomes (climate change mitigation, percentage of homes rated Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C and above).

12. The CAF highlights that failing to adapt to the impacts of climate change could reduce Oxfordshire's Gross Value Added to the UK by up to £1.8bn per year in the 2050s. Therefore, investing in climate adaptation measures will reap considerable economic benefits.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

13. The CAF reflects the council's recently published Strategic Plan 2025 – 2028, with 'greener, fairer, healthier' providing the structure for the CAF's vision for Oxfordshire in 2030.
14. **Greener:** The CAF directly tackles the climate emergency and the council's responsibility for nature recovery, setting out the council's approach to climate action and the activities that are taking place under each of the nine themes.
15. **Fairer:** The climate crisis affects everyone, but not equally. Some communities face greater risks and are often overlooked in climate solutions. The CAF has been developed within the context of Oxfordshire's social and economic inequalities and presents four pillars which underpin a fair transition to a green economy.
16. **Healthier:** Better health outcomes are a clear benefit of climate action and highlighted within the report. Improvements in air quality, access to work and education, active and sustainable transport and access to green spaces are all closely linked with climate action/nature recovery and improve physical and mental wellbeing for Oxfordshire's residents.

Financial Implications

17. This framework is an overarching document which brings together a number of existing strategies and plans and shows how they fit together to meet the council's climate objectives. The framework does not make new commitments: it is in line with the council's Strategic Plan 2025-28 and its vision to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. The framework reiterates key commitments from the strategic plan: that the council aims to be carbon neutral in its direct operations by 2030 and that it is committed to enabling a net-zero Oxfordshire well ahead of 2050. The council provided an update on financing climate action as part of its [bi-annual update to Cabinet in July 2025](#).
18. PaZCO demonstrates the scale of investment required, with up to £3.4bn investment needed to meet the county's long-term net zero target. However, this is not expected to be delivered by local authority with the committee on climate change setting out that financing will need to come from a range of sources including private sector and national government. The 100 Together programme and [Oxon Green Futures](#) green prospectus have been developed to support access to financing.

19. Any new financial implications will be individually addressed through the relevant programme or plan referenced in the framework.

Comments checked by:

Filipp Skiffins, Assistant Finance Business Partner,
Filipp.Skiffins@Oxfordshire.gov.uk (Finance)

Legal Implications

20. Central government has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, recognising much of this reduction must happen before 2030. Local authorities are clearly expected to play a role in these efforts. Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Environment Act 2021 the Council has duties to support climate adaptation and mitigation via biodiversity conservation, enhancement, and nature-based solutions. Whilst there are currently no other clear specific statutory duties on local authorities to take action that mitigates or adapts to climate change the Council does have wide powers to undertake such activities under its general power of competence set out at Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

Comments checked by:

Jonathan Pool, Solicitor (Contracts), Jonathan.Pool@Oxfordshire.gov.uk
(Legal)

Staff Implications

21. As stated in the Financial Implications section above, this framework does not make any new commitments and reflects existing workstreams and projects.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

22. The council's Climate Action Framework aims to ensure a fair sharing of the costs and benefits of climate action and avoiding energy inequality.
23. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the Climate Action Framework and found a net positive impact on protected groups and the wider community. The focus on a fair transition to a green economy is a key part of this impact. Further EIAs will take place as part of the business case development for other individual elements of the climate action programme as they progress.
24. Over the long term, decisive action will reduce the negative impacts of climate change and ensure adaptation to locked-in effects compared to a do-nothing scenario. It will be beneficial to all groups, particularly those identified as vulnerable.

Sustainability Implications

25. The Climate Action Programme, and this CAF in particular, is at the centre of the council's commitment to tackling the climate emergency. It is a core element of the 'greener, fairer healthier' pillars of the Strategic Plan.

Risk Management

26. A strategic risk is included on the council's strategic risk register, noting the increasing vulnerability of communities, economy and infrastructure to climate impacts. A number of control measures have been identified and are being reported on through the Business Management and Monitoring report. The Climate Adaptation Route Map which is being delivered with the district councils and key partners will identify further mitigations.

Consultations

27. An all-member briefing on the CAF was held on 11 December 2025. This gave all councillors an opportunity to comment on and feed into the final version of the CAF. Councillors commented on the need for green skills and jobs to translate into opportunities for residents (addressed in Chapter Nine), and the need for community resilience building training to build adaptation capability (addressed in Chapter 16).
28. Key external stakeholders were also invited to comment, including officers at the City and District Councils, representatives of the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership, Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and Community Action Groups Oxfordshire network. All comments have been integrated into the document.
29. There are a number of other key policies and strategies that feed into the CAF such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, and OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail, all of which were subject to extensive consultation with various stakeholders, including members of the public.

Robin Rogers

Annex: Oxfordshire Climate Action Framework 2026 – 2030
Climate Impact Assessment
Equalities Impact Assessment

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer:

Aoife Dudley, Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Policy & Project
Lead, Aoife.dudley@oxfordshire.gov.uk

February 2026

OXFORDSHIRE CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK
For a greener, fairer, healthier Oxfordshire
2026 - 2030

January 2026

climate.action@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Foreword

As Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, I am proud to introduce Oxfordshire County Council's Climate Action Framework 2026 - 2030. This framework sets out our renewed commitment to a greener, fairer, and healthier Oxfordshire – one where climate action is at the heart of our ambitions for people and nature.

Oxfordshire faces the realities of the climate and ecological emergencies: more frequent flooding, heatwaves, and other risks that threaten our communities and environment. These risks are experienced unequally across the county, as a result of economic and social inequality. Yet, our county is also a place of innovation, collaboration, and resilience. Over recent years, we have led the way nationally – recognised as the top-performing county council in the Climate Emergency UK Council Climate Action Scorecard for two years running – and have shown what is possible when local government, communities, and partners work together.

This framework is more than a plan to reduce emissions: it is a plan for wider change. It aims to improve health and wellbeing, create new economic opportunities, and restore our natural spaces. By integrating climate, nature, and people – and putting our values of fairness, resilience and empowerment at the heart of climate action – we can deliver benefits that reach every resident. This means lower energy bills, cleaner air, thriving wildlife, and stronger local economies. We are committed to ensuring that the transition to net zero is inclusive, so that no one is left behind.

The transition is already underway. The challenge is to shape it in favour of greater speed and fairness, which requires bold leadership and systemic change. Oxfordshire County Council will continue to champion evidence-based decisions, invest in green skills and jobs, and foster partnerships that drive innovation. We invite everyone – residents, businesses and visitors – to join us in shaping a sustainable future.

Together, we can build an Oxfordshire that is reducing its impact on the climate, is prepared for the impacts of climate change and leads the way in environmental stewardship. Let's seize this opportunity to create a legacy of hope, action, and shared prosperity for generations to come.

Cllr Judy Roberts

**Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action
Oxfordshire County Council**

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Glossary

Advanced manufacturing	Production using cutting-edge technologies like automation and data analytics to improve efficiency and sustainability
Biodiversity net gain	Ensuring development projects result in a measurable improvement in biodiversity compared to the original state
Carbon budget	The total amount of carbon dioxide that can be emitted while staying within a specific climate target, such as limiting warming to 1.5°C
Carbon neutral	State where the greenhouse gas emissions emitted by an entity's direct activities (and possibly Scope 3 indirect emissions) are balanced by an equivalent amount being removed or offset
Circular economy	An economic model that designs out waste by keeping materials in use through reuse, repair, and recycling
Cleantech	Environmentally friendly technologies that reduce pollution and improve energy efficiency
Consumption emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions that are associated with the production and consumption of goods and service within an area, regardless of where in the world they are produced
Doughnut Economics	A framework that balances meeting human needs with respecting ecological boundaries
Energy Performance Certificate	A rating that shows how energy-efficient a building is, with advice on improvements
Global majority	Inclusive term for people from regions that make up most of the world's population, such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America
Greenhouse Gases	Gases like carbon dioxide and methane that trap heat in the atmosphere and contribute to climate change
Gross Domestic Product	The total value of goods and services produced in a country, used to measure economic activity
Gross Value Added	A measure of economic output showing the contribution of industries or regions to the economy
Household Waste Recycling Centre	A site where residents can recycle or dispose of household items not collected at the kerbside
Nature-based solutions	Actions that use natural systems to tackle environmental challenges like flooding, climate change, and biodiversity loss
Nature finance	Using money to help protect and take care of nature in ways that also support people and the planet
Net zero	State where greenhouse gas emissions emitted by an entity including supply chain (scope 1-3) have been reduced as much as possible and any residual emissions neutralised by an equivalent amount being removed from the atmosphere

Offsetting	Compensating for emissions created during one activity, by investing in activities that reduce or remove an equivalent amount of emissions. This is often achieved through a credit system, such as carbon credits
PAS 2080	PAS 2080 is a built environment industry standard which specifies the requirements for the management of whole-life carbon in buildings and infrastructure
Retrofit	Upgrading existing buildings or infrastructure to improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions
Science-based target	A climate goal aligned with scientific evidence to help limit global warming, often verified by the Science Based Target Initiative
Scope 3 emissions	Emissions that are not produced by an organisation directly, but those that are indirectly generated through its supply chain, for example by the manufacture, transport and disposal of products
Solar PV	Technology that converts sunlight into electricity using solar panels
Territorial emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions that occur from activities carried out within the boundary of an area (such as Oxfordshire)

Acronyms

ACES	Action on Carbon and Energy in Schools
CAG Oxfordshire	Community Action Groups Oxfordshire
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HWRC	Household Waste Recycling Centre
LCWIP	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan
LED	Light Emitting Diode
LGR	Local Government Reorganisation
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
LTCP	Local Transport Connectivity Plan
OCC	Oxfordshire County Council
OLNP	Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership
OxLAEP	Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Plan
PaZCO	Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire
PV	Photovoltaic
ZCOP	Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership

Executive Summary

Overview

Climate change remains a critical international, national and local priority. Oxfordshire has progressed substantially in reducing emissions and mobilising climate action, yet evidence shows that the scale and pace of activity must accelerate to meet net zero commitments. This framework sets out an evidence-led, countywide approach to advance mitigation, adaptation, nature recovery and a circular economy. It builds on and replaces the 2020 Climate Action Framework, and aligns with county and district targets, and national policy direction.

Evidence and Need for Action

Supported by local programmes and national grid decarbonisation, territorial emissions in Oxfordshire continue to fall. Oxfordshire County Council has reduced operational emissions by 72% since 2010/11. Transport accounts for 40% of remaining territorial emissions, and domestic buildings around 22%. Intensifying climate impacts disproportionately affect vulnerable groups. To address such challenges, the framework synthesises updated evidence on emissions, risks, infrastructure gaps and the enabling conditions for a fair transition. It adopts a systemwide approach that links climate objectives to public health, economic prosperity, resilience and social equity.

Key Findings

- Socioeconomic inequalities shape exposure to climate risk and access to climate action benefits. A fair transition requires a targeted, inclusive approach.
- A growing green economy is a key opportunity for Oxfordshire's residents, unlocking employment by capitalising on sector growth and green skills.
- The built environment requires change in scale and coordination of energy efficiency, retrofit and low carbon heat, aligning new development with net zero.
- Transport emissions will only reduce at the necessary pace through demand reduction, modal shift, and rapid electrification.
- Large increases in renewable generation, storage and flexibility are essential. Local Area Energy Planning will be a critical guide to infrastructure investment.
- Delivering a circular economy - reducing waste and improving resource efficiency - is critical, through improved infrastructure, education and behaviour change.
- Oxfordshire's ecosystems provide carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and water management. Nature recovery requires coordinated restoration and protection.
- Council operations remain a significant lever for change, particularly through procurement, policy-making, fleet decarbonisation and carbon literacy.

Next Steps

Immediate priorities include establishing governance, developing an action plan, ensuring fairness in early decisions, and preparing for Local Area Energy Planning, spatial updates, and next stage investment. Delivery of the Framework depends on strong collaboration across local authorities, communities, institutions, businesses and national government to support delivery. To support this, the Framework recommends a coordinated approach, including shared evidence bases, pooled resources, consistent messaging, and cross authority governance. Monitoring, evaluation, and review will ensure actions remain responsive.

1. Introduction

In 2020, we (Oxfordshire County Council) launched our first Climate Action Framework, pledging to become carbon neutral by 2030 and achieve a net zero Oxfordshire as soon as possible in the 2040s.

Climate action is not just about reducing our greenhouse gas emissions; by transitioning to a more sustainable way of doing things we can also deliver better health and wellbeing, new economic opportunities, lower cost of living and access to nature among many other benefits. Putting fairness firmly at the heart of this transition ensures that these benefits will be felt across our society and help reduce inequality. According to [research by PriceWaterhouseCoopers](#) taking a bespoke, place-based approach to climate action in Oxfordshire means we could deliver these outcomes at a third of the cost, with three times the wider social benefits compared to a nationally uniform, top-down approach.

Over the last five years we have made significant progress. We have prioritised collaborative working on climate action to deliver positive change within our own organisation and across Oxfordshire. We have demonstrated strong leadership, being rated the top performing county council for climate action nationally by Climate Emergency UK in 2023 and 2025. This revised framework celebrates and reflects our work to date, and sets our vision for future work in this area.

Despite this success, there is still significant work to do. We need to act decisively to reduce Oxfordshire's contribution to the climate crisis and mitigate the local impacts. Climate change is already happening right now in Oxfordshire with flooding, droughts, heatwaves and other climate-related threats being more frequent and intense. These hazards are adversely impacting people's health and livelihoods. We need to prepare for these climate impacts and ensure the long-term safeguarding of our communities – especially those who find it hardest to adapt.

We are also approaching a period of change for local government in England. Currently, Oxfordshire is part of a two-tier system, with the county council as the tier one authority, and the five district and city councils as tier two authorities. Tier one and two authorities have different responsibilities and spheres of influence. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and devolution will reshape this system, and change the delivery of climate action at a local level. From May 2028, LGR will result in one or more unitary councils with responsibilities across housing, transport and energy systems. Devolution will enable further devolved powers to a mayoral authority. This framework straddles this period of transition, aiming to provide a clear thread on climate action from the current system to the new structure.

This document replaces the 2020 Climate Action Framework, and pulls together our work on the climate crisis, nature, adapting to the impacts of climate change, and waste management. These themes are intrinsically linked, and an integrated approach which puts fairness at its heart is crucial to achieve the very best outcomes for our environment and people.

2. Vision for the Future

Greener: In 2030, Oxfordshire will be a leader in climate action, resilience and nature recovery. We will have reached our 2030 council target, supported by a high-integrity offsetting strategy, and be on track for a net zero county as soon as possible in the 2040s. By using resources more sustainably and prioritising reuse, repair, and recycling, Oxfordshire will significantly reduce waste and support a circular economy. Communities will be better able to manage the impacts of severe weather, and biodiversity will flourish through coordinated nature recovery and community-led green space stewardship.

Fairer: In 2030, Oxfordshire will be a place where climate action builds shared prosperity and empowers residents, supporting them to use their voice and accounting for their differing needs and experiences. There will be growth in training and support for people to participate in the green economy. Investment in climate action will be better aligned with community wealth building to ensure that the benefits stay local. Work will be taking place to support availability of affordable, low carbon transport and energy-efficient homes, particularly for low income households, and the most vulnerable people in society will be resilient against the impacts of climate change. Climate action will be shaped by active public participation, strong local partnerships and a focus on future generations.

Healthier: In 2030, Oxfordshire will be a county where people and nature thrive. Walking, wheeling and cycling will be a widely adopted choice for everyday journeys. Clean air, comfortable, energy efficient homes, green spaces, and community volunteering will boost mental and physical wellbeing. Our built and natural environments will promote healthier lifestyles, reduce health inequalities, and create opportunities for everyone to live well in a changing climate.

3. Oxfordshire's Climate Story



Our Natural Spaces

Oxfordshire is rich in green landscapes, including the Cotswolds, Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes. Our green spaces play a crucial role in storing carbon, supporting biodiversity and reducing the risks from extreme weather. They make Oxfordshire a place that is attractive to live, visit and invest in. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) aims to make our natural environment more resilient by identifying key habitats and improving their connectivity.



Our Green Economy

The shift to a green economy brings opportunity to Oxfordshire. We are seeking to build community ownership and finance models, attract private investment, and create skilled opportunities such as retrofit of our building stock. Our cleantech clusters in are developing technologies for the future, and networks like Oxfordshire Greentech and new market-making arrivals including the Ellison Institute for Technology put Oxfordshire at the heart of the UK's response to the climate crisis.



Our Universities

Boasting two outstanding universities, Oxfordshire leads the way in research and innovation across climate science, policy and governance, healthcare, technology and more.

Our Networks

Oxfordshire is a county of collaboration, driven by a network of organisations. Through the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership, the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership, Low Carbon Hub, Good Food Oxfordshire, our business communities, healthcare and waste partnerships, we progress climate action in all sectors and deliver the benefits across the county.



Our Communities

Community climate action is central to our response to the climate crisis in Oxfordshire. The Community Action Groups (CAG) Oxfordshire network brings together over one hundred grassroots organisations, covering environmental topics from waste reduction to nature recovery. Working together locally helps ensure that climate action in Oxfordshire is inclusive and community focused.



Our Leadership

Oxfordshire is a leader in climate action. Our councils work together to push boundaries for our people and our planet. We came top on the [Climate Scorecard](#) for county councils in England, and we continue to lead with new policies and programmes to support fast and fair climate action.



3.1: Progress in Oxfordshire Since 2020

General

- [9% reduction in greenhouse gases per capita](#) between 2020 and 2023 (latest data)

Our own estate

- Replaced over 60,000 streetlights with LEDs, cutting costs and emissions by over 70% compared to 2010
- Secured more than £5m in central government grants to remove fossil fuelled heating systems in over 50 council buildings
- We generated 231,840 kWh of electricity from solar panels on our estate in 2024/25 – equivalent to powering around 85 homes for a year

Transport

- £32.8m ZEBRA funding from the government providing 159 new electric buses in Oxford
- Installed 118 EV charge points per 100,000 population in Oxfordshire, compared to 109 per 100,000 across the rest of the South East

Waste

- Best County Council Household Waste Disposal Authority in England for 11 years

Nature

- Our Local Nature Recovery Strategy has identified 85 Biodiversity Priority actions and 63 bespoke species actions to support Oxfordshire's local ecosystems.

Home Retrofit

- We have been awarded £11.4m funding for domestic retrofit since 2021
- We have completed retrofit projects on 627 low income homes since 2021
- [18% reduction in emissions](#) from domestic buildings in the county
- Supported innovative projects such as Clean Heat Streets and our multi-award winning [Energy Saver App](#)

Green Economy

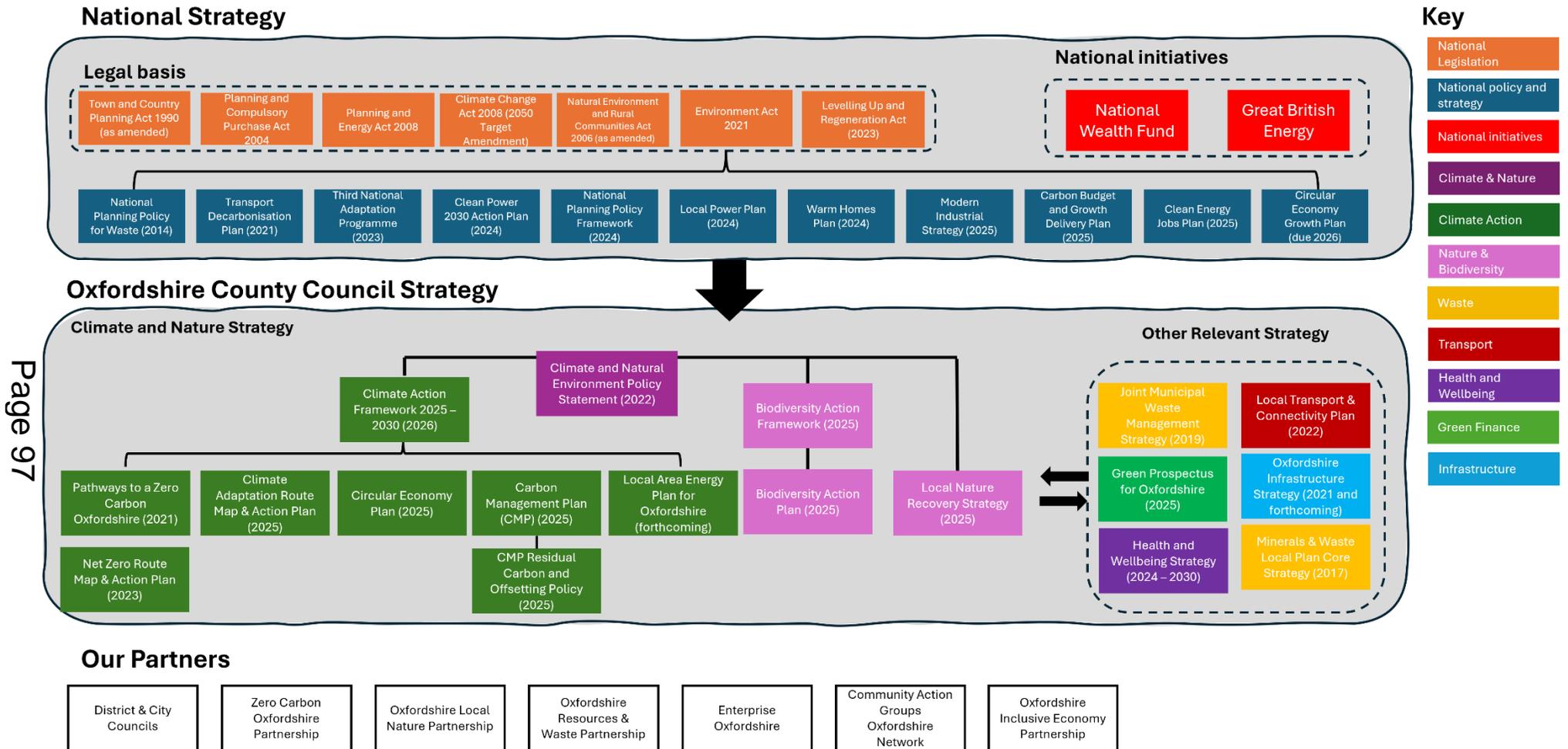
- We launched a green prospectus to deliver over £46m investment in green construction and nature recovery projects

Communities

- The Community Action Group Oxfordshire network ran more than 8,000 events in 2024, reaching over 120,000 participants and generating over £6m of funding and income
- We offer support to town and parish councils, with 40% of councils having delivered a [Community Emergency Plan](#)

4. Policy Context

Through our local approach, we are playing our role in delivering against national strategies to reduce emissions, restore nature, support inclusive economic growth and increase resilience against the impact of climate change. This diagram summarises our key policies and strategies that are relevant to climate action.



5. Our Role in Climate Action

Achieving the UK's 2050 net zero target requires collaboration between national, regional and local authorities to tackle the emissions within their control, influence the emissions outside of their control, and ensure that the transition to a green economy is fair. National government is critical in setting strong policy signals and providing the financing context to enable net zero.

Local authorities are uniquely placed to understand communities, drive delivery and bring people together at a local level.

In Oxfordshire the public sector was responsible for approximately [4% of emissions in 2023](#). While this is a small proportion, the council can deliver wider emissions savings and other valuable benefits by using our buying power, convening power and influence to deliver local and national action. The Climate Change Committee estimates that local authorities can influence around a third of local area emissions through planning, transport policy, waste and other services. Our work brings together the needs of the climate, nature, and people, which are all strongly interlinked, to implement solutions which restore natural systems, build resilience, and accelerate the transition to a fairer, low carbon future.

Local authorities also play a vital role in adapting to the impacts of climate breakdown. From supporting resilient and inclusive local economic growth, to supporting the health and wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents, local action to mitigate the impacts of climate change across Oxfordshire is essential. We take a holistic climate-people-nature approach to tackling the climate crisis and improving our natural environment, as set out in Figure 1.

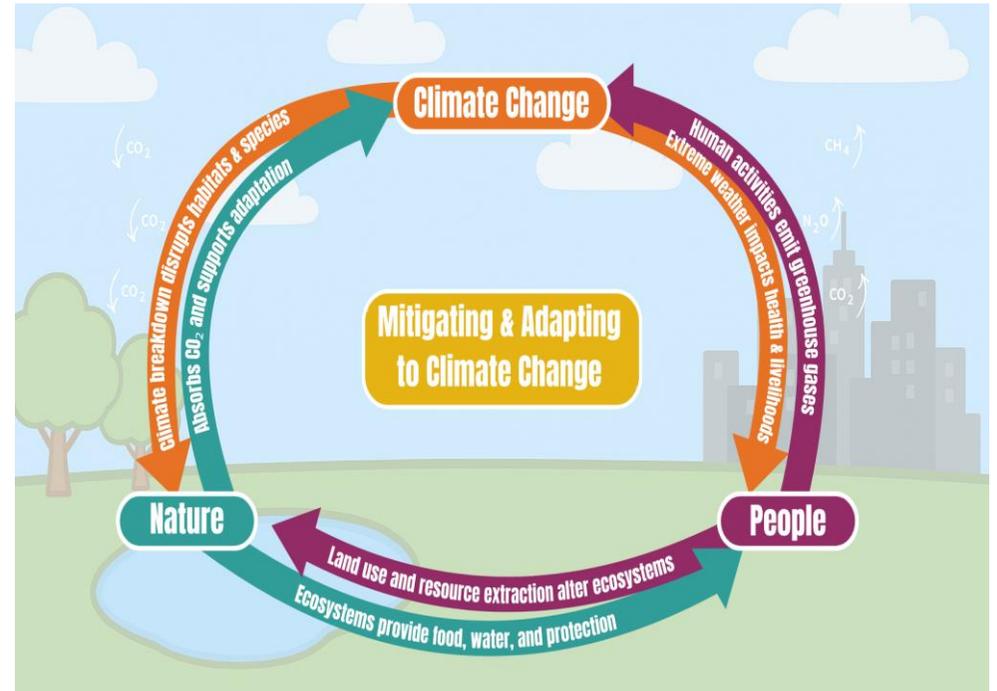


Figure 1: The relationship between climate, people and nature

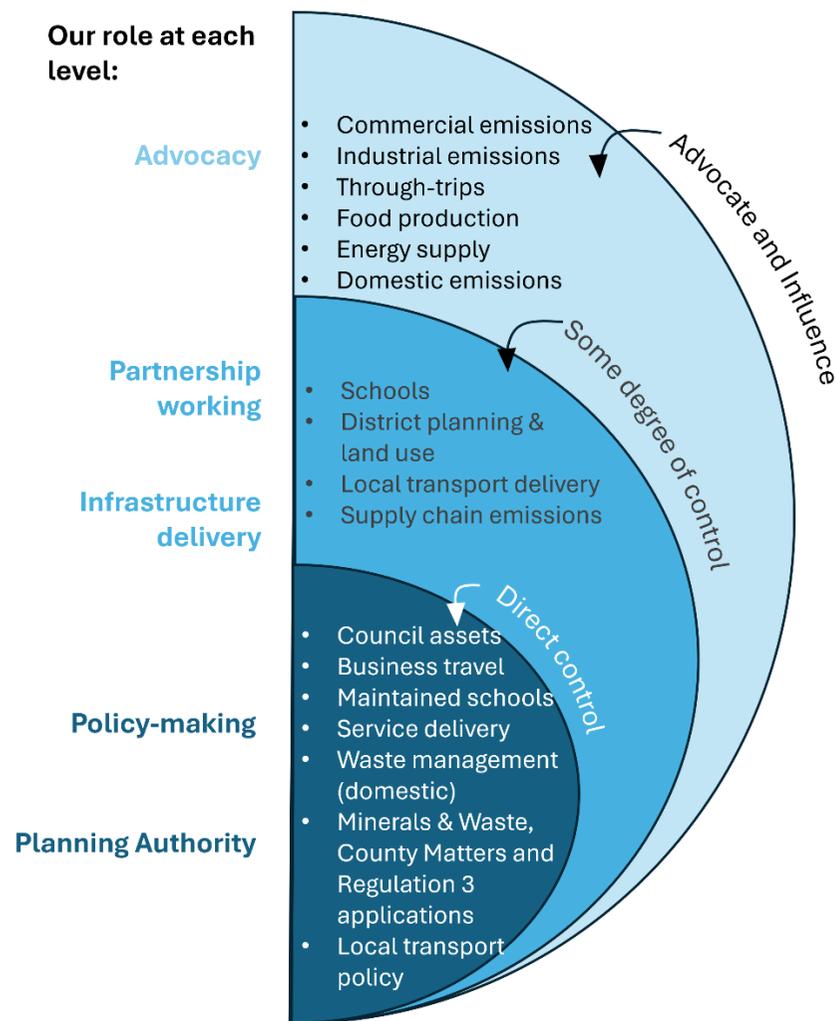


Figure 2: Areas within our control and sphere of influence

The county council sits at the centre of many systems and networks, and we will use our position to drive action at a county

and regional scale, leveraging investment to maximise the impact of our climate action programme. We will prioritise equity, efficiency and value for money through our work, including our home retrofit programme, our Local Area Energy Plan, the transition to zero emission transport, strategic planning at scale and our nature recovery and biodiversity programmes.

There are several ways that we can directly and indirectly have an impact on the emissions which are causing climate change, as shown in Figure 2. This includes our advocacy work – we are active members of the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy Planning and Transport (ADEPT), UK100 network, and the Local Government Association Sustainability Action Network, and use our influence through these organisations to push for change in national policy and practice in climate action.

We recognise the importance of partnership working for ensuring a holistic approach to climate action. We will continue to work with key organisations to reduce emissions from different sectors and ensure they are resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Spotlight on: Partnership Working

The Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership (ZCOP), hosted by Oxford City Council, exemplifies the power of collaborative working to accelerate climate action at scale. Originally established as a city-wide partnership to unite stakeholders across Oxford, it has expanded to countywide membership and brings together key organisations including local authorities, universities, NHS trusts, and businesses, to coordinate efforts toward net zero.

Through its Sprint Groups, ZCOP allows organisations to pool their knowledge and experience on specific issues such as retrofit (both residential and non-residential), adaptation, green skills, industrial decarbonisation and sustainable commuting.

6. Where Are We Now?

We have been making progress in the delivery of our climate action programme since the previous framework was introduced in 2020, reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for the likelihood of more extreme weather events across the county. The county's territorial emissions have continued to fall, in part driven by the decarbonisation of electricity from the grid. Transport emissions however have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic and stayed relatively steady in recent years.

Oxfordshire has higher territorial emissions per person (per capita) than the south east region and the England average (Figure 3). This is partly because Oxfordshire is a rural county, which means that people often rely on private vehicles to move around and our relative wealth drives higher-carbon lifestyles. Oxfordshire also hosts many A-roads and motorways which carry both local and through-traffic, the emissions from vehicles on these roads included in the per capita calculation. However, emissions are falling at a slightly faster rate than the rest of England which could be attributed to the higher-than-average uptake of low carbon technologies in the county, such as electric vehicles. The reduction in total emissions over this same period (Figure 4) demonstrates that an increase in population alone has not driven the reduction in per capita emissions.

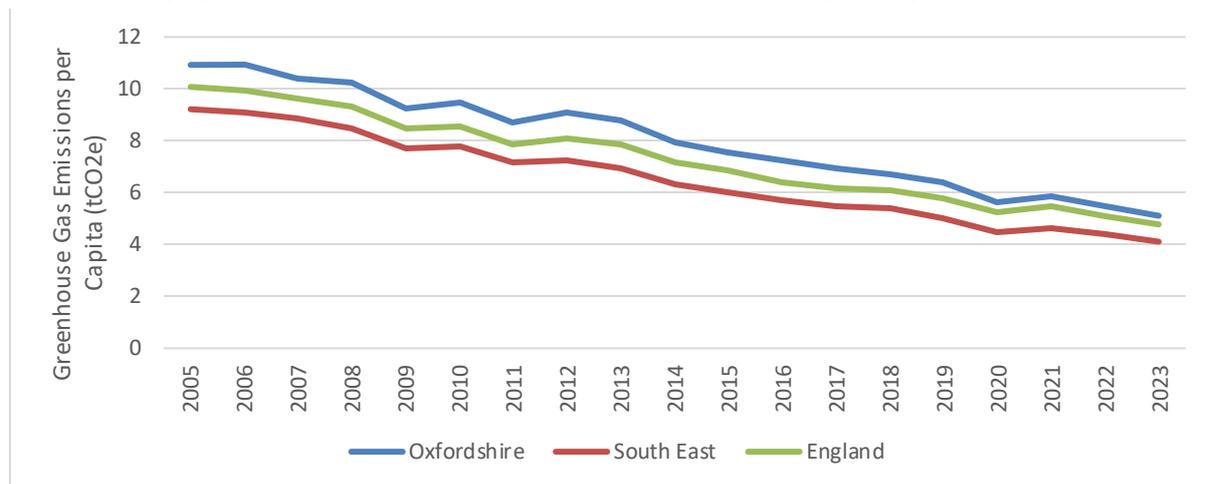


Figure 3: Greenhouse gas emissions per capita in Oxfordshire, the South East and England from 2005 to 2023

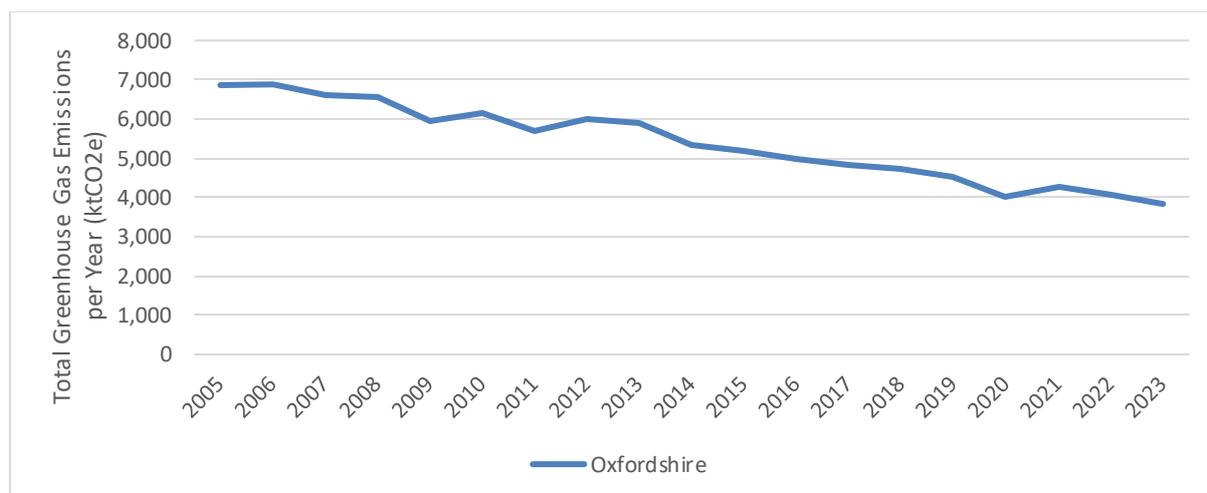


Figure 4: Total greenhouse gas emissions in Oxfordshire from 2005 to 2023

The most recent data from the Government's Department for Energy Security and Net Zero shows that transport is responsible for the majority of territorial emissions in Oxfordshire (40%), followed by domestic sources such as home heating and energy use

(22%) (Figure 5). This demonstrates the importance of continuing to focus on providing sustainable transport options, such as public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling and home retrofit programmes.

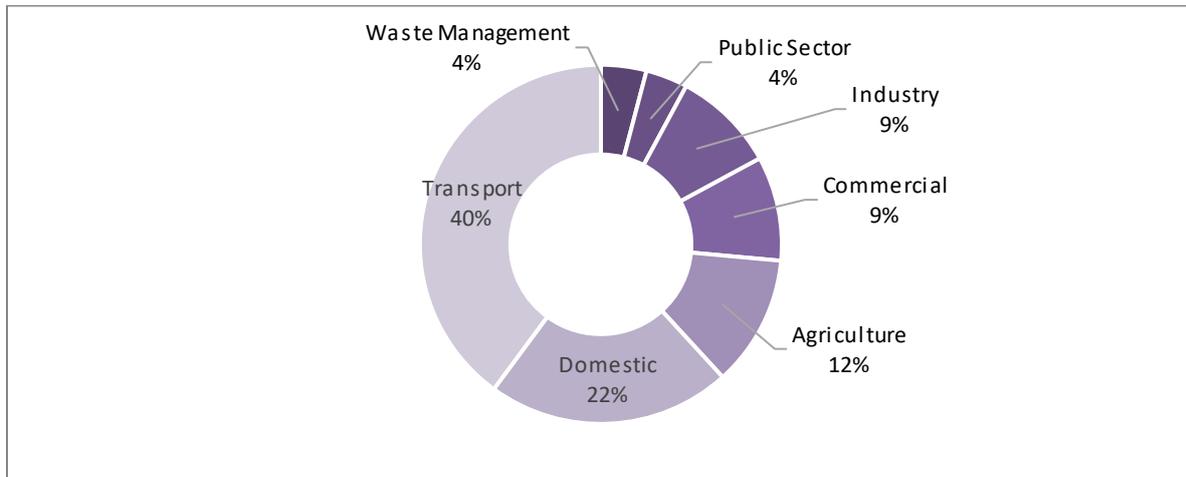


Figure 5: Proportion of greenhouse gas emissions by sector (2023)

It is important to note that these emissions data only reflect emissions inside Oxfordshire’s boundary; consumption emissions (emissions from goods and services consumed in Oxfordshire but produced outside the county’s boundaries) are equally important but harder to track. This is where reducing supply chain emissions, managing infrastructure carbon and moving to a circular economy are crucial. Consumption emissions are available at a county level through the [Local Authority Consumption Accounts](#).

Since 2020, the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO) has been published with the associated Route Map and Action Plan. These documents form the evidence base for our work and inform our approach to becoming a net zero county as soon as possible in the 2040s. The Route Map and Action Plan set out milestones across different sectors along the path to 2050. They also tell us the maximum amount of carbon dioxide we can emit within each five-year period between now and 2050 to stay within our ‘carbon budget’. By 2023 we had emitted 61% of our 2021 – 2025 carbon budget, but the rate of emissions reduction indicates we will be able to stay within budget by the end of this period. Meeting future carbon budgets will be more challenging as we tackle areas such as transport and industry which are harder to decarbonise. How we deliver this decarbonisation trajectory is also important, as we aim to support a fair transition, rather than one which further entrenches inequality in the county.

Economic growth in the county has continued despite reductions in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions (Figure 6). This shows that we can continue to take action to reduce our impact on the climate while maintaining and improving economic opportunities for people living and working in Oxfordshire, driving inclusive economic growth. However, much of this decoupling of growth and emissions has been driven by decarbonisation of the national grid; as the government delivers on the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, further emissions reductions must come from changes to national and local policy. We must work proactively to prevent a slowdown in progress, while acknowledging that Oxfordshire will be the focus of much economic growth in the coming years. We will look to grow our green economy and provide opportunities for people to learn new skills and join new green industries as they appear.

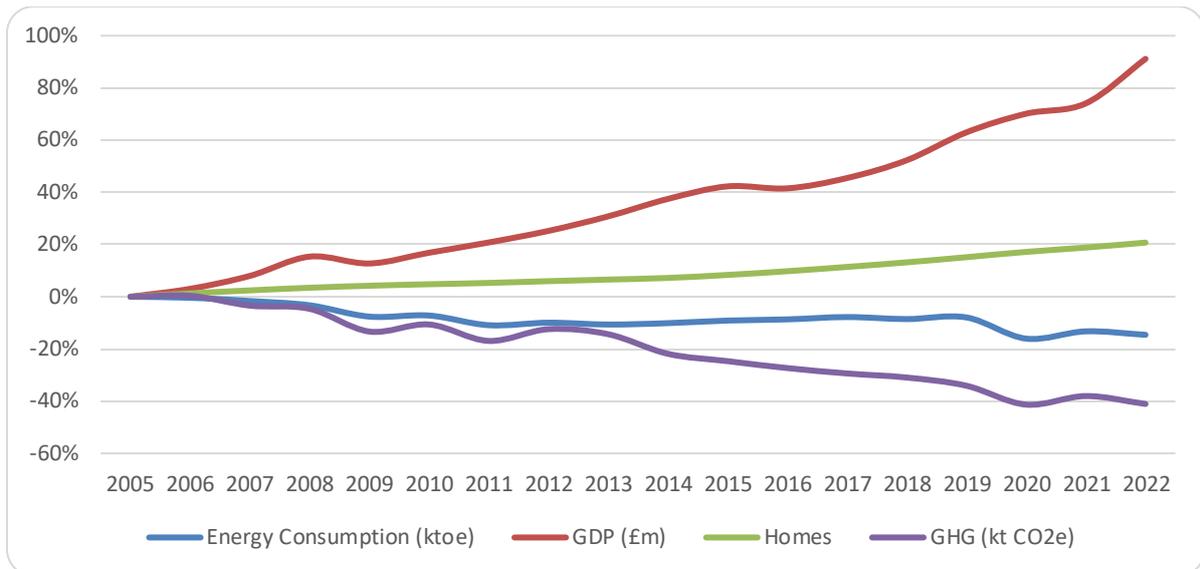


Figure 6: Relative changes in energy consumption, GDP, number of dwelling and GHG emissions in Oxfordshire, 2005 – 2022

There is also a strong link between economic resilience and preparing for extreme weather events. We commissioned research into [climate vulnerability](#) in the county, the impact of a changing climate on health, and the [likelihood of extreme weather events](#) impacting Oxfordshire in the future. The impacts of climate change could reduce Oxfordshire’s economic output by up to 6.5% in the 2070s if no steps are taken to become more resilient. In order to manage these risks, and the risks to health and wellbeing from a changing climate such as flooding, heatwaves, water shortages and food insecurity, we led the development of a [Climate Change Adaptation Route Map for Oxfordshire](#). This outlines the activities needed to ensure that Oxfordshire can better manage, prepare for and respond to severe weather events.

7. Climate Action Principles

The principles guiding our work on climate action:

Evidence-based decisions

- We hold ourselves to account and take an open, smart approach to data gathering and sharing.
- We use this data to support our decision making and investment.
- We share and learn from best practice to demonstrate national and global leadership.

Maximising the benefits for Oxfordshire

- We consider climate in every health policy and health in every climate policy, creating healthy sustainable places and communities
- We increase access to nature and green spaces where people live.
- We work with Enterprise Oxfordshire to develop the green and circular economies and support the growth of low carbon jobs.

- We support communities to own and benefit from energy projects and retain the benefits locally.

An inclusive and fair transition

- We support all communities and businesses to have a say in decision-making and participate in climate action.
- We ensure that responsibilities, costs and benefits are fairly shared.
- We seek to reduce inequality through climate action.

Communities & partnerships

- We encourage everyone to participate; our staff, communities, suppliers, businesses, partners and national government.
- We convene partnerships to drive action in industry, transport, planning, healthcare and more.
- We support and learn from our community groups.

Research & innovation

- We advocate for evidence-led climate action across local government.
- We look for opportunities to adopt new technologies on our estate.
- We partner with research institutions to constantly improve our understanding of effective climate action and solutions.

8. A Fair Transition to a Greener, Healthier Future in Oxfordshire

The climate crisis affects everyone, but not equally. Some communities face greater risks and are often overlooked in climate solutions. Women, children, older people, those with disabilities, low-income households, and people of colour experience the impacts of climate change more severely.

Oxfordshire has significant social and economic inequalities:

- Two locations in Blackbird Leys (Oxford City) are in the 10% most deprived areas in England.
- One in five children live in poverty.
- Nearly 100,000 residents have a disability.
- Average house prices are ten times local earnings.
- Thousands lack reliable broadband.

As a [Marmot Place](#), Oxfordshire is committed to tackling inequalities and improving health fairness in the county. We will ensure climate action is also fair: how we deliver projects, communicate, involve communities, and share benefits and resources matters.

By designing climate programmes that improve access to jobs and education, health and wellbeing, safe and comfortable homes, and sustainable transport, we can make the transition to a green future fair for all.

To guide this work, we have identified four pillars for embedding climate equity in decision-making through our Climate Action Framework (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Four pillars of a fair transition

Spotlight on: Oxfordshire's Transport Citizens' Assembly



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

In 2025, Oxfordshire County Council ran its first Citizens' Assembly on travel and transport, which brought together a representative sample of 34 residents to discuss the question: *'What steps do we need to take so Oxfordshire's transport system enables our county's health, economy, and environment to thrive in 2050?'*

Participants heard from 40 experts covering a wide range of perspectives and information, and their final recommendations were discussed by Cabinet. The recommendations included reducing emission and congestion in central Oxford, standardised ticketing across bus companies, better information about travel choices, and the vision for sustainable travel in Oxfordshire.

The Citizens' Assembly results have informed subsequent schemes, such as the [MyBus Oxfordshire ticket](#), which offers daily or weekly travel around the county, covering most routes and operators at a fixed price.

9. Enabling a Green Economy

Transitioning to an inclusive green economy means moving to a model where economic activity enhances the natural environment, and improves public health and wellbeing, while generating and sharing economic benefits. Climate change impacts – rising temperatures, extreme weather, and infrastructure damage – pose risks to residents, the workforce and our economy. Building climate resilience and providing access to new skills, jobs and community ownership of assets like renewable energy generation, is essential for inclusive, sustainable growth.

Oxfordshire can capitalise on its strengths in six of the eight knowledge intensive sectors highlighted in the [Modern Industrial Strategy](#), including [advanced manufacturing](#) and [cleantech](#), by supporting green skills training and access to new opportunities.

Enterprise Oxfordshire has responded to the emerging skills gaps through a £1.7 million Green Skills Bootcamp. Courses in e-bike maintenance and heat pump installation have enabled residents to access new opportunities in the growing green economy, and the Oxfordshire Skills Hub has complemented this with the creation of employer films for [Green Careers Week 2024](#), an [event for teachers](#) focused on the space sector's impact on sustainability and environmental issues, and workplace visits and employer encounters with businesses that are focused on green skills.

We are addressing inequality through a [community wealth building](#) project, working with the local community enterprise sector to place economic control in the hands of local people. This helps ensure that environmental transformation is equitable and locally beneficial. We also wish to support our community energy sector to bring about greater shared ownership of renewable generation. In December 2024 we issued £500,000 in green bonds to decarbonise public buildings and support tree planting projects across the county, demonstrating how innovation and community investment can drive environmental and social progress.

Together, these actions reflect Oxfordshire's commitment to a green economy that is inclusive, resilient, and future-ready; where environmental ambition is matched by economic opportunity and community empowerment.

9.1: Key Statistics

- Failing to adapt to the impacts of climate change could reduce Oxfordshire's Gross Value Added to the UK by up to £1.8bn per year in the 2050s.
- The Local Government Association estimates that over 15,000 green jobs will be required in Oxfordshire by 2050, mostly in low emissions vehicles, infrastructure, and low carbon electricity.
- According to PaZCO, £3.4bn investment is required to deliver the net zero transition in Oxfordshire between 2021 and 2030.
- There are currently 727 clean energy businesses in the county, 150 of which have high-growth potential.

Spotlight on: Oxfordshire Green Futures



We have developed a digital [prospectus](#) to showcase investment-ready nature and net zero projects in Oxfordshire. It aims to encourage investors to engage with opportunities in the county which provide a financial return while also enabling us to achieve our climate mitigation and adaptation targets. The prospectus is currently promoting over £46m of investment opportunities across nature recovery, green construction and renewable generation.

9.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Accelerate green skills development through dedicated education and training programmes to support the just transition	
Empowering residents and businesses to lead and benefit from the low carbon transition by creating accessible pathways into green careers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead a £2m programme for residents focused on developing solar and electric vehicle skills. • Enterprise Oxfordshire Careers Hub will be running one day work experience opportunities focused on green skills.
Priority 2: Target inward investment into green projects to deliver local benefits	
Place-based investment in low carbon, nature-positive initiatives can attract capital by engaging stakeholders to accelerate net zero and benefit communities and nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to bring stakeholders together through the 100 Together programme. • Seek development funding for a pipeline of net zero and nature recovery projects in Oxfordshire. • In partnership with the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership (OLNP), aim to leverage private finance to support nature recovery and LNRS delivery (see Chpt 13). • Explore inclusive models of ownership and benefits from renewable energy schemes (see Chpt 12, Priority 3).
Priority 3: Support and engage our networks to drive innovation in the green economy	
Supporting the low carbon economy by fostering innovation and collaboration will position Oxfordshire as a hub for climate-positive technologies and business models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support Oxfordshire Greentech through membership and sponsorship of their annual conference, and their work with Cambridge Cleantech. • Work with Innovate Oxfordshire to encourage growth of the low carbon sector in Oxfordshire.
Priority 4: Embed holistic, systems-level thinking into decision-making to ensure climate action supports a thriving, inclusive local economy	
Embedding systems-level thinking into our processes will ensure that our climate action contributes to a thriving and inclusive local economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a tool which provides a practical way of assessing the impact of our activities and plans on economic, environmental and social boundaries.

9.3: Benefits of our actions



10. Built Environment

Our homes and buildings are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Significant growth is expected across Oxfordshire over the coming years, and new development must be delivered sustainably. This includes using low carbon materials, heating, shading and insulation to be resilient to climate change and reduce lifetime emissions and energy costs. Oxfordshire councils have pushed the boundaries of planning policy for climate change such as [Salt Cross Garden Village](#) in West Oxfordshire and progressive Energy Use Intensity targets in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.

The Planning and Infrastructure Act (2025) places a duty on relevant authorities to prepare Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) alongside local plans. This will provide a new lever to bring together planning for housing, transport and infrastructure in a holistic manner, allowing for the delivery of climate change, health and sustainability outcomes at scale. In areas without a combined authority in place, the relevant authority will be either the unitary authority, or in the case of two tier areas, the county council.

New net zero buildings alone are not enough. Additional financing will be needed to support energy efficiency in homes. We have delivered government-funded programmes like the Home Upgrade Grant 2 and Heat Pump Ready, targeting low-income households with poor EPC ratings. We have also partnered with Cosy Homes Oxfordshire and the Low Carbon Hub to create resources that help residents upgrade their homes and switch to low carbon heating.

The design of the built environment will shape community and economic resilience and wellbeing. Buildings will need to be warmer in the winter and cooler in the hotter summer months. As partners on the National Hub on Net Zero, Health and extreme Heat (HEARTH) project, we aim to realise the health benefits of the net zero transition and the reduction in health risks associated with extreme heat for vulnerable communities. For example, communities in Blackbird Leys are at highest risk of overheating in Oxfordshire due to the volume of concrete and lack of shade in their local area, but are also in the 10% most deprived areas of England. In response, we are proposing to install cooling equipment in Blackbird Leys library to provide a cool space for residents in the summer.

To support sustainable development, an updated Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy has been commissioned, identifying challenges such as energy capacity, gaps in sustainable transport, lack of green space and rising flood risk. We will continue to work with partners, including schools and care homes, to improve the wider built environment across Oxfordshire.

10.1: Key Statistics

- We have installed solar panel units with battery storage on 306 owner-occupied domestic buildings through the Energy Saver App project.
- In 2023, housing alone accounted for 22% of total emissions in Oxfordshire.
- In order meet our net zero targets, 80% of new developments will need to have heat pumps and 100% of existing properties will need to be EPC B minimum.

Spotlight on: Energy Saver App



In July 2024 we launched our [Energy Saver App](#), funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, which encourages energy efficient behaviour and gives access to energy data for residents across Oxfordshire with a smart meter. The app reached almost 10,000 downloads, and 306 homes in Oxfordshire received solar and battery technology, trialling a new subscription model. Extensive positive feedback was received from residents, most of whom could not have otherwise afforded the technology.

Key successes:

- Those receiving the offer of low carbon technology saved on average £361 a year on their energy bills after the subscription costs.
- 97% would recommend a similar model to friends and family if it was available.
- The project has won two industry awards.
- Showcased at a Parliamentary Reception at the Houses of Parliament as an example of smart technologies that are driving the clean energy transition.

10.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Scale up delivery of retrofit across the county	
Scaling household retrofit countywide reduces emissions, improves energy efficiency, lowers bills, reduces fuel poverty and creates green jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a retrofit plan for the county, identifying optimal delivery methods and analysing policy gaps for low income and able-to-pay households. • Deploy £3.75m funding under the Warm Homes Local Grant. Seek increased funding from central government to tackle fuel poverty through energy performance and low carbon heating upgrades.
Priority 2: Mitigate climate impacts on the built environment while minimising the built environment's impact on the climate	
Mitigation and adaptation in the built environment creates resilient places that protect people, reduces emissions, and prepares communities for a changing climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore potential opportunities for strategic environmental policies to be embedded in future planning at a regional level through the SDS. • Work with 10 of our maintained schools to implement a range of measures addressing climate risks (e.g. heat, flooding and water scarcity). • Support delivery of the LNRS, including providing planning guidance for nature-based solutions to climate mitigation and resilience (see Chpt 13). • Continue to address flood risk (see Chpt 13).
Priority 3: Engage with stakeholders to demonstrate the benefits of building retrofit and climate resilience	
Effective engagement builds public trust, unlocks investment, and drives behaviour change, making retrofit a shared priority across the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce and share materials to demonstrate the importance and benefits of retrofitting homes for energy efficiency and climate resilience. • Work with district and county planning teams to ensure that all applications for development are compatible with net zero and improve resilience to a changing climate.

10.3: Benefits of our actions



11. Movement and Connectivity

Transport is Oxfordshire's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and, as a rural county hosting a significant A road and motorway network, one of the hardest to decarbonise. As the Local Transport Authority, we are working to reduce car dependency and build a net zero transport system by 2040, as outlined in our [Local Transport and Connectivity Plan](#) (LTCP). This includes replacing or removing one in four car trips by 2030 and prioritising walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport.

We are delivering this through initiatives like Oxford's electric bus fleet and an electric vehicle (EV) car club pilot, which has seen over 1,200 new members and 5,200 hiring sessions since April 2023. EV car clubs funded through CAG Oxfordshire also support low income households in rural areas. Active travel is supported through [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans](#) and our [Sustainable School Travel Strategy](#), while [freight decarbonisation](#) is being explored through mobile delivery hubs and e-cargo bike trials. We are accelerating public EV charge point roll out through the Oxfordshire Local EV Infrastructure fund (OxLEVI) in line with our [Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy](#).

To improve air quality and reduce traffic, we have introduced a [Zero Emission Zone](#) in Oxford city centre and implemented [Low Traffic Neighbourhoods](#) in Cowley and East Oxford. The Oxford [temporary congestion charge](#) was rolled out to manage increasing congestion and poor air quality within the city centre and improve bus journey times. It aims to benefit all users, particularly low-income groups relying on buses for transport. To address equity concerns, the Park and Ride service was free for all users for the first three months of the charge, and a [comprehensive list of exemptions and permits](#) is available, including for blue badge holders, care workers and unpaid carers, and those who use their vehicle for work. We are also strengthening the resilience of our transport network to flooding and severe weather, with nature-based solutions and climate-resilient infrastructure promoted through our emerging [OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail](#).

11.1: Key Statistics

- Transport produces 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in Oxfordshire.
- We aim to increase weekly cycle trips in the county to 1,000,000 by 2031.
- Over 4,000 people in Oxfordshire are using the [BetterPoints](#) app to earn rewards for walking, wheeling, cycling and using public transport.

Spotlight on: Zero Emission Buses



Oxford has one of the UK's largest electric bus fleets outside London. Led by Oxford Bus Company and Stagecoach, and supported by Oxfordshire County Council, the £82.5 million initiative – supported by the government's ZEBRA scheme – has introduced 159 battery-electric buses, including 104 from Oxford Bus Company and 55 from Stagecoach. These vehicles cover city routes, BROOKESbus services, and

sightseeing tours. Buses travel 200 miles per charge, supported by 104 rapid chargers at the Cowley depot.

The fleet saves over 4,000 tonnes of CO₂ annually, and prevents 35,000 litres of diesel from being burned and delivers 70,000 zero tailpipe-emission miles weekly.

11.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?

What will we do about it?

Priority 1: Decarbonise our transport system, reduce congestion and enable sustainable travel choices

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
<p>Reducing emissions by managing travel demand and encouraging sustainable travel choices protects public health, mitigates climate risks, and ensures reliable, equitable mobility across Oxfordshire's communities and infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align transport infrastructure carbon management processes with PAS 2080 (carbon management in infrastructure) and adopt circular economy practices (see Chpt 15, Priority 2). Transition to a trial of camera-operated traffic filters in Oxford. Investigate a Workplace Parking Levy in Oxford to encourage sustainable commuting. Investigate expansion of the Oxford Zero Emission Zone. Deliver an Electric Freight Spine and an integrated, decarbonised railway through the OxRAIL 2040: Plan for Rail.
<p>Priority 2: Support place-based plans for sustainable transport improvements</p>	
<p>Examining local requirements and challenges aligns transport with place-based needs. This supports decarbonisation of the transport system while also addressing the distribution of positive and negative impacts to ensure that the outcomes are fair and inclusive for all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop local area plans in line with the LTCP to guide future scheme development, funding bids, enabling sustainable growth. Continue to support the development of not-for-profit community transport groups and services through toolkits and grants. Consider appropriate mitigations to challenges caused by transport decarbonisation, such as increased costs and unequal access to infrastructure.
<p>Priority 3: Ensure resilience against extreme weather</p>	
<p>A resilient transport network is crucial to maintain safe, reliable connectivity, protect economic activity, and reduce disruption from extreme weather events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise sections of highway network for enhanced maintenance in extreme weather. Ensure regular maintenance of all drainage gullies in the county.
<p>Priority 4: Accelerate the transition to EVs</p>	
<p>Speeding up EV adoption cuts air pollution, supports emissions targets, and stimulates innovation and investment in Oxfordshire's green economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procure Charge Point Operators to install 1,200+ public EV charging points by the end of 2027. Roll out charging cable gullies for residents without off-street parking.

11.3: Benefits of our actions

 Economic resilience	 Job creation	 Energy security	 Social equity	 Cost savings
 Better health outcomes	 Natural environment	 Sustainable development	 Community resilience	 Governance

12. Energy

Decarbonising the energy system is critical to achieving Oxfordshire's climate targets. The [Clean Power 2030 Action Plan](#) and [Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire](#) report highlight the need to significantly increase local renewable energy generation by 2050 and improve energy efficiency across homes, businesses and public buildings. We are managing this transition through the [local area energy planning process](#) and working with local authority and commercial partners to unlock investment in flexible, resilient energy systems.

The energy system in Oxfordshire is heavily constrained requiring significant upgrades over the coming years. We are working with the new National Energy System Operator alongside our local authority partners to help shape the first Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP) which will cover Oxfordshire. Our energy planning work is a critical part of being able to ensure the RESP reflects our local needs. Decentralised renewable energy generates important benefits for the county and local communities including savings on energy bills, new income streams, jobs, stronger communities and better economic resilience. We are working to highlight the importance of public, community-owned and co-owned renewable energy generation, building upon the work of the Low Carbon Hub, such as [CAPZero](#), as a way of sharing the benefits of the energy transition.

Projects like [Local Energy Oxfordshire](#) have trialled smart technologies and behaviours to create a more flexible and fair energy system. It aimed to create a viable commercial marketplace for flexible energy trading to allow everyone to benefit from the generation and storage of energy, and worked within communities to explore the benefits of energy flexibility for communities, businesses and individual households. We have also submitted detailed forecasts of Oxfordshire's future energy needs to energy system operators to ensure local priorities shape network planning.

Global electricity demand is projected to more than double by 2050 in response to the electrification of heating and transport. Meeting this increase in demand in an efficient and sustainable way will be critical to enabling Oxfordshire to achieve its growth ambitions. The resilience of the electricity networks is of vital importance, particularly with the increased risk of extreme weather. Adapting the infrastructure to a changing climate is crucial for all new energy infrastructure projects.

12.1: Key Statistics

- Capacity of installed solar energy in Oxfordshire would have to increase 13-fold between 2020 and 2050 to meet low carbon energy demand.
-
- Two out of the three national energy system demonstrators have been held in Oxfordshire.

Spotlight on: Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Plan

Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Plan (OxLAEP) was commissioned to provide a clear, community-focused action plan for transforming how energy is generated, used and managed in Oxfordshire.

It involves all Oxfordshire councils working with Ove Arup & Partners Ltd to produce a plan for each district, as well as local authority capacity and capability building to deliver and continue future local area energy planning.

OxLAEP will complete by the end of 2026. The Oxfordshire Growth Commission has highlighted the importance of OxLAEP in shaping our energy future to enable growth in the county.

12.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Plan for, and invest in, Oxfordshire's energy future	
Strategic energy planning ensures long-term security, affordability and sustainability, and supports resilient communities across Oxfordshire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene the Local Area Energy Plan process to identify low carbon investment needs and grid upgrades. • Develop investment pipelines and delivery mechanisms to support the energy transition (see Chpt 9, Priority 2).
Priority 2: Develop innovative clean power infrastructure to support sustainable growth	
Embedding energy into growth strategies unlocks innovation, supports green jobs, and ensures new developments contribute to climate goals while enhancing Oxfordshire's economic resilience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners on a smart local energy system that is built into the design of new housing developments. This will keep bills low and supply secure in grid-constrained areas (see Chpt 10, Priority 2).
Priority 3: Accelerate the community-led energy transition	
Communities must benefit from the transition to clean power through local generation, ownership and fair distribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for community benefits from, and community ownership of, renewable schemes. • Take opportunities in the Local Power Plan to expand community owned energy in Oxfordshire.
Priority 4: Work with NESO in shaping the Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP)	
The RESP should acknowledge OxLAEP to ensure our energy priorities are reflected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Oxfordshire is represented on the first RESP Strategic Board. • Involve NESO in critical discussions on energy infrastructure and the development of OxLAEP. • Work with NESO and the University of Oxford on research to understand how the RESP can most effectively be developed.

12.3: Benefits of our actions

				
Economic resilience	Job creation	Energy security	Social equity	Cost savings
				
Better health outcomes	Natural environment	Sustainable development	Community resilience	Governance

13. Natural Environment and Land Use

Oxfordshire, the most rural county in the south east, supports habitats from chalk grassland to ancient woodlands. We have statutory responsibilities for nature under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Environment Act 2021, including the 'biodiversity duty', delivered through our [Biodiversity Action Framework](#) and [Action Plan](#). Recovering nature enables 'nature-based solutions' to climate impacts, such as carbon storage in vegetation and soils, natural flood management through wetlands, and resilience to extreme temperatures by increasing natural areas within urban environments. Our [tree policy](#) promotes increased canopy cover and climate-resilient species, and our [Highway Verge Policy](#) considers biodiversity outcomes.

Climate change is harming Oxfordshire's biodiversity, but reconnecting habitats can increase resilience. Through the [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) (LNRS), we have identified areas to focus efforts for a bigger, better, more connected and resilient network of nature. Our Biodiversity Action Plans set out actions the council will take to conserve and enhance biodiversity. We also work with and through the [OLNP](#) to lead and convene partners, from farmers and land owners (including the [North East Cotswold Farmer Cluster](#)) to local communities, environmental organisations, businesses and public bodies, enabling delivery of LNRS priorities.

Increasing frequency and severity of flooding is one of the most noticeable climate impacts in Oxfordshire. As the Lead Local Flood Authority, we have updated our [Local Flood Risk Management Plan](#) to manage flood risk and the impacts on people and property. This includes taking a collaborative, holistic approach to flood risk management, involving communities and delivering wider environmental and social benefits. We have also allocated £500,000 to fund 39 [flood projects](#) to make our communities more resilient, and have recruited new Flood Engagement Officers to support communities with flood preparedness and engagement.

13.1: Key Statistics

- There are 197 neighbourhoods in Oxfordshire with poor provision of accessible green space, seven of which are in the 30% most deprived areas in England.
- 800 to 900 species of plants, animals and fungi are at risk of local extinction.
- According to the [UK Urban Canopy Cover Map](#) Oxfordshire's average canopy cover per ward is 17.3% (above the UK average of 15.8%), of which 1.8 – 2.2% is at risk from Ash Dieback over the next 4-6 years. This would bring us below the national average overall.

Spotlight on: Local Nature Recovery Strategy



The LNRS is a county-wide plan to reverse biodiversity loss and enhance nature. The strategy was shaped by around 3,500 consultation responses during its creation. Key features include:

- A [Local Habitat Map](#) which highlighted existing and potential areas of biodiversity importance – covering about 40% of the county.
- A [Species Priority List](#) containing 63 bespoke species actions.
- A list of 40 [Biodiversity Priorities](#) with associated actions.

The LNRS will guide planning, funding, and land management decisions, supporting nature recovery across urban and rural areas.

13.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?

What will we do about it?

Priority 1: Reduce our impacts on nature and deliver enhancements

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
<p>Leading by example is key to achieving 'nature positive'; halting and reversing nature loss for the benefit of people and planet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance biodiversity through procurement, decision-making, land management and delivery of biodiversity net gain, including developing a Habitat Banking Vehicle.
<p>Priority 2: Understand the ecosystem services provided by nature and take this into account in decision making</p>	
<p>Ensuring decisions consider potential impacts on natural capital will give best public value, given the scarcity of some natural resources and the trade-offs between objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake natural capital assessments to inform our decisions, we will prioritise the use of nature-based solutions where appropriate, including natural flood management to reduce flood risk.
<p>Priority 3: Collaborate with private, public and voluntary sectors to enable nature recovery across Oxfordshire</p>	
<p>Nature recovery requires action by a wide range of people, it requires targeted investment and co-ordinated action to deliver a well-connected, biodiversity-rich, network of nature that is resilient into the future, restored for the health and wellbeing of future generations, and for natures' own sake.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with and through the OLN to embed the LNRS in decision-making, identify and develop strategic projects and monitor and report on delivery of LNRS priorities. • Work with communities in the Lower Windrush Valley to strengthen the evolving landscape, protect and enhance biodiversity and access to green space. • Work in partnership to conserve and enhance Oxfordshire's Local Wildlife Sites, aiming to increase the proportion of sites in positive conservation management. • Support the CAG Oxfordshire network to deliver community-level nature recovery.
<p>Priority 4: Improve awareness in our communities of the need to conserve and enhance biodiversity and what action they can take</p>	
<p>Providing communities with knowledge, tools, and support fosters environmental stewardship and resilience against climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership with local groups, empowering communities to take local actions that contribute to the priorities in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (see Chpt 16, Priorities 1 and 2).

13.3: Benefits of our actions

 Economic resilience	 Job creation	 Energy security	 Social equity	 Cost savings
 Better health outcomes	 Natural environment	 Sustainable development	 Community resilience	 Governance

14. Waste and Resources

To reach net zero, Oxfordshire must shift from a ‘take, make, use, dispose’ model to a circular economy; keeping materials in use for longer and designing out waste. As both the Waste Disposal and Waste Planning Authority, we manage household waste collected by the district and city councils and oversee planning for all waste developments through the [Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan](#), which sits alongside district and city Local Plans to form the county’s Development Plan.

Most waste comes from construction, demolition and excavation operations, but household waste is also significant. The Local Plan sets waste management targets to 2031 for these waste streams to provide the maximum diversion from landfill. Through the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership’s (ORWP) current [Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy](#) we aim to keep household waste growth to zero, increase household waste recycling to 70% by 2030 and send less than 3% of our household waste to landfill. We also plan for the management of future arisings of household waste through the Waste Local Plan. Our seven Household Waste Recycling Centres handle 50,000 tonnes annually, with over 65% recycled, reused or composted. A further 120,000 tonnes is sent to our energy recovery facility, generating enough electricity to power over 19,000 homes each year.

We’re embedding circular principles across our operations. Our [Circular Economy Plan](#) outlines actions to reduce waste and extend the life of materials, such as donating refurbished laptops to residents facing digital exclusion through [Getting Oxfordshire Online](#). Tools like the [Waste Wizard](#) help residents repair, reuse or recycle items, while projects like [EU CircleUp](#) in Wantage encourage circular behaviours through community engagement.

Reducing waste and improving resource efficiency are essential to cutting emissions and building a low carbon economy. Every step – from planning and infrastructure to public engagement – helps Oxfordshire move towards a more sustainable future.

14.1: Key Statistics

- In 2020 Oxfordshire produced 1.8 million tonnes of household (16%), commercial and industrial (27%), and construction demolition and excavation waste (57%).
- In 2023/24 for the 11th consecutive year Oxfordshire was the best county council in England for recycling, reusing and composting of household waste.
- In 2024-25 380 tonnes of food was diverted from the waste stream by activities delivered by the Oxfordshire [Community Action Group](#) network.
- Moving towards a circular economy could generate 6,000 - 7,000 jobs in Oxfordshire.

Spotlight on: Waste Wizard



To tackle recycling confusion and reduce waste, we launched the Waste Wizard, an intuitive online tool that helps residents determine how to reuse, repair, recycle, or dispose of household items responsibly.

By simply entering an address and item name, users receive tailored guidance on the most sustainable disposal options, prioritising reuse and repair over disposal. The tool also provides information on kerbside collection, recycling centre locations, and local reuse or repair services.

The Waste Wizard supports Oxfordshire’s ambition to reduce waste to landfill. With over 58% of waste already reused, composted, or recycled – well above the national average of 45% – the tool aims to push this even higher by reducing kerbside contamination and encouraging circular economy practices.

14.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Encourage a shift to circular principles within our own organisation	
Embedding circular principles across our teams will reduce waste and cost over time, impacting our climate and waste management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate colleagues on the circular economy, and the need to consider circular economy principles in our processes and proposals. Implement PAS 2080 (carbon management in infrastructure) standards across our organisation (see Chpt 15, Priority 2). Explore opportunities for local procurement of goods and services to the council (see Chpt 15, Priority 2).
Priority 2: Improve waste infrastructure, services, and opportunities for circularity	
Upgrading infrastructure and services enhances recycling rates, reduces environmental impact, and ensures efficient, accessible waste management for all Oxfordshire communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities such as the sale of second-hand and used items at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). Agree new HWRC management contract, seeking to increase on-site reuse and recycling levels from 2027. Implement capital works on HWRCs aiming to secure, maintain and enhance our network. Extend behaviour change communications and explore projects to reduce waste and increase recycling. Work with ORWP to update the county's waste analysis, enabling better understanding of the impacts of forthcoming legislation changes and business cases development for service changes and behaviour change work.
Priority 3: Plan for long-term, sustainable resource management in Oxfordshire	
Strategic resource planning is essential for future resilience and managing waste planning and arisings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin preparing a new Local Plan for minerals and waste once the new plan-making system, proposed by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, is enacted. Embed climate action within the new Local Plan and use a climate action framework assessment tool to assess policies and planning applications (see Chpt 10, Priority 2).

14.3: Benefits of our actions



15. Our Own Estate: Zero Carbon Council and Beyond

To reach carbon neutrality by 2030, the council is transforming the way it manages its estate and operations; improving electrical and heating efficiencies, electrifying transport and heating, removing and minimising fossil fuel usage, increasing renewable electricity, and embedding low carbon practices. This includes corporate buildings, streetlights and traffic signals, fleet vehicles, and staff business travel.

Our [Carbon Management Plan](#) has driven significant progress, with a target for 90% reduction in emissions from our estate and operations by 2030. Key initiatives include LED street lighting, property retrofits, new net zero buildings, fleet electrification and digital-first working. We have also been working with our supply chain to track and reduce our Scope 3 emissions, and implement our [Ethical Procurement Policy](#). Our Carbon Literacy programme has delivered training to 600 colleagues to improve their awareness of climate change and their impact on the environment through their work. Some emissions are likely to remain in 2030, particularly from specialist fleet vehicles, business travel and grid electricity usage. We are looking for innovative projects to address these through our offsetting strategy that prioritises high-quality, locally beneficial carbon reduction and removal projects .

We also recognise the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change. We are embedding climate resilience into our estate planning, infrastructure upgrades, service delivery and critical supply chains to ensure that we are better prepared for climate related risks.

15.1: Key Statistics

- By the end of 2024/25, the council achieved a 72% reduction in carbon emissions from its estate and operations compared to the 2010/11 baseline.
- Our LED street lighting programme, combined with decarbonisation of the national grid, has delivered an 83% reduction in emissions from street lights compared with 2010/11.
- By the end of 2026, we will have removed end of life fossil-fuelled heating from 51% of our estate in scope for our 2030 target.

Spotlight on: Our Maintained Schools



**Action on
Carbon &
Energy in
Schools**

We have been supporting our 116 maintained schools to decarbonise as part of the countywide 2050 net zero target.

Through the Action on Carbon and Energy in Schools ([ACES](#)) programme, we provide our maintained schools with [free energy audits and action plans](#) to save money and carbon. ACES also supports schools to apply for our [interest-free Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme](#) to install LED lighting, rooftop solar PV, and battery storage.

We have loaned £448,000 to ten schools to install energy saving LEDs, solar panels, and batteries, with an additional £508,000 allocated to 12 more.

15.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Decarbonise our estate and operations to reduce costs and energy consumption	
Decarbonising our estate and operations cuts emissions, improves energy performance,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to deliver our 'electric by default' policy to phase out petrol and diesel vehicles, targeting full transition of cars and vans by 2028.

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
and demonstrates leadership in climate action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with emerging technologies to address hard-to-decarbonise fleet, including hydrogen power for fire and waste vehicles. Continue to deliver our funded buildings retrofit programme and seek further financing to deliver our 2030 target
Priority 2: Improve our sustainable procurement process to localise our supply chain and avoid outsourcing emissions	
Enhancing sustainability processes ensures consistent delivery, embeds climate goals into decision-making, and drives long-term value across estate upgrades and operational practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update our procurement processes to ensure sustainability by design and encourage service areas to request accredited science-based carbon targets from suppliers. Ensure our contracts are in line with PAS 2080 standards and emphasising circular economy practices.
Priority 3: Support our colleagues to deliver climate action across our services	
Empowering colleagues with tools, training, and support enables climate-conscious service delivery, builds internal capacity, and embeds sustainability into our everyday operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target Carbon Literacy silver status by November 2027 (15% of our organisation completing training and submitting an action plan). Support colleagues to engage with climate action in their service through the colleague-led climate action group.
Priority 4: Explore the role of offsetting on our estate	
Offsetting helps address residual emissions, supports nature-based solutions, and complements action in achieving carbon neutral targets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate a Power Purchase Agreement to supply green power to meet councils' needs post LGR. Develop a high integrity, locally focused carbon offsetting approach using verifiable nature-based projects that deliver carbon removal alongside a range of other environmental and social benefits and strengthened climate resilience.

15.3: Benefits of our actions

 Economic resilience	 Job creation	 Energy security	 Social equity	 Cost savings
 Better health outcomes	 Natural environment	 Sustainable development	 Community resilience	 Governance

16. Engagement and Capacity Building

Oxfordshire's communities are one of its greatest strengths in our response to climate change. From grassroots groups to town and parish councils, there is significant capacity for action on all aspects of climate change and sustainability. We work with umbrella organisations including the [CAG Oxfordshire](#) network, [Low Carbon Hub](#), [Good Food Oxfordshire](#), [Wild Oxfordshire](#), [Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils](#) and [Community First Oxfordshire](#) to support and coordinate activity.

Our role is to inform and empower residents, support emissions reduction and resilience, and secure resources to help communities deliver climate action. We've developed a Climate Engagement Plan to guide this work and created the [Climate Action Oxfordshire website](#) with city and district councils to provide practical resources for residents.

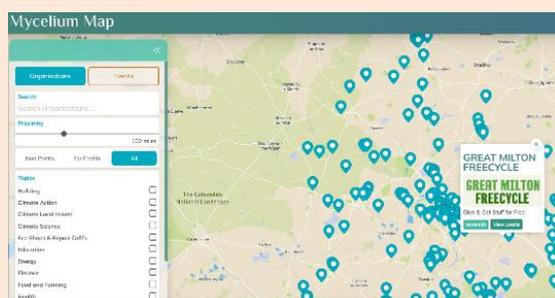
We have increased our funding for CAG Oxfordshire, which provides capacity building opportunities, micro-grants, advice, resources and coordination to a wide range of climate focussed grassroots and community organisations.

Research from our [Local Policy Lab](#) fellows into community engagement approaches and principles has encouraged us to reframe our approach to better include marginalised and global majority communities in climate action. For example, the [Inclusive Nature Recovery Working Group](#) provides stipends and travel costs for non-traditional groups to take part and access funding in the climate and nature space, including refugee and disability groups, Caribbean groups and for supporting community gardens in deprived areas. We are also committed to supporting activities rooted in community to strengthen our approach to climate action; we have provided annual grants for Great Big Green Week, the Garden Tree Giveaway and supported expansion of Oxfordshire's Libraries of Things. We also support community groups and parish councils with management of road verges.

16.1: Key Statistics

- 85% of Oxfordshire Climate Survey (2024) respondents feel it is important to reduce their (and their family's) carbon footprint.
- Around 130 groups are members of CAG Oxfordshire and growing.
- In 2024/25 over 100,000 volunteering hours were recorded by the CAG network for environmental projects.

Spotlight on: The Mycelium Map



We partnered with [Hedgerley Wood Trust](#) to expand the coverage of their [interactive map](#) across Oxfordshire, listing local climate action groups, initiatives, and sustainable businesses.

The map is integrated with the Climate Action Oxfordshire website to help residents bridge the gap between learning about

actions and finding a place to take them. It aims to foster confidence in the local climate and sustainability movement and widen engagement.

16.2: Our focus for the future

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
Priority 1: Work with our residents to spread the word about climate action	
Working with residents builds awareness, shared responsibility, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the Climate Action Oxfordshire website. • Work with local schools to engage young people, develop relationships with arts and cultural

Why is it important?	What will we do about it?
encourages climate-positive behaviours to ensure actions are inclusive and locally supported.	<p>institutions in the county and work with local programmes such as EU CircleUp (see Chpt 14, Priority 2).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide updates on activity to be shared in residents', partner and community newsletters.
Priority 2: Provide training for, and share knowledge with, our communities to support local action	
Helping communities develop skills, networks, and resources empowers local action, strengthens resilience, and ensures long-term delivery of climate initiatives across Oxfordshire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer training and support to community groups and town and parish councils on a range of topics including carbon reduction, emergency planning and climate resilience and community engagement. • Support grassroots initiatives and identify key communities to work alongside, particularly those not often seen in the climate action space. • Launch a community grant scheme to encourage community investment in local climate resilience.
Priority 3: Provide coordination across the county to maximise impact	
Coordination aligns efforts, avoids duplication, and amplifies impact which enable joined-up climate action across the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with existing networks to amplify their voices, enhance their impact and support the development of resources which encourage coordination efforts. • Develop and maintain our network of strategic partners, engaged groups, schools and funders to facilitate coordination, for example by peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing workshops.
Priority 4: Secure resources to support local climate action	
Securing resources ensures communities have the tools to lead meaningful climate action locally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to secure further funding for our objectives and put communities in touch with funders. • Work to secure community benefit from local renewable energy schemes to support climate action (see Chpt 12, Priority 3).

16.3: Benefits of our actions



17. Summary and Conclusion

This framework sets out a bold and necessary path for climate action in Oxfordshire. Local government has a vital role to play in influencing national policy, convening partnerships and amplifying the voices of our communities to drive systemic change, and ensure that climate action is not only ambitious, but fair and inclusive.

Throughout this framework we have emphasised the importance of the wider benefits that this transition will deliver: improved health and wellbeing, economic opportunity and restoration of the natural environment. Yet we also acknowledge the scale and urgency of the challenge. The impacts of climate change such as flooding, heatwaves and loss of biodiversity are all being felt across Oxfordshire and disproportionately affect our most vulnerable communities. We must act quickly and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from climate action.

Delivering this vision requires robust governance and accountability. An Equalities Impact Assessment and a Climate Impact Assessment have been carried out as integral parts of developing this framework, ensuring that our actions address both climate and social justice. These assessments will be reviewed annually, reflecting our commitment to continuous improvement and transparency. Progress on the delivery of the framework will be reported annually to Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet, providing regular opportunities for accountability.

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Oxfordshire County Council
Equalities Impact Assessment

Climate Action Framework 2026 - 2030

17 November 2025

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Economy & Place (Climate Action)
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Climate Action Framework 2026-2030
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	New policy
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>The Climate Action Framework 2026-2030 outlines the county council's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030 and county-wide net zero as soon as possible in the 2040s, focusing on integrated climate action that benefits the environment, economy, and communities. It sets out priorities across sectors including built environment, transport, energy, nature, waste, council operations, and community engagement. It focuses on both climate mitigation (reducing carbon emissions) and adaptation (preparing for climate impacts).</p> <p>The Framework is designed to benefit all residents, with targeted support for vulnerable groups and deprived areas. All impacts of implementing the Climate Action Framework 2026-2030 are positive. No evidence of bias, discrimination, or unfair disadvantage has been identified; instead, the Framework seeks to reduce inequalities and ensure a fair transition for all.</p>
Completed By	Ursula Winyard / Aoife Dudley
Authorised By	Ariane Crampton
Date of Assessment	19 November 2025

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>Climate Action is a key priority within OCC’s Strategic Plan 2025 – 2028 under the ‘greener’ theme, encompassing both climate mitigation and climate adaptation. The Council has pledged to become carbon neutral by 2030 and to achieve a net zero Oxfordshire well ahead of 2050. The revised Climate Action Framework builds on significant progress since 2020, including collaborative working, strong leadership, and recognition as the top performing county council for climate action nationally. Despite these successes, climate change continues to pose urgent risks - such as flooding, droughts, and heatwaves - which disproportionately impact vulnerable groups and communities. The Framework integrates climate crisis response, nature recovery, adaptation, and waste reduction, aiming for a greener, fairer, and healthier Oxfordshire.</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>The Climate Action Framework 2026 - 2030 does not introduce new policies, but instead consolidates and clarifies the relationship between existing policies and programmes. It sets out a vision for future work, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerating green skills development and supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy. • Targeting investment into green projects and nature-positive initiatives. • Supporting innovation and collaboration in the green economy. • Embedding systems-level thinking into decision-making to ensure climate action supports a thriving, inclusive local economy. • Scaling up home retrofit programmes, decarbonising transport, and improving energy infrastructure. • Enhancing climate resilience in the built and natural environment, with a focus on adaptation to extreme weather and flood risk. • Promoting community engagement, capacity building, and fair access to the benefits of climate action. • A fair transition <p>Acting on the climate emergency is the only viable course of action. Failure to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change and adapt to the locked-in impacts will have a negative impact on all residents, visitors and organisations in Oxfordshire.</p>

<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>Oxfordshire’s greenhouse gas emissions data shows 3,833 ktCO₂e was emitted in 2023. This equates to 5.1 tCO₂e per person which is above the national average. Research highlights the economic risks of failing to tackle climate change, with potential reductions in economic output if resilience is not improved.</p> <p>Since 2020, there has been a 5% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for Oxfordshire, largely driven by decarbonisation of electricity and uptake of low-carbon technologies. Emissions from transport continue to make up the largest proportion of emissions overall. The council has delivered major projects, including LED streetlight upgrades, electric bus fleet rollout, home and estate retrofit programmes, and nature-based flood management schemes.</p> <p>The Framework is informed by national strategies and local evidence bases (e.g. Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire). The three strategic principles of the Council’s 2025-2028 Strategic Plan - greener, fairer, healthier - are directly addressed by the Framework.</p>
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>No alternative policies or frameworks have been considered. The urgency of the Climate Emergency requires immediate and direct action. “Doing nothing” is not an option, as the risks of inaction include worsening climate impacts, increased social and economic inequalities, and missed opportunities for health, wellbeing, and sustainable growth.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies and strategies within this Framework are expected to have a positive impact on residents of all ages, particularly older people and children, who are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change such as heatwaves and flooding. The activities underneath the Framework will ensure that adaptation, mitigation, and resilience programmes are targeted to support vulnerable age groups, including through engagement with schools and care homes.			

<p>Disability</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The Framework is designed to be inclusive and accessible, recognising that disabled residents may face greater risks from climate impacts, for example due to restrictions on mobility, and barriers to accessing services. Actions underneath the Framework such as improving access to sustainable transport, retrofitting housing, and community engagement will help to reduce inequalities and support disabled people to participate fully in climate action. The focus on a Fair Transition will help to mitigate this by distributing the impacts and benefits, hearing and involving disabled people, recognising diverse needs, and repairing harm from past injustices.</p>			
<p>Gender Reassignment</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>No direct impact on people who are undergoing, or who have undergone, gender reassignment has been identified.</p>			

Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No direct impact on people who are married or in a civil partnership has been identified.</p>			
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Pregnant residents and those with children may be at higher risk from climate impacts, for example due to higher sensitivity to extreme heat events, or potential reduced mobility during evacuation from a flooding event. Policies and strategies within this Framework focus on health, housing, and community resilience, such as via workshops, will help to reduce these risks and support wellbeing.</p>			

<p>Race</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>People of colour may experience the impacts of climate change more severely, due to systemic issues such as the fact that they are more likely to suffer from pre-existing economic and health inequalities, which can then be exacerbated by in impacts of climate change if not dealt with effectively. Policies and strategies within this Framework focus on a Fair Transition which will help to mitigate this by distributing the impacts and benefits, hearing and involving people of colour, recognising diverse needs, and repairing harm from past injustices.</p>			
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<p>Sex</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Women may experience the impacts of climate change more severely, for example due to being more likely to live in poverty, less likely to be involved in decision-making processes, and more likely to bear primary responsibility for caregiving. Policies and strategies within this Framework focus on a Fair Transition which will help to mitigate this by distributing the impacts and benefits, hearing and involving women, recognising diverse needs, and repairing harm from past injustices.</p>			
<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>No direct impact on people of different sexual orientations has been identified. However, according to the 2021 census, a higher proportion of people with disabilities identify as queer, in which case the impacts, actions, and mitigations may overlap for people with disabilities.</p>			

Religion or Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No direct impact on people who follow certain religions or belief systems has been identified. However, many religious communities enact environmental stewardship through diverse cultural practices, and we are committed to shaping our initiatives through their perspectives. For instance, the emphasis on vegetarian diets within Hinduism helps lower carbon emissions by reducing the environmental impact of the food supply chain.</p>			
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Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies and strategies within this Framework will benefit rural communities by improving access to sustainable transport, local energy projects, and flood resilience measures. Rural areas are more at risk from climate change due to isolation, limited transport connections, and a higher concentration of elderly residents. Over the long term, these actions will reduce emissions and the impacts of extreme weather events.			
Armed Forces	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No direct impact on the armed forces has been identified.			
Carers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Carers are more likely to be vulnerable to climate change because they support people with disabilities, who themselves face heightened			

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				risks from climate impacts. When climate-related disruptions occur - for example, power outages - carers must manage not only their own safety but also the needs of those they care for. Therefore, the impacts, actions, and mitigations may overlap for people with disabilities.			
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies and strategies within this Framework will benefit deprived communities by encouraging better access to resources and services, such as affordable housing, energy-efficient homes, and sustainable transport. Deprived communities are more at risk from climate change due to fewer resources for adaptation, such as fewer funds to increase heating during extreme cold weather events. Over the long			

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (* Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				term, these actions will reduce emissions and the impacts of extreme weather events.			

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Embedding climate action principles will improve efficiency, reduce waste, and enhance productivity for staff. Policies and strategies within this Framework also support staff training and engagement, such as through the Carbon Literacy programme, which will build capacity and support wellbeing. Improvements to the working environment, such as building retrofits, will further benefit staff.			
Other Council Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies and strategies within this Framework will improve efficiency and reduce waste across council services, making them easier to navigate and improving productivity. Collaboration and			

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				sustainability standards will enhance service delivery.			
Providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work on supply chain emissions and ethical procurement is part of the Zero Carbon Council programme which sits underneath this framework. Providers who align with the Council's sustainability and ethical procurement goals will have a competitive edge, access new opportunities, and benefit from a supportive, forward-thinking partnership approach.			
Social Value ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Policies and strategies within this Framework will generate positive social value by encouraging climate action principles within the local community, supporting reuse and repair (which can reduce			

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

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				costs), and regenerating natural systems. These actions will improve the local environment, public health, economic wellbeing, and community resilience.			

Section 4: Review

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

Review Date	19 November 2026
Person Responsible for Review	Aoife Dudley
Authorised By	Ariane Crampton

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HR & CULTURAL CHANGE – QUARTERLY EMPLOYEE DATA REPORT

Report by Director of HR and Cultural Change

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is **RECOMMENDED** to note the report.

1) Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the progress towards delivering the Our People and Culture Strategy (as measured by the achievement of its key performance indicators) and summarises the main employee-related trends for Q3 2025/26 and reviews trends over the last four quarters.

2) Strategic Context

a) The vision for the Our People and Culture Strategy is that ‘we develop and maintain high performing, innovative, highly engaged, and agile teams, employing the best people, and reflecting the communities we serve. We nurture an environment that supports diversity, equality, and inclusion, and allows all our employees to bring their whole selves to work to deliver great services for our Oxfordshire residents’. The Strategy focuses on priorities under 4 pillars, ATTRACT, THRIVE, GROW and LEAD.

- b) In Quarter 3, the council made strong progress across the Our People and Culture Programme:
- The first pulse- style engagement survey introduced a continuous listening model, giving more frequent insight into the employee experience.
 - The Reciprocal Mentoring Scheme expanded successfully, strengthening inclusive leadership and cross- organisational learning.
 - The new HR Advice Desk launched on The Hive, improving transparency, efficiency and user experience when accessing HR support.
 - The council also completed its Culture Review, providing a clear evidence base for future workforce planning.
 - Oxfordshire Connects brought colleagues together in October, reinforcing organisational culture and a shared sense of purpose.

3) Workforce composition/headlines

a) Headcount and temporary staff across previous financial years

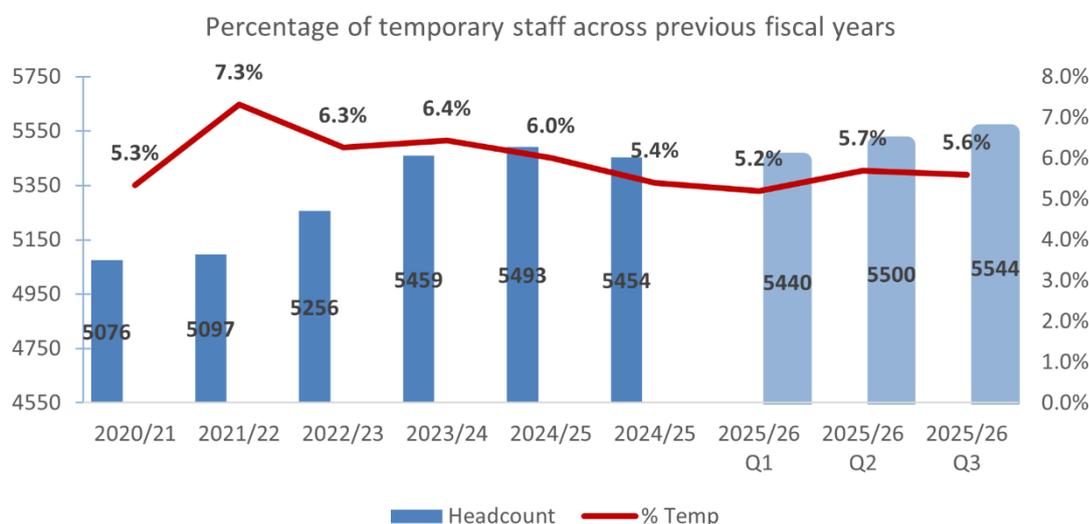


Figure 1 Headcount and temporary staffing proportion as at Q3 across previous financial years.

The percentage of temporarily contracted colleagues (not agency) in early 2021/21 was around 5-6% of contracted headcount and rose noticeably through 2021/22, peaking at just over 7% in Q3 and Q4. Through 2022/23 and 2023/24, temporary staffing then reduced back down between 6% and 6.5%. Temporary staffing percentages have since continued to stay at around 5-6% illustrating the Council's commitment to responsible and strategic resourcing of team structures. This enables the continued delivery of high-quality services and reflects a balanced consideration of financial constraints.

Overall, the trend shows that whilst temporary staffing levels fluctuate, a core proportion is made up of our apprentices demonstrating the Council's commitment to development of staff which speaks to our People and Culture pillar of 'Grow'.

4) Workforce composition/headlines

a. Headcount/FTE

Staffing	All Service Areas			
	Q4_24/25	Q1_25/26	Q2_25/26	Q3_25/26
Employee & Post Details				
Headcount	5,454	5,440	5,500	5,544
Employee FTE	4,606	4,597	4,617	4,654
No. of PT Staff	2,168	2,156	2,170	2,183
% PT staff	39.8%	39.6%	39.5%	39.4%
Temp Employee	295	282	314	311
% of Temp staff	5.4%	5.2%	5.7%	5.6%

Table 1: Headcount/FTE figures for previous three quarters

As shown in Table 1, the Council's directly employed workforce grew this quarter, with headcount rising from 5,500 to 5,544 and FTE increasing to 4,654. Part-time staff numbers increased to 2,183, though their proportion remained stable at 39.4%, reflecting our commitment to our Agile Working policy. Temporary staff also saw a slight decrease to 311, representing 5.6% of the workforce.

5) Starters & Leavers

Recruitment activity remains steady, with new starters at 160, representing 2.9% of the workforce, and leavers at 141 representing 2.5% of the workforce in Q3 of 2025/26 with most new hires on permanent contracts (83.1%), supporting workforce stability. Children's Services saw the highest intake, reflecting continued investment in critical frontline and hard-to-recruit to roles (See Annex 1).

The overall turnover rate increased marginally from 11.3% to 11.7%. For the rolling 12 months voluntary turnover decreased slightly from 10.0% to 9.9% between Q2 and Q3 2025/26, reflecting a continued improvement and maintaining a value below the Our People & Culture Strategy KPI of 11.5%. A significant reduction in voluntary leavers 149 (Q2 2025/26) to 113 (Q3 2025/26), suggesting an improvement in retention efforts.

Leavers within the first six months of their contract are monitored to assess the effectiveness of induction processes and role clarity. In 2024/25 there were 56 early leavers, compared to 20 so far in 2025/26. Reasons for leaving during the probation period typically include unsuccessful probation outcomes or personal decisions that the role is not a good fit. In all cases, steps are taken to ensure that we learn from these early exits, capturing the reasons through exit interviews and surveys to inform continuous improvement.

6) Agency Spend

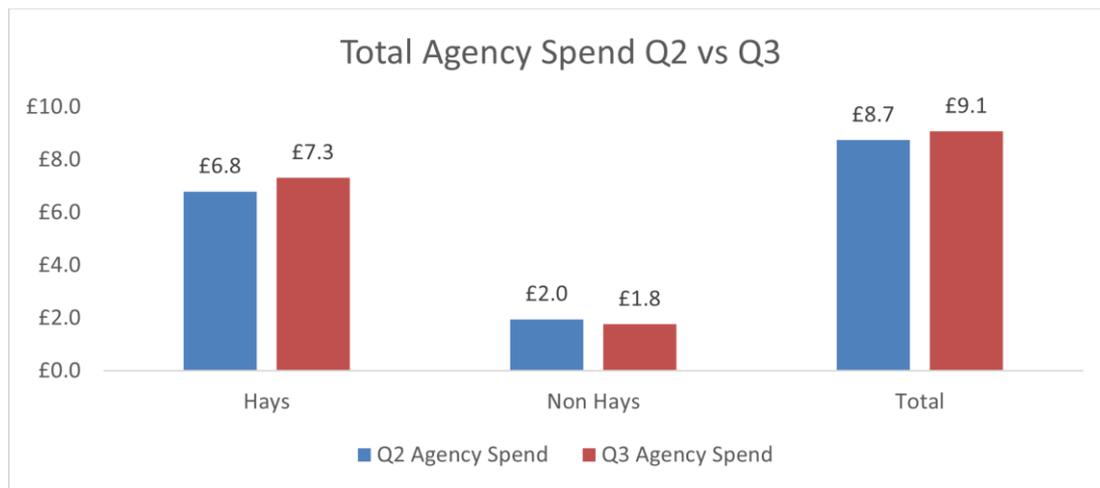


Figure 2: Agency Spend (Q2 vs Q3)

In Q3 2025/26, the Council's total agency spend increased to £9.1 million (as seen in Figure 2) up from £8.7 million in Q2 2025/26, an approximate 4% spend increase compared to Q2. This uplift is primarily driven by the continued need to cover roles which are hard to fill due to by national skills shortages. Spend via HAYS, the Council's contracted agency provider, increased slightly to £7.3 million, this reflects off-contract spend being brought onto the Hays framework which allows better visibility and monitoring.

To continue to address agency spend levels a dedicated work group comprising key stakeholders has been established. This group is actively exploring targeted interventions to reduce off-contract spend, strengthen workforce planning, and improve recruitment outcomes in high-demand areas.

7) Recruitment & Time to Hire

a) Background

The council introduced the Tribepad recruitment system as part of its new resourcing model, moving recruitment ownership in-house and away from the Integrated Business Centre (IBC). Tribepad provides a fully digital, end-to-end recruitment system with automated workflows, stronger reporting, and clearer visibility of the applicant journey, enabling a more efficient, consistent, and user-friendly experience for both applicants and hiring managers. It is now possible to report on Time to Hire data.

Time to Hire (TTH) is calculated as the number of calendar days between the candidate entering Pre-Offer (which is the stage a preferred candidate has been identified, and pre-employment checks begin) and being marked as Hired on Tribepad. Hired is the stage when all onboarding checks have been successfully completed, a contract issued and a start date confirmed. Only applications with final status Hired are included in these statistics. Secondments/IDH (Internal Direct Hires), agency/casual hires, and evergreen roles (continuously open roles or campaigns due to skill shortage areas) are excluded to ensure the KPI reflects genuine recruitment activity and is not distorted by atypical hiring routes.

b) Average Time to Hire

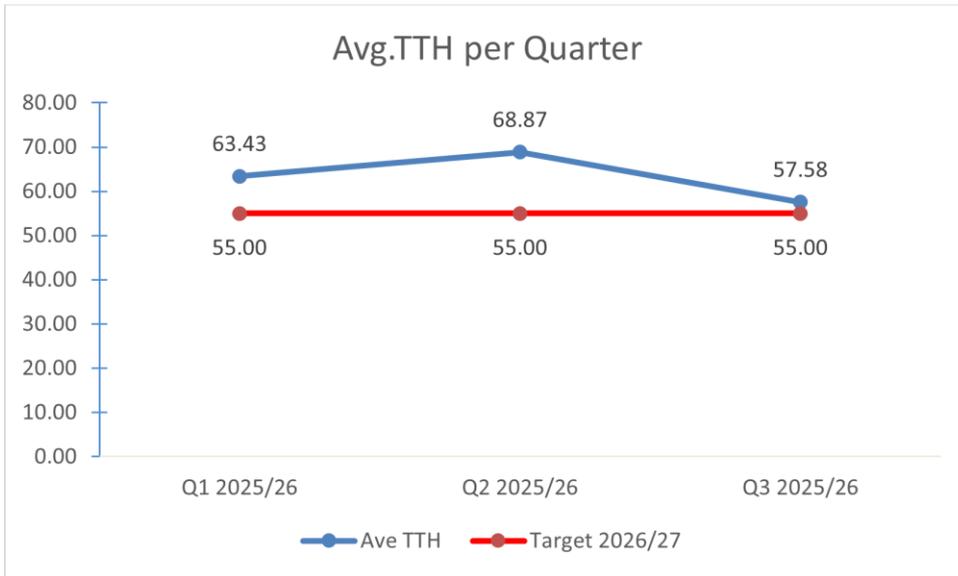


Figure 3: Avg. Time to Hire per quarter against 2026/27's target of 55 days.

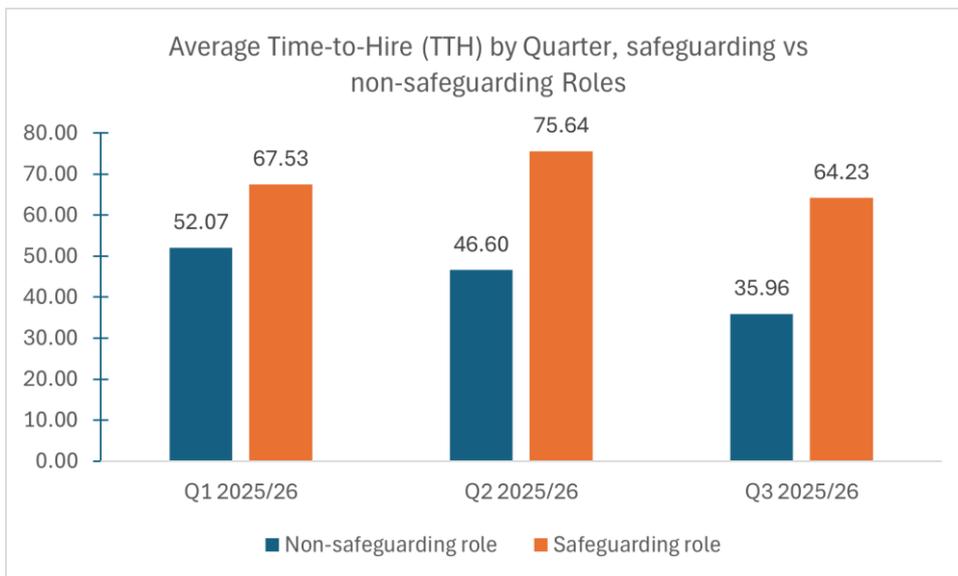


Figure 4 Quarterly TTH safeguarding and non-safeguarding roles.

A new Time to Hire (TTH) KPI has been introduced as of Q3 2025/26, following a full year of operating the Tribepad recruitment system, to strengthen insight into our recruitment performance. The first quarter of operation involved some overlap of systems, so for accuracy of trending, figures are only reported from the beginning of fiscal year 2025/6.

For 2026/27, the council have set a target to achieve an average TTH of 55 days or lower, measured from Pre-Offer to Onboarding Completed. TTH is influenced by process variables, particularly for safeguarding and regulated roles that require additional checks and referencing, which can legitimately extend timelines. Whilst overall the council are just outside our target TTH (Figure 3), when separated out, the non-safeguarding roles TTH is better than target and has improved since moving to Tribepad (Figure 4). This target will therefore be monitored regularly and reviewed annually, with a view to reducing it over time, but always with appropriate service level context to ensure fair expectations and to reflect the differing complexity of hiring across the organisation.

Average TTH peaked in Q2 2025/26 at 69 days, before improving significantly in Q3, falling to 56 days across directorates, Q3 2025/26 TTH values varied considerably from 16 to 80 days, with roles requiring the most extensive safeguarding and compliance checks, particularly in Children’s Services and Adult Social Care, showing the longest hiring timelines due to the complexity of pre-employment vetting.

During Q3, the council delivered a marked improvement in THH, driven by a focused effort from the Resourcing Team to understand the root causes of delays and embed more consistent processes. Key actions included progressing onboarding checks, targeting delays within Children’s Services and Adult Social Care, sharing best practice from hiring managers in high-performing directorates, and aligning resourcing officers with services to support them and ease bottlenecks. Enhanced candidate monitoring has also strengthened the onboarding journey. Increased stakeholder engagement, with recruitment processes designed alongside users, has further supported these improvements by ensuring approaches are efficient and focused on the needs of the services.

8) Workforce Diversity & Inclusion

a) Key D&I Metrics

In Q3 2025/26, promotions and secondments for colleagues identifying as ethnic minority rose 3.0% to 12.9% (12-month average – 10.7%), while those awarded to those declaring a disability dipped by 0.7% to 9.3% but is above the 12-month average of 7.6% reflecting ongoing progress in ethnic diversity and disability inclusion.

At the end of Q3 2025/26, 66.8% of Council colleagues were female, a stable trend in workforce gender representation.

At the end of Q3 2025/26, 5.2% of colleagues were under 26 a slight dip from 5.4% (Q2 2025/26), showing stability in younger workforce representation, while colleagues aged over 55 within the workforce increased slightly from 24.8% to 25.1%, maintaining a stable risk against potential retirements.

The percentage of colleagues at the Council declaring a disability increased from the 9.1% reported last quarter (Q2 2025/2026) to 9.5% at the end of Q3 2025/2026, while this is an increase and signals a positive shift in disclosure and representation, continued monitoring will help determine whether this upward trend is sustained.

At the end of Q3 2025/26, the proportion of non-white colleagues employed by the Council increased slightly to 11.6%, from 11.4% in Q1, while the rate of non-disclosure of ethnicity increased from 10.2% to 10.7%. This trend indicates a small increment in reported workforce diversity and is a recognised gap in declaration rates.

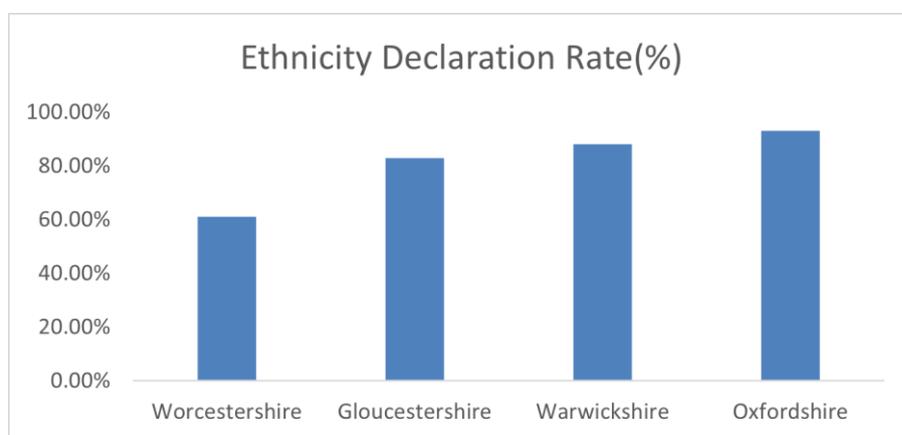


Figure 5: OCC vs counties similar in size. Data source: SEE

As of Q3 2025/26, the council's ethnicity declaration rate is 89.3%. This is similar to Q2 2025/26 at 89.8%, we are well above the national benchmarking mean of 81.3% and as shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**, indicating the council is still in a strong position compared to peers.

To support inclusive workforce planning and ensure accurate representation, further analysis is required to understand the barriers to disclosure and identify actions to improve declaration rates. The continuing work to reduce the rate of non-disclosure of protected characteristics is being supported by a communication and engagement campaign to highlight the importance the Council places on diversity. This focus is to ensure that the workforce is engaged, and the Council is doing everything possible to be an inclusive employer.

b) Equality & Inclusion Implications

Equality, diversity, and inclusion considerations are embedded across all Council workstreams, ensuring that policies, practices, and workforce decisions are assessed for their impact on underrepresented and protected groups. This approach supports our legal duties and strategic commitment to fostering a fair and inclusive organisation.

9) Attendance, Wellbeing & Employee Experience

a) Absence

i) Sickness Reasons

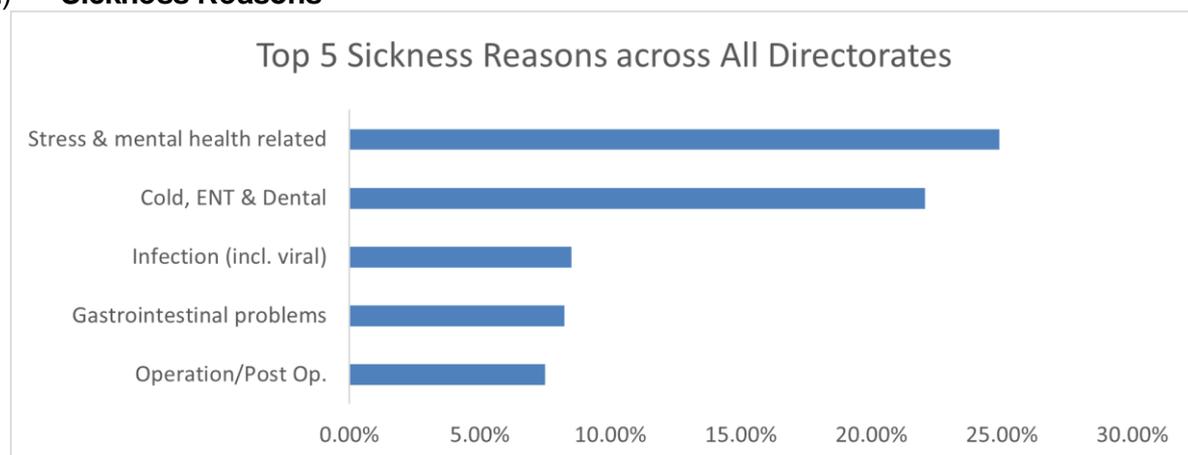


Figure 6: Top 5 Sickness Reasons Across Directorates. Data Source: IBC – OCC's HR system.

Top 5 sickness reasons across all directorates can be seen in Figure 6, stress and mental health alongside cold/ENT & dental issues remain the dominant sickness causes. These highlight the need for targeted mental health support and cold/flu prevention measures across all service areas.

ii) Sickness Data Trends

The average number of sick days per full-time equivalent (FTE) increased year-on-year from 9.1 to 9.2 days, remaining above the Council's target of 8.0 days. As of Q2 2025/26, the year-on-year increment was 0.17 days and 0.10 days for Q3 2025/26. Although above the Council's target, there is continued improvement in the year-on-year figures. There has been continued focus on absence management, wellbeing initiatives, and targeted support to ensure absence is managed well, employees are supported to achieve a sustained return to work. Ongoing work to achieve this is through the use of Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), increased reporting on the reasons for absence and targeted support in areas of high absence.

Oxfordshire County Council is committed to achieving the Thrive at Work accreditation by embedding health, wellbeing, and inclusive practices across leadership and culture, policies and

procedures, learning and development, and health promotion. To support this, the council are reviewing Occupational Health provision and developing a new intranet-based Wellbeing Hub alongside an integrated engagement plan to improve support accessibility.

10) Apprenticeships and Apprenticeship Levy utilisation

In Q3 2025/26, the Council enrolled 29 new apprenticeships, with 5 colleagues successfully completing their programmes (2 in Law and Gov, 1 each in Children’s services, ICT and Property & Assets), bringing the total number of active apprentices to 367. This reflects continued investment in workforce development and skills growth across services.

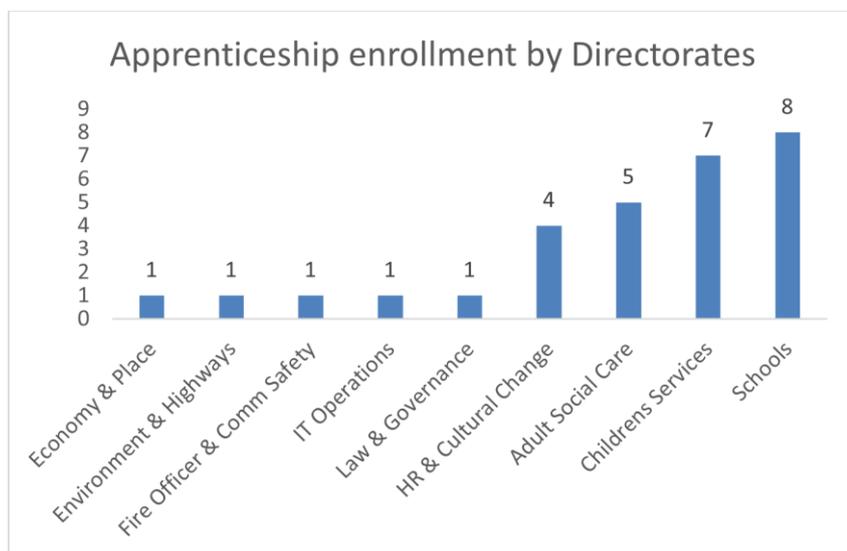


Figure 7: Q3 Apprenticeship Enrolments by Directorates

While quarterly spend decreased slightly to £378,422, Apprenticeship Levy utilisation remains strong at 92.3% in Q3 2025/26, reflecting a continued upward trend from 68.0% in Q2 last year. This demonstrates strong year-on-year progress in both levy optimisation and apprenticeship engagement, supporting the Council’s long-term workforce sustainability and talent pipeline.

11) Sustainability Implications

A review of the activities and data presented in this report has identified no direct sustainability implications at this time. The Council remains committed to embedding environmental and socially sustainable principles across its workforce planning and operational practices, and any future developments with potential impact will be assessed accordingly.

12) Risk Management

A review of the data and activities outlined in this report has identified no immediate risk management concerns. The Council continues to monitor workforce-related risks through established governance processes, ensuring that any emerging issues, such as recruitment challenges, agency spend, or absence trends are escalated and addressed in line with corporate risk protocols.

13) Financial Implications

The financial implications of the increase in agency expenditure will be reflected in the forecast service expenditure set out in the Business Management and Monitoring Reports to Cabinet and the Provisional Outturn Report which will set out the position at the end of the financial year.

Where there is a forecast overspend as a result of additional agency expenditure this needs to be managed within the wider budget. Where there are on-going pressures as a result of challenges with recruitment to specific roles these have been considered as part of the Budget & Business Planning Process for 2026/27.

Comments checked by:

Kathy Wilcox, Head of Corporate Finance

Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Anita.Bradley@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

Staff implications have been considered across all relevant workstreams and are reflected throughout this report. Key areas include workforce growth, recruitment trends, agency reliance, absence management, and apprenticeship engagement. These factors collectively inform our approach to workforce planning, service delivery, and organisational resilience.

Cherie Cuthbertson

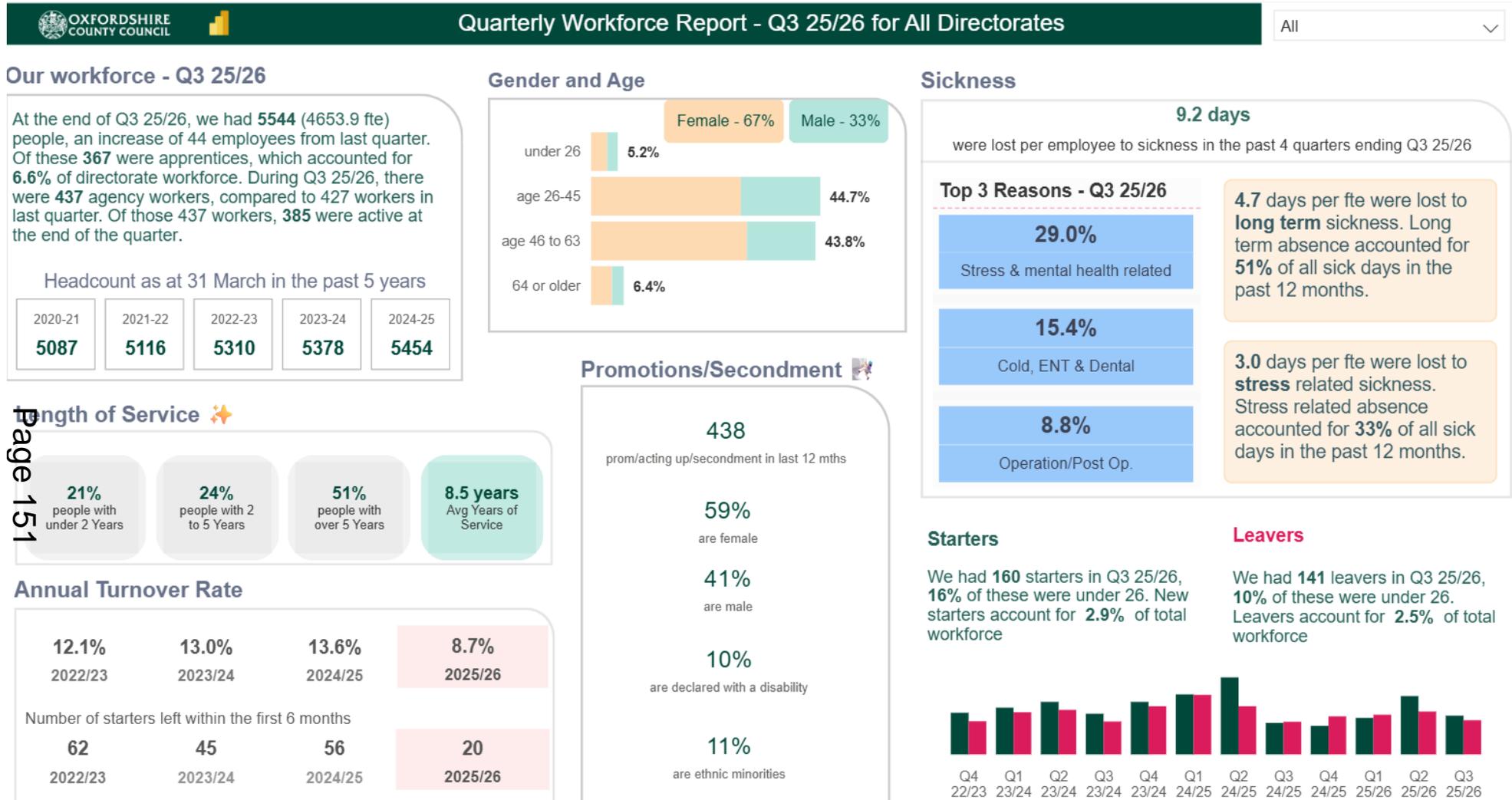
Director of HR and Cultural Change

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Taiwo Alabi
15/01/202

ANNEX 1¹

Figure 8 - Q3 Quarterly Workforce Dashboard.



Length of Service

- 21%**
people with under 2 Years
- 24%**
people with 2 to 5 Years
- 51%**
people with over 5 Years
- 8.5 years**
Avg Years of Service

Annual Turnover Rate

12.1%	13.0%	13.6%	8.7%
2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26

Number of starters left within the first 6 months

62	45	56	20
2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26

Starters

We had **160** starters in Q3 25/26, **16%** of these were under 26. New starters account for **2.9%** of total workforce

Leavers

We had **141** leavers in Q3 25/26, **10%** of these were under 26. Leavers account for **2.5%** of total workforce



¹ Annual turnover is shown as quarter to year (turnover figures are representative of turnover for quarters one, two and three of 2025/26), figure provided within the report is a rolling 12-month turnover figure.

Apprenticeship - celebrate our success

During Q3 we had **29** new apprentices enrol and saw **5** apprentices successfully completed their training in Q3 25/26.

We are now in a good position where we are close to spending the maximum levy allocation of approximately £1.4 million per year. The pause will allow us to:

- Confirm the organisation's priorities for apprenticeship investment
- Develop a refreshed early careers strategy
- Redesign our apprenticeship approach to ensure it is sustainable, targeted, and impactful
- Work closely with services during organisational redesign identifying how apprenticeships and early careers pathways can be embedded to meet future skills needs and address recruitment challenges
- Implement a robust governance structure for apprenticeship application and enrolment to ensure suitability, alignment with strategic priorities, and effective use of levy funding.

No. of apprentices on programme - end of Q3 25/26

367

Split by new apprentices vs CPD

% new apprentice

27.0%

% doing CPD

73.0%

Number of new apprentices enrolled in Q3 25/26

29

Split by new apprentices vs CPD

% new apprentice

31.0%

% doing CPD

69.0%

actual spend on apprenticeship by quarter



In Q3 25/26 there were

Completions

5

Withdrawals

3

Agency Spend

Agency spend via HAYS in Q3 25/26 was **£7,309,581**, which has gone up compared to the spend in the last quarter at **£6,788,832**

Please note from Q3 2024-25 spend via HAYS included Statement of Work (SoW). This spend was not included in the previous quarters

Comensura/HAYS spend by quarter

Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24
7.28M	6.65M	7.04M	6.73M
Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25
7.01M	6.94M	6.86M	6.91M
Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26
6.55M	6.63M	6.79M	7.31M

Off contract spend by quarter

Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24
3.43M	1.76M	2.55M	1.69M
Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25
2.09M	1.05M	1.50M	1.74M
Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26
1.68M	978.88K	1.95M	1.76M

Figure 9 - Q3 agency and apprenticeship spend dashboard

Division(s): N/A

CABINET – 24 FEBRUARY 2026

FORWARD PLAN AND FUTURE BUSINESS

Items identified from the Forward Plan for Forthcoming Decision

Topic/Decision

Portfolio/Ref

Cabinet, 17 March 2026

<p>▪ Updates to the Parking Standards for New Developments</p> <p>The Parking Standards for New Developments was adopted in October 2022; it is now due to be updated. Following internal and external engagement on the draft updated document, formal adoption by Cabinet of the finalised updated document is sought.</p> <p>Approval from Cabinet is also sought to proceed to a statutory consultation, which is necessary to enable changes to LTCP policy to provide suitable support for the Parking Standards.</p>	<p>Cabinet, 25/241 - Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, Cabinet Member for Transport Management</p>
<p>▪ Our People & Culture Strategy 2026-2027</p> <p>To approve the Our People & Culture Strategy which ensures we develop high-performing, innovative, highly engaged and agile teams. Employing the best people and reflecting the communities we serve.</p>	<p>Cabinet, 2025/173 - Cabinet Member for Resources and Deputy Leader</p>
<p>▪ Update on Recommendations of the Oxfordshire Travel and Transport Citizens' Assembly</p> <p>To provide an update on the progress of the recommendations from the 2025 Oxfordshire Travel and Transport Citizens' Assembly, as approved at Cabinet in July 2025.</p>	<p>Cabinet, 25/251 - Leader</p>
<p>▪ Future HWRC Management Contract - Model</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council's current household waste recycling centres management contract is in its final extension period and comes to an end on 30th September 2027. A future model for the service delivery is required to be in place and mobilised prior to the expiry of the existing contract. The paper is to approve the preferred model.</p>	<p>Cabinet, 2025/057 - Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action</p>
<p>▪ Business Management & Monitoring Report - January 2026</p> <p>To note the report and approve the recommendations</p>	<p>Cabinet, 2025/102 - Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation</p>

<p>▪ Movement and Place Plans</p> <p>The Movement and Place (MAP) plans form part 2s of the Local Transport Connectivity Plan. The Science Vale MAP Plan was the first plan to be discussed at cabinet in January 2026.</p> <p>A greater emphasis has been had on "place" hence forth the plans now reflect this in their title. They will reflect Oxfordshire's changing priority to be a place shaper of choice and articulate the council's wide aspirations.</p> <p>Objectives and Actions have been developed for our places with a focus on achieving liveable, healthy neighbourhoods and to help demonstrate and achieve integration across different modes and allow the achievement of the LTCP targets. The plans will replace the extant Local Transport Plan 4 strategies, adopted in 2016.</p> <p>This MAP Plan reflects the Bicester area in the North of the County (Cherwell) with further plans to come forward over the following months.</p>	<p>Cabinet, 25/262 - Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action</p>
<p>▪ Future Vision Zero and Road Safety Funding Allocation</p> <p>Releasing of funds following on from full council in February 2025 to deliver the VZ and road safety programme of works in 26/27.</p>	<p>Cabinet, 25/005 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management</p>
<p>▪ Oxford Temporary Congestion Charge - Investment Plan</p> <p>Cabinet will be asked to consider officer recommendations for uses of the income generated by the temporary congestion charge</p>	<p>Cabinet, 26/007 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management</p>
<p>▪ Department for Transport Local Transport Delivery Plan</p> <p>The DfT Local Transport Delivery Plan. This item outlines the proposed programme over the next 4 years.</p>	<p>Cabinet, 25/006 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management</p>

Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, 17 March 2026

<p>▪ Proposed Closure of Ace Nursery</p> <p>Proposed closure decision for Ace Nursery following informal and formal consultation processes</p>	<p>Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Children and Young People,</p>
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	25/260 - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Didcot Valley Park Special School - Education Specification and Approval to Start LA Presumption Process Whether to approve the education specification for a new special school, and move forward with identifying an academy sponsor 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, 25/265 - Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 26 March 2026

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed 20mph Speed Limit - Bainton Speed limit change to promote road safety in the village 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/235 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Witney High Street and Market Square Enhancements Following earlier public consultations on proposals to enhance the amenities of the area, the council are consulting on a final scheme for approval. 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/195 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed no waiting at anytime and 20mph speed limit amendment – Pettiwell, Garsington Introduction of double yellow lines to improve road safety. The start of the 20mph speed limit is being relocated south to avoid conflict with the restrictions and to make signs more visible. 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/250 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed 20mph limit - Parker Road, South Hinksey Introduction of a 20mph speed limit as part of vision zero project 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport

	Management, 25/249 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed Disabled Persons Parking Places (DPPP's) - Cherwell and West Oxfordshire Summer 2025) Proposed disabled parking places in response to requests from residents requiring a dedicated disabled bay 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/158 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed 20mph Speed Limits - Carterton and Brize Norton Proposals as part of the County Council's 20mph speed limit project 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/143 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A417 Corridor – Proposed 30, 40 and 50mph Speed Limits Proposed changes for safety reasons along the A417 corridor include reductions to 30, 40 and 50mph on various lengths between Oxford and the County Boundary 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/258 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed Amendments to Exemptions: Bus Gates - Didcot and Wantage Proposed amendments to exemptions for Police Vehicles at Bus Gates located at: Larch Drive/Diamond Drive, Didcot and Elder Way, Wantage 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/253 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed Bus Stop Markings - Hobbyhorse Lane, Sutton Courtenay Introduction of bus cages and flags as part of a development 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/264 - Cabinet Member for

	Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Claydon Canal Bridge - Proposed 13t Structural Weight Limit Change from the existing 3t structural weight limit to reflect its current load carrying capacity 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/263 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proposed Shared Use Cycleway/Footway - Camp Road, Upper Heyford Introduction of a shared use cycleway / footway as part of a development site 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/259 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford - Speed Reduction Justification includes addressing road safety concerns raised by the parish council due to the walk to schools in Wallingford; to encourage active travel by improving the perception of safety due to vehicles slowing down when travelling along the road where there are advisory cycle lanes (LTN 1/20 compliance). 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/274 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Controlled Parking Zone Review - Summertown Review of parking restrictions in the Summertown CPZ 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/273 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Controlled Parking Zone Review - Temple Cowley Review of parking restrictions in the Temple Cowley CPZ 	Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/273 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local Bus Contracts (August 2026) 	Delegated Decisions by

<p>A decision is required on whether to undertake a tender exercise for a number of local bus contracts which are due to expire in the summer and autumn of 2026, and to delegate authority to award contracts to the Director of Environment & Highways.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 26/013 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management</p>
<p>▪ A4158 Rose Hill Service Road - Appraisal of Options The report outlines the highway options available to address the collision history at the southern access to the service road.</p>	<p>Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Transport Management, 25/257 - Cabinet Member for Transport Management</p>

Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, 26 March 2026

<p>▪ Approve and Authorise the Award of the HIF1 Culham River Crossing Construction Contract This is a key decision to approve and authorise the award of the HIF1 Culham River Crossing Construction Contract</p>	<p>Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, 25/268 - Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action</p>
<p>▪ Approval to Enter into Agreements - Ambrosden to Bicester Active Travel Scheme Construction contract for Ambrosden to Bicester Active Travel Scheme</p>	<p>Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, 25/266 - Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action</p>
<p>▪ Rights of Way Improvement Plan Extension A request to consider the officer recommendation to extend the current Rights of Way Improvement Plan's validity date from end 2025 financial year to end 2028 financial year and to add relevant policies adopted since 2015 as an annex.</p>	<p>Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action,</p>

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	26/001 - Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action
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Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

Under section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000, Overview and Scrutiny Committees must require the Cabinet or local authority to respond to a report or recommendations made thereto by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Such a response must be provided within two months from the date on which it is requested¹ and, if the report or recommendations in questions were published, the response also must be so.

This template provides a structure which respondents are encouraged to use. However, respondents are welcome to depart from the suggested structure provided the same information is included in a response. The usual way to publish a response is to include it in the agenda of a meeting of the body to which the report or recommendations were addressed.

Issue: **Infrastructure Funding Statement and s.106**

Lead Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Judy Roberts, Cabinet member for Place, Environment and Climate Action**

Date response requested:² **16 December 2025**

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
That the Council should ensure that local members are engaged and involved with questions of funding and infrastructure in their divisions.	Accepted	Locality teams will continue to engage members through Locality Meetings

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

<p>That the Council should recognise the urgency of ensuring its processes are sufficient for timely spending of s.106 funds.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The s106 Improvement Programme recognises the urgency of improving processes to ensure transparency and accelerate delivery. Future programme updates will</p>
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Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

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Issue: **Movement and Place Plans**

Lead Cabinet Member(s): **Cllr Judy Roberts, Cabinet member for Place, Environment and Climate Action**

Date response requested:² **12 November 2025**

Response to recommendations:

Recommendation	Accepted, rejected or partially accepted	Proposed action (if different to that recommended) and indicative timescale (unless rejected)
1. That the Council should review the proposed geographical boundaries for the Place plans to ensure they pass the 'sense check'.	Accepted	To ensure the geographic boundaries are coherent officers will attend locality meetings to discuss proposed geographic boundaries with councillors to gain feedback. This recommendation is already in progress, with officers having already attended some locality meetings in December to agree the most logical boundaries for some of the initial Movement & Place (MAP) Plans, including South of Oxfordshire where the initial

¹ Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

² Date of the meeting at which report/recommendations were received

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation Response Pro forma

		discussion was had. Nonetheless, for all areas where a plan is being developed this process will be followed.
2. That the Council should engage proactively with local members to ensure that local needs are understood.	Accepted	<p>Local members need to be at the heart of this process and we have recently amended programmes to ensure engagement from the outset at locality meetings. We recognise each area is different with some areas feed in through district officers' comments. Workshops and briefings have been undertaken and will be arranged as appropriate for the plans being developed.</p> <p>The MAP Plans set out what has been done, what is being progressed, and what needs to be developed. They identify challenges and commit to working proactively with the Local Cllrs both on potential solutions, but also how best to engage with the local community.</p>
3. That the Council should engage proactively with parish and town councils to ensure that local needs are understood.	Accepted	<p>As part of the engagement process explained to members at the scrutiny meeting (Nov 25), town and parish councils are, and will continue to be, part of the development of each MAP Plan before public consultation. Officers will provide a dedicated meeting (online) where parish and town council councillors can contribute towards the development of the plan before public consultation.</p> <p>It's also important to note that The MAP Plans set out what has been done, what is being progressed and what needs to be developed. They identify challenges and commit to working proactively with the local community on potential solutions, including co-production where appropriate. There are several engagement points, and the MAP Plans are essentially a live document, evolving as further work is completed with stakeholders and communities.</p>