

Oxfordshire County Council

Budget Proposals 2025/26

Draft Overarching Equality Impact Assessment

Context and Purpose

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

This assessment sets out the equalities impact of our budget proposals for 2025-26.

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

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

These protected characteristics are:

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

Including Everyone – an inclusive Oxfordshire

The council has set out its approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion, including how we meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, in the [Including Everyone framework](#), which was refreshed in October 2024.

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

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

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

Equality Impact Assessments

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

This Overarching Equality Impact Assessment is made in support of the council's overall budget proposals for 2025/26. It provides summary information on the equalities impacts which the council's budget proposals might have if the proposals are approved and implemented. It also gives an indication of how we might mitigate any potential negative impacts.

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

Overarching Equality Impact Assessment – approach

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

If potential impacts are assessed as significant, individual Equalities Impact Assessments are completed to aid understanding and outline mitigations.

Following the public consultation, impact assessments will be reviewed and updated as necessary to take into account consultation responses, and to further develop strategies to minimise material negative impacts on protected groups.

Proposals

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

Some impacts have been identified for capital proposals, which are outlined in the summaries below:

- **Public Rights of Way Infrastructure Programme**

The proposal demonstrates significant benefits for all communities in the county and benefits from having very few negative equalities impacts. Where rights of way are scheduled to close, there may be some negative impacts in the short to medium term. Mitigations have been identified, and these will be implemented based on the factors laid out in the EIA.

- **Redbridge Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) Redevelopment**

Redbridge Hollow Gypsy and Traveller site is extremely close to the recycling centre and additional mitigations should be considered to communicate and engage with this community before and during any proposed temporary closure of the Redbridge HWRC e.g. road closures, construction noise/traffic. If the plans progress, further detailed work is required on identifying impacts and mitigations.

- **Energy Saving Measures**

There may be physical impacts on those with disabilities, on mature employees and possibly those who are pregnant. Where infrared lamps are installed, they should be done so in a way that doesn't discriminate unfairly against any specific group, so common spaces, as well as areas reserved for changing, and gendered toilets must all be treated in the same way. If the plans progress, further detailed work is required on identifying and mitigating against the impacts. This would likely involve the appropriate station manager, and or Health & Safety lead for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue.

Public Consultation

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

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Section 1: Summary details

Service Area	All Service Areas
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	This assessment sets out the overall impact that the budget proposals have on a range of equality and diversity characteristics, including the nine protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010. The assessment also summarises any mitigations that have been planned or put in place to reduce or remove any potentially negative impacts.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	This impact assessment provides an overview of the 2025/26 budget proposals and so comments on existing programmes as well as new proposals.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>This assessment covers the budget proposals for Oxfordshire County Council for 2025-26. It is an opportunity to highlight key evidence and intelligence that the council has used to assess the impact of its budget proposals on the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>In line with our equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI) framework, the council has also assessed the impact on those living in rural areas, those living with social deprivation, armed forces communities, carers and those leaving care, and social value.</p> <p>This assessment has not identified any bias, unfair advantage or disadvantage to any groups or individuals. Where potential negative impacts have been identified, mitigations have been put in place to reduce impact.</p> <p>A summary of the impacts of the budget proposals on climate change outcomes have been set out in a separate overarching Climate Impact Assessment.</p>
Completed By	Jamie Kavanagh
Authorised By	Susannah Wintersgill
Date of Assessment	January 2025

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Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>Oxfordshire County Council's vision is to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.</p> <p>We want to make sure that everyone in Oxfordshire can take advantage of what the county has to offer. Our strategic plan explains our cross-cutting priorities and commitments to achieve our vision and sets out our areas of focus.</p> <p>In recent years Oxfordshire County Council has delivered significant savings both in response to reductions in government funding and to release funds to reinvest in meeting rising demand. This budget planning round has been affected by increased pressure as a result of estimated inflationary increase to the cost of social care, and government change to employers national insurance, as well as contract inflation.</p> <p>The council also continues to experience demand-led pressures and the effects of the growing nationwide costs of supporting children and young people; the rising cost of social care and care placements for both children and adults; and a national shortage of social care workers leading to a reliance on agency staff and higher costs.</p> <p>The last Census confirms Oxfordshire has a growing and ageing population, which will continue to increase demand on services.</p>
<p>Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>This impact assessment covers all savings proposals across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Social Care • Children's Services • Environment & Highways • Economy & Place • Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Community Safety • Public Health & Communities • Resources and Law & Governance • Transformation, Digital and Customer Experience <p>Details of proposals are set out in the main budget papers.</p>

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<p>Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact</p>	<p>In considering the impact of budget proposals before they are formally agreed, the council undertakes a detailed process of democratic and community engagement. For equalities this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA 2023) of health and wellbeing needs, and the associated Equalities Briefing, to consider the impact of proposals as they are drawn up and in the development of this overarching assessment. The council’s JSNA can be found here. • Census 2021 data analysis and insight, which is used to understand the demography of Oxfordshire and benchmarked statistics in relation to national and county level data, which can be found here. • Using data and intelligence gathered through developing our refreshed Including Everyone Framework on equalities, diversity and inclusion, which can be found here. • Services follow the council’s approach to undertaking Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA). This can include considering at an early stage what impacts each proposal might have on the nine protected characteristics or on wider inequalities, and subsequently setting out greater detail, including any actions identified to mitigate negative impacts. If potential impacts are assessed as significant, individual Equalities Impact Assessments are completed and published to aid understanding and outline mitigations. • A democratic process including agreement of proposals by Cabinet, analysis and comment on those proposals by the Performance Scrutiny Committee, and adoption of a budget by Full Council. Each of these stages provides an opportunity to invite comment and engagement from the public and representatives of particular organisations or population groups.
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Section 3: Impact Assessment

<p>Assessing the evidence and impact on those with the protected and additional characteristics</p>	<p>The 2021 Census records that Oxfordshire has a population of 725,290. Demographic data below has been taken from the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2023 and through analysis of Census 2021 data.</p>
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The summaries below outline where a proposal has a positive or negative impact on those with protected and additional characteristics.

Cross-benefits

- Investment in procurement services: The proposed investment in additional resources for procurement services will help improve procurement practices in the council, including ensuring that procurement processes are fair, transparent, and inclusive. By driving social value through procurement, the council can support initiatives that benefit diverse communities and promote equal opportunities. Overall, this investment is designed to not only improve operational efficiency but also to support the council's commitment to equality and social value.
- Active travel proposals have wholesale positive impacts on communities, and directly improve outcomes for all residents, particularly those with protected characteristics. LCWHIPS have been extensively consulted on with local communities, community groups and vulnerable residents. The provision for investment seeks to improve outcomes in rural and market towns by investing in infrastructure which not only supports active travel but also advances broader objectives such as economic vitality, health and environmental sustainability. The anticipated benefits include significantly improved connectivity within and between settlements, fairer access and opportunity to choose active travel, better air quality, expanded transportation options for underserved communities, and healthier lifestyles through increased walking and cycling possibilities. These investments will also bolster local economies by boosting footfall in market towns, and supporting tourism and local businesses, and fostering a sense of community pride. No negative impacts have been identified in this proposal, although if any negative impacts are identified through consultation, robust mitigations will be designed and implemented.

Age: The median age of Oxfordshire increased slightly from 38 years as of 2011 census to 39 years at 2021 census. In 2021 census, the median age was lowest in Oxford City (31 years) and highest in West Oxfordshire (44 years). At a small area level, wide areas of rural Oxfordshire had a median age above 47. Over the past 20 years (between 2001 and 2021), there was an increase in the population of Oxfordshire from 605,400 to 725,200, a growth of 119,800 (+20%). The younger age group, aged 0-15, increased by 10%. The older age group, aged 65 and over, increased by 48%. Rural districts have a much higher proportion of older people than Oxford City. In 2021, older people aged 65+ made up 20% of the

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estimated population of Oxfordshire's four rural districts, compared with 12% of the population of Oxford City. Oxford City had a much higher proportion of people in younger age groups (including students) and a higher number of people aged 20-24 than living in Oxfordshire's four rural districts.

- **Public Rights of Way Infrastructure Proposal:** Replacing stiles with gates, installing bridges 'at grade' and installing ramps where appropriate to replace steps will make the public rights of way network more accessible to all in the long term. However, while the proposed works are being completed, this may increase disadvantage in the short term to those who use mobility aids or have difficulty with movement because of their age. Mitigations will be put in place based on location and the time that individual rights of way are out of operation.
- **Energy Saving Measures:** There may be impacts on those with disabilities, for mature employees and possibly those who are pregnant. Mitigations will be discussed with the relevant Station Manager and / or Health and Safety Lead for the fire service.
- **Proactive flooding measures and flood officer posts:** The proposal for a reserve fund to invest in proactive flooding measures, and the provision of two Flood Officer posts, has no negative equalities implications. The provision will have a positive impact on residents who may be vulnerable due to their protected characteristics of age and disability and who are disproportionately impacted by the effects of flooding.
- **Joint ticket at Park and Rides:** No negative impacts have been identified with the proposal, which seeks investment to support holding the price of a joint ticket (parking and bus fare) at Park & Ride car parks unchanged from 2024/25. Wholesale positive impacts are associated with this proposal, including the benefits of an affordable ticket on rural communities, areas of deprivation, carers, and staff. Retaining the affordability of the ticket improves access to city services and reduces traffic congestion and the reliance on car parking at work.

Disability: 14.5% of people in Oxfordshire consider themselves disabled as defined in the Equality Act 2010, compared to 17.5% of people nationally. Of those 14.5%, approximately 35% feel limited 'a lot' by their disability in day-to-day activities, with 65% limited 'a little'. Since 2011, the proportion of disabled

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people in Oxfordshire has increased by 0.7%. The most common types of disability for older people are mobility, breathing/stamina issues and hearing. The main type of disability experienced by working age adults relates to mental health, with children experiencing the most social/behavioural and learning disabilities. As of March 2021, there are 20,000 blue badge holders in Oxfordshire, 2.9% of Oxfordshire residents (source: Department for Transport), compared with 4.2% of England's population. In November 2022 there were 52,169 disability-related benefits claimed in Oxfordshire.

- **Public Rights of Way Infrastructure Proposal:** As above, there may be an impact in the short term to those with mobility issues. However, in the long term the proposed work should aid accessibility.
- **Energy Saving Measures:** There may be impacts on those with disabilities, for mature employees and possibly those who are pregnant. Mitigations will be discussed with the relevant Station Manager and / or Health and Safety Lead for the fire service.
- **Proactive flooding measures and flood officer posts:** The proposal for a reserve fund to invest in proactive flooding measures, and the provision of two Flood Officer posts, has no negative equalities implications. The provision will have a positive impact on residents who may be vulnerable due to their protected characteristics of age and disability and who are disproportionately impacted by the effects of flooding.
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Gender Reassignment: 0.6% of Oxfordshire residents over the age of 16 identify with a gender which differs from their sex registered at birth, compared with 0.5% of over 16s in England. Of this population, 16% identify as a trans woman, 17% as a trans man and, 17% identified as non-binary and 49% as other gender identities. Oxford City has the largest trans and non-binary population outside of London.

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

Pregnancy and maternity: There were 7,380 live births in Oxfordshire in 2021. The general fertility rate (GFR) for Oxfordshire (51.2) is lower than in England (54.3), and the birth rate among mothers aged 30-39 is higher than the England average. The biggest increases in birth rates from 2020-2021 are in South Oxfordshire (11% increase) and Cherwell (9%), with a 2% decrease in live births in Oxford. 4.2% of Oxfordshire maternities took place at home, higher than the UK average of 2.4%.

- **Public Rights of Way Infrastructure Proposal:** As above, there may be an impact in the short term to those who have mobility issues as a result of pregnancy or when using strollers for babies and infants. Mitigations will be identified based on location and the time that individual rights of way will be out of operation. However, in the long term the proposed work should aid accessibility.
- **Energy Saving Measures:** There may be impacts on those with disabilities, for mature employees and possibly those who are pregnant. Mitigations will be discussed with the relevant Station Manager and / or Health and Safety Lead for the fire service.

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

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

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

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56% of school pupils in Oxford are of an ethnic minority, double the rate of Oxfordshire as a whole, and 33% have a first language which is not English. 18.7% of Oxfordshire residents were born outside of the UK, of which those born in Poland are the largest group, followed by India and Romania. As of 2021 there were 652 'White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller' residents and 1,229 'White: Roma' residents in Oxfordshire. The majority of Roma residents reside in Oxford and Cherwell, with the highest proportion of Gypsy and Irish Traveller population residing in West Oxfordshire. Nearly a quarter of Oxfordshire residents are of an ethnic group other than White British (and almost half the population in Oxford). Oxfordshire has a higher proportion of residents that are of a mixed-race or of multiple ethnicities than the England and Wales average (3.1% compared to 2.9%).

- Redbridge Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) Redevelopment

Redbridge Hollow Gypsy and Traveller site is extremely close to the recycling centre and additional mitigations should be considered to communicate and engage with this community before and during any proposed temporary closure of the Redbridge HWRC e.g. road closures, construction noise/traffic. As the plans progress, further work is required to identify the impacts and mitigations.

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

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

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

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

Sexual Orientation: The 2021 Census shows that 3.4% of Oxfordshire residents (21,428) describe their sexual orientation as something other than Straight or Heterosexual. Of this group, 47% are bisexual,

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41% are gay or lesbian, 7% are pansexual, 2.5% are asexual, 1.3% are queer and 0.7% other sexual orientation.

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

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

- **Public Rights of Way Infrastructure Proposal:** This is likely to have a positive impact on rural communities by improving access for residents to the surrounding countryside for recreation, access to nature and health and wellbeing.
- **Proactive flooding measures and flood officer posts:** The proposal for a reserve fund to invest in proactive flooding measures, and the provision of two Flood Officer posts, has no negative equalities implications. The provision will have a positive impact on residents who may be vulnerable due to their protected characteristics of age and disability and who are disproportionately impacted by the effects of flooding.
- **Joint ticket at Park and Rides:** No negative impacts have been identified with the proposal, which seeks investment to support holding the price of a joint ticket (parking and bus fare) at Park & Ride car parks unchanged from 2024/25. Wholesale positive impacts are associated with this proposal, including the benefits of an affordable ticket on rural communities, areas of deprivation, carers, and staff. Retaining the affordability of the ticket improves access to city services and reduces traffic congestion and the reliance on car parking at work.

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

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

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

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

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

Areas of Social Deprivation: Oxfordshire is one of the 10 least deprived counties in England, However, four of Oxfordshire's wards are in the most 10% deprived nationally. Oxfordshire's ten most deprived areas have higher rates of children (under 16s) in poverty than across England (24.6%), while increasing numbers of households experience fuel poverty, with more households in Oxford experiencing fuel poverty than the rest of Oxfordshire. Nearly 20,000 children and 12,000 older people in Oxfordshire live in poverty.

- Proactive flooding measures and flood officer posts: The proposal for a reserve fund to invest in proactive flooding measures, and the provision of two Flood Officer posts, has no negative equalities implications. The provision will have a positive impact on residents who may be vulnerable due to their protected characteristics of age and disability, and on areas of social deprivation, who are disproportionately impacted by the effects of flooding.
- Joint ticket at Park and Rides: No negative impacts have been identified with the proposal, which seeks investment to support holding the price of a joint ticket (parking and bus fare) at Park & Ride car parks unchanged from 2024/25. Wholesale positive impacts are associated with this proposal, including the benefits of an affordable ticket on rural communities, areas of deprivation, carers, and staff. Retaining the affordability of the ticket improves access to city services and reduces traffic congestion and the reliance on car parking at work.

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