

**Oxfordshire County Council
Screened Equality Impact Assessment – Opposition Group Budget
Amendment (Oxfordshire Alliance)**

Purpose and scope

This EIA considers potential equality impacts arising from the Oxfordshire Alliance amendments to the 2026/27–2030/31 budget to support lawful and informed decision-making under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

N.B: The amendments are currently being screened for their equality impacts. If any of these amendments are included in the final budget, they will be subject to further detailed review to prevent any unintended negative consequences and to identify measures that could minimise potential adverse effects. After all proposals and amendments to the budget have been agreed, thorough Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be carried out before any programmes or policy changes are put into action.

Current Budget Setting Context:

Like many councils, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) faces a challenging financial landscape. Demand for key services (especially in adult and children's social care) is rising while resources are constrained. The Council must find substantial savings and efficiencies to deliver a balanced budget. At the same time, central government is undertaking a 'Fair Funding Review' of local government finance from 2026/27 which creates uncertainty about future funding levels. In essence, the Council must plan prudently amid budget pressures and an evolving funding formula, ensuring vital services continue for those who need them most. This tight fiscal context makes it even more critical to assess equality impacts: we need to save money in ways that do not unfairly burden any community or protected group. The Council's financial strategy is to protect frontline services and vulnerable people as far as possible despite the constraints on reserves and spending.

Proposals covered

Revenue

- Savings: remove carbon management budget (in part from 2027/28), reduce Climate Action Team by 50% (part-year then full), redesign Communications/Marketing/Engagement and Policy functions, reduce meeting catering and certain memberships.
- Investments: ongoing additional funding for potholes, flooding and drainage; small, application-based scheme enabling flags/banners on street-light columns via approved supplier; funding for Fire Cadets (time-limited profile).
(No capital proposals were supplied for this group.)

Who is likely to be affected

- Road users, pedestrians and residents in flood-prone areas: potential accessibility and safety improvements from highways/drainage spend.
- People who benefit from climate-related advice or protected groups who we engage with: potential reduction in capacity and outreach as a result of team and budget changes.
- Young people engaged through Fire Cadets: potential inclusion/skills benefits where provision continues.

Equality impacts

Net direction of impact: Mixed effects, likely positive local transport/ safety impacts from maintenance; potential adverse distributional effects where reduced climate-related capacity affects groups at greater climate risk (e.g., health-vulnerable households), scale dependent on service prioritisation. Reduction in engagement and outreach to vulnerable groups, as well as officers to develop protective policies has the potential to isolate community voice and engagement.

Key dependencies/uncertainties

Realising savings depends on organisational change processes; equality impacts will vary with how residual services and communications capacity are prioritised.

Procedural controls

Follow statutory consultation where required; complete equality screening at service redesign stages; use routine EDI monitoring to identify emerging differential effects. As above, a full EIA will be developed to assess the implications of these amendments if they are agreed as part of the budget

Conclusion

Proposals are capable of being implemented compatibly with the PSED, recognising **likely adverse effects where capacity is reduced**; effects should be tracked through standard governance.

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