Agenda

Council

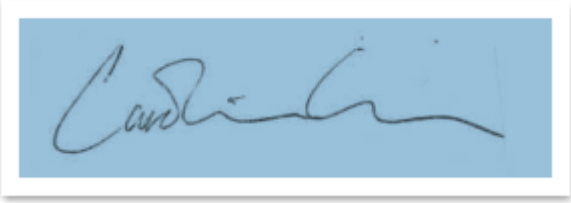
Summons

A meeting of the City Council will be held to transact the business set out below on

Date: **Monday 30 January 2023**

Time: **5.00 pm**

Place: **Council Chamber - Oxford Town Hall**



Proper Officer

Members of the public can attend to observe this meeting and:

- may register in advance to speak to the meeting in accordance with the public speaking rules
- may record all or part of the meeting in accordance with the Council's protocol

Information about speaking and recording is set out in the agenda and on the website

Please contact the Committee Services Officer to register to speak; to discuss recording the meeting; or with any other queries.

This meeting can be viewed live or afterwards on the council's YouTube channel.

For further information please contact:

Democratic Services

01865 529834 democraticservices@oxford.gov.uk

View or subscribe to updates for agendas, reports and minutes at mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk.
All public papers are available from the calendar link to this meeting once published

Membership of Council

Councillors: Membership 48: Quorum 12.

Lord Mayor Councillor James Fry

Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Mark Lygo

Sheriff Councillor Mike Rowley

Members

Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan
Councillor Lubna Arshad
Councillor Shaista Aziz
Councillor Nadine Bely-Summers
Councillor Susan Brown
Councillor Nigel Chapman
Councillor Mary Clarkson
Councillor Tiago Corais
Councillor Barbara Coyne
Councillor Lizzy Diggins
Councillor Dr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini
Councillor Paula Dunne
Councillor Laurence Fouweather
Councillor Andrew Gant
Councillor Stephen Goddard
Councillor Duncan Hall
Councillor Tom Hayes
Councillor Alex Hollingsworth
Councillor Rae Humberstone
Councillor Jemima Hunt
Councillor Chris Jarvis
Councillor Emily Kerr
Councillor Tom Landell Mills
Councillor Dr Amar Latif
Councillor Sajjad Malik
Councillor Katherine Miles
Councillor Alistair Morris
Councillor Lois Muddiman
Councillor Edward Mundy
Councillor Chewe Munkonge
Councillor Jabu Nala-Hartley
Councillor Lucy Pegg
Councillor Susanna Pressel
Councillor Anna Railton
Councillor Rosie Rawle
Councillor Ajaz Rehman
Councillor Jo Sandelson
Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Roz Smith
Councillor Dr Christopher Smowton
Councillor Imogen Thomas
Councillor Ed Turner
Councillor Louise Upton
Councillor Naomi Waite
Councillor Diko Walcott

Apologies will be reported at the meeting.

Agenda

The business to be transacted is set out below

		Pages
	PART 1 - PUBLIC BUSINESS	
1	**Apologies for absence**	
2	**Declarations of interest**	
3	**Minutes**	19 - 28
	Minutes of the ordinary meeting of Council held on 28 November 2022.	
	Council is asked to approve the minutes as a correct record.	
4	**Appointment to Committees**	
	Any proposed changes will be circulated with the briefing note or notified at the meeting.	
5	**Announcements**	
	Announcements by:	
	1. The Lord Mayor	
	2. The Sheriff	
	3. The Leader of the Council (who may with the permission of the Lord Mayor invite other councillors to make announcements)	
	4. The Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer	
6	**Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision at this meeting**	
	Public addresses and questions to the Leader or other Cabinet member received in accordance with Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution relating to matters for decision in Part 1 of this agenda.	
	Up to five minutes is available for each public address and up to three minutes for each question. Questions must be less than 200 words.	
	The request to speak accompanied by the full text of the address or question must be received by the Head of Law and Governance by 5.00 pm on Tuesday 24 January 2023.	

The briefing note will contain the text of addresses and questions submitted by the deadline, and written responses where available.

A total of 45 minutes is available for both public speaking items. Responses are included in this time.

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

7 Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27

29 - 110

The Executive Director (Communities and People) submitted a report to Cabinet on 14 December 2022 recommending that it is adopted as part of the Council's policy framework.

The Cabinet minutes dated 14 December 2022 are available at item 11a.

Councillors Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for Leisure & Parks, Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture and Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Health & Transport, will present the report and present Cabinet's recommendation.

Recommendation: Cabinet recommends that Council resolves to:

1. **Adopt** Oxford's Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27 as part of the Council's policy framework, including the following recommendations:

   (i) Agree and adopt the Thriving Communities Principles across the Council's work and encourage our partners to do the same;

   (ii) Explore opportunities to improve the inclusivity and sustainability of Oxford's community facilities, and review opportunities as they arise through business cases;

   (iii) Continue to integrate Council services and seek out opportunities to better align our work with partners agencies, including co-location.

OFFICER REPORTS

8 Flexible Working / Hybrid Working Policy

111 - 128

The Head of Business Improvement has submitted a report requesting Council approve the Hybrid Working Policy.

Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services will propose the recommendation.

Recommendation: That Council resolves to:

1. **To Approve** the Hybrid Working Policy.

9 Disciplinary Policy

129 - 170

The Head of Business Improvement has submitted a report asking Council to approve the Disciplinary Procedure.

Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services will propose the recommendation.

Recommendation: That Council resolves to:

1. **Agree** the Disciplinary Procedure and Guidance with immediate effect;
2. **Authorise** the Head of Business Improvement or their designated deputy to make revisions to the Disciplinary Procedure as required to correct any clerical errors or comply with changes to law;
3. **Authorise** the Head of Business Improvement or their designated deputy to make minor revisions to the Disciplinary Guidance to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.

10 Council and Committee meetings programme for May 2023 to May 2025

171 - 182

The Head of Law and Governance has submitted a report setting out a programme of Council, Committee and other meetings for the whole of 2023/24 and 2024/25 council years.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Brown will propose the recommendations.

Recommendation: that Council resolves to:

1. **Approve** the programme of Council, committee and other meetings from 01 May 2023 to 31 May 2025 attached at Appendix A;
2. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to this programme in the event that there is any decision by Council to change the committee structure or committee remits which impacts on the programme of meetings; and
3. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Law and Governance to set dates for additional training and briefing sessions for Members.

QUESTIONS

11 Questions on Cabinet minutes

This item has a time limit of 15 minutes.

Councillors may ask the Cabinet Members questions about matters in these minutes:

11a	**Draft Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 14 December 2022**	183 - 192

12 Questions on Notice from Members of Council

Questions on notice from councillors received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.11(b).

Questions on notice may be asked of the Lord Mayor, a Member of the Cabinet or a Chair of a Committee. One supplementary question may be asked at the meeting.

The full text of questions must have been received by the Head of Law and Governance by no later than 1.00pm on Wednesday 18 January 2023.

These, and written responses where available, will be published in the briefing note.

PART 2 - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND SCRUTINY

13 Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision at this Council meeting

This item will be taken at or shortly after 7.00pm

Public addresses and questions to the Leader or other Cabinet member received in accordance with Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution and not relating to matters for decision in Part 1 of this agenda.

Up to five minutes is available for each public address and up to three minutes for each question. Questions must be less than 200 words.

The request to speak accompanied by the full text of the address or question must be received by the Head of Law and Governance by 5.00 pm on Wednesday 24 January 2023.

The briefing note will contain the text of addresses and questions submitted by the deadline, and written responses where available.

A total of 45 minutes is available for both public speaking items. Responses are included in this limit.

14 Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions

14a Scrutiny Committee update report 193 - 196

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee has submitted a report which updates Council on the activities of scrutiny and the implementation of recommendations since the last meeting of Council.

Council is invited to comment on and note the report.

PART 3 - MOTIONS REPRESENTING THE CITY

15 Motions on notice 30 January 2023

This item has a time limit of 60 minutes.

Motions received by the Head of Law and Governance in accordance with the rules in Section 11 of the Constitution by the deadline of 1.00pm on Wednesday 18 January 2023 are listed below.

Cross party motions are taken first. Motions will then be taken in turn from the *Liberal Democrat Group, Green Group, Labour Group* in that order.

Substantive amendments to these motions must be sent by councillors to the Head of Law and Governance by no later than 10.00am on Friday 27 January 2023 so that they may be circulated with the briefing note.

Minor technical or limited wording amendments may be submitted during the meeting but must be written down and circulated.

Council is asked to consider the following motions:

a) Opposing Voter ID (proposed by Cllr Landell Mills, seconded by Cllr Smowton)

b) Fixing Oxford's Water (proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Muddiman)

c) End Tory Cost of Living Crisis (proposed by Cllr Aziz, seconded by Cllr Upton)

d) Use Park and Ride Parking Sites for Solar Farms (proposed by Cllr Fouweather, seconded by Cllr Miles)

e) Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming (proposed by Cllr Dunne, seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth)

15a Opposing Voter ID (proposed by Cllr Landell Mills, seconded by Cllr Smowton)

Liberal Democrat member motion

Voting at elections is the cornerstone of democracy at both local and national level.

Participation in elections should be encouraged in all those who are qualified regardless of age, ethnicity or income.

Unnecessary barriers to voting are likely to reduce voter participation in elections, proper representation of all parts of the community and so legitimacy of those elected to office.

Voter ID is a solution without a problem and as such insinuates barriers to voting which should be of great concern to anyone who supports an open and effective democratic system of government.

The specific details released at the end of 2022, showing that considerably more forms of ID will be accepted for older voters than for younger voters, is particularly concerning in that it risks disproportionately disenfranchising voters who tend not to support the current Government.

This Council therefore requests that the Leader should write to Minister for the Cabinet Office to convey:

- This council's opposition to mandatory voter ID.
- That the list of acceptable documentation should be reviewed at the earliest opportunity and its equalities impacts measured.
- That adequate funding for local advertising must be provided to minimise the risk of voter disenfranchisement due to unawareness of the new requirements.

15b Fixing Oxford's Water (proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Muddiman)

Green member motion

Council notes

1. On August 24, Thames Water introduced a hosepipe ban following the driest July on record.
2. Across England and Wales, 3 billion litres of water are lost to leaks in the water system every single day
3. According to analysis by the GMB union, Thames Water's infrastructure allows 635 million litres of water to leak out of the system every single day - equivalent to leaving a hosepipe on for 73 years. [1]
4. Failure to fix leaks has had a major impact on public infrastructure in Oxford - including the flooding of the Littlemore underpass for several weeks.
5. There has been a long delay in replacing the water pipe occupying the east bound cycle lane on Osney Bridge, which has endangered cyclists using Botley Road.

[1] https://www.gmb.org.uk/news/thames-waters-daily-waste-same-hosepipe-being-73-years

6. Between 2017 and 2021, Thames Water has accrued £32.4 million of fines over 11 separate incidents of water pollution - including a £4 million fine for sewage pumped into Oxford's waterways. [2]
7. Since privatisation in 1989, shareholders of water companies have pocketed over £72bn in dividends.[3] Thames Water paid out £392 million in profit to shareholders between 2013 and 2017. [4]

Council believes

1. Thames Water is currently failing to deliver an adequate public service, is failing to invest in infrastructure, and has caused extensive environmental damage - all while putting the burden of water saving onto residents.
2. Serious questions have been raised as to Thames Water's performance - questions to which the public need answers. More accountability for the company is therefore necessary.
3. Going forward, the country's illogical privatisation of water must be reversed. Water is a basic need, a natural monopoly and a vital public service. Privatisation provides all the wrong incentives for running a water supply, and it should be returned to public hands, with democratic oversight.

Council resolves

1. To request that the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks requests that Thames Water's CEO Sarah Bentley attend a meeting open to all Councillors to ask questions on the company's performance.
2. To request that the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks writes to the water regulator - Ofwat - expressing the concerns laid out in this motion and requesting action be taken to redress it.
3. To request that the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks writes to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Thérèse Coffey, and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Grant Shapps informing them of the Council's view that the country's water system should be taken into public ownership.
4. To lobby government ministers on an ongoing basis to tackle the issues raised in this motion, and for a publicly owned water system.

15c End Tory Cost of Living Crisis (proposed by Cllr Aziz, seconded by Cllr Upton)

<u>Labour member motion</u>

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thames-water-fined-4-million-after-30-hour-waterfall-of-sewage-discharge
[3] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/aug/15/uk-water-boss-bonuses-reservoirs-built-leaks-fixed
[4] https://weownit.org.uk/company/thames-water

The cost-of-living crisis is deepening poverty, inequalities and insecurity, amongst thousands of people, families, and communities across our city.

Twelve years of Tory austerity and brutal central government funding cuts to councils such as ours continues to have a catastrophic impact on services and community support for working people.

The Covid pandemic has also pushed many people into further hardship along with independent and small businesses finding it impossible to survive.

Under a Tory government of millionaires, food bank use across the country and in our own city has rocketed, with more and more people in full time employment also dependent on food banks and food projects across Oxford. And now this government is wielding more cuts to services.

The Tories have shown over the past twelve years they have no desire to improve the lives of working people across our city and country. They need to go, now.

As winter continues, many are left to wonder how they will feed their families, heat their homes, pay spiralling energy bills and pay their rent and mortgages. People are terrified of becoming destitute and homeless.

Oxford City Council is working with people and communities, organisations and partners across the city including advice centres, food banks and food networks, the NHS, and others to provide information and support across Oxford's diverse communities.

We are proud of the many ways community groups are working together to support people and thank everyone for their tireless work.

This council condemns this out of touch government for the harm and devastation it is causing people and communities daily.

We condemn the increases in inequalities and specifically racialised inequalities that the cost of living crisis is exacerbating, as outlined in the recent Runneymede Trust report.

We reject this government's failed economic and social policies that have seen an increase in child poverty in our city that is creating a deepening mental health crisis, as the recent Marmot report highlights.

We demand an end to further cuts to local government budgets and services across our city and reject the Tories desire to wield austerity 2.0 against our city.

We call on the government to ensure benefit payments rise in line with record breaking inflation, so that people have a chance to survive the economic chaos created by a government of multi-

millionaires and can make it through the winter.

We call on Universal Credit payments and Disability Cost of Living Payments to rise for everyone and for these payments not to be one off.

We call on the government to respect public sector workers' human rights to strike action and call on all workers to be paid wages enabling them to live lives of dignity and hope.

We call on the government to implement urgently the energy windfall tax and tax energy companies making huge profits while thousands of people across our city struggle to pay for gas and electricity.

15d Use Park and Ride Parking Sites for Solar Farms (proposed by Cllr Fouweather, seconded by Cllr Miles)

Liberal Democrat member motion

Oxford City Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' in 2019. Various initiatives have been proposed since then and the Council has been making progress in areas such as decarbonisation of Council owned social housing and leisure centres.

This proposal is to ask that the case for installing solar panels on the Park and Ride sites around Oxford is examined and a report prepared for Cabinet to consider at a future meeting.

A solar farm in this case would consist of solar panels mounted on a sufficiently high framework so that the majority of cars would be able to park underneath. An additional benefit would be that cars would be protected from both bad weather and overheating due to sunshine.

The French government has recently announced a plan to mandate that all car parks in France must have solar farms installed. The Bentley Car Company recently announced that they were installing a car park solar farm at their plant in Crewe which will cover 1378 spaces and generate 2.7 MW of power.

The benefit of this proposal is that it makes much more efficient use of available land – rather than using farmland in the Green Belt and demonstrates that the City Council is fully behind the push for Green Energy and Net Zero.

Taking the three City owned P+R sites (Peartree, Redbridge and Seacourt) together there are 3836 car spaces. This could generate at least 6MW of power – enough for 800–1000 average sized houses. If the other P+R sites (Thornhill and Water Eaton/Parkway) are included then this rises to over 9MW.

Therefore this Council requests that the Head of Corporate Strategy submits a report to Cabinet which:

1. Examines this proposal to assess its feasibility.
2. Explores alternative possibilities for funding the installation costs.
3. Considers the desirability or otherwise of the Council being the operator of the solar farm(s) and thus selling the electricity generated to energy companies.
4. Assesses the potential income stream to the Council from the solar farms once installed.
5. Reports on discussions with the relevant County Council officers about the possibility of the other P+R sites at Thornhill and Water Eaton being included in this scheme.

15e Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming (proposed by Cllr Dunne, seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth)

Labour member motion

Council notes that:

- The global scientific consensus is that humans have heated the climate at a rate that is unprecedented, and we are heading towards mass extinction not just for ourselves but of entire eco systems if we do not change our actions today.[5]
- Oxford City Council is committed to reducing its impact on the environment and to becoming carbon neutral by 2030.[6]
- We have a duty as leaders in the city to empower the local community to make changes that can mitigate climate catastrophe and help preserve the vitality of our planet for future generations.
- The UK's agriculture produces 10% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions and makes up 70% of land use. Modern agricultural practices are a central driver for habitat and biodiversity loss and the UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries.[7]
- In the UK we eat twice as much meat and dairy as the global average which is not sustainable as there is not enough land in the world to meet this demand without destroying our natural world.[8]
- Plant-based sources of protein have much smaller carbon

[5] https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/outreach/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Press_Conference_Slides.pdf

[6] https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1705/council_outlines_how_it_aims_to_become_a_zero_carbon_council_by_2030_at_the_latest

[7] https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/state-of-nature/state-of-nature-uk-report-2016.pdf

[8] https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/how-much-meat-should-i-be-eating/

footprints than animal-based ones, even when comparing locally raised meat to imported plant foods.

- Farm animals across Europe are producing more emissions than cars and vans combined.[9]
- Our relationship to food is still an overlooked factor to the climate crisis yet it is the quickest and cheapest step to help tackle the climate crisis if we reduce our meat intake.
- The necessary change to confront the climate crisis needs to tackle existing inequalities in society while acting urgently.
- To protect and enrich jobs in Oxford, we should work closely with local farmers and plant-based food organisations to move to more sustainable farming methods and local produce that promotes plant-based food.

Council agrees to:

- Request that the Cabinet Member for Health and Transport:
    - Works with local farmers to support, promote, and encourage their move to create more sustainable plant-based produce.
    - Recognises the benefit of sourcing food locally from producers who follow sustainable principles.
- Request that the Executive Director (Communities and People) submits a report to Cabinet with options to form a plant-based localised free food service by funding community groups who are already doing this work to transform Oxford into a more environmentally sustainable economy which will also tackle food poverty.
- Follow Oxfordshire County Council's lead by ensuring that food provided for internal councillor events are entirely plant-based and food provided at all council catered events and meetings include plant-based options, preferably using ingredients sourced from local food surplus organisations.[10]
- Call on Cabinet to request that the Council's Climate Action Plan be updated to state that all catering provided at Council events and functions from March 2023 will have plant-based options.
- Call on the Shareholder group to work with all Council run companies to encourage moving to having plant-based catering options by March 2023.

[9] https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/22/eu-farm-animals-produce-more-emissions-than-cars-and-vans-combined-greenpeace

[10] Oxford City Council stopped catering for council meetings a year ago so plant-based catering would be for the few remaining internal council events.

16 Matters exempt or part exempt from publication and exclusion of the public

If Council wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any aspects of the preceding agenda items it will be necessary for Council to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 specifying the grounds on which their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Section 15 of the Council's Constitution – sets out the conditions under which the public can be excluded from meetings of the Council)

16a Cowley Branch Line Local Funding for Full Business Case

197 - 218

Appendices 1 and 4 to this item include exempt information pursuant to Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. If Council wishes to discuss matters relating to the information set out in Appendices 1 and 4 to the report, it will be necessary for the Council to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting (as set out at agenda item 16).

The Executive Director (Development) submitted a report to Cabinet on 14 December 2022 seeking approval for the funding package and to enter into all necessary contracts to undertake the Approval in Principle design and Full Business Case and local connectivity studies for the reopening of the Cowley Branch Line to passengers. This includes the parameters for a financial contribution from Oxford City Council, including the ring-fencing of future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport, will present the report and present the Cabinet's recommendation.

Recommendation: Cabinet recommends that Council resolves to:

1. **Approve** a capital budget of £4.56m to deliver the next phase of the project made up of:
    - Up to £289,000 up front contribution from Oxford City Council from already-secured Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds;
    - Up to £3.5m of the costs to be funded by local landowners and then be reimbursed from CIL paid for any future developments by those landowners that gains planning consent after the date that contracts are entered

into;

- At least £771,000 from local landowners and Oxfordshire County Council as a non-repayable grant contribution;
- In the event that the submitted Levelling Up Fund 2 application seeking £4.0m is found to be successful in total or in part, the local funding arrangement described above would be reduced commensurately from one or more of the funding pots outlined above.

Updates and additional information to supplement this agenda are published in the Council Briefing Note.

Additional information, councillors' questions, public addresses and amendments to motions are published in a supplementary briefing note. The agenda and briefing note should be read together.

The Briefing Note is published as a supplement to the agenda. It is available on the Friday before the meeting and can be accessed along with the agenda on the council's website.

Information for those attending

Recording and reporting on meetings held in public

Members of public and press can record, or report in other ways, the parts of the meeting open to the public. You are not required to indicate in advance but it helps if you notify the Committee and Member Services Officer prior to the meeting so that they can inform the Chair and direct you to the best place to record.

The Council asks Councillors and members of the press and public recording the meeting:

- To follow the protocol which can be found on the Council's website
- Not to disturb or disrupt the meeting
- Not to edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes not editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being recorded.
- To avoid recording members of the public present, even inadvertently, unless they are addressing the meeting.

Please be aware that you may be recorded during your speech and any follow-up. If you are attending please be aware that recordings may take place and that you may be inadvertently included in these.

The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any activities that in his or her opinion are disruptive.

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 (ie 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.

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". The matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

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.

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.

You must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room, if you answer in the affirmative to this test:

> "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 may stay in the room, take part in the discussion and vote.

*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.

** 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: 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.

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Minutes of a meeting of Council on Monday 28 November 2022

www.oxford.gov.uk
OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

Council members present:

Councillor Fry (Lord Mayor)
Councillor Rowley (Sheriff)
Councillor Arshad
Councillor Bely-Summers
Councillor Chapman
Councillor Corais
Councillor Diggins
Councillor Dunne
Councillor Gant
Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Jarvis
Councillor Latif
Councillor Morris
Councillor Mundy
Councillor Nala-Hartley
Councillor Pressel
Councillor Rawle
Councillor Sandelson
Councillor Roz Smith
Councillor Turner
Councillor Waite
Councillor Lygo (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Altaf-Khan
Councillor Aziz
Councillor Brown
Councillor Clarkson
Councillor Coyne
Councillor Djafari-Marbini
Councillor Fouweather
Councillor Goddard
Councillor Hunt
Councillor Kerr
Councillor Miles
Councillor Muddiman
Councillor Munkonge
Councillor Pegg
Councillor Railton
Councillor Rehman
Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Smowton
Councillor Upton
Councillor Walcott

Also present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer and Head of Law & Governance
Alice Courtney, Committee and Member Services Manager (Interim Acting)

Celeste Reyeslao, Committee and Member Services Officer

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Hall, Hayes, Humberstone, Landell Mills, Malik and Thomas sent apologies.

The minutes show when Councillors who were absent for part of the meeting arrived and left.

48. Declarations of interest

Item 15a) Motion: Bus Fares

Cllr Gant: stated that, after considering advice from the Monitoring Officer, he would not take part in the item relating to Bus Fares and indicated that he would leave the room during the consideration of that item.

Cllr Lygo: stated that he would not take part in the item relating to Bus Fares; he made the declaration on the basis of public perception and indicated that he would leave the room during the consideration of that item.

Item 12: Questions on Notice from Members of Council (CM3: City Allotments)

Cllr Hollingsworth: stated that he was the chair of the Cripley Meadow Allotment Association; he made the declaration for reasons of transparency; it was not a pecuniary interest and Cllr Hollingsworth was not required to leave the room during consideration of that item.

Cllr Clarkson joined the meeting.

49. Minutes

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 03 October 2022 as a true and correct record.

50. Appointment to Committees

Council agreed to appoint with immediate effect:

- Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Railton to stand down and Councillor Hunt to replace her.
- Standards Committee – Councillor Diggins to stand down and Councillor Rehman to replace her.
- Audit and Governance Committee – Councillor Munkonge to stand down and Councillor Railton to replace him.

51. Announcements

The Lord Mayor gave thanks to councillors who attended the Remembrance Sunday Service and highlighted his appreciation for the performance by the bag piper. On attending the celebration of St Clement's Church 900th anniversary, he commented on the many charitable works, funded by the Dawson Family Trust, which helped to provide accommodation for the winter night shelter in St Clement's.

The Lord Mayor advised Council of upcoming Christmas events including the *Lord Mayor's & Councillors Christmas Reception* on the 12th of December 2022 and the *Lord Mayor's Christmas Carol Concert* on the 18th of December 2022, and encouraged councillors to attend.

The City Rector addressed Council on the season of advent and the concept of waiting well. He gave thanks to the Council and the City Council Staff for their work on the determination of the venues for the winter night shelter which would help house the City's homeless guests. He highlighted the anniversary of the birthday of William Blake and shared two of his quotes.

The Sheriff was pleased to have attended the opening of the City of Oxford College's new technology campus in Blackbird Leys, which brought higher education to the area for the first time. He advised Council that he met students of the campus who were dedicated to their work. He also advised that he had the duty and the pleasure to admit fourteen people to the Freedom of the City alongside the Lord Mayor, some of whom had been waiting for two years due to the cancellation of public events during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Leader of the Council advised Council of a potential special meeting of Council immediately prior to the next Council meeting in January 2023, in order to make some Freedoms of the City. She asked councillors to update their diaries and advised that further announcements would be made in due course. She added that the meeting in January would fulfil the formal process required and a more celebratory event would follow in March 2023.

52. Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision at this meeting

There were no addresses or questions.

53. UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan

Council considered the report from the Head of Regeneration and Economy seeking endorsement of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan, allocation of budget and delegated authority to enter contract with Government for delivery of the plan on behalf of Oxford City Council.

Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships introduced the report and proposed the recommendation.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Establish** Capital and Revenue budgets in accordance with paragraph 21 of the report.

54. Award of a Works Contract for the Refurbishment of the Gas Works Pipe Bridge

Council considered the report from the Executive Director (Development) seeking approval for a works contract to refurbish/repair the Gasworks Pipe Bridge situated between Friars Wharf and Baltic Wharf; authority for the Executive Director (Development) to award a contract; and approval of the spend of identified funds for the funding of the contract.

Cllr Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** a virement of £1.82 million from the existing stock condition budget to fund the works to the gasworks pipe bridge, including reimbursement of £185k feasibility cost incurred to date.

55. Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Bid Approval

Council considered a report from the Head of Corporate Strategy seeking approval of Oxford City Council's submission of a bid to Government under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund 2.1 bidding round seeking funding towards a retrofit programme for around 300 council homes.

Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **If the bid is successful, grant approval** for the release of up to £6.050 million of HRA capital funding required for match funding under the terms of the SHDF

2.1 scheme in accordance with the estimated spend profile in paragraph 24 of the report.

56. Decisions taken under Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution

Council received a report from the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) asking Council to note the decision taken by the Head of Paid Service using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution.

Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management and put to the vote.

Council noted the decision taken as set out in the report.

Cllr Latif joined the meeting.

57. Questions on Cabinet minutes

a) Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 19 October 2022

Minute 70 – Botley Road Retail Park Development Brief

In response to a question from Cllr Fouweather, Cllr Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery advised that the Environment Agency said that the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS) would not change the boundaries of the various flood zones in Oxford. He explained that it would lessen the risk of flood in areas that are protected within the site, however most of the site would be within a 3b flood plain. He added that a 3b flood plain was defined in the NPPF as undevelopable for housing and the Environment Agency had not indicated that the flood plain boundaries would change, but it was of the view that the OFAS would reduce the likelihood of flood.

Minute 71 - Draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28

In response to a question from Cllr Roz Smith, Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing stated that the consultation on the strategy was now live and accessible online.

b) Draft Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 16 November 2022

Minute 85 – West End and Osney Mead Supplementary Planning Document

In response to questions from Cllr Smowton, Cllr Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery emphasised that the SPD illustrated additional details to existing plan policies and did not create new plan policies for new bridges. He stated that the bridge from the Oxpens site to Osney Mead on the SPD was the bridge in the Local Plan.

Minute 84 – Housing Infrastructure Funding for Osney Mead Revised Implementation Arrangements

In response to a question from Cllr Smowton, Cllr Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery advised that the report stated the money was being reallocated to use on the bridge with future packages of money to fund the path work.

58. Questions on Notice from Members of Council

Cllr Sandelson joined the meeting.

48 written questions were asked of the Cabinet Members and the Leader, and these and written responses were published before the meeting.

These along with summaries of the 17 supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting are set out in the minutes pack.

Council agreed to consider item 14 next on the agenda before the 30min break and then return to the agenda as listed.

59. Outside Organisation/Committee Chair Reports and Questions

a) Scrutiny Update Report

Council had before it the report of the Scrutiny Committee Chair.

Cllr Smowton, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and provided updates on the recent activities of Scrutiny since the last meeting of Council. He advised that the new Climate and Environment Panel would meet in the near future and gave thanks to Panel Members, and Cllr Pegg, who came forth with the idea.

The recommendations were agreed on being seconded by Cllr Diggins and put to the vote.

Council noted the report.

The meeting broke for 30 min at the conclusion of this item.

60. Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision at this Council meeting

Council heard one question and Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships provided a verbal response.

The question and response are set out in full in the minutes pack.

1. Address by Linda Newbury – Plant-based food and sustainable farming motion

The Lord Mayor thanked the speaker for their contribution.

61. Motions on notice 30 November 2022

Cllr Djafari-Marbini joined the meeting.

Council had before it six motions on notice submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules and reached decisions as set out below.

Motions agreed as set out below:

a) Bus Fares, as amended (proposer Cllr Hollingsworth, seconder Cllr Upton, amendment proposer Cllr Smowton, seconder Cllr Fouweather)

b) Campsfield House (proposer Cllr Gant, seconder Cllr Rawle, amendment proposer Cllr Dunne, seconder Cllr Djafari-Marbini)

Motions not taken as the time allocated for debate had finished:

c) Fixing Oxford's Water (proposer Cllr Jarvis, seconder Cllr Bely-Summers)

d) End Tory Cost of Living Crisis (proposer Cllr Aziz, seconder Cllr Upton)

e) Support Small Business Saturday on December 3rd (proposer Cllr Fouweather, seconder Cllr R Smith, amendment proposer Cllr Brown, seconder Cllr Rehman)

f) Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming (proposer Cllr Dunne, seconder Cllr Hollingsworth)

a) Bus Fares (proposed by Cllr Hollingsworth)

Cllrs Gant and Lygo left the meeting, having declared an interest in this item.

Cllr Hollingsworth, seconded by Cllr Upton, proposed the submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note.

Cllr Smowton, seconded by Cllr Fouweather, proposed the amendment as set out in the briefing note.

Council debated the motion and amendment. Following debate, Cllr Hollingsworth accepted the amendment put forward by Cllr Smowton. On being put to the vote, the amendment was agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

This Council recognises the vital importance of affordable, reliable and high quality public transport to the functioning of our city. We therefore strongly welcome the recent IPPR research on public transport, published on 6th October 2022 under the title ***"To support low-income households, it's time to reduce the cost of daily bus travel"***.

This Council agrees with the IPPR report when it makes clear that reducing fares is not the ONLY thing needed to increase bus patronage – interventions to improve speed, reliability and the experience of passengers are all required as well.

However this Council agrees strongly that reductions in the costs of public transport for passengers are essential for a fair transport system.

Low income households are the most likely to use buses, while research by the RAC Foundation shows that since 2013 the cost of bus travel has risen by a greater extent than all other forms of transport. It is the poorest households, without access to other

forms of travel, that have borne the brunt of these increases driven by de-regulation and lack of long-term funding.

Any reduction in bus fares would therefore be of the greatest benefit to those least well off. Capping bus fares at no more than £1 per day would save the poorest 20% of households in England £0.8bn a year. Making all bus fares in England free would save the poorest 40% of households £1.5bn a year.

This Council notes that a policy of making bus fares in England entirely free would cost £2.3bn a year, with the greatest benefits going to the least well off. For comparison, the recent 'fiscal event' proposed £40bn worth of tax cuts, mostly to the most well off. The current proposed Government funding for new roads is £27bn, for schemes that are likely to increase pollution and make the climate and biodiversity crises worse. For the same money, bus travel could be made free for at least ten years, helping to reduce car journeys and making progress towards a net zero transport system.

This Council further notes the Fair Deal Alliance's progress in improving bus travel in the County, including delivering reduced Park and Ride fares, £1 fares for 18s and under, and decarbonising our bus fleet via the ZEBRA programme.

- The Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Transport, the Shadow Secretary State for Transport, Oxford's two MPs and to the Leader of the County Council expressing this Council's support for making public transport in Oxford free of charge

- The Council's Cabinet Members and officers, through their existing partnerships and relationships with the County Council and bus operators, work to promote and deliver this objective.

References/links

https://www.ippr.org/blog/time-to-reduce-the-cost-of-daily-bus-travel

https://www.racfoundation.org/data/cost-of-transport-index

b) Campsfield House (proposed by Cllr Gant, seconded by Cllr Rawle)

Cllrs Gant and Lygo re-joined the meeting.

Cllr Gant, seconded by Cllr Rawle, proposed the submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note and immediately changed the motion without notice to reflect the amendment submitted by Cllr Dunne, as set out in the briefing note. The change was seconded by Cllr Rawle and agreed by Council, in accordance with Oxford City Council's Constitution Part 11.20(h).

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

The Home Office announcement of its intention to reopen Campsfield House Immigration Detention Centre in Kidlington ignores local and national feeling on the treatment of refugees. It's also a cruel, ineffective, and costly backwards step for this government, for our country and for the people of Kidlington, Yarnton and Begbroke.

In the years before its closure in 2018, Campsfield House was used to detain nearly 30,000 migrants. During that time there were weekly demonstrations, protests, hunger strikes, two suicides, escapes and scores of legal challenges. It was finally closed following a damning inquiry into conditions.

The UK is ranked 20th in terms of asylum applications processed, and 19th for applications accepted. Two thirds of UK asylum seekers' claims are turned down, the highest refusal rate in Europe, with 41% of those decisions overturned on appeal.

Instead of criminalising people fleeing war, oppression and persecution, who have already suffered at the hands of people traffickers, the government should focus on achieving its own targets to deal with asylum claims promptly and fairly.

For decades, the Campaign to Close Campsfield[1], the people of Oxford, and this council[2] have fought tirelessly to amplify the voices of asylum seekers and end the misery and injustice of immigration detention.

This Council is proud and committed to being a City of Sanctuary welcoming Afghans, Syrians, Ukrainians and all those fleeing war in recent times.

This council is currently supporting partner organisations such as Asylum Welcome[3] to care for recently arrived asylum seekers locally providing the humanity and dignity not provided to them by the faceless Home Office.

This Council therefore condemns the re-opening of Campsfield House and asks the Leader to write to the Home Secretary calling for:

- The cancellation of the reopening of Campsfield House as a detention centre.
- The creation of safe havens and more legal routes to apply for asylum in the UK.
- The prioritisation of prompt and fair processing of asylum claims whilst introducing appropriate safeguards to allow asylum seekers to live and work in our communities in the meantime.

c) Fixing Oxford's Water (proposed by Cllr Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Bely-Summers)

This motion was not taken as the time allocated for debate had finished.

d) End Tory Cost of Living Crisis (proposed by Cllr Aziz, seconded by Cllr Upton)

This motion was not taken as the time allocated for debate had finished.

e) Support Small Business Saturday on December 3rd (proposed by Cllr Fouweather, seconded by Cllr R Smith)

This motion was not taken as the time allocated for debate had finished.

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[1] Close Campsfield | The weblog of the Campaign to Close Campsfield (wordpress.com)
[2] Statement on Government plans to reopen Campsfield House Immigration Detention Centre | Oxford City Council
[3] https://www.asylum-welcome.org/

f) Plant Based Food and Sustainable Farming (proposed by Cllr Dunne, seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth)

This motion was not taken as the time allocated for debate had finished.

62. Matters exempt or part exempt from publication and exclusion of the public

Council passed a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and the public from the remaining item of business on the grounds that their presence would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

a) Appointment of a Contractor for the Oxpens River Bridge

Council considered a report from the Executive Director (Development) seeking approval to enter into a legal agreement with Oxfordshire County Council to enable the completion of the Oxpens River Bridge, as set out within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal; to fund and enter into a construction contract to build the Oxpens River bridge, subject to agreement with Oxfordshire County Council; and to enter into an agreement with OxWED (which owns some of the land on which the bridge will be situated) to facilitate the construction of the bridge.

Cllr Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** the establishment of an additional capital budget of £2.8 million in 2022/23 and 2023/24 funded from additional growth bid monies.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.27 pm

Lord Mayor …….. **Date: Monday 30 January 2023**

Decisions on items of business take effect immediately:

Motions may be implemented immediately or may require further budget provision and/or reports to Cabinet before implementation.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.

To:	**Cabinet**
Date:	**14 December 2022**
Report of:	**Executive Director (Communities and People)**
Title of Report:	**Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-2027**

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present the Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-2027 and to recommend that it is adopted as part of the Council's policy framework.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Members:	Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Cabinet Member for Leisure & Parks Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities & Culture Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Health & Transport
Corporate Priority:	Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Thriving Communities Strategy

Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:

1. **Recommend to Council** to adopt Oxford's Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27 as part of the Council's policy framework, including the following recommendations:
   (i) agree and adopt the Thriving Communities Principles across the Council's work and encourage our partners to do the same;
   (ii) explore opportunities to improve the inclusivity and sustainability of Oxford's community facilities, and review opportunities as they arise through business cases;
   (iii) continue to integrate Council services and seek out opportunities to better align our work with partner agencies, including co-location.
2. **Agree** that an annual progress update should be produced for Cabinet and that the action plan should be regularly reviewed based on new data and insights such as the census.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	The Thriving Communities Strategy
Appendix 2	The City Conversation report
Appendix 3	Thriving Communities Strategy Risk Assessment
Appendix 4	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 5	An easy-read version of the strategy

Introduction and background

1. Oxford's Thriving Communities Strategy brings together leisure, culture, and our work with communities to tackle inequalities. We will do this by encouraging well-designed neighbourhoods and parks where healthy lifestyles are the norm (sometimes called healthy place-shaping) developing skills, ensuring growth is inclusive, strengthening communities and improving access.
2. This strategy sets us on a journey to *build back fairer*, to work *with our inspirational* communities and collaborate with partners so that everyone in Oxford can access leisure, culture and community opportunities. COVID-19, and now the cost-of-living crisis, have exposed further inequalities, which are on a trajectory to get worse without a concerted effort.
3. Like most councils, our budgets are under immense pressure, we have seen a £7m reduction in funding because of austerity measures. While the Council will do all it can to protect public services, we will need to find new ways of doing things and take tough choices to balance our budget.
4. The strategy is ambitious and is focused on creating a shared purpose, it is also realistic and looks to make better use of the resources we have, ensuring our investments have the greatest possible impact, and that our work is based on insight.
5. Our strategy is purposefully high-level, demonstrating how we will work using our Thriving Communities Principles and it outlines the main activities we will be undertaking.

Design

6. The Strategy brings together four outdated strategies that had overlapping outcomes (leisure, culture, community centres and our children and young persons' strategy) and uses a simple 4Ps framework to better align this work:

   - **People** – implementing our Thriving Communities principles – e.g. doing things with people not to them, and building on what works well
   - **Pride** – celebrating diverse cultural heritage, encouraging trust and belonging and ensuring inclusivity
   - **Place** – inclusive spaces and places
   - **Progress** –a range of ways to demonstrate the impact of our work and continually learn.

The scale of the challenge

7. Oxford is the second most unequal city in the UK. Ten out of Oxford's 83 neighbourhoods are amongst the 20% most deprived in England[1]. 22% of adults have no or low educational qualifications[2]. The cost of living is rising faster than wages, with inflation at its highest level in 40 years. Average house prices in Oxford are over £500,000[3] which is 17.3 times average earnings. After housing costs, one in four children lives below the poverty line; this rises to 36% in Blackbird Leys.

Developing the strategy

8. We started work on the strategy pre-COVID with a fantastic group of partners, this work included a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review, which provided helpful insights.

9. At the start of the year, we undertook a series of workshops to create a discussion paper which was used over the 10-week Thriving Communities City Conversation where we have spoken to hundreds of partners, community groups and residents. The City Conversation took place at three levels:

   i) Discussion at high-level strategic meetings.
   ii) Partner forums, two online and one in person at Rose Hill Community Centre, over 200 partners took part in these conversations.
   iii) Community conversations - with individuals and community groups, they included conversations with young people through our Youth Ambition sessions and Asylum Welcome facilitated a conversation with refugees.

10. Positive feedback has been received about our approach, with people saying they valued having the time to discuss real issues that would then help to shape the strategy.

11. The Council's Business Intelligence Unit (BIU) which has been developed to help pull data sets into meaningful insight wrote a report to share the key points from the City Conversation. The full report is included in Appendix 2.

12. This strategy is based on these insights, it recognises the need to be flexible, to treat people as individuals and to shape our approach so it helps local people find local solutions to what matters to them.

13. All of the actions in the strategy will be tracked through our internal action plan. Some of the actions are straightforward to monitor such as the delivery of projects, while others are complex and require more data and a learning approach to be taken to better understand our impact. We will bring an annual report to Cabinet to demonstrate the progress we are making.

The key themes

14. Our leisure centre contract expires in 2024, which provides an opportunity for these facilities to better meet changing community needs. We will explore with partners, such as Oxfordshire County Council public health and the NHS how Oxford's leisure centres, especially those in areas of significant health inequalities can play a greater role in tackling health inequalities.

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[1] The English Indices of Deprivation (2019)
[2] Census (2011)
[3] Centre for Cities (2019)

15. We will complete our investments in Bullingdon, East Oxford and Blackbird Leys Community Centres creating fantastic facilities. We will continue to seek out opportunities to join up our community facilities, and better connect them with the wider environment to create sustainable spaces for communities. Our preferred approach remains that where possible we want communities to manage community assets. We want our community facilities to be accessible and well-governed with a diverse and representative group of trustees, staff and volunteers.

16. To make sure we don't lose the learning from the pandemic, we have implemented new locality structures with teams from across the Council, working more collaboratively with Oxford's communities. Increasingly, we will look to align our work with partners, generating shared insights and co-creating better services for our residents.

17. We have developed our Thriving Communities Principles, and while these are not set in stone, they show how we will work with communities, collaborating and building on what's strong:

- **Doing with, not to**
- **Building on what's strong, not what's wrong**
- **Collaboration**
- **Always learn**
- We will use **clear language that reinforces our values**
- Use **meaningful ways to measure** and demonstrate the impact of our work.

18. These principles form an important part of the Council's Operating Model, they show how we will work with communities on what matters to them. Demand for many council services continues to increase, and our financial support from the government continues to reduce which places a real strain on the Council's capacity. Embedding the Thriving Communities Principles will help us target our resources where they will have the greatest impact, reduce the demand for our services, and play our role in helping Oxford's communities to thrive.

Financial implications

19. The strategy is focused on using the resources we have to maximise the impact of available budgets. Where investment is needed, business cases will be developed to be considered as part of the budget process. Alternative funding options will be sought such as the Community Impact Levy which is paid towards community infrastructure to mitigate the impact of developments.

Legal issues

20. Legal considerations are reviewed separately for each part of the strategy.

Level of risk

21. All of the projects referred to in the strategy have risk assessments, appendix three shows the risks around the delivery of the strategy.

Equalities impact

22. The equality impacts have been considered from the onset and at every stage of the development of the strategy, the Equalities Impact Assessment is shown in Appendix 4.

23. A series of four Thriving Communities Videos is being produced to make the strategy as accessible as possible to a wider audience. Once the strategy has been approved by Cabinet we will have it desktop published and include the links to the videos within the

strategy, alongside adding the videos to the council's website as part of our promotion campaign. We have also created an easy-read version of the strategy that is shown in Appendix 5.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

24. There are three main strands within the strategy for carbon and environmental considerations. These are:

1) The development of community facilities such as East Oxford Community Centre, reducing carbon emissions is a primary benefit of these redevelopment projects;

2) Improving the way our community facilities are operated and managed, £13 million has been invested in reducing the carbon impact of leisure centres over the past year;

3) Working with residents to create the behaviour change that is needed to reduce the carbon impact of how we live our lives.

Report author	Ian Brooke
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Background Papers: None

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Appendix 1

DRAFT
THRIVING COMMUNITIES STRATEGY 2023-2027

1st December 2022

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Foreword

This strategy has been written following our Thriving Communities City Conversation where we have heard from hundreds of people – I'd like to start by thanking so many people for giving us their time and working with us to deliver our shared ambitions. Communities across the city are facing new and deepening hardships from the cost of living crisis. We have written this strategy to ensure fairness and to build on the sense of community and care that so many people have shown over recent years.

The Michael Marmot report, Build Back Fairer, shows the scale of the challenge we face and why we need a new approach. Soaring inflation and the cost of living crisis are making this even more important. As the UK emerges from the pandemic (and crashes into a cost of living crisis) it would be a tragic mistake to go back to the normality that existed before.

For thousands of people there has never been a 'normality', more than ten years of austerity has devastated communities and meant more and more people were struggling to survive. The pandemic and now the cost of living crisis has made things harder for many people, as the services and safety nets communities depended on have been cut or severely impacted by a lack of central government funding.

There is an urgent need to do things differently: to build a society based on the principles of social justice, racial justice, gender justice and climate justice; to reduce inequalities of income and wealth; to build a society that responds to the climate crisis while achieving greater health equity. In Oxford we are setting out how we will do this. We urgently need a government strategy that aims to build an economy centred on the achievement of health, wellbeing and sustainable futures, rather than narrow economic goals. Our aim is to help strengthen communities and focus our resources where they are most needed, in the face of huge funding cuts to local government since 2010.

We will adapt to local circumstances, at times connecting people, others times facilitating, signposting or commissioning. This way of working requires an approach where we build trust and seek to understand people's lived experience, adapting our support to best meet individual needs. It also requires culture change inside the council and changing how we work.

We will increasingly work with community groups and partners, seeking out new relationships with people who want to make a difference. We will look for opportunities to build relationships with underrepresented groups and where the greatest inequalities exist. We know we can achieve better outcomes by involving more people and ensuring representation of diversity in our teams. We also know that language really matters. We will ensure our language is easy to understand and inclusive. We have also produced an easy-read version of this strategy and made some accompanying short videos.

This way of working is aligned with our wider goals and aims, and our Council Strategy. Thriving Communities is one of the four interconnected areas of our Council Strategy, alongside our commitment to tackling climate change, building an inclusive economy and affordable housing. We have just completed a £13 million leisure centre decarbonisation programme making innovative improvements to Oxford's leisure centres. We aim to support the delivery of our plan with Oxfordshire County Council's wider strategic ambitions laid out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Children and Young People's Plan, and those of our colleagues working in Oxfordshire County Council Public Health.

I have created a short video to summarise why this work is so important and want to thank people for their incredible work across our inspirational, but unacceptably unequal city.

Nb – a video link will be added here when the strategy is desktop published after it is approved by Cabinet.

Councillor Shaista Aziz
Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities & Culture

1. Executive summary

Oxford's Thriving Communities Strategy brings together leisure, culture, and our work with communities to tackle inequalities. We will do this by encouraging well-designed neighbourhoods and parks where healthy lifestyles are the norm (sometimes called healthy place shaping) developing skills, ensuring growth is inclusive, strengthening communities and improving access.

The gap between the poorest and richest in our society continues to grow, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer – austerity, the pandemic and the cost of living crisis hurt those with the least the most. These inequalities are detailed in Oxfordshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which provides information about the county's population and the factors affecting health, wellbeing, and social care needs. Our ability to tackle inequalities is also being compromised by continued recruitment challenges in industries such as leisure and rising energy costs which are placing significant strain on service delivery.

Leisure, culture, and community services provide the most accessible, inclusive and cost-effective solutions for prevention and rehabilitation, and positively impact in many other ways, including health and wellbeing, educational attainment, employment, economic productivity, crime reduction, loneliness and engaging disadvantaged communities. This strategy is about connectivity and collaboration – ensuring we effectively join up our efforts to help create a more equal city. The strategy shows how things connect and where possible we have used shared outcomes such as our ambition that every child can learn to swim.

Our leisure centre contract expires in 2024, which provides an opportunity for these facilities to better meet changing community needs. We have been investing in our community facilities to ensure they provide modern, flexible spaces that are fit for purpose, carbon-friendly and long-term sustainable spaces. This investment includes developments at Rose Hill, Barton, Bullingdon and East Oxford Community Centres, with work planned at Blackbird Leys Community Centre, we have also invested in the Museum of Oxford. We want our community facilities to be accessible and well-governed with a diverse and representative group of trustees, staff and volunteers.

To make sure we don't lose learnings from the pandemic, we have implemented new locality structures with teams from across the Council working more collaboratively with Oxford's communities. Increasingly, we will align our work with partners, generating shared insights and co-creating better services for residents. We have developed our Thriving Communities Principles, and while these are not set in stone, they show how we will work with communities, collaborating, and building on what's strong.

2.Introduction

This strategy sets out how we aim to work with partners and our diverse communities to build back fairer and create thriving communities.

To create thriving communities, we want everyone to have the best chance of good physical and mental health at all stages of life. This means promoting good health and social connections, valuing difference and being active in volunteering. We need to work together to ensure everyone in Oxford can access leisure, culture and community opportunities.

This strategy aims to create a shared purpose for the Council, partners and communities, making the most of the resources we have, ensuring our investments have the greatest possible impact, and that our work is based on insight. Our approach is centred on local people - redirecting wealth back into local communities and placing the control of the benefits into the hands of local people; this is often called Community Wealth Building.

COVID-19, and the ongoing cost of living crisis, have increased inequalities, which are expected to get worse unless we start taking action now. Like most councils, our budgets are under immense pressure: we have seen a £7 million reduction in funding because of austerity measures. While we will do all we can to protect services for the most vulnerable, we will have tough choices to stay in budget and need to change how we work.

Oxford's inequality in data -

- Oxford is the UK's second most unequal city[1].
- Ten out of Oxford's 83 neighbourhoods are amongst the 20% most deprived in England[2].
- 22% of adults have no or low educational qualifications[3].
- Average house prices in Oxford are 17.3 times average earnings at over £500,000[4].
- One in four of children lives below the poverty line (after housing costs), rising to 36% of children in Blackbird Leys.
- Life expectancy is much shorter in Oxford's most deprived areas - 13.8 years for men and 11.2 for women.

[1] Gini co-efficient

[2] The English Indices of Deprivation (2019)

[3] Census (2011)

[4] Centre for Cities (2019)

We cannot tackle these deeply ingrained inequalities unless we take a whole system approach, not just to health but to living in our city. This strategy is focused on prevention and addressing the root causes of issues that create poor opportunities and experiences.

**"We need to stop just pulling people out of the river.
We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."**

– Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Ethnicity and poverty are linked, with all the associated issues for health, education, employment and life chances. The Runnymede Trust, a leading UK race equality thinktank, has published a report on how the UK cost of living crisis will disproportionately affect minority ethnic communities. Black and minority ethnic people are currently 2.5 times more likely to be in poverty than white people and black and other minority ethnic groups are more likely to live in Oxford's most deprived neighbourhoods.

We are developing new structures so our teams can work more collaboratively in Oxford's neighbourhoods. Our vision is to *place residents at the heart of service delivery; focusing on prevention and meeting residents' needs including those who are in crisis or need our help the most. Maximising people and place potential, reducing inequalities, benefiting from digital engagement, and facilitating solutions to deliver meaningful and tangible outcomes.* We will increasingly align our work with partners, creating shared insights and more joined-up solutions.

This strategy brings together four outdated strategies (Leisure, Culture, Community Centres and our Strategy for Children and Young People) that had overlapping outcomes and uses a simple 4Ps framework:

- **People** – implementing our Thriving Communities Principles (section 7) – e.g. doing things with people not to them, and building on what works well
- **Pride** – celebrating diverse cultural heritage, encouraging trust and belonging and ensuring inclusivity
- **Place** – inclusive spaces and places
- **Progress** –using a range of ways to demonstrate the impact of our work and continually learn.

This strategy sits alongside the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Oxford's Economic Strategy, and the Net Zero Oxford Action Plan as a cornerstone of the Council's strategic framework. It has been developed in a rapidly changing environment, with fundamental changes in the way we live our lives.

Health is intrinsically linked to inequality, but better societal factors can make a significant difference to good health. The February 2021 Health and Social Care White Paper shows the need for a more integrated

system, with one in three patients admitted to hospital as an emergency now having five or more health conditions, up from one in ten a decade ago.

One of the clearest examples of how crises like the pandemic, and now the cost of living, increase inequality is seen in research on the social gradient of health. This shows that the lower one's social and economic status, the poorer one's health is likely to be. The importance of these social determinants of health is highlighted below in a quote by Duncan Selbie, former Chief Executive of Public Health England.

"A decent job, a good home and friends are more important to good health than the NHS".

Working differently creates an opportunity to integrate our services, such as leisure and culture, with partners like the NHS to develop a preventative, person-centred, long-term approach. Our contract for leisure services expires in 2024, so we now have a window of opportunity to reimagine how Oxford's leisure centres could play a more substantial role in tackling health inequalities that is more integrated with work by health and Oxfordshire County Council public health providers. The recently produced *Fit for the Future: the role of district councils in improving health and wellbeing* makes a strong case for integrating council-run leisure and wellbeing services into the health system.

3.How we developed the strategy

We started work on the strategy pre-COVID, supported by a fantastic group of partners, and undertook a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review which provided helpful insights. We paused the work during the pandemic to focus on emergency support.

Restarting in 2022, we ran a series of workshops to create a discussion paper which was used over a 10-week Thriving Communities City Conversation. We spoke to hundreds of partners, community groups and residents. Feedback on this approach has been very positive, with people valuing the opportunity to discuss real issues that would then help to shape the strategy.

The Census provides invaluable insight into the social and demographic changes that have occurred over the last decade. Census 2021 data is now gradually being released and is an important source of data to better understand the characteristics of our local communities including deprivation and inequalities as well as how those communities may be changing over time and if there are new, emerging communities in our city. Already we know our population has grown by 6.7% over the past 10 years to 162,100 and that our city is increasingly diverse with population growth in most of our minority ethnic communities during this period.

Alongside consultation and community conversations, this information will help our understanding of our communities.

We know it is important to take a *whole system approach* - looking at how the bigger picture connects - and that equality, diversity, inclusivity and a sense of belonging need to be at the heart of the strategy. Oxford City Council's Thriving Communities Strategy dovetails with Oxfordshire County Council's public health work and Children's Services; and of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System partners (BOB ICS).

Nb – the desktop published version will include video two here to explain a whole system approach

Based on these insights, this strategy recognises the need to be flexible, to treat people as individuals and to shape our approach so it helps local people find local solutions to their priority issues.

4. Thriving Communities insights

Below are some illustrative insights about Oxford and the leisure and cultural opportunities it currently offers to residents.

Society

- There is a strong correlation between deprivation and physical inactivity. Most deprived areas in Oxford have low physical activity rates and high rates of obesity which contributes to lower life expectancy. Areas in Barton, Blackbird Leys, Greater Leys, Littlemore and Rose Hill have the lowest proportion of active adults in the City.
- There is a strong link between deprivation and a preference for exercising in leisure centres over exercising in informal settings such as parks, or at home. The more deprived the area the more likely it is that people will prefer exercising in leisure centres.
- Oxford has become more digitally competent since COVID-19 forced businesses and individuals to quickly adapt and residents of Oxford are less likely to be digitally excluded than the national average. However, research also shows that the negative impacts of remaining offline have become more acute as an increasing number of services and support networks become digital-only. Furthermore data at a more granular level shows that digital exclusion, including the cost of data and devices, is more likely to affects deprived areas in the southern neighbourhoods; and certain groups such as older residents, residents with a disability and some minority ethnic groups are less likely to use digital communication channels.
- Communities are staying more local and discovering what's on their doorstep.

Finance and social value

- Every £1 of City Council core funding investment into cultural organisations in 2019-20 resulted in more than £50 of additional funding/earned income.
- For every £1 invested in a leisure centre, £23 in value is created according to research by the King's Fund.
- By reducing inactivity, life expectancy between the least and most deprived would reduce from 12 to eight years, according to research by East Anglia University.
- A 2014 review showed that c£18.3 million of social value (the monetary equivalent of the importance people place on the changes in their lives) is generated by Oxford's leisure centres each year. Our tennis programmes alone generate c£336k of social value.
- However, there is a c£1.5 million maintenance backlog across all community centres and c£15.2 million potential costs in repairs and maintenance of our leisure centres over the next 25 years (based on 2018 condition surveys).

Location

- Oxford has a variety of leisure facilities, public, private and boutique offers, including a high number of museums, green and blue spaces and arts venues for its size.
- The majority of residents are within a 20-minute walk of a leisure centre.
- Arts and cultural organisations are predominantly based in the city centre - there are 13 museums and art galleries in Oxford, of which the majority are located in the centre of the city. There are currently six main theatres in Oxford, all bar the Pegasus Theatre are located in the city centre.
- 26% of arts and culture audiences live within four miles of the venues visited.
- Community centres are concentrated in the city centre and East Oxford.
- Over 90 green spaces, of varying sizes, can be found across the City, including parks and nature reserves.

5.What this strategy covers

The Thriving Communities strategy covers the 4Ps set out earlier. There are numerous connections across all areas of work; by understanding and joining up these up we can create better support for residents.

6.How it all connects

Supporting Oxford's 2050 Vision

The Oxford2050 vision shows our plans for the future of the city. Thriving Communities are central to this vision, connecting each theme and playing a primary role in the people and communities and culture and leisure sections.

Our Corporate Strategy

Thriving Communities is one of the four mutually supportive areas of the Council's Corporate Strategy, along with our Housing, Environment and Economic Development strategies it shows how we will deliver our vision for communities:

> **"Oxford's diverse communities should be equipped, supported and enabled to tackle inequality and ensure everyone is able to play a full part in the life of our city."**
>
> **– Corporate Strategy, 2020-2024**

To achieve this vision, we know the importance of working with communities and partners. An example of collaboration between local authorities and the community is the emerging Oxfordshire Food Strategy. This sets out how Oxfordshire's food system can help achieve priorities for health and wellbeing, climate change, biodiversity loss, and fair income and employment.

Connectivity is a key part of the strategy; projects, objectives and partners often overlap across the council which can be confusing, making it challenging for people to effectively join up their work. The graphic overleaf shows how these strategies connect to achieve the shared outcomes.

"Create shared agendas and ensure everyone understands how they fit into the bigger picture."

– City Conversation participant, 2022

7. How we will work

We are increasingly focused on creating collaborative, innovative and sustainable approaches to supporting communities. A few examples include Oxford's Community Impact Fund; the insight-led Community Impact Zone; the Cultural Education Partnership; the creation of a twinning programme between Oxford University colleges and local primary schools; establishing the Museum Development Trust to attract more funds to the Museum of Oxford; and Life Chances where we are piloting the use of Social Impact Bonds to support children and young people. We will share our learning and use insights from connected pieces of work such as the Council's child poverty review.

These innovative approaches have collectively levered in over £1m of revenue over the past three years, alongside creating social value, additional resources and delivering significant outcomes. The Community Impact Fund has created further value by generating match funding for organisations.

We believe that the way we work is as important as what we do. We have explored using an asset-based community development approach, which is also used by partners such as Adult Social Care in what they call the Oxfordshire Way. People fed back that while the approach makes sense, the title is confusing and we need to make sure it is relevant to Oxford. As such we have created:

Six Thriving Communities Principles

During the City Conversation we tested our thriving communities principles, which were very positively received:

1) **Doing with, not to** – we know that involving people and working together rather than imposing solutions upon people creates far better outcomes.
2) **Building on what's strong, not what's wrong** – we know that a positive approach based on developing what is already working well also helps create better outcomes.
3) **Collaboration** – we will give time to think through who needs to be involved and what our role should be.
4) **Always learn** – we will facilitate shared learning and won't be afraid to try new things – even if mistakes are made, sometimes they provide the greatest learning.
5) We will use **clear language that reinforces our values** – e.g., we will talk about *people* - not *cases*, and *understanding someone's situation* rather than *assessing their needs.*
6) Use **meaningful ways to measure** and demonstrate the impact of our work – while numbers are useful, other methods such as sharing stories provide more in-depth insight.

The strategy's principles should not be set in stone; it important to be flexible and review as we go.

NB – the desktop published version will have a video link here to bring the above principles to life.

8.Our aims

Our aims have been developed throughout the work on the strategy following conversation with residents, community groups and partners, they have been refined following our Thriving Communities City Conversation.

1. To target our resources where they will have the greatest impact.
2. To move towards an enabling approach using our Thriving Communities Principles.
3. To embed lessons that we have learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. To adapt and integrate our services so they can react to changing community needs, working more closely with partners and connecting with the Integrated Care System.
5. To ensure that our people (employees) have the skills to support communities.
6. To foster a sense of belonging.
7. To provide many different opportunities to be active.
8. To develop a sustainable, inclusive and accessible leisure and community offer.
9. To enable a vibrant, innovative and sustainable cultural sector and economy.
10. To use a variety of methods to demonstrate how we improve life chances and strengthen communities.

The next section of the strategy shows how we will achieve these aims. While the strategy is high-level and designed to show our approach and the key activities, we also have a detailed internal action plan where we will track progress. An update report will be taken to the Council's Cabinet each year to ensure there is good governance and transparency around our commitments.

9.The 4Ps and our actions

People

A more equitable and supportive society is needed; COVID and the cost of living crisis are further increasing inequalities.

What you told us in the City Conversation

For many people, this was the most important part of the strategy, being clear on how we will work and ensuring that we build on the learning from the pandemic – taking time to build trust and continuing to work with communities.

You liked the clarity of our approach, articulated in the Thriving Communities Principles. You valued the space to talk and saw value in 'joining things up', and you told us that the City Conversation provided a great opportunity to further your understanding, share your ideas and make new connections.

We had lots of conversations about barriers, you told us that a combination of cultural and social barriers make it hard to take part in leisure and cultural activities, including cost, lack of time, barriers to access, being 'not for them' and people's lives being too chaotic.

You told us that a key part of accessibility was improving our communication and making places and spaces more welcoming. You also wanted one place where people could find out about what's available.

> **"Ensure you are targeting a diverse range of members of the community, not just those with the 'loudest' voice – this can be facilitated through organisations on the ground who work closely with and are active within the community as a whole."**
>
> **– City Conversation participant, 2022**

What we will do

- Implement and encourage others to work with and adopt Oxford's Thriving Communities Principles.
- Continue to develop our work in localities, making sure our teams are joined up and able to address the root cause of residents' problems.

- Add our services to and help promote the County Council's Live Well Oxfordshire website as a central resource for finding out what's available to support people in the community.
- Facilitate increased cross-sector collaboration for bids to the Community Impact Fund and help bring in more funding from local, regional and national funders.
- Hold an annual Thriving Communities Forum with partners to create an inclusive and diverse space to continue the city conversation.
- Work with our partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to create skills, employment and development opportunities.
- Work with the County Council, and other partners, to create a more integrated approach to supporting children and young people by building on the Ready by 21 Framework, collaborative bids to funds such as the Youth Investment Fund and to continuing to collaborate on projects such as the Cultural Education Partnership *Feeling Safe* mental health project.
- Make better use of data so we can take an insight-led approach; embracing digital innovation, increasing digital connectivity, and supporting an open data philosophy.
- Work more closely with partners and the community to co-produce and promote inclusive activities such as You Move and Move Together.
- Ensure Oxford's community services are sustainable and better connected, helping to deliver a range of local outcomes as well as outcomes for national strategies such as Arts Council England's *Let's Create* Strategy and Sport England's *Uniting the Movement*.
- Facilitate preventative services to become part of a more integrated health and social care model, with increased social prescribing and GP referrals into a broader range of inclusive options.
- Adopt a whole system approach to enable fair and sustainable access to good food in line with the Oxfordshire Food Strategy.

Pride

We want everyone in Oxford to feel a sense of local pride and be free to be who they are and feel like they belong.

What you told us

You were concerned that inequalities are worsening and the harsh economic environment and budget cuts are negatively impacting the poorest people the most.

You were positive about the City Council's work, you particularly valued the Council's support over the pandemic when our teams were very visible in the community. You wanted the Council to be transparent and

explicit with communities about what we are trying to achieve and you felt that this wasn't always the case.

You felt some communities were very good at asking for and getting help but that people and communities who are most in need often did not know what support was available to them.

You told us that our language and written communication were often hard to understand and that at times you wanted face-to-face contact.

Many people wanted to be more involved with local issues, some wanted guidance, funding or just to know who to speak to. There were conversations that some people needed more support to be able to be involved, or volunteer.

"It is much harder to understand on the phone – you end up saying 'yes' when you don't understand."

– Refugee focus group member, 2022

What we will do

- We will use a variety of images and role models in our communications to inspire people and be inclusive. We will continually challenge ourselves in how we use terms and language so that we can connect with our communities and residents in all our communication and interaction.
- We will produce short videos and an easy-read version of this strategy to make it more accessible.
- We know the value of our workforce representing the community and being embedded within a wide range of local networks. This helps us to support Oxford's diverse communities. We will continue to build on this through our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and People Strategies.
- We will continue to champion Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and engage with and facilitate conversations about equality throughout the city, and work to make Oxford an anti-racist city through our Anti-Racism Charter.
- We will work with community associations and groups such as Friends of Parks to help strengthen their governance to be more inclusive of the local areas they represent and better address diverse local needs.
- We will work in collaboration with refugees, asylum seekers and the migrant community to inform and develop a Local Authority City of Sanctuary Action Plan and ensure the City Council meets its commitment to become an accredited local authority of sanctuary.
- We will continue to promote and celebrate diversity, including publishing a calendar of diverse events and collecting and telling the unique stories and heritage of Oxford's different communities in the newly renovated Museum of Oxford and online.

- We will enable arts, culture, sport, community activities and grants to provide and promote opportunities for everyone, and foster a sense of pride and belonging in Oxford's leisure, cultural and community assets.
- We will increase the diversity of people engaged with Oxford's twin cities and publicise the benefits of our International Links connections.
- We will audit our community spaces and places to make sure they are accessible to everyone.
- We will work to find a burial ground to meet the future needs of the city.

Place

The Council has a crucial role in creating community spaces that help people thrive, from parks and public spaces, through to community and leisure centres.

What you told us

You told us there are lots of great spaces and places across Oxford, but they are not all accessible. This was mainly university green spaces, and some community and leisure centres were seen as being unwelcoming to the wider community. You wanted community spaces and facilities to be better promoted. Several participants in the refugee focus group had never heard of community centres.

You were concerned about the increasing cost to access and maintain Oxford's leisure and community centres. This would result in people not being able to afford to access them, with lower revenue resulting in deteriorating building conditions, among other negative consequences. You told us that you found it helpful when we combined services such as adding libraries and health services into community centres and felt this could help improve the customer experience and help save on running costs.

You wanted us to improve access to travel to facilities, with healthy and safe travel options prioritised, and better linkages with green spaces and parks.

What we will do

- We will look to provide the best possible leisure service. We will do this through dialogue with potential operators and compare what they offer with an in-house comparator. We will request innovative solutions that balance cost and social value, we will explore options such as a longer-term lease and ask for innovative ideas about how the centres could be used to better deliver strategic outcomes.
- We will take a lead in reducing the city's impact on climate change by working with our leisure partners, communities and community associations to implement further decarbonisation improvements, better cycling facilities and improve biodiversity.

- Explore with partners, such as Oxfordshire County Council Public Health and the NHS, how Oxford's leisure centres, especially those in areas of significant health inequalities, can play a greater role in tackling health inequalities.
- Complete our investments in Bullingdon, East Oxford and Blackbird Leys Community Centres, creating fantastic facilities. The modular design of Bullingdon creates a blueprint for future developments.
- We will continue to seek out opportunities to join up our community facilities – to create sustainable spaces for communities. Our preferred approach remains that where possible we want communities to manage community assets.
- We have a map of all community facilities on our website; we will better promote what's available, especially our inclusive activities such as free swimming for under 17s and produce an animated video to help bring this map to life.
- Ensure that our community facilities are well managed, inclusive and accessible with easy to navigate booking systems.
- We will use the International Society for Physical Activity and Health Eight Investments That Work for Physical Activity to guide our work to tackle inactivity.
- We will review our Parks and Green Spaces Strategy in 2026 and explore the possibility of combining it with the next Thriving Communities Strategy.
- We will trial charging non-Oxford residents a small entry fee to access the Museum of Oxford, generating income to help protect valuable services from the impact of government cuts.
- We will explore opportunities with partners to work with us to deliver services such as youth work; by changing the way some services are delivered we may be able to access new sources of funding.
- Embed healthy place shaping by integrating health prevention into neighbourhoods, helping to create more connected neighbourhoods with cycle and walking routes and providing affordable public transport, particularly focusing on areas with the greatest health inequalities.
- Ensure Oxford is a leader in active travel – working with Oxfordshire County Council and ensuring the voices of schools and other partners (such as Cyclox and Oxford Pedestrians Association) are comprehensively included in the delivery of cycling and walking improvements.
- We will work with partners to try and sustain and widen our inclusive community programmes such as GO Active, Move Together, You Move, health walks, Dancin' Oxford, GO Active Families and GO Active Outdoors. We will target those who are inactive and/or most in need.
- Expand the offer in Oxford Town Hall via its events spaces, the Museum of Oxford and café to attract a wider audience from the local community and beyond with the aim of becoming one of the leading events and cultural venues in the city.

Progress

How we will know if we are achieving our objectives

The ultimate outcomes we want to achieve are for everyone in Oxford to:

- Have a great experience when using Oxford's places and spaces where they feel safe and enjoy themselves.
- Be able to positively contribute to society; feel connected, accepted and respected for who they are.
- Meet the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines for physical activity (especially children and young people).

The outcomes within the strategy are shared with partners, and where possible we have adopted shared measures; the measures also link directly into the Council's key priorities and plans.

Meaningful measurement

Ensuring that we are measuring, in a meaningful way, the delivery and outcomes of this strategy will be key to understand its impact and success. Meaningful measurement however is not just about judging success and impact, it is also about a shift in mind-set to support a culture of continual learning. In line with our principles to 'always learn' and to 'use meaningful ways to measure the impact of our work' meaningful measurement will also allow us to incorporate learnings and adapt our approach should it be necessary.

In keeping with our meaningful measurement principle we will:

- Use numbers so we are aware of how many people use our services.
- Use metrics to demonstrate value for money.
- Monitor progress against our Thriving Communities Action Plan and produce an annual update.
- Use techniques such as collecting and publishing the stories of our communities and their lived experience of Oxford, case studies and videos to bring outcomes to life and learn from them.

Annual measures of success

Our communities

- Produce and annually review Locality Plans – these will be based on insight, with a focus on tackling inequalities.
- Increase the diversity of recipients of Oxford's Community Impact Fund.
- Increase the diversity of volunteers and trustees – we will focus on our Community Champions programme, community associations, Friends of Parks and the Museum of Oxford.

Reducing inequalities

- Reduce the number of children leaving primary school who cannot swim 25 metres from four to two in ten over the lifetime of this strategy.

- Increase the number and diversity of young people taking part in Oxford's Youth Ambition activities.
- Reduce physical inactivity in the areas of the city where it is the highest.

Customer excellence

- Increase satisfaction levels with leisure centres.
- Continually increase our score in our Customer Service Excellence accreditation.
- Achieve accreditation to national quality award schemes such as Quest (the UK quality award scheme sport and leisure).

Our places

- Complete the redevelopment of Bullingdon, East Oxford and Blackbird Leys Community Centres.
- Contribute to the Council's commitment towards pursuing a zero carbon Oxford.

10. Summary

We have written this strategy at a time when many people are struggling to make ends meet, the strategy lays out the challenges and it shows how people with the least are hurting the most.

We know that we need to change how we work and that proper collaboration with our partners, communities and residents is needed, the strategy shows what we will do and through our Thriving Communities Principles how we will work.

The actions in this strategy and new ways of working we are committing to, alongside the actions in our wider strategic framework, provide a solid platform for our teams to work collaboratively to help Oxford's communities thrive.

11. Words and phrases we have used

We have tried to keep this document in plain English and easy to read. In parts, we have referred to ideas or programmes that might not mean much to all readers. We have defined these below:

Active travel: Travelling in an active way, for example by foot or bike.

Healthy place shaping: Creating areas that make healthy choices easier, by providing spaces to exercise, local access to daily needs like shops and community spaces, and where it's easy and safe to walk, cycle and exercise. This includes places like leisure centres and parks, along with arts and cultural spaces.

Meaningful measures: Showing how we are performing and making a real difference to the lives of our communities.

Social prescribing: When health professionals refer people to services that are based in the community (e.g. health walks). These can be non-medical and are often delivered through community and voluntary

organisations. It can include a supported conversation with a link worker, focusing on what matters to the person (not their condition or disability).

Whole system approach: Taking an overview of all the organisations and interactions people have when accessing a service (e.g. how someone might be referred to a health service) and using this information to better design and improve services.

If you're unsure of anything in this document and require extra help to understand it, please email us at TCS@oxford.gov.uk or call us on 01865 249811.

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Appendix 2

Thriving Communities Strategy
Group Discussions Thematic Analysis Report

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Background

This report details findings from the thematic analysis of feedback received during group sessions to discuss the Thriving Communities Strategy (TCS) Discussion paper found here.

Prior to developing the discussion paper ten group discussions and one system wide conversation were held. Feedback from those discussions was analysed and used to shape the contents of the discussion paper. A report detailing the findings of these conversations can be found here.

The purpose of the TCS discussion paper is to detail Oxford City Council's plan for how we set out on a journey to build back fairer, work with communities and collaborate with partners to ensure that everyone in Oxford can access leisure, culture and community opportunities and also, just as importantly, to give community organisations, partners, members and officers the opportunity to comment on our plans before the final Thriving Communities Strategy is produced.

As well as consulting widely with partners and external organisations, there is a cross party working group as part of the governance to develop the Thriving Communities strategy.

Objectives

- To give community organisations, partners, officers and members from across Oxfordshire the opportunity to comment on Oxford City Council's Thriving Communities Strategy discussion paper prior to producing the Thriving Communities Strategy.

Methodology

- Online and face to face group discussions were held over 27 sessions between July and September 2022. An email address (TCS@oxford.gov.uk) was also set up for feedback from partners and organisations.
- The sessions were attended by a wide range of organisations from across Oxfordshire including members of community organisations, partner organisations, Oxfordshire County Council as well as Oxford City members and officers. Further details of participants can be found here.
- Participants were asked to feedback on the TCS discussion paper. In some sessions they were asked to discuss specific questions, tailored according to the audience, in others a general discussion was had. A spreadsheet detailing which questions were discussed in each session can be found here.
- Comments made during these discussions were recorded and each one was assigned a 'theme'. These themes have been analysed to identify the most common. A spreadsheet containing a count of all themes can be found here.

Overview of Strands

The sessions were grouped according to the following three strands.

Strand 1 – Strategic overview

Group discussions with Oxford City Council officers including the Corporate Management Team at OCC, the internal ODG group and members of the Oxford Strategic Partnership. Three strand 1 group discussions took place in total.

Strand 2 – Whole System conversations

Group discussions with internal and external groups including representatives from community and cultural partners as well as Oxford City Council members, Oxfordshire County Council, the ODS (Oxford Direct Services) Exec Team and the EDI (Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion) steering Group. The purpose of this strand was to have city-wide conversations to update on progress, to work collaboratively, to help achieve an informed insight, and to make sure we are aligning work to achieve our aims. Nineteen strand 2 group discussions took place.

Strand 3 – Locality conversations

Group discussions with external groups. Discussions in this strand included a wide range of people. A number of these discussions took place in person during community events such as the Cutteslowe Play Day, the West Oxford Fun day event, the Northway summer holidays' activities programme and the Eid Extravaganza as well as with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum. This strand served the same purpose as strand 2 with locality based inclusive conversations that involved community based stakeholders who may not have or been able to participate in strand 2 or may have requested a bespoke conversation. Please note that a number of strand 2 participants were asked if they would like to have a strand 3 conversation but they preferred to take part in a strand 2 discussion as it enabled them to network with other groups and organisations.

Asylum Welcome were also asked to conduct research with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants living in Oxford. In total 21 participants were consulted with in total and three in-person group consultation sessions as well as ten individual phone interviews. A link to this report can be found on page 27 of this report.

Summary of findings

As is perhaps to be expected from discussions that focused on a Thriving Communities Strategy, feedback from many of the participants was concerned with community involvement & engagement and how important this is, to not only ensure that the strategy has the right focus, but that it is also a success. Participants also touched on themes of inclusivity and accessibility; that everyone should be listened to and that the aims and outcomes of the strategy must be accessible by all.

Concern for community involvement & engagement was often woven throughout other themes. For example, creating a communications' plan was considered important so that all communities understand the aims of the strategy and that measuring its success should be linked to how engaged communities are.

Furthermore when asked during community events which of the strategy's 4Ps (People, Pride, Place and Progress) was the most important most participants felt it was People.

Many participants fed back the importance of partnership working with some offering their support and advice as to who we should partner with. Others focused more on the practicalities of the strategy; i.e. how this strategy will align with others, the need for a clear action plan and how the aims of the strategy will actually be embedded.

It was clear that a number of participants felt they wanted to know more about how we will actually deliver the strategy, what will actually change as a result and who will be responsible. Some talked about governance and felt strongly that a strategy such as this needs an overall lead who will ultimately be responsible for its delivery.

We also learnt that participants feel it is important that we have some way of measuring the success of the strategy and how we might use data and insight to do this. Others flagged the need for meaningful measurement and ensuring that we use story-telling and case studies to illustrate the impact of the strategy and what good outcomes look like.

Just as useful as understanding what participants felt was important was hearing their feedback on what they felt was missing or did not have enough focus in the discussion paper. Examples included a breakdown of the costs involved, more focus on equal access to green spaces and their importance for improving mental and physical health as well as the need to make more mention of physical activity, to give just a few examples.

Overall these conversations were rich, enlightening and informative with many wide ranging themes discussed. The report below gives further details of these themes as well as recommendations for the structure, development and implementation of the Thriving Communities Strategy.

Thematic Analysis of all Group Discussions

Before detailing the most common themes, it is worth highlighting that across all strands there were participants who made positive comments about the discussion paper.

'Really good read, if done right - it is fantastic'.

In particular several participants really liked the six principles laid out in the discussion paper and were pleased to see these clearly defined.

'It's unusual to see principles set out as clearly as this & acknowledging the importance of relationships & working together'.

'I was surprised (and pleased!) to see principles like 'doing with' and 'collaboration' included. These aren't ideas I would've associated with a policy document'.

The discussion paper is therefore a good start from which we can build on.

'A good start that is building on existing things'.

Community Involvement and Engagement

As perhaps is to be expected from group discussions that included a number of representatives from community organisations; community involvement & engagement was the most common theme overall. This theme was mentioned mainly in strand 2 and 3 conversations.

A number of participants felt that ensuring that communities are involved and engaged is crucial, not only to understand what is important to those communities and to support in the implementation of the strategy, but also as way of measuring how successful the strategy is. Some participants referred to the importance of 'collaboration' with residents and a number of them thought that collaborating effectively with communities is key to achieving the aims of the strategy.

'Collaborating is vital - ideas and suggestions that come from groups themselves are much more likely to be acted on than those imposed/suggested from above'

Others felt that community involvement and engagement is in fact what is missing from the discussion paper and that we need to ensure that we are really listening to what communities want as this may not always align with our aims. Others felt that 'community empowerment' was important, in other words 'doing with, not to' and that we need to work with communities to empower them to find their own solutions.

'Empowerment rather that solutions/options handed to people'

A number of participants simply raised the question - have we consulted and listened to communities about what they want. Others suggested how this could be done e.g. focus groups. A few participants mentioned the need to reward and incentivise communities for their involvement:

'What we as professionals have to say is irrelevant. We need to be having grass roots conversations with our communities. They are the key to this strategy'.

'Clarify process and pathways through which communities can contribute and how'

'Using buddy systems (community led) could help to ensure feedback is voiced, heard and recorded'

'Incentivising and ensuring the community members engaged are respected and there time is valued. Must have resources available to facilitate this in order to recognise and reward

members of the community that are 'stepping up'

The theme of community involvement and engagement links to a number of other themes, namely **community experience** and how this can be used to demonstrate impact, as well as **inclusion and diversity**. A number of participants felt it was important to ensure that we have reached out to all of Oxford's diverse communities, that everyone is listened to and that all voices are heard.

'Develop ways to reach all of the community and communicate to everyone to ensure 'all voices' are heard'

Measuring outcomes

This was the second most mentioned theme overall and was raised in most discussion groups. A number of participants mentioned the need for 'meaningful measurement'. 'Measuring outcomes' had a number of sub-themes:

1) The need to ensure that outcomes are measurable as a way of gauging the impact of the strategy.
2) The need to determine exactly what we are going to measure.
3) Ways to measure outcomes including frequent questionnaires and community focus groups.
4) The need for meaningful measurement.

'Aims should be measurable - how will we know if we have achieved for example a vibrant economy?'

'Use meaningful ways to measure. This is something we are starting to look at within how we monitor supported accommodation. Some data can be useful but gathering case studies, mapping of clients journey etc. can be more useful to identify what has worked well in individual cases and comparing with why this may not have worked for others'.

Clarity

This theme was one of the most common and was mentioned across a number of groups. The need for clarity related to several aspects namely:

1) The terminology and jargon: For some there was terminology and jargon in the discussion paper that was unclear or needed to be defined. For example how exactly do we define 'thriving' or what is meant by 'equitable and supportive' or 'healthy place shaping'?

   This was particularly the case in the 'Children & Young People Summer Holiday Activities' group discussion where a number of participants highlighted the need to clarify some of the terms used and that some of the language to describe the outcomes was confusing.

'Many Young People felt some wording was confusing. The words "equitable and supportive" could be replaced with "equal and helpful'

One participant felt that the language we use could be softer and more inclusive.

'Use softer language - i.e. Inclusive, fair, more supportive, safe space/s, feel supported rather than help, do you feel better supported, somewhere to go (right place, first time)'.

Feedback from one partner via email also suggested that we need to make the strategy sound less 'corporate'.

2) Length of the paper: Some participants felt that the discussion paper was too wordy and long and that it should be simplified so that it is shorter, easier to read and to understand. Some suggested we produce a summary version. Some participants also raised the need for the strategy to be accessible, for example one participant asked if we plan to produce a Braille version.

   This links to another theme, that of language and how, for residents whose first language isn't English, this could be a barrier. Therefore clear, simple language is important. A few asked if we plan to produce versions of the strategy in difference languages.

   'Overall the language used and themes could be simplified more in plain English to make sure (it is) really accessible.'

3) Examples: Some participants suggested we use real examples and stories to clarify exactly what we mean by good practice. Other participants commented on the need to use real examples and stories to illustrate exactly how we have achieved our stated outcomes.

   'Practically what does it mean for me? Give real examples'

Delivering the Strategy

Another commonly mentioned theme, particularly in the strand 2 city-wide conversations, was how the strategy is actually going to be delivered and who is responsible for delivery. Some participants wanted to know what is actually going to change if this strategy is delivered.

'More important to think about what this actually means in terms of delivery'

There was some cynicism (a few comments only) about whether we will actually be able to deliver this strategy in its entirety with a few participants stating they had seen this sort of thing before and that nothing had really changed!

'Heard it all before. What are we really going to do about it?''

Linked to delivering the strategy were comments relating to governance of the strategy and

who ultimately is responsible for its delivery. A number of participants felt that there must be a clear, overall lead who is responsible for this. Others participants felt that it was important that everyone understands the part they play in the strategy's delivery and that roles are clear.

'A champion to lead - without a champion, direction can be lost'

Partnership Working

The importance of working with relevant partners was another key theme. This theme was most commonly mentioned in relation to strategy delivery and how partners can help with this.

In most cases participants were simply making the point that partnership working is needed but some participants did mention specific organisations and/or community groups that they felt we should partner with for delivery or were offering their support as one of our partners. A list of these suggested partners can be found here.

'Importance of Partnership working and joining things up'

Aligning the TCS with other strategies

Linked to partnership working was the theme of aligning the TCS with other internal and external strategies where relevant. This was highlighted by a number of participants. Some participants mentioned the County Council and the need to not only partner with them for this piece of work but also to ensure we are aligned with County strategies where appropriate.

Some participants mentioned specific strategies that they feel the TCS should be aligned with. A list of these can be found here.

A few participants mentioned the need to signpost to other relevant strategies from within the TCS document itself and to make it easy to access all related and connected strategies in one place.

'Ensure action plans are aligned and not duplicated; Reference other external strategies (e.g. health, County) and demonstrate full integration; Identify people with specialist knowledge to read through strategies and pick out key links'

'Make some form of infographic/mind map that shows how strategies connect'

Communication

This theme was mentioned by a number of participants; that is the need to ensure residents, partners and internal service areas understand exactly what our plans are and what this strategy aims to achieve. Several participants talked about awareness and the need to raise awareness of this strategy. Some participants suggested that we create a

communications' plan.

Other participants talked about communication in terms of the need to communicate effectively with members of the public to let them know what is happening within their communities.

'We need a Comms plan and to join the dots and signpost – a centralised website?'

'Keeping a handle on what's happening in the community and sharing knowledge and communicating with local teams to strengthen their understanding'

'Improve communication channels to allow people to be aware of what is available within the community'

A few suggested how we best communicate with residents and that this could be tailored to different communities.

'Hard copy newsletter is needed for people to know what is going on, but more is needed i.e. a city council column in Oxford Mail'

An officer from the County Council suggested via email that we should be included in the Oxfordshire Live Well platform - www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/livewell

Data and Insight

Another common theme was that of 'data and insight' and how this should be used to demonstrate the impact of the strategy. A few participants suggested what data and insight could be used and some mentioned the need to ensure we are using data and insight for the purposes of continual learning and to review the impact of the strategy ongoing.

Some participants mentioned the use of qualitative data, including storytelling and case studies, others mentioned the use of quantitative data e.g. examples of decreasing figures – i.e. child obesity. Some felt both should be used.

'Qualitative plus quantitative (Social Return on Investment for some aspects but also stories that talk about people's journeys)'.

'Meaningful and qualitative data is fantastic, but we can't forget traditional quantitative data. As best practice, we should use both as both sets of data are of equal importance'.
'(Use of) perception surveys to understand what communities value'

Funding and costs

Two main strands sit under the theme of funding and costs.

1) Funding the strategy: Some participants felt that details of how the strategy is actually

going to be funded and the costs involved is currently missing and should be included. A few also mentioned how restricted funding currently is.

'Reference to costs – what will it cost to actually implement the strategy'

'Raised again the question of funding and who is delivering. The strategy needs to show there's an element of spend to make this work, part of showing a real commitment that we can be held to.'

2) Other participants mentioned funding in relation to ensuring that residents know how to access funds and making this more accessible.

'How to support communities to access available funding and to make access to funding easier'

'Funding strands to be more accessible - simple things like: Easy read format, brail, audio options not just text based'.

Green Spaces

The need to consider green spaces and how these could be used was another fairly common theme, particularly from the whole system conversations held on 28th July.

A number of participants felt that reference to green spaces needed more focus in the discussion paper. Others highlighted the link between lack of access to green spaces and poverty & deprivation as well the importance of green spaces for health & wellbeing.

'Not much detail on green spaces. Some parts of Oxford are lacking in green space. Need to talk to communities about what they need'.

'Very little information about green spaces and how to improve equity of access.''

'Working to help with green space strategies to make sure they meet the needs of communities, for health and wellbeing, as well as nature recovery and climate targets.'

One participant asked how the strategy links to Oxford City Council's Green Spaces Strategy.

Other less common themes from across all group discussions were:

- **Community assets (e.g. community centres)** – how to make best use of these and ensure they are accessible to all.
- **Young and older people involvement** – ensure that we engage with both young and older people for this strategy.
- **Leisure and physical activity** –make more mention of the importance of physical activity.
- **Cost of living crisis and affordability** – ensure that access to activities and facilities is affordable especially given the current climate.

- **Volunteering** – ensure that we are linked with the voluntary sector for delivery of this strategy as well as highlight volunteer opportunities for residents.
- **Inequality** – the need for the strategy to address growing inequality as well as the importance of completing Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). The EIA steering group in particular raised this point.
- **Mapping assets** – some participants suggested it would be useful to undertake an assets and partners mapping exercise.
- **Transparency** – ensure that we are transparent with communities about exactly what we are trying to achieve and why.
- **Barriers** – consider what the barriers to delivery might be and how we might overcome these.
- **Build Trust** – important to build trust with communities.

Recommendations

Below details recommendations for the structure, development and implementation of the Thriving Communities Strategy based on the identified themes above:

1. Structuring the strategy report

- Terminology and jargon – consider the terminology and jargon used. Not everyone will understand what is meant by specific terms or jargon. Ensure these are explained.
- Language – be mindful of those whose first language isn't English and consider having versions of the strategy in other languages to maximise engagement from all communities.
- Length – some participants felt that the discussion paper is too long. Consider creating a summary version of the final strategy.
- Visuals – the use of visuals in the discussion paper was generally well received. Use these where relevant in the final strategy paper.
- Accessibility – ensure that the final strategy paper is accessible to all and consider how the strategy will be disseminated so that it reaches everyone. Also important to think about those who may be digitally excluded and how to reach them.
- Links to other relevant strategies – ensure other relevant strategies are clearly linked to from within the TCS strategy.

2. What is missing?

- Costs: A breakdown of the actual costs for delivering the strategy and how it will be funded.
- Green spaces: A number of participants commented that the discussion paper does not make enough mention of access to green spaces and their link to mental and physical wellbeing.
- Links to other strategies: A few participants felt that having clear links to other related strategies within the TCS, and how they connect, would be useful.
- Measuring outcomes: Consider exactly how we will measure the success and impact of the strategy.
- Examples: Include examples/case studies of what success looks like.

- Digital Inclusion: Some felt the strategy should include plans for digital inclusion (the County have recently published a digital inclusion strategy).
- Physical activity: Some felt the importance of physical activity, and its link to mental wellbeing, needs more mention.
- Volunteering: Some felt we should mention volunteering opportunities across the city as well as ensure we engage with voluntary organisations for the delivery of this strategy.
- Prioritisation exercise: Consider undertaking a prioritisation exercise to understand what partners and communities feel are priorities. Important to understand this as they may differ.

3. Strategy ownership

- Clear governance: Who owns the strategy and is ultimately responsible for its delivery? Ideally have a strategy lead who has overall responsibility.
- Communities, partners and service areas: All have roles to play in the strategy delivery and our expectations of them need to be clear.

4. Community involvement and engagement

- Community involvement: Is crucial for understanding what communities need and value. Communities must be fully engaged for this strategy to be a success.
- Inclusion and diversity: All communities should to be included in the development and implementation of this strategy. Important that we are inclusive in our approach and that we listen to the many voices of Oxford's diverse communities.
- Put people front and centre of the strategy: When asked, more participants felt that 'people' is the most important of the 4Ps than any other (People, Place, Pride and Progress).
- Listen to communities: Demonstrate in the final strategy that we have listened to communities and that we will do this ongoing (and how). This helps to build trust.
- Empower communities: Detail how we will empower communities to make change themselves.

5. Partnership working and joining up strategies

- Identify and work with partners: Partnership working will be crucial to deliver this strategy and, just as importantly, we will need to work with partners to agree what their roles are in helping us to achieve the strategy's aims. A number of partners suggested ways in which they would like to support.
- Aligning strategies: Ensure that the TCS is aligned with other strategies where relevant, both internally and externally, to ensure consistency.

6. Implementing and delivering the strategy

- Delivery plan: Layout exactly how the plan is going to be delivered. Consider using an action/delivery plan.
- Communication plan: How will this strategy and its aims be communicated, not just to

communities throughout Oxford but to partners and service areas? Consider developing a communication plan.

- What makes this strategy different: A few participants felt that they had 'heard it all before' and that things don't change. Highlight what will be different this time and how this will ensure that the strategy is a success. Demonstrate successes ongoing.

7. Measuring outcomes and success

- Measuring success and impact: Important to consider how the impact and success of the strategy is going to be measured. Think about 'meaningful measurement'.
- Data and insight: Should be used ongoing to understand the impact of the strategy and if its aims are being achieved. Consider using both quantitative and qualitative data including case studies and story-telling.

8. Embedding the strategy

- Adaptable and flexible: Ensure that we are adaptable and flexible in implementing and embedding this strategy.
- Continual learning: The strategy's principles shouldn't be set in stone; it important to be flexible and adapt if necessary. We should apply learnings and review as we go.

Summary of Findings by Strand

This section presents the findings of the thematic analysis by strand.

Thematic Analysis for Strand 1 discussions

Three group discussions were held for strand 1: The internal ODG group, the Internal Policy Officers group and the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) group. The OSP group included both councillors and officers.

The most common themes from strand 1 discussions were:

- Aligning strategies
- Ensuring that an action plan is created
- Using examples to embed the strategy
- Measuring outcomes
- Education and schools

Aligning Strategies

This was mentioned several times in the internal policy officers group; that is the need to ensure that the TCS strategy is aligned with other strategies to ensure duplication is avoided and that there is a joined up approach. Some participants also commented that strategies connected to the TCS are sign-posted to from within the TCS and that it should be

easy for people to understand how different strategies interconnect:

'Ensure action plans are aligned and not duplicated; Reference other external strategies (e.g. health, County) and demonstrate full integration; Identify people with specialist knowledge to read through strategies and pick out key links'

'Sign post to other strategies within the TCS'/ 'Make some form of infographic/mind map that shows how strategies connect'

Creating an Action Plan

The internal ODG group in particular highlighted the need for an action plan for strategy implementation to ensure that there is a clear plan for actually delivering the strategy. This links to the theme of 'delivering the strategy' seen in other strands.

'Could we create an action plan that's updated annually (similar to Housing?)'

'How is this being developed? Is this enough. What else do we need from our services?'

Use of Examples to Embed the Strategy

Some participants felt that using examples would be a good way of embedding the strategy and demonstrating its impact. Feedback also included how examples can show people what success looks like in practice and how they can adopt the strategy.

'Give concrete examples of what we want to do, what achieving a goal looks like'

'Understand how they (the principles) have been adopted by different service areas - use examples'

Measuring Outcomes

This theme was not only one of the key themes from strand 1, it was one of the most common themes overall. In strand 1 feedback related to measuring outcomes was often not to suggest how this should be done but to simply flag that it is important that we consider how we will measure the strategy's outcomes.

'How are we meeting the principles? Build in to SLAs'

'What outcomes are we looking to achieve?'

Education and Schools

The OSP group raised the need to recognise the impact of Covid on performance in schools, the need to make mention of school exclusions as well as how education can help to reduce inequality.

'Must throw in school exclusions – this is increasing issue…at risk of exploitation – needs to be collectively addressed'

'Post COVID – need to recognise that many Year 7 and Year 8 children are struggling with socialisation of being back in schools. Those doing better have supportive parents. Need to consider our role in supporting that as part of Thriving Communities'

Other interesting themes from strand 1, although not the most common, were:

1. The need to be **adaptable** – ensure that we are fluid in our approach and are able to review the strategy ongoing:

'Principles shouldn't be set in stone, need to be fluid and adapt - always learning, need to be reviewed'

2. Consider how we will actually **deliver the plan**. How will we do this given that the aims of the strategy are ambitious?

'Bold and ambitious values and aims – but very complex given the partner landscape. Needs to be real at the granular people level. What is the implementation gap?'

3. Ensure that we **communicate** the aims and principles of the strategy both internally and externally, with officers, partners and communities, to ensure they understand what the strategy is aiming to achieve and how:

'Culture change; Clear communication - show how things work in practice; Make work relevant to colleagues, communities and partners'

Conclusions for Strand 1 Discussions

Discussions from strand 1 were more focused on the practicalities of the strategy than other strands where there was more of a focus on community involvement and engagement.

Feedback that consideration is given to how the strategy is properly aligned with other strategies, that there is a clear action plan for delivery and how the strategy can be successful embedded were among the most commonly mentioned themes.

Other considerations were also raised and the OSP group in particular also focused on education and volunteering. Whilst the Policy Officers groups made most mention of the practicalities (aligning strategies and measuring outcomes), some participants did talk about the need for a cultural change and being adaptable.

Thematic Analysis of Strand 2 discussions

Group discussions with internal and external groups. For strand 2 nineteen group discussions were held with partners and organisations from across Oxford as well as Oxford

City Council members, Oxfordshire County Council, the ODS (Oxford Direct Services) Exec Team and the EDI (Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion) Steering Group. A list of attendees at these sessions can be found at the beginning of this report.

Strand 2 group discussions had the highest number of participants of all the strands and as a result a higher number of themes were identified from these discussions. The most common themes from strand 2 discussions were:

- Community Engagement and Community Involvement
- Clarity
- Measuring Outcomes
- Delivering the strategy
- Partnership Working
- Communication
- Data and Insight
- Inclusion

Community Engagement and Community Involvement

This was the most common theme in strand 2 and was also the most common theme overall. This theme encompasses several sub-themes relating to:

1. Listening to communities: Ensure that we understand what they want and need.
2. Collaboration: Ensure that we have a collaborative approach to working with communities in order to deliver the strategy.
3. Ownership: Giving communities a say in the ownership and implementation of this strategy.
4. Inclusivity: Ensure that we reach all of Oxford's diverse communities, not just those who shout the loudest and encourage everyone to take part.
5. Recognising and rewarding: Recognise and reward members of the community for their involvement.

'Ensure we listen to communities and gain their 'buy in'. Empower and support them to be part of something longer term that they have ownership of and support sustainability'

'What we as professionals have to say is irrelevant. We need to be having grass roots conversations with our communities. They are the key to this strategy'

'If we are enabling the community to take on some of this, it's important to ensure the communities' time is recognised and utilising resources to reward those for being involved'

'How will we ensure further outreach to underrepresented communities?'

'Collaboration between community, institutions, partners and other organisations is key. We all have the same interests at heart and it makes sense for us to work together'.

Clarity

The need for clarity had several sub-themes:

1. The terminology used – for some the terminology was unclear or needed to be defined. For example what exactly do we mean by 'thriving' or 'demonstrating impact'? Also feedback on avoiding the use of jargon - e.g. healthy place shaping, net zero etc.

   'What is the definition of 'THRIVING' - different views on this'

   'We need to define meaningful measurement. Meaningful measurement might not mean anything to a layperson'.

2. Some felt that the discussion paper is too wordy and long and there is a need to simplify the strategy so that it is easy to read and understand.

   'Paper is confusing for some - trickle feed the info rather than bulk dumping in one long report - for some this is a massive barrier'

   'The discussion paper is too complicated, communication needs to be simple and clear'

3. Clarity links to another fairly common theme of 'language used', namely that for some residents, possibly those whose first language isn't English, there may be a language barrier and therefore clear, simple language is important. One participant asked what languages the strategy will be published in.

   'What languages has it been published in? Which people within the community have actually seen/read it? Those most vulnerable are being further isolated by the very nature of the information (too wordy, no visual learning aids, no audio etc.)

4. One comment relating to clarity on the principles within the strategy and how these are going to be used.

   'One person asked what the principles are going to be used for. Are they a guide? Are they used to measure projects? Are staff going to be held accountable? Are they a criteria? Please can we have more information?'

Measuring Outcomes

This was one of the most common themes from the strand 2 conversations as well as one of the most common themes overall. As was the case in strand 1 conversations, strand 2 comments relating to measuring outcomes were often to simply flag that this needs to be considered rather than how to do this. Some felt how outcomes will be measured was missing from the discussion paper.

Several participants felt that measuring outcomes is how you demonstrate the impact of the strategy. A few participants also mentioned the need for 'meaningful measure'.

'How can we track social impact that requires longer periods of monitoring so we can see true impact of this work?'

'Aims should be measurable - how will we know if we have achieved for example a vibrant economy?'

'A key aspect of meaningfully measuring impact is in reporting and properly communicating your successes and failures. Welcoming constructive feedback and incorporating that moving forward.'

Delivering the strategy

Several comments in strand 2 related to how the strategy is actually going to be delivered. Some commented on the need to be practical and to think about what is actually going to be achievable. A few commented on the fact that they have seen similar plans in the past and that nothing has really changed!

'Heard it all before. What are we really going to do about it?'

'I think the building on what's strong not what's wrong sort of works, but for me it's about focusing on what is achievable, rather than sending lots of time on things which are desirable but not viable'.

Related to the theme of delivering strategy was that of **governance** and in particular who is going to have overall responsibility for ensuring the strategy is actually delivered. Some felt that it is important that this strategy has a clear leader who will take the strategy forward and they felt that this is currently missing from the discussion paper.

'Champion to lead - Without a champion, direction can be lost'

'A 5th 'P', 'Power'. Who makes these decisions?'

'It's about how we work together, wrap around communications plan and accountable governance'.

Partnership Working

Partnership working was another main theme from strand 2. It includes a number of sub-themes:

1. The need to work with partners in order to deliver the strategy and achieve the best outcomes.
2. Ensure we think about which partners are needed for this strategy and what part they play in delivering this strategy. A number of comments mentioned the need to ensure we have strong links with the County
3. To take learnings from partners to inform the work that we do.
4. The need for collaboration – ensure that we collaborate effectively with our partners

(as well as communities).

'The Community Services Team can't do this alone - it requires collaboration as a collective County'

'By listening to other organisations and learning from them'

'Share info around new initiatives to get the right people involved & the best outcomes'

'Does it call enough on partners to do stuff? (the paper seems more abstract based rather than providing a real time approach of what will actually be implemented i.e. relevant tangible approach)'

Related to partnership working is the need to ensure we align strategies (both internal and external) and ensure cross strategy links are made where relevant. This also ensures consistency, avoids duplication and aids delivery.

'How do we join all of this up? There are strategies all over the place'.

'Discussed the need to align our plans with delivery partners'

'Share all information to ensure there is no duplication and work together where there is duplication or overlap'

'This is not just a stand-alone strategy - inter related to other strategies i.e. equality and diversity so the community are more interested in what OCC are actually going to do rather than what is contained within this document'.

Communication

A number of participants in strand 2 discussions raised the theme of 'communication' particularly in response to the question 'how can you work with us to achieve the 10 aims?'

Some commented that we need to ensure we communicate effectively with communities throughout the city so that they are fully informed as to what is on offer for them as well as what our plans are and what the aims of this strategy are.

Others felt it was about communicating effectively with our partners as well as internally to ensure we are 'joined up' in our approach and are fully aware of what each other is doing. A couple of participants mentioned the need for a communications' plan and some suggested how we could do this e.g. newsletters, sharing stories in videos, a shared system etc.

'Better ongoing communication needed - particularly post Covid which created huge isolation within some communities - what is the follow up?'

'We need a Communications plan and to join the dots and signpost – a centralised website?'

'A lot of work needs to be done to improve communication around service provision - this is something that partners can then distribute and pass on'

Data and Insight

This theme was often mentioned in relation to how we measure the impact of the strategy.

Some participants also suggested ways to do this with some feeling there should be a focus on qualitative feedback to measure the impact e.g. case studies, focus groups and people's stories. A few mentioned that there is data available but need to make better use of it.

'We are data rich but articulation is poor. How can we do this better?'
'Qualitative plus quantitative (Social Return on Investment for some aspects but also stories that talk about people's journeys)'

'Story telling - listening to lived experiences, picking key points/issues to work with'

Other themes to note from strand 2, although not the most common include:

Inclusion

A number of participants mentioned the importance of inclusion particularly in response to the question 'what have we missed'.

Some participants commented on the importance of ensuring that all communities are represented, others mentioned specific groups we need to consider such as faith groups, as well as residents who are blind or hearing impaired. Some also felt that in order to be inclusive and accessible we need to consider the format of the strategy document.

'Ensure you are targeting a diverse range of members of the community, not just those with the 'loudest' voice - this can be facilitated through organisations on the ground who work closely with and are active within the community as a whole'.

'Ensure communities of interest, geography and race etc. are all included. How do we ensure interconnectivity by connecting all of the various groups and rebuild relationships (i.e. the lack of trust from the community towards the council?)

'Can we create a shorter, layman's version of the document to ensure accessibility and inclusivity?'

Funding and costs

Comments related to funding/access to funds were fairly broad. A number of comments related to accessing funds (and ensuring communities know how to do this) as well as the need to consider how the aims of the strategy will be funded. Some felt that funding for and costs associated with the strategy are missing from the discussion paper and should be included. Others commented on how restricted funding currently is and that this is a

concern.

'Funding (i.e. Government) criteria can be restrictive and no necessarily support reducing inequalities effectively'.

'Supporting communities to access funds and bids and making help and support available to do this and simplifying'

'From a property asset perspective, there is worry about the finances of the council and our partners. On reading the strategy, it appears that we have finance to be able to do things, that in reality, we may not. We need to be transparent and careful to not over promise and underperform'.

'What is missing – 'No reference to costs'.

Green spaces

Although not one of the most common themes, a number of participants mentioned 'green spaces' as something that the strategy is missing and how important these are as well as ensuring equal access to green spaces.

'Equity of access to green spaces - for those living in areas high on the indices of depravation'

'Not much detail on green spaces. Some parts of Oxford are lacking in green space. Need to talk to communities about what they need.'

Adaptable

And finally a few comments related to the need for this strategy to be adaptable. Some participants feel we need to be able to adapt the strategy as circumstances change and that is should not be set in stone.

'Need for flexibility. Adapt for change. Be agile. Cost of living having an impact on so many areas, working behaviour, what we spend on'.

Conclusions for Strand 2 discussions

Themes from strand 2 conversations were wide ranging which is not surprising given the number of participants and conversations that took place.

Feedback from strand 2 often focused on community involvement and engagement and how important this is, not only to ensure that the focus of the strategy is right but to ensure its implementation and success. Participants felt it is important that everyone is listened to, not just those who may have the loudest vice.

This concern for community involvement and engagement is woven through a number of

other themes, for example the need for clarity so that the strategy can be understood by all and is as inclusive as possible, the importance of communication so that communities are kept informed and know exactly what our plans are and that levels of community involvement should be a key measure of the success of the strategy.

And finally a number of participants in the strand 2 conversations were focused on how we plan to actually deliver the strategy and what its governance will be, and in particular the importance of having an overall lead who will ultimately be responsible for ensuring the implementation and success of this strategy.

Thematic Analysis of Strand 3 discussions

Group discussions with external groups. Discussions in this strand included a wide range of people. A number of these discussions took place in person during community events such as the Cutteslowe Play Day, the West Oxford Fun day event, the Northway summer holidays' activities programme and the Eid Extravaganza as well as with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum. This strand served the same purpose as strand 2 with locality based inclusive conversations that involved community based stakeholders who may not have or been able to participate in strand 2 or may have requested a bespoke conversation. Please note that a number of strand 2 participants were asked if they would like to have a strand 3 conversation but they preferred to take part in a strand 2 discussion as it enabled them to network with other groups and organisations.

Asylum Welcome also provided a report detailing conversations they had with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants so that their feedback can also be considered for in the final strategy (see page 27 for further details).

The most common themes from the five group discussions were:

- Community involvement and engagement
- Inclusion
- Community safety
- Young people and children involvement

Community Involvement and Engagement

The most common theme again was community involvement and engagement, particularly in response to what success looks like and how we measure it. Participants felt that attendance of residents at community events is one way of measuring the success of this strategy and that events can be an important way of bringing people together and strengthening a sense of community.

'Events are important because it's a way of getting people out in the community and encourages them to take part in something. This strengthens the community by bringing people together. Free refreshment stands in the community is important because not everyone has access to money to buy simple luxuries when outside'.

Inclusion

Inclusion was the second most commonly mentioned theme in strand 3 discussions and was mentioned in four of the five strand 3 discussion groups. In particular participants mentioned the need to ensure that those residents whose first language isn't English are included and can access information and understand what is going on in their community. One participant commented that inclusion and diversity is foundational to making communities work:

'Inclusion and diversity needs to come first as this is foundation of making communities work'

'Those not connected with their community or speak English to know what is going on in their community'

Community Safety

This theme was only mentioned in the LEAF group but was one of the most common themes in that group. This relates to both policing and sufficient street lighting as well as the need for safe places for people to go (such as community centres).

'More community centres and safe places' 'What is missing - neighbourhood policing'

Children and Young People Involvement

At both the Cutteslowe Play Day and the Eid Extravaganza the need for 'youth provision' was mentioned:

'Youth provisions should be included and be invested in for future generations'

'Youth provision needs to be more accessible and based in bus routes, so young people can have access to it. Since the 17 bus was cut this has had a huge effect on us and the children accessing services'

Other themes (although only mentioned by a few and not the most common) included:

Cost of living/affordability – a few comments related to how consideration needs to be given to making activities and facilities affordable for families and residents.

'Community activities and facilities need to be affordable for families'

Community Assets – a couple of comments related to the use of community assets and in particular having places where people can meet and connect.

'Having places where people can meet and connect, cafes, fetes etc'

The WOCA group only were also asked what they think makes a thriving community. A range of answers were given as detailed below:

Community Support

Additionally in three of the groups (Eid Extravaganza, Cutteslowe Play Day and the Children and Young People group) participants were asked which of the 4Ps detailed in the discussion paper (People, Pride, Place, Progress) they believe is most important. The 4Ps framework is detailed below.

- **People** – implementing our Thriving Communities principles – e.g. doing things with people not to them, and building on what works well
- **Pride** – celebrating diverse cultural heritage, encouraging trust and belonging and ensuring inclusivity
- **Place** – inclusive spaces and places
- **Progress** – we will use a range of ways to demonstrate the impact of our work and continually learn.

The results were:

Whilst results are not exactly the same across each group, all three groups clearly felt that 'People' is an important aspect of the framework. Conversely Progress was considered the least important and in two groups no-one felt this was the most important of the 4Ps.

In the Children and Young People's group* participants were also asked to put a sticker against various statements under each of the 4Ps to denote which they felt is the most important and why.

Results are below:

People - 14 stickers in total

Grants and Funding: 2 stickers

- *You can fund opportunities for vulnerable children with life threatening illnesses.*
- *Because it gives families a better chance to afford things*

Volunteering: 1 sticker

- *Because it allows people to share their ideas and get involved.*

Events: 2 stickers

- *It allows people to have fun*
- *Brings lots of people together*

COVID-19 recovery: 1 sticker

- *So people can go back to work and make money for the community*

Programmes: 1 sticker

- *Because we need a way to achieve and enjoy during the holidays*

Activities: 1 sticker

- *So that all people have something to do*

Listening and responding to communities: 1 sticker

- *I think the council should listen to what people have to say so that people don't have to do it all themselves*

Skills: 1 sticker

- *Having more skills = increased access to more jobs and more activities*

Accessible fees and charges: 4 stickers

- *If things were cheaper to access it would help as other prices have been raised which means things like expensive transport to things like school or things for me, sometimes I don't have access to cars so it is very inconvenient to be paying so much.*
- *Transportation costs to help get to work and things I want to do without too much of cost difference.*
- *Bus prices are high and kids need to go to school every day, so things like gym prices should reduce as they are trying to promote healthy lifestyles*
- *Because people should be able to go out and still be able to afford food.*

Pride: 11 stickers in total

Diversity: 5 stickers

- *To show inclusion of all within community*
- *Because as a biracial person it's important to embrace diversity*

- *It's like teamwork, because teamwork makes the dream work*
- *Because I am against racism*
- *Celebrating diversity can help stop racism*

Inclusion: 4 stickers

- *It is Important to make sure that people with disabilities are included*
- *It is important to help people with life threatening illnesses*
- *Because all people should be included and treated fairly*
- *So that everyone is included*

Heritage: 1 sticker

- *My heritage is important to me*
- *To have pride we need to show how diverse somewhere is*

Cohesion: 1 sticker

- *Social cohesion will help bring society together despite differences to solve problems and include those with or without differences.*

Place: 7 stickers in total

Access to facilities: 1 sticker

- *So we can come to youth club to play pool and PS4*

Facility assets: 2 stickers

- *So that we can really enjoy the time we spend here*
- *To give us new experiences and new things to do*

Reducing carbon: 2 stickers

- *Because of pollution the whole world is struggling, we need to stop it before it's too late*
- *We should have solar panels in every community centre, people are constantly using the centres and therefore the electricity being used is increased*

Design of facilities: 2 stickers

- *To help maintain facilities so that they may last longer*
- *To attract more people*

Progress: 1 sticker in total

Future scoping: 1 sticker

- *So that you can make a significant change to make the world better for people*

Do we have the right outcome statements?

In two groups (Eid Extravaganza and Children and Young People group) participants were also asked to feedback if they think we have the right outcome statements in the

discussion paper (NB feedback was not obtained on the progress outcome statement):

Outcome Statements:

People

"A more equitable and supportive society is needed – COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis have further increased inequalities."

- A majority felt we have got this right. Some participants fed back that they would like to see specifics on supporting communities regarding social and economic barriers and some commented that they word equitable could be confusing. Some participants did not understand what is meant by 'cost of living'.

Pride

"We want everyone in Oxford to feel a sense of local pride, be free to be who they are and to feel like they belong"

- A majority feel we have got this outcome statement right. One comment related to making locals feel like we are on their side and not just concerned with the students who bring in money to the universities.

Place

'The Council has a crucial role in creating community spaces that help people thrive, from parks and public spaces, through to community & leisure centres"

- About half of participants felt we have got this right. Some commented that more information is needed on what's on offer for them, specifically those with no recourse to public funds (NRFPF) and those who have language barriers.

Asylum Welcome report

As part of these strand 3 conversations, Asylum Welcome were also asked to consult with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants living in Oxford to ensure that their needs and experiences as residents of Oxford are understood and included in the Thriving Communities Strategy. A report detailing their feedback and key findings can be found here.

Conclusions for Strand 3 discussions

Group discussions from this strand were slightly difference to the other strands in that a number of them took place in person during community events such as the Cutteslowe Play Day and the Eid Extravaganza. As a result participants were asked to participate in a number of interactive exercises such as putting stickers against which of the 4Ps they felt was most important.

Similar to feedback from stand 2, participants were often focused on the need to ensure community involvement and engagement and were also concerned that the strategy is as inclusive as possible.

With such a focus on community involvement and engagement it is perhaps not surprising that most people across the strand 3 groups felt that 'people' is the most important of the 4Ps.

Oxford City Council Business Intelligence Unit
Report date: 14th October 2022

Report prepared by Sally Hicks, Business Intelligence Unit Lead
Sally Hicks: shicks@oxford.gov.uk

Appendix 3 - Risk Register

Delivery of the Thriving Communities Strategy

As at: 21 November 2022

									Gross		Current			Target							
Ref	Title	Risk Description	Opp / Threat	Cause	Consequence	Risk Treatment	Date Raised	Owner	P	I	P	I	Score	P	I	Comments	Control / Mitigation Description	Date Due	Action Status	% Progress	Action Owner
	The Strategy is not effectively implemented	Insufficient clarity about the strategic scope, budget and roles and responsibilities for delivery	Threat	Overarching, high level strategy	Lack of clarity about delivery including scope, costs, governance etc. Tension if community priorities differ from Council priorities.	Avoid	02/11/22	Ian Brooke	4	4	3	3	9	2	2		Implement communications plan including easy read material, translated material, series of films etc. Co-create an action plan for delivery including agreeing governance, priorities, delivery mechanisms, roles and responsibilities, with clarity about the scope, budgets etc.	01/04/23	In Progress	10%	Ian Brooke
	Lack of officer/partner capacity/relevant skills affects delivery	Tighter budgets lead to insufficient officer/partner capacity/skills to nurture the relationships which are essential to a whole system approach	Threat	Insufficient capacity	Siloed working; delivery gaps/overlap/failure	Avoid	02/11/22	Ian Brooke	4	4	3	3	9	2	2		Action plan includes governance and delivery mechanisms which are structured to maintain relationships efficiently. Locality model embeds nurturing relationships and learning approach as business as usual.	01/04/23	In Progress	30%	Ian Brooke
	Overlap with other strategies	Confusion/overlap with partner strategies e.g. County	Threat	Other strategies unclear as still in development	Duplication or conflicting strategies	Avoid	02/11/22	Ian Brooke	3	3	3	3	9	2	2		Close collaboration with other strategic partners e.g. County and Partnership board to ensure strategic alignment and clear lines of demarcation	01/04/23	In Progress	10%	Ian Brooke
	Economic and political volatility	Cost of living or other crisis increases needs beyond available resources	Threat	Wider economic and political climate. Costs for the maintenance backlog will increase when we complete the new condition surveys, significantly above the 2018 figures used in the report.	Unmet needs - inequalities gaps widen - some communities not thriving	Reduce	02/11/22	Ian Brooke	4	4	4	4	16	4	3		Flexible delivery responding to continuous learning approach; building on pandemic response mechanisms; strong partnership networks and collaboration; joint funding bids; invest to save - e.g. carbon reduction; data and insight informs prioritisation; strong engagement across diverse communities	01/04/23	In Progress	10%	Ian Brooke
	Measuring success	Lack of clarity about success measures ref outcomes and what will change as a result	Threat	Time to plan and communicate	Lack of clarity about what success will look like	Avoid	02/11/22	Ian Brooke	4	4	3	3	9	2	2		Agree and use quantitative and qualitative data/insight including meaningful measurement e.g. storytelling/films/case studies etc. to understand the impact of the strategy and monitor whether its aims are being achieved.				

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Appendix 4

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Form to be used for the Full Equalities Impact Assessment

Service Area: Community Services	**Section:** Thriving Communities Strategy	**Date of Initial assessment:** N/A	**Key Person responsible for assessment:** Lucy Cherry	**Date assessment commenced:** 1 November 2022
Name of Policy to be assessed:	Thriving Communities Strategy			
1. In what area are there concerns that the policy could have a differential impact	***Race*** √	***Disability*** √	***Age*** √	
	Gender reassignment √	***Religion or Belief*** √	***Sexual Orientation*** √	
	Sex √	***Pregnancy and Maternity*** √	***Marriage & Civil Partnership*** √	
Other strategic/ equalities considerations	***Safeguarding/ Welfare of Children and vulnerable adults*** √ ***Housing and Homelessness Strategy*** √	***Anti-Racism Charter*** √ ***Oxford City Council Corporate Strategy*** √	***Mental Wellbeing/ Community Resilience*** √	
2. Background: Give the background information to the policy and the	A strategy development team and a partner steering group were in place pre-pandemic; this was paused to prioritise emergency support. The Leisure and Wellbeing, Community Centre, and Culture strategies all expired over the pandemic period. The Children and Young person Strategy expires in 2022. These strategies are targeting similar outcomes and there is a level of duplication. This provides an opportunity to create a more joined up strategy focused on *people, place, and pride.*			

perceived problems with the policy which are the reason for the Impact Assessment.	The Thriving Communities Strategy (Strategy) will outline the Council's approach to coordinating its preventative services with a focus on getting people active, reducing inequalities, and improving residents' quality of life. Vision: *"Oxford's diverse communities should be equipped, supported and enabled to tackle inequality and ensure everyone is able to play a full part in the life of our city" (Corporate Strategy, 2020-24).* The strategy is integral to the *social objective* of the national planning framework - *to support strong, vibrant, and healthy communities……. with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.* • Reduced physical inactivity • Improved health and wellbeing • Improved community cohesion • Reduced inequalities • More people taking part in positive activities • Provision of a well-coordinated and sustainable place offering. The Strategy: - • Is intended to create an innovative approach and to fit alongside other primarily strategies such as the Economic Development, Climate, and Housing strategies as a corner stone of the Council's policy framework. Part of this is our stronger relationships with communities – *doing with* and *not to* people. • Has the potential to enable a step change. It will bring together our work on creating vibrant places for people to come together, how the council works in communities, effectively engaging with communities and create a framework for how the Council works with communities.
3. Methodology and Sources of Data: The methods used to collect data and what sources of data	Time was invested in the design stage and to avoid fixing what the strategy will look like too early, as it is more likely to lead to meaningful change. By taking an exploratory approach with engaging communities at its core the Council was far more likely to find solutions to the complex systemic challenges such as reducing inequalities. An internal officer's project group was created and adopted a phased approach for delivery. The methodology framework included: - • Investigating • Involving

	• Engaging • Evaluating • Testing • Visibility. Prior to the pandemic: - • A robust exercise was undertaken to pull together all the leisure and culture data sets so the Council were better able to take a holistic insight-based approach to redesigning services so they can best contribute to the Council's priorities. • Officers joined up with the #WeAreOxford campaign and asked people who live, work, and play in Oxford about what they value and what they would like to see change (i.e., leisure, culture, and community services). Reaching out in several ways, including photography, paper surveys and approaching people in public spaces. • To ensure a place-based approach a strategy development steering group was established. The group included representatives from Community Services, Policy, Planning, the County Council, Health, the Audience Agency, Active Oxfordshire, Oxford University and the Local Enterprise Partnership, Leisure, Galleries, Libraries and Museums, Oxfordshire Public Health (amongst others). • Workshops were held with the Council's Housing, Homelessness and Energy and Natural Resources Teams to obtain further insight on how the Strategy can support the Council's housing, homelessness, and carbon reduction priorities. Workshops were held to understand the equality impacts of the strategy. They also helped to shape the community engagement to make sure the needs of people less likely to participate, or in more need of support were incorporated. Subsequently: - • Ten group discussions and one system wide conversation were held. Feedback from those discussions was analysed and used to shape the contents of a strategy discussion paper. • Initial conversations were held at strategic partnerships • A cross party steering group was implemented • There was and continues to be close working with the Business Intelligence Unit team to pick out key insights and evidence base to inform our work • A Poverty, Inclusion and Inclusive growth workshop took place with cross Council • A discussion paper was developed.

	The purpose of the discussion paper was to detail the Council's plan for how it sets out on a journey to build back fairer, work with communities and collaborate with partners to ensure that everyone in Oxford can access leisure, culture, and community opportunities and, just as importantly, to give community organisations, partners, members, and officers the opportunity to comment on our plans before the final Strategy was produced. Community organisations, partners, officers, and members from across the city and Oxfordshire were given opportunity to comment on the paper and prior to producing the strategy. These city-wide conversations focused on *connectivity, collaboration, reducing inequalities, and* helped inform on what had been learnt so far. A thematic analysis from the diversely represented City-wide conversions was completed by the Business Intelligence Unit. This report detailed findings from of feedback received during conversations. Participants were asked to feedback on the discussion paper. In some sessions they were asked to discuss specific questions, tailored according to the audience, in others a general discussion was had. A spreadsheet detailing which questions were discussed in each session can be found here. Comments made during these discussions were recorded and each one was assigned a 'theme.' As well as engaging with a wide range of diverse partners and external organisations, several other bespoke internal and external conversations took place: - • Leisure partnership Board • Children and Young Persons Partnership Board • Green and Blue Space Network • Cross Party steering group • EDI Steering Group • Policy Officers Group • Community Services: - Thriving Communities Forum and Locality Learning Sessions • A meeting was held with the Council's policy team to explore how other stands of engagement can be woven together – such as the Equalities Review, local area mapping and the Origins engagement.

	• A session was held with the County Council to explore links with their new cultural strategy; while they were are at an early stage, they were keen to find ways collaborate and avoid duplication. • Discussions have also been held with Cherwell, South and The Vale of White Horse District Councils to explore linkages with their new leisure strategy.
4. Consultation This section should outline all the consultation that has taken place on the EIA. It should include the following. • Why you carried out the consultation. • Details about how you went about it. • A summary of the replies you received from people you consulted. • An assessment of your proposed policy (or policy	An internal officer's project group and development steering group was established. Workshops with key internal and external partners were delivered. A session took place to assess the equality impact of the strategy. This helped to shape the community engagement to make sure the needs of people less likely to participate, or in more need of support are fully incorporated. The design of collaborative and community focused engagement used a variety of creative methods and capture individual experiences. Community groups were encouraged to support and lead parts of the engagement as it was viewed, they were likely to get more balanced feedback. <u>Design of City-wide conversations</u> Online and face to face group discussions were held over 27 sessions between July and September 2022. An email address (TCS@oxford.gov.uk) was also set up for feedback from partners and organisations. • *Strand 1* – Oxford Strategic Partnership, Oxford Stronger Communities Board, other individual high level strategic conversations. • *Strand 2* – Group discussions with internal and external groups including representatives from community and cultural partners as well as Oxford City Council members, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford Direct Services' Senior Team and the Council's Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion Steering Group. The purpose of this strand was to have conversations to update on progress, to work collaboratively, to help achieve an informed insight, and to make sure we are aligning work to achieve our aims. Nineteen strand 2 group discussions took place. • *Strand 3* - Group discussions with external groups. Discussions in this strand included a wide range of people. A number of these discussions took place in person during community events such as the Cutteslowe Play Day, the West Oxford Fun day event, the Northway summer holidays' activities programme and the Eid Extravaganza as well as with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum. This strand served the same purpose as strand 2 with locality based inclusive conversations that involved community-based stakeholders who may not have or been able to participate

<table>
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<td>options) in the light of the responses you received.
• A statement of what you plan to do next</td>
<td>in strand 2 or may have requested a bespoke conversation. Several strand 2 participants were asked if they would like to have a strand 3 conversation, but they preferred to take part in a strand 2 discussion as it enabled them to network with other groups and organisations. Asylum Welcome were also asked to conduct research with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants living in Oxford. In total 21 participants were consulted with in total and three in-person group consultation sessions as well as ten individual phone interviews.</td>
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<td>5. Assessment of Impact:
Provide details of the assessment of the policy on the six primary equality strands. There may have been other groups or individuals that you considered. Please also consider whether the policy, strategy or spending decisions could have an impact on safeguarding and / or the welfare of children and vulnerable adults</td>
<td>
<table>
<tr><td>Race</td><td>Disability</td><td>Age</td></tr>
<tr><td>Positive impact</td><td>Positive impact</td><td>Positive impact</td></tr>
<tr><td>Gender reassignment</td><td>Religion or Belief</td><td>Sexual Orientation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Positive impact</td><td>Positive impact</td><td>Positive impact</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sex</td><td>Pregnancy and Maternity</td><td>Marriage & Civil Partnership</td></tr>
<tr><td>Positive impact</td><td>Positive impact</td><td>Positive impact</td></tr>
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The actions and methodology describe in the preceding sections were designed to provide far reaching and diverse conversations and give opportunity for the Council to be checked and challenge on findings and thoughts for shaping a final strategy.

A key focus of the design was to ensure the Council reached out with people and not to them; so that the strategy has the best possible positive impact for those most in need, and to help in reducing Oxford’s inequalities gap; including those with protected characteristics who have been most impacted by the pandemic.

As a result of this, our communities, strategic partners, community representatives, city organisations, cross council services, etc. have influenced changes to the strategy document, helped inform meaningful measurements, and enabled lived experiences to be incorporated into the final strategy document.</td>
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	It has also enabled the strategy document to have greater clarity, better format and language style to help our communities better understand what the Council is trying to do with and for them.
6. Consideration of Measures: This section should explain in detail all the consideration of alternative approaches/mitigation of adverse impact of the policy	<u>City-wide conversations</u> • The need to ensure that outcomes are measurable as a way of gauging the impact of the strategy. • The need to determine exactly what we are going to measure. • Ways to measure outcomes including frequent questionnaires and community focus groups. • The need for meaningful measurement. • Clarity (terminology and jargon, length of the discussion paper/ strategy, easier to read and to understand, need for the strategy to be accessible, and how, for residents whose first language is not English, this could be a barrier. ***People****:* - "A more equitable and supportive society is needed – COVID and the cost-of-living crisis are further increasing inequalities." ***Pride***: - "We want everyone in Oxford to feel a sense of local pride and, be free to be who they are and feel like they belong." ***Place***: - "The Council has a crucial role in creating community spaces that help people thrive, from parks and public spaces, through to community and leisure centres." ***Progress***: - The outcomes within the strategy are shared with partners, and where possible we have adopted shared measures, we only want to measure things that make a difference and have a broad impact. The ultimate outcomes we want to achieve are for everyone in Oxford to; ❖ Have a great customer experience when using Oxford's places and spaces where they feel safe and enjoy themselves. ❖ Be able to positively contribute to society; feel connected, accepted, and respected for who they are. ❖ Meet the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines for physical activity (especially children and young people). ❖ Have at least three friends they can call on for support.
	<u>Thematic Analysis Recommendations</u>

6a. Monitoring Arrangements: Outline systems which will be put in place to monitor for adverse impact in the future and this should include all relevant timetables. In addition, it could include a summary and assessment of your monitoring, making clear whether you found any evidence of discrimination.	Below details recommendations for the structure, development and implementation of the strategy based on the identified themes from our City-wide conversations: Structuring the strategy report: - • Terminology and jargon – consider the terminology and jargon used. • Language – consider having versions of the strategy in other languages to maximise engagement from all communities. • Length – Consider creating an easy read summary version of the final strategy. • Visuals –Use of visuals and/ or audio visuals to help diversely embedding the strategy • Accessibility –ensure that the final strategy paper is accessible to all and consider how the strategy will be disseminated so that it reaches everyone. • Links to other relevant strategies – ensure other relevant strategies are clearly linked to from within the strategy. What is missing? - • Digital Inclusion: The strategy should include plans for digital inclusion. • Volunteering: Mention volunteering opportunities across the city as well how the Council re we engage with voluntary organisations for the delivery of this strategy. Strategy ownership: - • Clear governance: Identify who owns the strategy and is responsible for its delivery. • Communities, partners, and service areas: All have roles to play in the strategy delivery and the Council's expectations of them need to be clear. Community involvement and engagement: - • Community involvement: Is crucial for understanding what communities need and value. Communities must be fully engaged for this strategy to be a success. Inclusion and diversity: - • All communities should to be included in the development and implementation of this strategy. • Important that we are inclusive in our approach and that we listen to the many voices of Oxford's diverse communities. • Put people front and centre of the strategy: When asked, more participants felt that 'people' is the most important of the 4Ps than any other (People, Place, Pride and Progress) • Listen to communities: Demonstrate in the final strategy that the Council have listened to communities and that Council will do this ongoing (and how); builds trust.

	• Empower communities: Detail how the Council we will empower communities to make change themselves. Partnership working and joining up strategies: - • Identify and work with partners: Partnership working will be crucial to deliver this strategy and, just as importantly, the Council will need to work with partners to agree what their roles are in helping us to achieve the strategy's aims. • Aligning strategies: Ensure that the strategy is aligned with other strategies where relevant, both internally and externally, to ensure consistency implementing and delivering. • Delivery plan: Layout exactly how the plan is going to be delivered. Communication and what makes this strategy different: - • Be clear how the strategy and its aims will be communicated. • Highlight what will be different this time and how this will ensure that the strategy is a success. Measuring outcomes and success: - • Measuring success and impact: Consider how the impact and success of the strategy is going to be measured - 'meaningful measurement.' • Data and insight: Should be used ongoing to understand the impact of the strategy and if its aims are being achieved. Use both quantitative and qualitative data including case studies and storytelling. • Adaptable and flexible: Ensure that we are adaptable and flexible in implementing and embedding this strategy. • Continual learning: Important to be flexible and adapt if necessary. Effectively and efficiently apply learnings, review was continuously and demonstrate successes ongoing. The impact of the strategy will be monitored via qualitative and quantitative monitoring including: - • Using numbers so we are aware of how many people use our services. • Using metrics to demonstrate value for money. • Monitoring progress against our Thriving Communities Action Plan and producing an annual update. • Use techniques such as collecting and publishing the stories of our communities and their lived experience of living in the city, case studies and videos to bring outcomes to life and learn from people's lived experiences. • Celebrating success.
7. Date report signed off:	21st November 2022

8. Conclusions: What are your conclusions drawn from the results in terms of the policy impact	The conclusion is to reflect on the recommendations in the City-wide conversation thematic analysis report and where relevant, viewed as a priority for the needs of communities, and are feasible to adopt the report recommendations into the final Thriving Communities Strategy document and action delivery plan.				
9. Are there implications for the Service Plans?	YES	**10. Date the Service Plans will be updated**	April 2023	**11. Date copy sent to Equalities Lead Officer**	Mili Kalia
.**13. Date reported to Scrutiny and Cabinet:**	INSERT	**14. Date reported to Scrutiny Committee:**	INSERT	**12. The date the report on EqIA will be published**	INSERT

Signed (completing officer) L Feheny

Signed (Lead Officer) I.Brooke

Please list the team members and service areas that were involved in this process:

Ian Brooke – Head of Community Services
Mili Kalia – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead, Community Services
Lucy Cherry – Leisure and Performance Manager
Paula Redway – Culture and Community Development Manager

Oxford City Council
Thriving Communities Strategy
2023 to 2027

Easy read booklet

December 2022

What is in this booklet

Page 3 Who we are and what we do

Page 4 What this strategy is about

Page 5 How we made the strategy

Page 6 Important things we know

Page 7 What people told us is important

Page 8 How we will work to make Oxford a better, healthier and fairer city

Page 9 Words we have used (part 1)

Page 10 Words we have used (part 2)

Page 11 How to contact us for more information

Who we are and what we do

We are **Community Services**, part of Oxford City Council. We run some **public services** for people in Oxford.

This includes services like:

- **parks**
- **leisure centres**
- **community centres**
- **the Museum of Oxford**

We want to make Oxford a **better, healthier** and **fairer place** for people.

What this strategy is about

Making the most of our **community facilities** like parks, leisure and community centres.

Preventing people from **getting sick.**

Helping people to **lead healthy lives.**

Making everyone in Oxford to **feel safe and part of the community.**

Making Oxford **fairer and reducing the gap between rich and poor**.

How we made the strategy

We started work on our **strategy** before Covid in 2020.

We restarted in 2022.

We **wrote our thoughts** in a paper for people **to think about and we asked them for their views.**

We **talked to:**

- **many people in Oxford**
- **community groups**
- **other council's and healthcare providers**

Important things we know

Some people are **less likely** to be **physically active**, such as:

- people living in **disadvantaged areas**
- people with **disabilities**

Money spent on community facilities and activities creates many benefits for people.

Oxford has many **community facilities** like parks and leisure centres, but **not everyone feels able to use them.**

What people told us is important

Building trust and working with all communities in Oxford.

Communicating clearly.

Making **spaces welcoming.**

How we will work to make Oxford a better, healthier and fairer city

We will **communicate better**.

Live Well Oxfordshire

We will add **community and wellbeing activities** to the Live Well Oxfordshire website.

We will help people **to work together**.

We will make our **community facilities** easier for people to use.

We will to all we can to make it **easier** for people to be **active and live a healthy life**.

Words we have used (part 1)

Community facilities

- Places that are usually open to the public and include leisure centres, community centres and arts or culture venues.

Community and wellbeing activities

- Activities that support good physical or mental health and feeling part of a community.

Community Services

- This is a part of Oxford City Council that works to make sure people live happy and healthy lives.

Words we have used (part 2)

Physically active

- This means people moving their bodies and can include things like walking, cycling and other activities that get you moving.

Public services

- These are important services that may be run by councils and includes things like parks, leisure centres and community centres.

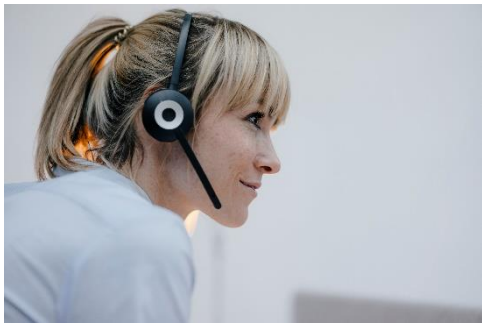
Strategy

- A plan that shows what we will do and how we will do it.

How to contact us for more information

Email

tcs@oxford.gov.uk



Phone

01865 249811

Website

www.oxford.gov.uk/tcs

To:	**Council**
Date:	**30th January 2023**
Report of:	**Head of Business Improvement**
Title of Report:	**Flexible Working / Hybrid Working Policy**

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To approve the Hybrid Working Policy
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services
Corporate Priority:	None
Policy Framework:	None

Recommendation(s): That Council resolves to:
1. To approve the Hybrid Working Policy.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Hybrid Working Policy
Appendix 2	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 3	Risk Assessment

Introduction and background

1. This policy is needed to formalise the working practices that have developed since the start of the pandemic. The Council has moved away from office-based working to a standard practice of hybrid working.
2. Not all roles are covered by the policy as there are a number of roles that may only be carried out in an office base and this includes Town Hall roles, for example. Hybrid working covers all back office roles. It also covers roles that have face-to-face contact with customers and businesses or work on site at different locations, as any desk-based activities can be carried out at home.

3. The proposed Hybrid Working policy will replace the current Homeworking Policy.

Hybrid Working Policy and Case for Change

4. The basis of this new policy is the existing Homeworking policy. The latter operated on the basis that some, but not all, work could be carried out at home. There was a requirement to attend work in an office location periodically. This is what we now refer to as hybrid working. Travel expenses could not be claimed for travel. A home working allowance was paid to circa 12 staff (who had an agreement to work from home) and this payment is protected for this group. We have not extended this allowance to others who have worked from home on a regular basis since the pandemic. This was agreed as part of the current pay agreement. The payment of the allowance will be reviewed in 2024 when the current pay agreement ends. It will be discussed as part of future pay negotiations. The expectation that employees will attend work in Oxford remains in the Hybrid Working Policy with frequency driven by job need. Travel expenses will not be paid.
5. The Homeworking policy described different categories of worker and this has been retained but with updated descriptions. These work profiles acknowledge the range of working arrangements and can be used in communications and to determine equipment needs.
6. Manager and employee responsibilities are made clear and health and safety considerations are included.
7. Where employees are unable to work from home, they have an office base and this will continue with the move to the Town Hall.
8. It is important to address this current policy gap so that policy reflects actual working practices, supports consistent approaches across roles with the same demands and provides clear information to employees.
9. Unison and Unite have been consulted and are happy with the policy.
10. Other options have not been considered as the aim here is to formalise existing practice.

Legal implications

11. Legal advice has been taken on the approach as we do not plan to update existing contracts of employment but will use policy to confirm current, established practice. Unison and Unite are happy with this approach and, in fact, Unison would prefer that we did not write to individuals as they believe this may raise concerns that we are changing something.

Financial implications

12. There is no financial cost to agreeing this new policy. Financial savings and income have resulted from a reduction in office space.

Health and Safety

13. Health and safety considerations are included. This policy will be supported by the roll out of DSE assessments and training later this year.

Level of risk

14. This is a low risk decision with no impact on residents. The revised policy will ensure that the Council complies with its legal requirements. The absence of the policy would increase the risk of action against the Council if individual managers adopt different working practices and this is seen to be unfair.

Equalities impact

15. A completed Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix 2. The policy and practice may disadvantage some groups, particularly around access to equipment, but this has been addressed.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

16. The policy has led to a reduced office footprint and Carbon reduction for the Council. Employee household carbon emissions may have increased.

Report author	Gail Malkin
Job title	Head of People
Service area or department	Business Improvement
Telephone	01865 252689
e-mail	gmalkin@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

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Hybrid Working Policy

Updated home working policy

Contents

1 Policy statement 2
2 Scope 2
3 Context and Definitions 2
4 Roles and Responsibilities 3
5 Visits to the employee's home 3
6 Equipment and materials 3
7 Expenses 4
8 Health, safety and well-being 4
9 Insurance 5
10 Contract 5
11 Monitoring and Review 5

1. Policy statement

Hybrid working is where an employee generally works from two locations, one of which could be home. We have roles that can be carried out mostly from home with some meetings happening in a Council office, we have roles that visit numerous locations with work also carried out at a regular office or home base and we have community-based roles that may also include work at a different location.

We recognise there are benefits for the Council and employees in hybrid working. This includes cost and carbon savings through a reduced office footprint, recruitment of talent from a wider pool of people and greater flexibility and autonomy for employees in managing work demands and other commitments.

Hybrid working will not be open to all roles. Where a job role needs to be carried out in full at a Council location, other location or in the community then there will be no opportunity for hybrid working.

Where hybrid working can be offered, the time working from a home location and in a work location will be determined by business or job need. Employees will be expected to attend a work location to support relationship building, communication, problem solving, planning, training and induction.

Employees will have two work locations: Oxford and home. Work in Oxford may be at one or more sites depending on the role.

2. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all employees working in a hybrid way.

3. Context and Definitions

We have a number of different work profiles, covering all employees.

Work profiles

Four types of work profile are described below. These are broad definitions. Individuals will agree working arrangements with their manager as job needs will vary, along with individual needs and preferences. Although the frequency of work time in Oxford will be different from role to role, what is certain is that we believe it is important for all employees to attend work in Oxford.

There will be a consistent approach for roles with similar demands.

Fixed
Work is carried out at a specific location because of job requirements, personal choice or personal need. There is one work location at a Council building or office and this is fixed. There is no hybrid working and so this policy does not apply to this group.

Flexible Office
The majority of work can be carried out at any suitable work location and this can include home. There will be a need to attend Oxford to carry out service delivery

and/or attend meetings or events where it is best to do them in person. Time in a Council office can be used to stay in touch or collaborate with colleagues and, for some roles, it will be necessary to meet customers, external partners or contractors at a work location.

Field Based
Work is carried out off site at different locations but there is a need for a work space at a suitable location for desk-based work, which could be at home or at an office location.

Community Based
Work is carried out in community settings with regular in-person contact with customers, partners, contractors and team members. There is still a need for access to a work space which could be in the community or at home depending on the job.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Employees

- You must complete a DSE (display screen equipment) work station assessment for your main work base and talk to your manager if you need to make any adjustments or need any equipment.
- You will need to comply with our data protection policy whether working at a Council location or at another work base, such as home.
- You will need to make clear your working hours and update your manager and team if you need to change your normal pattern of work.
- Will take a break each day for at least 30 minutes after 6 hours of consecutive work
- Will have a daily rest break of at least 11 continuous hours, between stopping work one day and beginning work the next day

Managers

- Adopt a flexible and inclusive approach to managing teams and individuals to achieve an effective balance to meet both job requirements and individual needs and preferences.
- Set up processes to support effective communication and the setting of clear and achievable objectives and targets, making sure that working arrangements are reviewed and adapted as necessary.

5. Visits to the employee's home

As a condition of home working the Council may wish to attend an employee's home for health and safety reasons, such as to follow up on a risk assessment for example, or to install, maintain and service its equipment. Visits would only occur where necessary and practicable by advance agreement with the employee.

6. Equipment and materials

Equipment will be provided for employees to carry out work at home or in the field in line with job requirements. This may include office furniture such as a suitable chair.

It is the employee's duty to ensure that proper care and security is taken of any equipment and materials provided.

Employees must return all equipment to a Council office on leaving employment unless it is not practicable, for example with office furniture.

On termination of the employee's employment for any reason, the Council may wish to attend an employee's home having exhausted all other options on reasonable notice and retrieve all equipment and documents belonging to the Council that have not already been returned.

Anyone working at home must not allow members of their family or third parties who are not employed by the Council to access or use the Council's equipment.

7. Expenses

The Council will not pay any allowance for employees to work from home except to those who have a protected entitlement to a homeworking allowance as at 31st March 2022 as outlined in the collective agreement effective from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2024. The working from home allowance will be reviewed as part of the Pay and Grading Review.

As the Council provides a mobile phone for employees who are mobile or who work from more than one location, it will not be possible to claim the cost of calls on other devices.

Travel expenses may not be claimed for travel to an individual's work base in Oxford even if the majority of work is carried out at another location such as home. All employees are required to attend work in Oxford when required and this is not classed as a business expense.

8. Health, safety and well-being

The Council is committed to ensuring safe and healthy working practices at any work location. Managers are required to ensure that this includes the home if used for working and they must make sure:

- all work equipment and systems of work in the employee's home are safe
- all articles and substances for work use are handled and stored safely
- a home working DSE self-assessment of the employee's working environment is conducted
- information and training on the safe use of equipment, including display screen equipment, is provided
- additional risk assessments are carried out (when required) in respect of the work the employee is carrying out
- incidents, accidents and near misses are reported

9. Insurance

The home worker is responsible for checking that all home and contents insurance policies provide adequate cover for working from home.

The Council will not meet any additional insurance costs.

10. Contract

Where hybrid working is offered and accepted, this policy forms part of the contract of employment.

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be kept under regular review to ensure it continues to be effective and up to date.

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Form to be used for the Full Equalities Impact Assessment

Service Area: **Business Improvement**		**Section:** **People Team**	**Date of Initial assessment: 3 October 2022**	**Key Person responsible for assessment: Gail Malkin**	**Date assessment commenced:** **3 October 2022**
Name of Policy to be assessed:			Internal Hybrid Working Policy		
1. In what area are there concerns that the policy could have a differential impact			***Race***	***Disability***	***Age***
			Gender reassignment	***Religion or Belief***	***Sexual Orientation***
			Sex	***Pregnancy and Maternity***	***Marriage & Civil Partnership***
Other strategic/ equalities considerations			***Safeguarding/ Welfare of Children and vulnerable adults***	***Mental Wellbeing/ Community Resilience***	
2. Background: Give the background information to the policy and the perceived problems with the policy which are the reason for the Impact Assessment.			This policy formalises the working practices that have been in operation since the start of the pandemic. Hybrid working arrangements have the potential to have a greater, negative impact on: • employees with a disability who do not have adequate space at home for a work station with all necessary adaptations • people who find working from home affects their mental health due to more limited social interaction and reduced peer support and who may also have stress, anxiety or depression • younger employees who may live in shared accommodation and have to work from a		

	bedroom Equally, there are potential benefits for the same groups in that: • hybrid working cuts out travel that might be difficult, time consuming or stressful • a better work/ life balance can be achieved through travel time savings • travel costs are reduced **Workforce data** Disability: 10.7% of the workforce have declared a disability. This compares favourably with local population at 6.7%. Disabilities include visual and hearing impairments and stress and we have employees who are neurodiverse. Age: Average age is 45. The Council's workforce is fairly evenly split between the three decade age groups of 30 to 40, 40 to 50 and 50 to 60.
3. Methodology and Sources of Data: The methods used to collect data and what sources of data	Employee feedback through previous surveys. Discussions with managers to agree team principles that cover ways of working. Feedback from union representatives. More recent data collection has been as part of the Flexible Working Programme and includes: Consultation with staff took place in two Let's Talk events held on the 7th and 13th September 2022. Over 250 staff attended these sessions, representing a third of the workforce. Following these sessions staff were invited to contact the dedicated Future Workplace email address to raise any specific concerns about hybrid working arrangements and the move to the Town Hall. Staff networks were contacted during the w/c 12th September to ask if they would like to raise any concerns. Feedback was received from two members of the Women's Health Network and the

	Accessibility Champion/Advisor and two members of the LGBTQIAPls Network. This was specifically about the office arrangements at the Town Hall under a hybrid working policy. Meetings were set up with staff members who raised specific concerns at the Let's Talk sessions. Over 20 members of staff have raised EIA specific concerns via the dedicated email for the programme. A Future Workplace staff survey was launched on 30th September which gathered information about staff requirements when using the Town Hall under the hybrid working policy.
4. Consultation This section should outline all the consultation that has taken place on the EIA. It should include the following. • Why you carried out the consultation. • Details about how you went about it. • A summary of the replies you received from people you consulted. • An assessment of your proposed policy (or policy options) in the light of the responses you received. • A statement of what you plan to do next	As the policy is not new but is simply formalising existing practice, no new consultation has been carried out but hybrid working has been the subject of much organisation-wide consultation and discussion. Where concerns have been raised about hybrid working, measures have been put in place to meet individual, employee needs and management practices have been changed to offer better support to employees. More recently, individual and group needs have been re-assessed because of the move to the Town Hall. We have surveyed employees and taken feedback through staff engagement sessions and questions sent by email. A number of individuals have raised concerns not with hybrid working but with the arrangements at the Town Hall regarding desks and other equipment and building access. Individual needs are being accommodated for employees with a disability and those who wish to work only in an office because of practical issues or because of mental health reasons. The next staff survey in November will provide an opportunity for further feedback on hybrid working.

5. Assessment of Impact: Provide details of the assessment of the policy on the six primary equality strands. There may have been other groups or individuals that you considered. Please also consider whether the policy, strategy or spending decisions could have an impact on safeguarding and / or the welfare of children and vulnerable adults	<table><tr><td>**Race** Neutral</td><td>**Disability** Negative</td><td>**Age** Neutral</td></tr><tr><td>**Gender reassignment** Neutral</td><td>**Religion or Belief** Neutral</td><td>**Sexual Orientation** Neutral</td></tr><tr><td>**Sex** Neutral</td><td>**Pregnancy and Maternity** Neutral</td><td>**Marriage & Civil Partnership** Neutral</td></tr></table> Some employees with a disability are negatively impacted because under hybrid working as they do not have a dedicated work space when attending an office.
6. Consideration of Measures:	Measures taken include: providing height-adjustable desks and chairs as standard, accommodating individual needs such as locker space for storing equipment and medication, designing a new DSE

This section should explain in detail all the consideration of alternative approaches/mitigation of adverse impact of the policy	assessment and training package and allowing individuals to work in an office only if home is not suitable or if an individual's mental health is at risk. People management practices have been adapted to provide more regular "check-ins" and team social interaction to make up for lost social interaction from regular face-to-face contact. Employees have been able to order office equipment needed for home working.
6a. Monitoring Arrangements: Outline systems which will be put in place to monitor for adverse impact in the future and this should include all relevant timetables. In addition it could include a summary and assessment of your monitoring, making clear whether you found any evidence of discrimination.	We will continue to communicate with staff through the Future Workplace communication channels and keep the programme email established so staff can make contact regarding specific concerns.
7. Date reported and signed off by City Executive Board:	
8. Conclusions: What are your conclusions drawn from the results in terms of the policy impact	The policy impact has both positive and negative consequences but the positive benefits outweigh any challenges and staff are very happy with hybrid working and have not asked for a change to working arrangements. The current cost of living crisis has impacted the savings being made through less frequent travel but time savings from reduced commuting are also very valuable. We have accommodated individual needs whether at home or in the office to minimise any challenges from hybrid working.

9. Are there implications for the Service Plans?	NO	**10. Date the Service Plans will be updated**	N/A	**11. Date copy sent to Equalities Lead Officer**	N/A

.**13. Date reported to Scrutiny and Executive Board:**		**14. Date reported to City Executive Board:**		**12. The date the report on EqIA will be published**	N/A Internal

Signed (completing officer) Signed (Lead Officer)

Please list the team members and service areas that were involved in this process:

Gail Malkin, Head of People
Isaac Durno, Flexible Working Programme Manager
Elaine Swapp, Principal Regeneration Officer

Appendix 3

Employment Policies and Procedures: Hybrid Working Policy - Risk Register

					Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current		Residual		Comments	Controls				
Title	Risk description	Opp/ threat	Cause	Consequence			I	P	I	P	I	P		Control description	Due date	Status	Progress %	Action Owner
Employment Policies and Procedures	Failure to provide a suite of policies that comply with employment legislation and that are fit for purposes of improving performance and managing risk	T	Managers not equipped with revised policies and procedures	Effective employment policies not implemented consistently and fairly appllied	01.07.22	Helen Bishop	3	3	3	2	2	2	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	ongoing	open	80	Helen Bishop
Employment Policies and Procedures	Loss of opportunity to have a suite of poliicies that implement good practice	O	Managers not equipped with revised policies and procedures	Effective employment policies not implemented consistently and fairly appllied	01.07.22	Helen Bishop	3	3	3	2	2	2	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	onging	open	80	Helen Bishop
Employment Policies and Procedures	Damage to Council's reputation	T	Failure to comply with legislative requirements	Effective employment policies not implemented consistently and fairly appllied in line with legislation	01.07.22	Helen Bishop	3	3	3	2	2	2	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	ongoing	open	80	Helen Bishop

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To:	**Council**
Date:	**30th January 2023**
Report of:	**Head of Business Improvement**
Title of Report:	**Disciplinary Procedure**

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To approve the Disciplinary Procedure
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services
Corporate Priority:	None
Policy Framework:	None

Recommendation(s): That Council resolves to:

1. Agree the Disciplinary Procedure and Guidance with immediate effect;
2. Authorise the Head of Business Improvement or their designated deputy to make revisions to the Disciplinary Procedure as required to correct any clerical errors or comply with changes to law;
3. Authorise the Head of Business Improvement or their designated deputy to make minor revisions to the Disciplinary Guidance to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Disciplinary Procedure
Appendix 2	Disciplinary Guidance
Appendix 3	Risk Register
Appendix 4	Equalities Impact Assessment

Introduction and background

1. There has been a full review of the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, which has been in place for ten years. An updated Disciplinary Procedure and separate guidance have been agreed and are presented for approval.

Disciplinary Procedure and Guidance

2. The documentation has been reformatted to have one procedure document and one guidance document. These replace a single policy and procedure document and three separate supporting documents on conducting investigations, disciplinary meetings and appeal meetings.
3. The new procedure details all of the core policy elements of the disciplinary procedure including constitutional requirements. The guidance is a comprehensive step by step guide on process to inform both employees and managers.
4. Feedback received from managers and trade union representatives has been taken into account in developing the new Disciplinary Procedure and separate guidance.
5. The new documentation is intended to be more user friendly and takes account of changes in working practices. It is also in line with ACAS (Arbitration, Conciliation and Advisory Service) guidance on disciplinary procedures.
6. The procedure has been simplified by enabling line managers to undertake investigations whenever appropriate, instead of having two separate roles of Commissioning Manager and Investigating Officer. The appeals process has also been simplified.
7. The informal process has been strengthened to encourage more use of early informal intervention to prevent unnecessary escalation of cases.
8. The current documentation indicates that a Councillor must always be present to observe appeal hearings against dismissal. The Constitution wording is that they may be invited to observe the meeting. The new documentation confirms that an Elected Member may attend to observe the meeting if this is requested by the employee.
9. Trade Unions have agreed all of the proposed changes.
10. The proposed changes do not affect the constitutional rules in relation the disciplinary procedures for staff in certain senior officer roles.
11. Training on the new procedure will be provided to managers.
12. The Head of Business Improvement or their delegated deputy will only make changes to the Disciplinary Procedure if they are necessary to correct any clerical errors or to comply with changes in law. The approval of Council will be sought for any other changes, after consultation with Unions.
13. The Head of Business Improvement, or their delegated deputy may, however, make minor changes to the Guidance. Such changes will be to ensure that the practical steps which underpin the Procedure continue to be fit for purpose as working practices evolve and change, including any changes to law. Unions will be consulted on changes as appropriate.

14. Some minor changes have been made to the Procedure and Guidance to improve clarity following comments and recommendations by Scrutiny Committee on 16th January 2023.

Financial implications

15. By having a legally compliant policy the risk of any financial compensation claims is minimised.

Legal issues

16. The Disciplinary Procedure forms part of the terms and conditions of employment for Council employees. By having legally compliant policies the risk of any legal challenge is minimised. Under employment legislation there is a requirement to provide employees with information about the disciplinary procedure.

Level of risk

17. A completed Risk Register is attached at appendix 3. The revised policy will ensure that the Council complies with its legal requirements and the supporting procedure/guidance will ensure consistency. The absence of the policy would increase the risk of legal action against the Council with associated financial and employee relations considerations.

Equalities impact

A completed Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix 4.

Report author	Gail Malkin
Job title	Head of People
Service area or department	Business Improvement
Telephone	01865 252689
e-mail	gmalkin@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

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People Team

Disciplinary Procedure

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of the Disciplinary Procedure is to help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain satisfactory standards of conduct and ensure employees are treated in a manner that is fair, sensitive, and consistent with Council values, employment law, and good management practice.

1.2 The policy should be read in conjunction with the Disciplinary Guide, which provides clear guidance on the steps that should be followed to ensure that allegations of misconduct are investigated in a timely and appropriate manner.

1.3 This policy is not contractual and may be amended.

2 Who this Policy Covers

2.1 The policy applies to all employees and workers. It does not apply to contractors, consultants, agency workers or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation. The Council's constitutional rules will be applied for senior officers where appropriate.

3 What this Policy Covers

3.1 This policy covers allegations of misconduct. It will not apply where other policies and procedures exist such as probation, performance or attendance and are more relevant. It may also be necessary to move between policies and procedures if it becomes apparent that is more appropriate to address the concerns under a different procedure. Both the Dignity at Work Policy and Safeguarding Allegations Policy operate in conjunction with this Policy.

3.2 Any complaints or grievance about any matters related to the disciplinary procedure will usually be addressed as part of the disciplinary process.

4 Informal Action

4.1 Cases of minor misconduct will be dealt with informally wherever possible. Informal warnings will be confirmed in writing.

5 Formal Action

5.1 The formal procedure will be applied if either the informal procedure has not resolved the misconduct issue or it is considered to be too serious to be dealt with informally.

5.2 It may be necessary to alter or restrict duties, or to suspend employees from work with pay during a disciplinary investigation. These measures are to protect the Council or ensure the smooth running of the disciplinary procedure and are in no way intended to indicate guilt on the part of the employee.

5.3 Allegations of misconduct will be investigated by an appropriate person in a way that is fair and proportionate to the seriousness and complexity. This will normally be the line manager, unless it is deemed inappropriate, in which case another investigator will be identified. Employees will be informed of the nature of the allegation(s) of misconduct and will have the opportunity to respond. The investigator will complete the investigation and then determine whether to take no further action, to issue an informal warning or determine that a disciplinary hearing is required.

5.4 Any conduct issues must be managed within a reasonable timeframe. The individual will be kept informed of progress and anticipated timescales.

5.5 Where cases relate to alleged criminal activity and are subject to external investigation (e.g. police, safeguarding teams) the disciplinary investigation may run concurrently. Where appropriate we may share investigation findings with external bodies e.g. police, safeguarding boards and the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

5.6 Employees will be informed of their statutory right to be accompanied at formal hearings by a Trade Union Representative or work colleague. Trade Union Representatives have the right to be represented by their District or Regional Officer.

5.7 A non-exhaustive list of examples of acts of misconduct and gross misconduct is attached at Appendix 1.

5.8 There are a number of sanctions that may be given. These will normally be either to take no action; issue an informal warning, give a first warning or a final warning; dismissal with notice or summary dismissal (without notice). Other actions may be recommended or sanctions applied, if considered appropriate.

5.9 Employees cannot be dismissed for a first instance of misconduct except in the case of gross misconduct, where the penalty may be dismissal without notice.

5.10 Where dismissal may be an outcome the disciplinary hearing will be chaired by a Head of Service or more senior officer.

5.11 Employees may appeal the disciplinary decision within seven calendar days of receiving the outcome letter. They will be advised of this right and will be required to explain the reason for their appeal.

5.12 At the employee's request, an Elected Member may attend an appeal meeting to observe proceedings but not participate in the decision.

5.13 The appeal hearing decision is final.

6 Confidentiality

6.1 All parties involved in the disciplinary procedure must ensure that they maintain confidentiality and any breach of this will be treated as potential misconduct.

7 The Role of the People Team

7.1 The People Team is responsible for advising on the fair, consistent application of the Disciplinary Procedure Policy. Managers must contact the People Team before starting the formal disciplinary procedure.

8 Monitoring and Review

8.1 This policy will be regularly reviewed in consultation with trade unions.

8.2 The policy will be monitored to ensure it continues to meet the requirement to treat all employees equally, fairly and without discrimination.

Appendix 1 – Examples of Misconduct

Examples of misconduct and gross misconduct for which disciplinary action is appropriate include (but are not limited to):

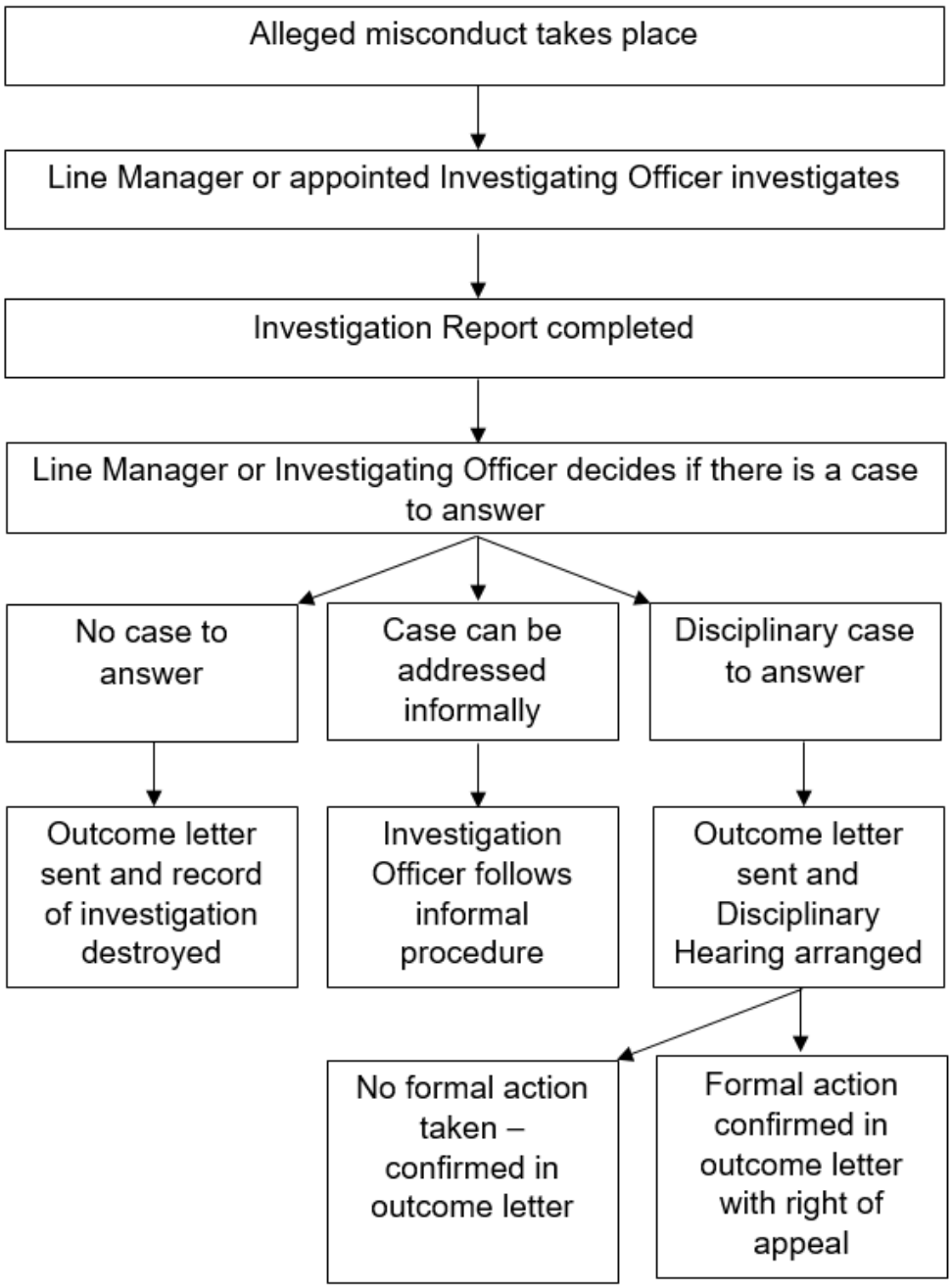
Misconduct

- Failure to follow a reasonable management request
- Lateness and poor timekeeping
- Breach of absence reporting procedures
- Insulting or offensive behaviour towards colleagues or customers
- A breach of Council policies including the Employee Code of Conduct
- Depending on the seriousness of the allegation the above actions may be considered to be gross misconduct

Gross Misconduct

- Theft, fraud or falsification of documents
- Physical violence or bullying
- Wilful damage to property
- Serious breach of health and safety rules
- Bringing the Council into disrepute
- Serious misuse of computer, email or internet facilities
- Unlawful discrimination or harassment

Appendix 2 – Overview of Disciplinary Procedure



People Team

Disciplinary Guidance

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How to use this guide

This guide has been written to accompany the Disciplinary Procedure, which sets out the process that employees and managers must follow.

This guide outlines the steps that should be taken to ensure that employees are treated fairly and consistently.

For any support regarding this process please reach out to the People Consultancy team at employeerelations@oxford.gov.uk.

1 What is Misconduct?

1.1 If an employee does something wrong that goes against Oxford City Council's policies or procedures, it could be considered to be misconduct. Some examples include:

- Lateness
- Refusing to do work

1.2 Some wrong doings could be considered so serious that they are considered to be 'gross misconduct'. Some examples include:

- Dishonesty
- Theft
- Fraud
- Physical violence

2 The Informal Process

2.1 If the act of misconduct is minor, the line manager should deal with this informally.

It is also possible to resolve cases informally where the manager is confident that the behaviour will improve straight away.

2.2 If handling informally, the line manager should have a conversation with the employee to:

- Confirm that the conduct is unsatisfactory
- Give them the opportunity to explain and discuss the reasons for what happened
- Clarify the conduct expected
- Explain that if their conduct doesn't improve the formal disciplinary procedure may be instigated

2.3 The line manager should then send the employee a written summary of the conversation and save a copy to their personal file.

2.4 A record of the informal conversation will be kept but will normally be disregarded after 6 months.

3 The Formal Process

Chief Executive, Directors, Chief Finance Officer (S151) or Monitoring Officer

3.1 If an investigation is into the actions of the Chief Executive, a Director, Chief Finance Officer or Monitoring Officer the procedure set out in the Constitution involving the Investigation and Discipline Committee must be followed as appropriate.

Suspension

3.2 Once it has been established that the formal process needs to be instigated, the first step is to determine whether or not suspension is appropriate.

3.3 It might be necessary to suspend an individual for all or part of the disciplinary investigation if:

- They are accused of gross misconduct where dismissal is a possible outcome
- It is not suitable for them to continue working
- The employee or others may be at risk
- There is a risk that the employee may influence witnesses or interfere with the investigation

3.4 Any decision to suspend must be approved by the relevant Head of Service or more senior officer and the People Consultancy team notified.

3.5 If suspension goes ahead a meeting must be arranged with the employee to set out:

- The allegations raised
- The decision to suspend
- The reason(s) for suspension
- Confirmation that pay will continue
- Confirmation that suspension is not assumption of guilt in any way
- The expected duration (suspension will normally be reviewed every 14 days and must last no longer than is necessary to investigate the allegations raised)
- The need to be contactable and available to attend any meetings at short notice
- That they must not visit their place of work or contact colleagues without the authority of their line manager
- That computer access may be removed
- Where annual leave has been pre-booked prior to suspension this may be taken
- That confirmation of their suspension will be sent in writing

3.6 The meeting should be held by a manager more senior than the employee involved (most likely the employee's line manager).

3.7 The employee can have a witness present to observe the meeting, but there is no right of representation. The witness should be a Trade Union

representative or work colleague. If the employee can't find a suitable witness, the suspension meeting can still go ahead.

3.8 A letter summarising the suspension discussion must be sent to the employee.

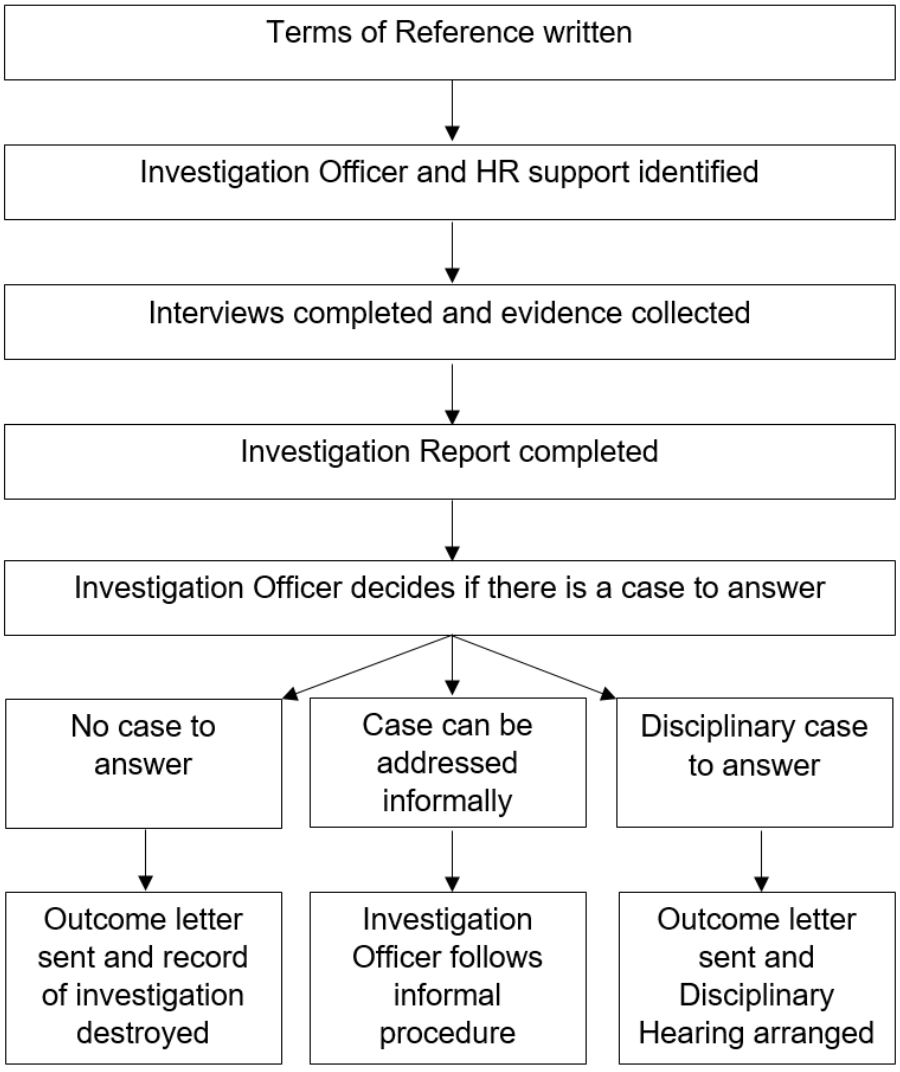
Disciplinary Investigation

3.9 If the alleged misconduct is more serious, or an informal or formal warning has not seen the improvement in behaviour required, it may be appropriate for a disciplinary investigation to be carried out. The aim of the investigation is to establish the facts about the alleged misconduct and determine whether there is a disciplinary case to answer.

3.10 The investigation process is solely for the purpose of fact finding but, if the Investigating Officer decides there is a disciplinary case to answer, it can lead to the formal process being instigated via a disciplinary hearing.

What is the investigation process?

3.11 This flowchart sets out the steps to be completed as part of the investigation process. More information on each step follows on.



What are the Terms of Reference?

3.12 This is a summary document which should be prepared by the Investigating Officer at the start of any investigation outlining:

- The allegations to be investigated
- Any relevant information/ evidence already gathered related to the case
- The facts that need to be established
- Timescales

Who should be the Investigating Officer?

3.13 The Investigating Officer should be someone who:

- Has not been involved in the alleged misconduct
- Is at least the same, if not more senior than the employee being investigated
- Has received training on conducting investigations

3.14 Usually it is most appropriate for the employee's line manager to carry out the investigation, but there could be situations where this isn't appropriate – in which case someone else should be identified. If the line manager considers it wouldn't be appropriate for them to carry out the investigation they should contact the People Consultancy Team for advice.

What is the role of the Investigating Officer?

3.15 The Investigating Officer has to gather the facts of the case by:

- Interviewing the employee about the alleged misconduct
- Interviewing any witnesses
- Obtaining any other relevant documentary evidence
- Preparing a report that contains all the relevant factual information, copies of statements received and any other relevant documentary evidence

What is the role of the person being investigated?

3.16 If being investigated, employees are expected to:

- Cooperate fully with the investigation process
- Provide names of relevant witnesses if asked
- Disclose documents when requested
- Attend meetings when required

Failure to do so could lead to further disciplinary action

What is the role of the People Consultancy Team?

3.17 A member of the People Consultancy Team can support the Investigating Officer throughout the disciplinary investigation.

3.18 They may attend any planned investigation interviews and keep the concerned employee updated on investigation progress.

3.19 They can help to ensure that the right process is followed in line with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and the ACAS guidance on the Disciplinary Procedure.

3.20 If the Investigating Officer would like support from the People Consultancy team they should contact employeerelations@oxford.gov.uk.

What is the role of the Accompanying Person?

3.21 Any employee being interviewed as part of a disciplinary investigation has the right be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work colleague.

3.22 If the employee concerned is a Union Representative, they must be offered the opportunity to involve a full time Union official, and with the employee's agreement the Council may contact the Union directly.

3.23 The employee is responsible for notifying their accompanying person of the interview. If there is no accompanying person the Investigating Officer must confirm with the employee at the beginning of the interview that they have chosen not to be accompanied.

3.24 It is not appropriate for an accompanying person to be someone who may be interviewed as a witness as part of the investigation.

3.25 If an employee's chosen companion isn't available at the proposed meeting time, the Investigating Officer must postpone the meeting to a time proposed by the employee provided that the alternative time is both reasonable and not more than five working days after the date originally proposed.

3.26 The accompanying person is allowed to:

- Set out the employee's case
- Raise any points related to the case (they may not respond to questions on the employee's behalf)
- Talk with the employee during the meeting
- Take notes
- Sum up the employee's case at the end of the meeting

What does the planning process look like?

3.27 It is really important to plan an investigation to make sure that the right people are involved and the necessary evidence is reviewed as quickly as possible.

3.28 When planning the investigation, the Investigating Officer should:

- Confirm which parts of the Code of Conduct or Council Policies may have been breached
- Notify the employee concerned in writing of the allegations made against them and that an investigation will be carried out
- Decide what information is needed and how it will be obtained

- Identify initial witnesses to be interviewed and the order that the interviews should be carried out

3.29 The Investigating Officer only has to do as much of an investigation as is reasonable. It is necessary to keep a sense of proportion as exhaustive detail is usually only needed where there is a particularly complex or major issue.

3.30 For more complex investigations, if necessary, the Investigating Officer should call for specialist help to clarify details. For example, an auditor or health and safety expert or a technical expert may be involved in any investigations that involve their specific knowledge base.

Written witness statements

3.31 Once the Investigating Officer has identified who they need to speak to as part of the investigation they need to decide whether to request a written statement or an interview (which could be held remotely or in person).

3.32 A written statement might suffice if:

- There are very specific questions or points to be clarified
- The witness is not an employee (e.g. customer or client)
- The witness is too ill to attend an interview

3.33 If requesting a written statement, the Investigating Officer should contact the employee via email:

- Confirming what they are investigating
- Enclosing a list of questions
- Requesting their written response to the attached questions
- Reminding them of the need to keep what they share confidential (but agreeing to their reviewing of the questions with a work colleague or union rep for support)
- Explaining what the statement will be used for
- Giving a deadline to respond by

Investigation interviews

3.34 Where the Investigating Officer needs to interview employees they should email a meeting invitation that:

- Confirms what they are investigating
- Provides meeting details (date, time, location and attendees)
- Outlines what to expect from the meeting
- Reminds them of the need to maintain confidentiality
- Outlines their right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work colleague

3.35 The Investigating Officer should consider the interviews as an opportunity to acquire information, not to interrogate or challenge employees.

3.36 Interviews should be conducted in a private setting, away from interruptions. There may be a need to make special provisions for witnesses whose first

language is not English, or who have disabilities, learning difficulties or other needs that can be reasonably accommodated. The interviews can be held remotely, but if it is more appropriate for it to take place in person this should be arranged.

3.37 The individual being investigated should be told who is being interviewed as part of the investigation and be given the opportunity to suggest anyone else who it may be helpful to interview.

At the start of the interview the Investigating Officer needs to confirm:

- Who is present
- The role of the accompanying person, if present
- That the employee is happy to continue if no accompanying person is present
- The format for the interview
- That notes will be taken
- That the interviewee will receive a copy of the meeting notes and will have the opportunity to make any amendments before they are finalised
- That their evidence may form part of a Disciplinary Hearing
- That all discussions during the interview are confidential and must remain so (in this context, confidential means that whilst the interview is held in a confidential setting, the content of the subsequent statement may be used as part of the formal disciplinary process or in an employment tribunal)

During the interview the Investigating Officer should:

- Make the purpose of the interview clear (fact finding)
- Use open questions (questions that don't have a yes or no answer) to gain an overall picture of events
- Query and probe in order to clarify and obtain accurate information
- Use closed questions (questions that have a yes or no answer) to obtain specific facts
- Avoid asking questions that attempt to guide the interviewee's answer

At the end of the interview the Investigating Officer should:

- Ask the interviewee if there is anything else that they would like to add including any witnesses they believe should be spoken to
- Explain that there may be a need to meet again depending on the outcome of any other interviews
- Confirm that a copy of the meeting notes will be provided

Taking notes

3.38 The Investigating Officer may want to have a member of the People Consultancy team with them at any interviews to take notes.

3.39 The notes should capture:

- The date and place of the interview
- Names of all people present

- A record of the discussion had
- Any refusal to answer a question
- The start and finish times, and details of any adjournments

3.40 The notes do not need to record every word that is said but they should accurately capture the key points of any discussion.

3.41 In exceptional circumstances an audio recording of meetings can be taken with the agreement of the interviewee. However, this can sometimes complicate the matter. Knowing they are being taped may be intimidating to an interviewee, making them less able to talk openly about the matter. It can also be time consuming because a transcript of the recording will need to be typed up so that it can be used as a witness statement.

3.42 After any interview, a copy of the meeting notes needs to be sent to the interviewee. The document should be saved with added protections so that only tracked changes can be added to prevent accidental editing. To do this on Microsoft Word go to File>Protect Document>Restrict Editing. The interviewee should then review the notes and confirm via email that the notes reflect the discussion had, or attach the edited document.

3.43 If the interviewee does not agree to the contents of the notes, they should make amendments using Track Changes. If the changes that the interviewee makes do not match the notes of the interviewer/note taker, a separate version should be saved and referred to in the Investigation Report.

Searching employee e-mails and computers

3.44 It may be necessary to search and monitor an employee's work e-mails as part of a disciplinary investigation. Any search must be carried out in accordance with the Council's Employee Data Monitoring Policy, and investigators should be mindful that any method used to extract information about suspected breaches of the disciplinary procedure must be lawful e.g. not contravene data protection legislation.

Suspected criminal or fraudulent activity

3.45 The Council does not have the authority to undertake a search of personal belongings; or detain an employee against their wishes.

3.46 If the Investigating Officer believes a criminal offence has been committed, the Council may notify the police. Further advice from the Head of People or the Monitoring Officer may be obtained.

3.47 Depending on the nature of the offence, it may appropriate to carry out an independent internal investigation, even if the police are involved in a criminal investigation. If employees are unable to or have been advised not to attend a disciplinary hearing or say anything about a pending criminal matter, the Council may make a disciplinary decision based on the available evidence.

3.48 In cases of alleged fraud, it is the responsibility of the Investigating Officer to notify the Section 151 Officer who will liaise with the Monitoring Officer and Head of People to determine whether the matter needs to be referred to the police.

Safeguarding allegations

3.49 Where there are any allegations of misconduct that may also be a safeguarding concern, the manager must refer to the Safeguarding Allegations Policy and Procedure and immediately notify the Head of Business Improvement.

3.50 The Head of Business Improvement will determine the most suitable course of action.

The Investigation Report

3.51 When all investigating has been done, the Investigating Officer will need to write up the findings in an Investigation Report. It should include the following:

Contents
- All pages should be numbered and the contents page should detail where each section of the report, including appendices, can be found.

Introduction and background
- Why the investigation was deemed necessary
- The terms of reference of the investigation
- Any other factors regarding the organisation or individuals which may be relevant at this stage for the reader to know
- Confirmation that the Investigating Officer was provided with a copy of the Disciplinary Procedure together with this document and that the process outlined in these documents was followed

Methodology
- A list of interviewees and their job titles
- A list of any other evidence reviewed

Investigation findings
- Interview findings – pulling out any things said in interviews relevant to the allegations
- Facts established – clarifying the facts against each allegations
- Summary of findings – outlining whether there is a disciplinary case to answer against each allegation and why

Conclusion & Recommendations
- State whether overall there is a disciplinary case to answer
- Highlight any mitigating factors identified
- Highlight any complexities or inconsistencies of the investigation

Appendices
Include the full versions of:
- Signed witness statements
- Finalised interview meeting notes
- Documents relevant to the investigation

Deciding whether there is a case to answer

3.52 When deciding where there is a disciplinary case to answer, the Investigating Officer should consider:
- Are there facts that prove the allegation(s) raised?
- Is there mitigation to justify the actions taken by the employee in question?
- What was the impact of the misconduct on other people and/or the organisation?

What happens next?

3.53 No case to answer:

- The employee should be notified in writing that no formal action will be taken and any recommendations highlighted to them
- Any record of the investigation should be destroyed

3.54 Informal Resolution:

- Where there is evidence of misconduct, but the Investigating Officer determines it was minor, this can be addressed informally
- The Investigating Officer should have an informal conversation with the employee and follow this up in writing (please refer to point 2.2)
- Any record of the investigation should be destroyed

3.55 Disciplinary case to answer:

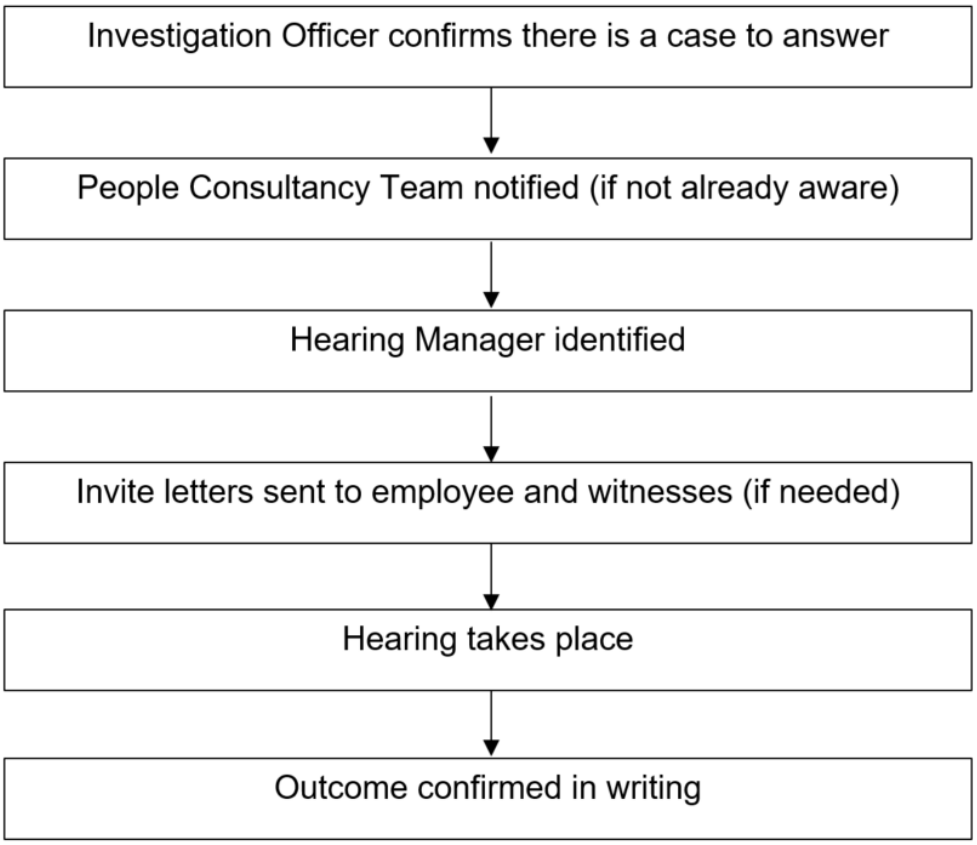
- The Investigating Officer must contact the People Consultancy team.
- The employee must be notified in writing of the allegations being taken forward to a disciplinary hearing along with details of what to expect next

4 Disciplinary Hearing

4.1 If there is a case to answer, someone from the People Consultancy team will help to identify an appropriate Disciplinary Hearing Manager.

What is the hearing process?

4.2 This flowchart sets out the steps to be completed as part of the disciplinary



hearing process. More information on each step follows on.

Who should be the Hearing Manager?

4.3 The Hearing Manager should be someone more senior than the employee concerned. It could be the Investigating Officer's line manager, provided they have not been involved in the investigation process.

4.4 If dismissal is a potential outcome, the Hearing Manager must be a Head of Service or above.

What is the role of the Hearing Manager?

4.5 The Hearing Manager's role is to chair a disciplinary hearing and:

- Review all relevant information
- Ask further questions of the employee concerned and any witnesses
- Consider any mitigation the employee wants to raise

4.6 At the end of the hearing, the Hearing Manager will decide whether formal action should be taken.

Possible outcomes

4.7 The Hearing Manager can decide:

a) To take no action
If the allegations are unfounded this might be appropriate.

b) First written warning
This is suitable if the conduct does not meet acceptable standards. This warning remains live for disciplinary purposes for 6 months.

c) Final written warning
If the misconduct is sufficiently serious, or if there is further misconduct prior to the expiry of a first written warning, a final written warning may be issued. This warning will remain live for disciplinary purposes for 12 months.

d) Dismissal
If there is further misconduct prior to the expiry of a final written warning, or if the misconduct constitutes gross misconduct, dismissal may be appropriate.

e) Other sanction
Other action short of dismissal can also be put in place if there is misconduct prior to the expiry of a final written warning for gross misconduct. This may include demotion, a financial penalty or transfer.

What is the role of the People Consultancy Team?

4.8 A member of the People Consultancy team will support the Hearing Manager through the process, advising on the planning process, the meeting itself and helping them when determining the most appropriate outcome.

4.9 The supporting People Consultant will prepare the disciplinary hearing pack.

4.10 They can help to ensure that the right process is followed in line with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and the ACAS guidance on the disciplinary procedure.

What is the role of the Accompanying Person?

4.11 The employee has the right be accompanied to the hearing by a Trade Union representative or work colleague.

4.12 If the employee concerned is a Union Representative, they should be offered the opportunity to involve a full time Union official, and with the employee's agreement the Council may contact the Union directly.

4.13 The employee is responsible for notifying their accompanying person of the interview. If there is no accompanying person the Investigating Officer must

confirm with the employee at the beginning of the interview that they have chosen not to be accompanied.

4.14 It is not appropriate for an accompanying person to be someone who has been involved in the investigation as a witness.

4.15 If an employee's chosen companion isn't available at the proposed meeting time, the Hearing Manager must postpone the meeting to a time proposed by the employee provided that the alternative time is both reasonable and not more than five working days after the date originally proposed.

4.16 The accompanying person is allowed to:

- Set out the employee's case
- Raise any points related to the case (they may not respond to questions on the employee's behalf)
- Talk with the employee during the meeting
- Take notes
- Sum up the employee's case at the end of the meeting

What does the planning process look like?

4.17 The People Consultant supporting the case will prepare a disciplinary hearing pack including:

- Investigation Report
- Investigation Appendices (including witness statements)

4.18 The hearing pack should then be shared with the Hearing Manager to review and identify any witnesses they believe will need to attend the hearing (for example if clarification is needed or further questions need to be asked).

4.19 Meeting invitations should then be sent out. The invite letter for the employee concerned should include:

- Date, time and location (meeting should take place within 5 and 10 working days of the letter)
- The right to be accompanied
- Details of any witnesses to be called during the meeting
- The deadline for submission of any additional documentation to be considered during the meeting (3 working days before the meeting)
- Option for them to request witnesses to attend the hearing (must give names at least 3 days before the meeting)
- An indication of potential outcomes
- A copy of the disciplinary hearing pack
- A copy of the Disciplinary Procedure

At the employee's request, a hard copy of the hearing pack can be posted to them.

4.20 The meeting invite for the witnesses should include:

- Date, time and location
- Confirmation that they won't be required to stay for the full meeting

- Confirmation of the reason they have been asked to attend (e.g. to provide additional clarification or respond to additional questions)

4.21 When planning the location, the Hearing Manager should think about the best place to hold the meeting. It should be held as privately as possible, preferably away from the normal work location in a suitable room where there will be no interruptions. Hearings should be held in person, but by exception they can take place remotely.

4.22 Consideration needs to be given to any adjustments needed for anyone with underlying ill health or language difficulties.

4.23 The Hearing Manager should consider the structure of the meeting and make a list of points to be covered and questions to be asked.

What happens in the meeting?

At the start of the hearing the Hearing Manager needs to confirm:

- Who is present
- The format for the meeting
- That notes will be taken
- That the employee will receive a copy of the meeting notes and will have the opportunity to make any corrections before it is finalised
- The role of the accompanying person, if they are present
- That the employee is happy to continue, if they do not have an accompanying person
- The witnesses scheduled to attend the meeting

During the hearing the Hearing Manager should:

- Clarify the allegations being considered
- Outline the possible outcomes
- Ask any questions relevant to the case
- Give the employee the opportunity to set out their case, ask questions, present evidence and call relevant witnesses
- Offer breaks as needed
- Adjourn the meeting to consider all information and determine the appropriate outcome
- Release witnesses from the meeting when they are no longer required

4.24 Throughout the meeting, the Hearing Manager should seek to:

- Establish the facts
- Establish whether the employee is prepared to accept that they may have done something wrong, then decide on the steps which should be taken to remedy the situation

4.25 If the employee submits late evidence or evidence on the day, it is up to the Hearing Manager to choose whether or not this is accepted as evidence during the meeting.

4.26 Witnesses attending a hearing are only there to respond to questions asked

by the Hearing Manager or to provide clarity on action taken.

4.27 It is possible that the hearing may not proceed smoothly – people may be upset or even angry. If the employee becomes upset or distressed it is important to allow time for them to regain composure before continuing. If the distress is too great to continue then the Hearing Manager should adjourn and reconvene at a later date.

4.28 During the meeting emotions may not be fully controlled, however abusive language or conduct should not be tolerated.

4.29 If an employee raises a grievance during the hearing, and it is related to the same case the Disciplinary Hearing Manager may need to adjourn the meeting in order that the grievance is dealt with first.

Taking notes

4.30 A member of the People Team will attend the hearing to take notes.

4.31 The notes should capture:

- The date and place of the hearing
- Names of all people present
- A record of the discussion had
- Any refusal to answer a question
- The start and finish times, and details of any adjournments

4.32 The notes do not need to record every word that is said but they should accurately capture the key points of any discussion.

4.33 An audio recording of the hearing can be taken with the agreement of the employees involved. However, this can sometimes complicate the matter. Knowing they are being taped may be intimidating to an employee, making them less able to talk openly about the matter. It can also be time consuming because a transcript of the recording will need to be typed up.

4.34 After the hearing, a copy of the meeting notes should be sent to the interviewee. The document should be saved with added protections so that only tracked changes can be added. To do this on Microsoft Word go to File>Protect Document>Restrict Editing. The employee should then review the notes and confirm via email that the notes reflect the discussion had, or attach the edited document.

4.35 If the employee does not agree to the contents of the notes, they should make amendments using Track Changes. If the changes that the employee makes do not match the notes of the interviewer/note taker, a separate version should be saved.

Failure to attend

4.36 If the employee is genuinely unable to attend the disciplinary hearing, e.g. because they are ill, they should be offered an alternative at a reasonable date and time.

4.37 If the accompanying person cannot make the hearing, the employee must propose another date and time which is no more than five working days after the day originally proposed.

4.38 If the employee fails to attend the rearranged meeting without good reason, a decision may be made on the available information but the Test of Reasonableness form must be completed with as much information as is available when coming to a decision. If this is the case, the employee must receive notification of the decision in writing and include confirmation that they have the right to appeal.

4.39 If the date of the meeting has to be changed for any reason other than the attendance of the employee or their representative, the employee must be offered a reasonable alternative date and time. It is important that the employee is notified as soon as possible of any delays.

Making the decision

4.40 The Hearing Manager needs to decide 'on the balance of probabilities' whether the employee carried out the alleged misconduct. This should be evidence based.

a) Not enough evidence
If there isn't enough evidence to come to a judgement about whether the allegation took place the case would be dismissed and all relevant paperwork destroyed.

b) Sufficient evidence
If the Hearing Manager concludes that on the balance of probabilities the alleged misconduct did take place they then need to consider the appropriate sanction to apply.

4.41 They need to think about:

- The seriousness of the misconduct
- Any mitigating circumstances raised
- The employee's previous unspent disciplinary record
- Treating all employees fairly and consistently. The penalty imposed in any previous case of a similar nature should usually be taken into consideration, although it should not be treated as a precedent. (The People Consultant supporting the case can help with this.)

4.42 At this stage, the Hearing Manager should complete the Test of Reasonableness Form.

Sharing the decision

4.43 When the Hearing Manager has determined the outcome, they must communicate this to the employee.

4.44 They must reconvene the meeting and confirm:

- What they considered when making their decision
- Whether they believe on the balance of probabilities that the alleged misconduct took place
- What their decision is
- The employee's right to appeal the decision (if outcome is a formal warning, dismissal or sanction short of dismissal)

4.45 Written confirmation of the decision must be given within 5 working days of the meeting, including confirmation of the employee's right to appeal.

The outcome letter

4.46 The outcome letter needs to outline the decision taken, and any points considered when coming to the final decision.

4.47 For no action taken it must also cover:

- Confirmation that all papers relating to the meeting will be destroyed
- Any recommendations or actions to be taken, with the owner and deadline for completion

4.48 For a first written warning it must also cover:

- The nature of the misconduct
- The change in behaviour required
- That a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change
- That a record of the warning will be kept but normally be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after 6 months
- The right to appeal

4.49 For a final written warning it must also cover:

- The nature of the misconduct
- The change in behaviour required
- That failure to improve may lead to dismissal
- That a record of the warning will normally be kept but disregarded for disciplinary purposes after 12 months
- The right to appeal

4.50 For procedural dismissal it must also cover:

- The nature of misconduct
- The reasons for dismissal
- The date that employment will end
- The notice that the employee is required to work, or if dismissal is effective immediately confirmation that they will be paid in lieu of their contractual notice

- Confirmation that any outstanding contractual entitlements such as holiday pay will be made to the employee
- The right of appeal

4.51 For summary dismissal it must also cover:

- The nature of misconduct
- The reasons for dismissal
- Confirmation that the dismissal is effective immediately and without notice
- Confirmation that any outstanding contractual entitlements such as outstanding holiday pay will be made to the employee
- The right of appeal

4.52 For other sanctions short of dismissal (demotion, financial penalty etc.) it must also cover:

- The nature of the misconduct
- That failure to improve may result in dismissal
- That a record of the sanction will be kept but normally be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after 12 months
- The right of appeal

5 Appeal Process

5.1 Employees have the right to appeal a disciplinary outcome if they consider:

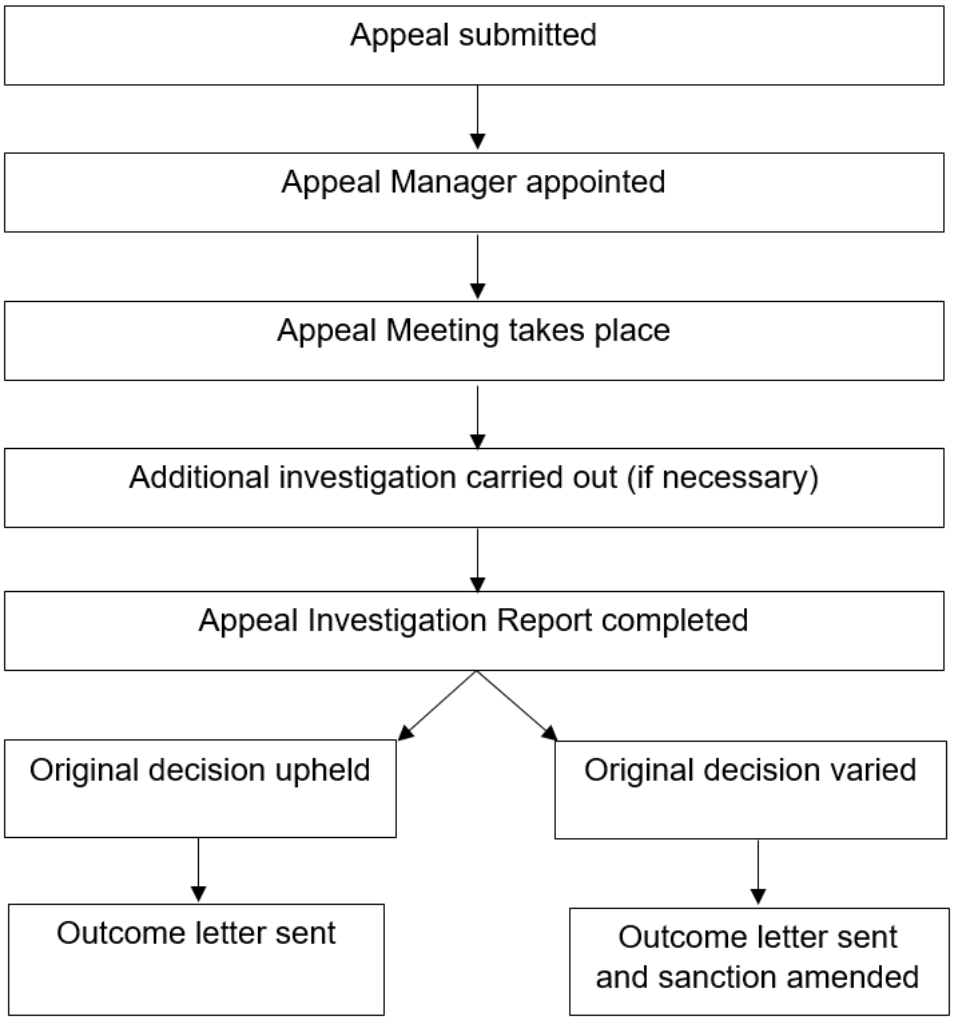
- The outcome is too severe
- Any part of the procedure was wrong or unfair
- They have new evidence to show

5.2 When an appeal is raised, the Council is required to review the case to see if:

- The procedure was followed in a fair way
- The outcome was fair

What is the Appeals Process?

5.3 The following flowchart sets out the steps to be completed as part of the appeals process. More information on each step follows on.



5.4 In some exceptional instances the Appeal Manager may determine that a re-hearing of the case is necessary to fairly determine the appeal outcome. In such situations the employee will be informed of the reasons for this and a meeting will be arranged following the steps outlined for a disciplinary hearing. The outcome of this meeting will be final and there is no further right of appeal.

Submitting an appeal

5.5 An appeal must be submitted to the People Consultancy Team within 7 calendar days of the disciplinary hearing outcome letter being received.

5.6 When submitting an appeal, the employee must state what their grounds are (as set out in point 5.1).

5.7 If the employee is appealing against a dismissal, the date on which dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of the appeal. If the appeal is successful, they will be reinstated with no loss of continuity or pay.

5.8 At the point of submitting their appeal, the employee can request for an Elected Member to attend their appeal meeting. If attending, the Elected Member can observe proceedings, but cannot participate in the decision. If Elected Member attendance is requested the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for People will be approached first. If they are unavailable then an available member of Cabinet will attend.

Who should hear the appeal?

5.9 The appeal will be heard by someone more senior than the Disciplinary Hearing Manager, and who has not been involved in the case previously. This is usually coordinated by the People Consultancy team.

What is the role of the Appeal Manager?

5.10 The Appeal Manager's role is to:

- Meet with the employee to understand more about the appeal raised and ask any relevant questions
- Carry out any additional investigation if required
- If additional investigation is needed, prepare a report that contains all the relevant factual information, copies of statements received and any other relevant documentary evidence

5.11 They will then need to decide whether:

- The original outcome was fair
- They need to change the original outcome, if it's clear it was not right

Possible outcomes

5.12 The Appeal Manager can decide:

a) To uphold the original decision
If they believe the original outcome was fair.

b) To vary the original decision

c) The Appeal Manager may revoke the original decision or substitute a different penalty. They cannot increase the severity of the original disciplinary outcome.

What is the role of the People Consultancy Team?

5.13 A member of the People Consultancy team will support the Appeal Manager through the appeal process.

5.14 They will attend any investigation interviews and keep the employee updated on investigation progress.

5.15 They can help to ensure that the right process is followed in line with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure and the ACAS guidance on the Disciplinary Procedure.

What is the role of the Accompanying Person?

5.16 Any employee has the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work colleague.

5.17 If the employee concerned is a Union Representative, they should be offered the opportunity to involve a full time Union official, and with the employee's agreement the Council may contact the Union directly.

5.18 The employee is responsible for notifying their accompanying person of the meeting. If there is no accompanying person the Appeal Manager should confirm with the employee at the start of the meeting that they have chosen not to be accompanied.

5.19 If an employee's chosen companion isn't available at the date and time proposed, the Appeal Manager must postpone the meeting to a time proposed by the employee provided that the alternative time is both reasonable and not more than five working days after the date originally proposed.

5.20 The accompanying person can:

- Set out the employee's case
- Raise any points related to the case (they cannot respond to questions on the employee's behalf)
- Talk with the employee during the meeting
- Take notes
- Sum up the employee's case at the end of the meeting

Planning Process

5.23 Before meeting with the employee, the Appeal Manager should review the disciplinary hearing pack, the disciplinary hearing meeting notes and the hearing outcome letter alongside the appeal submission.

5.24 It will be helpful to identify any questions or points of clarity that the Appeal Manager wants to raise with the employee.

5.25 The Appeal Manager must then send an invite letter to the employee, to include:

- Date, time and location (meeting should take place within 2 weeks of the appeal submission wherever possible)
- The right to be accompanied
- The deadline for submission of any additional documentation to be considered during the meeting (3 working days before the meeting)
- An indication of potential outcomes

5.26 When planning the location, the Appeal Manager needs to think about the best place to hold the meeting. It should be held as privately as possible, preferably away from the normal work location in a suitable room where there will be no interruptions. The meeting can be held remotely, but if it is more appropriate for it to take place in person this should be arranged.

5.27 Consideration should be given to any adjustments needed for anyone with a disability, underlying ill health or language difficulties.

What happens in the meeting?

At the start of the meeting the Appeal Manager should confirm:

- Who is present
- The format for the meeting
- That notes will be taken
- That the employee will receive a copy of the meeting notes and will have the opportunity to make any corrections before it is finalised
- The role of the accompanying person, if they are present
- That the employee is happy to continue, if they do not have an accompanying person

During the meeting the Appeal Manager should:

- Clarify the points of appeal
- Outline the possible outcomes
- Ask any relevant questions
- Give the employee the opportunity to raise any points
- Offer breaks as needed
- End the meeting to consider all information and decide whether further investigation is required
- Explain to the employee that they will receive an outcome letter, and that the People Consultant will keep them updated on progress.

Taking notes

5.28 A member of the People team will attend the hearing to take notes.

5.29 The notes should capture:

- The date and place of the hearing
- Names of all people present
- A record of the discussion had

- Any refusal to answer a question
- The start and finish times, and details of any adjournments

5.30 The notes do not need to record every word that is said but they should accurately capture the key points of any discussion.

5.31 An audio recording of meetings can be taken with the agreement of the employees involved. This can, however, complicate the matter. Knowing they are being recorded may be intimidating to an employee, making them less able to talk openly about the matter. It can also be time consuming because a transcript of the recording will need to be typed up.

5.32 After the meeting, a copy of the meeting notes should be sent to the employee. The document should be saved with added protections so that only tracked changes can be added. To do this on Microsoft Word go to File>Protect Document>Restrict Editing. The employee should then review the notes and confirm via email that the notes reflect the discussion had, or attach the edited document.

5.33 If the employee does not agree to the contents of the notes, they should make amendments using Track Changes. If the changes that the employee makes do not match the notes of the interviewer/note taker, a separate version should be saved.

Failure to attend

5.34 If the employee is genuinely unable to attend the appeal meeting, e.g. because they are ill, they will be offered an alternative at a reasonable date and time.

5.35 If the accompanying person cannot make the meeting, the employee must propose another date and time which is no more than five working days after the day originally proposed.

5.36 If the employee fails to attend the rearranged meeting, a decision may be made on the available information but in any case the Test of Reasonableness form may be completed with as much information as is available when coming to a decision. If this is the case, the employee must receive notification of the decision in writing.

5.37 If the date of the meeting has to be changed for any reason other than the attendance of the employee or their representative, the employee will be offered a reasonable alternative date and time. It is important that the employee is notified as soon as possible of any delays.

If further investigation is needed:

5.38 After meeting with the employee, the Appeal Manager might decide they need to carry out further investigation steps if they need to:

- Find or look at new evidence raised
- Re-check evidence already used
- Talk to the same witnesses again

- Find and talk to new witnesses

5.39 If this is the case, the Appeal Manager will need to follow the steps in the investigation stage (see point 3.11).

5.40 The Appeal Manager will then compile a written investigation report setting out the findings, before determining the outcome.

Making the decision

5.41 When deciding the appropriate outcome, the Appeal Manager will consider:

- Has a thorough and sufficient investigation been conducted?
- Was the Hearing Manager's decision to take disciplinary action reasonable based on the evidence relating to the case?
- Was the disciplinary action decided upon reasonable, given the circumstances of the case?
- Is the treatment of the employee consistent with the Council's general approach to similar cases?
- Has the matter been handled fairly and appropriately and is it consistent with the Disciplinary Procedure?

The outcome letter

5.42 When the Appeal Manager has determined the outcome, they must communicate this to the employee in writing, where possible within two weeks of the appeal meeting.

5.43 The outcome letter needs to outline the decision taken and detail any points considered when coming to the final decision.

5.44 The letter also needs to confirm that the decision is final and there is no further right of appeal.

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Appendix 2

Employment Policies and Procedures: Disciplinary Procedure - Risk Register

					Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current		Residual		Comments	Controls				
Title	Risk description	Opp/ threat	Cause	Consequence			I	P	I	P	I	P		Control description	Due date	Status	Progress %	Action Owner
Employment Policies and Procedures	Failure to provide a suite of policies that comply with employment legislation and that are fit for purposes of improving performance and managing risk	T	Managers not equipped with revised policies and procedures	Effective employment policies not implemented consistently and fairly appllied	01.07.22	Helen Bishop	3	3	3	2	2	2	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	ongoing	open	80	Helen Bishop
Employment Policies and Procedures	Loss of opportunity to have a suite of poliicies that implement good practice	O	Manages not equipped with revised policies and procedures	Effective employment policies not implemented consistently and fairly appllied	01.07.22	Helen Bishop	3	3	3	2	2	2	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	onging	open	80	Helen Bishop
Employment Policies and Procedures	Damage to Council's reputation	T	Failure to comply with legislative requirements	Effective employment policies not implemented consistently and fairly appllied in line with legislation	01.07.22	Helen Bishop	3	3	3	2	2	2	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	Reviewing and maintaining current employment policies is a continual process	ongoing	open	80	Helen Bishop

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Initial Equalities Impact Assessment screening form

Prior to making the decision, the Council's decision makers considered the following: guide to decision making under the Equality Act 2010:

The Council is a public authority. All public authorities when exercising public functions are caught by the Equality Act 2010 which became law in December 2011. In making any decisions and proposals, the Council - specifically members and officers - are required to have ***due regard*** *to the* ***9*** *protected characteristics defined under the Act. These protected characteristics are:* ***age, disability, race, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage & civil partnership***

The decision maker(s) must specifically consider those protected by the above characteristics:
(a) To seek to ensure equality of treatment towards service users and employees;
(b) To identify the potential impact of the proposal or decision upon them.

The Council will also ask that officers specifically consider whether:

- *(A) The policy, strategy or spending decisions could have an impact on safeguarding and / or the welfare of children and vulnerable adults*
- *(B) The proposed policy / service is likely to have any significant impact on mental wellbeing / community resilience (staff or residents)*

If the Council fails to give 'due regard', the Council is likely to face a Court challenge. This will either be through a judicial review of its decision making, the decision may be quashed and/or returned for it to have to be made again, which can be costly and time-consuming diversion for the Council. When considering 'due regard', decision makers must consider the following principles:

1. ***The decision maker is responsible for identifying whether there is an issue and discharging it****. The threshold for one of the duties to be triggered is low and will be triggered where there is any issue which needs at least to be addressed.*
2. ***The duties arise before the decision or proposal is made, and not after and are ongoing****. They require* ***advance*** *consideration by the policy decision maker with conscientiousness, rigour and an open mind. The duty is similar to an open consultation process.*
3. *The decision maker must be* ***aware*** ***of the needs of the duty****.*
4. *The* ***impact of the proposal or decision must be properly understood first****. The amount of regard due will depend on the individual circumstances of each case. The greater the potential impact, the greater the regard.*
5. ***Get your facts straight first!*** *There will be no due regard at all if the decision maker or those advising it make a fundamental error of fact (e.g. because of failing to properly inform yourself about the impact of a particular decision).*
6. *What does 'due regard' entail?*
    a. ***Collection and consideration of data and information;***
    b. ***Ensuring data is sufficient to assess the decision/any potential discrimination/ensure equality of opportunity;***
    c. ***Proper appreciation of the extent, nature and duration of the proposal or decision.***

7. ***Responsibility*** *for discharging can't be delegated or sub-contracted (although an equality impact assessment ("EIA") can be undertaken by officers, decision makers must be sufficiently aware of the outcome).*
8. ***Document the process*** *of having due regard! Keep records and make it transparent! If in any doubt carry out an equality impact assessment ("EIA"), to test whether a policy will impact differentially or not. Evidentially an EIA will be the best way of defending a legal challenge. See hyperlink for the questions you should consider http://occweb/files/seealsodocs/93561/Equalities%20-%20Initial%20Equality%20Impact%20Assessment%20screening%20template.doc*

1. Within the aims and objectives of the policy or strategy which group (s) of people has been identified as being potentially disadvantaged by your proposals? What are the equality impacts?

This is an assessment of the revised Disciplinary Procedure, which will replace the existing policy which was introduced in 2012. There are no anticipated adverse effects for groups with protected characteristics.

2. In brief, what changes are you planning to make to your current or proposed new or changed policy, strategy, procedure, project or service to minimise or eliminate the adverse equality impacts?

   Please provide further details of the proposed actions, timetable for making the changes and the person(s) responsible for making the changes on the resultant action plan

The principle changes relate to clearly separating the policy from the guidance and having two clear documents instead of four previous documents. Changes have been made to simplify the process including removing the role of commissioning manager, other than by exception to enable line managers to carry out investigation and simplifying the appeals process. The informal process has also been strengthened to encourage early intervention and resolution and avoid unnecessary escalations. Changes have been made to reflect current working practices such as use of email communications and remote meetings. Reference has also been made to taking into account any disabilities and adjustments staff may during the process.

3. Please provide details of whom you will consult on the proposed changes and if you do not plan to consult, please provide the rationale behind that decision.

   Please note that you are required to involve disabled people in decisions that impact on them

Some line managers, the Councils' Corporate Management team, Law & Governance team, Unite and Unison leads and members of the People Team, were invited to comment on the proposed policy. The Policy will go before Council on 28th November 2022 for approval.

4. Can the adverse impacts you identified during the initial screening be justified without making any adjustments to the existing or new policy, strategy, procedure, project or service?

   Please set out the basis on which you justify making no adjustments

There are no adverse impacts envisaged upon those with protected characteristics

5. You are legally required to monitor and review the proposed changes after implementation to check they work as planned and to screen for unexpected equality impacts.

   Please provide details of how you will monitor/evaluate or review your proposals and when the review will take place

Employment policies are subject to regular reviews of any changes made to legislation/ directives by central government. Any challenges to the policy that result in gaps or irregularities being found will be amended following further review, agreement between the employer and the local trade unions, and subsequent sign off from Council (if required).

All managers will receive training on this policy and regular meetings with respective service area Business Partners.

The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored through the number of disciplinary investigations, hearings and appeals that take place.

Lead officer responsible for signing off the EqIA: Gail Malkin

Role: Head of People

Date: xxxxx

Note, please consider & include the following areas:

- Summary of the impacts of any individual policies
- Specific impact tests (e.g. statutory equality duties, social, regeneration and sustainability)
- Consultation
- Post implementation review plan (consider the basis for the review, objectives and how these will be measured, impacts and outcomes including the "unknown")
- Potential data sources (attach hyperlinks including Government impact assessments or Oxfordshire data observatory information where relevant)

To:	**Council**
Date:	**30 January 2023**
Report of:	**Head of Law and Governance**
Title of Report:	**Meetings programme for May 2023 to May 2025**

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	This report sets out a programme of Council, committee and other meetings for the whole of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Council years.
Recommendations: That Council resolves to:	
1. **Approve** the programme of Council, committee and other meetings from 01 May 2023 to 31 May 2025 attached at Appendix A;	
2. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to this programme in the event that there is any decision by Council to change the committee structure or committee remits which impacts on the programme of meetings; and	
3. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Law and Governance to set dates for additional training and briefing sessions for Members.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Programme of Council and committee meetings in calendar format May 2023 to May 2025

Introduction and background

1. This report sets out the proposed schedule of Council and committee meetings for whole of the next two municipal years, from 01 May 2023 to 31 May 2025, for approval by Council.
2. Council agreed a programme of meetings on 29 November 2021 which included meetings in May 2023. There have been no changes to the meetings programmed for May 2023.
3. Appendix A provides the recommended programme of meetings of Council, committees, sub-committees, Scrutiny standing panel meetings and Member training and briefing sessions. Meeting dates for Cabinet and the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group are a matter for the Leader of the Council and are included in the programme for completeness.

4. Setting the programme for all main Council and committee meetings in advance allows for good governance, open and efficient decision making and helps Members and officers to plan their workloads and availability.

Programme of meetings

5. This report assumes that the Council's decision making arrangements and committee structure will be unchanged from current arrangements. Should Council decide to make changes to its committee structure at any point, a revised programme may need to be prepared and circulated. It is recommended that authority is delegated to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme as required following any such decision.

6. The principle used in timetabling is that Council business must happen in a timely manner but the broader needs of Members will be taken into account. Council has previously asked officers to as far as possible avoid scheduling meetings during school holidays, during certain religious festivals and on Fridays. The main Christian festivals coincide with public holidays. There are no significant clashes with major Sikh or Buddhist festivals. Major festivals for those of Muslim, Jewish and Hindu faiths taken into account are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Dates of major Muslim, Jewish and Hindu festivals

Festival	Dates in 2023/24	Dates in 2024/25
Eid-al-Fitr	Tues 09 April – Weds 10 April 2024	Sun 30 March – Mon 31 March 2025
Ramadan	Sun 10 March – Tues 09 April 2024	Fri 28 Feb – Sun 30 Mar 2025
Eid-al-Adha	Weds 28 June – Sun 02 July 2023	Sun 16 June – Thurs 20 June 2024
Rosh Hashanah	Fri 15 Sept – Sun 17 Sept 2023	Weds 02 Oct – Fri 04 Oct 2024
Yom Kippur	Sun 24 Sept – Mon 25 Sept 2023	Fri 11 Oct – Sat 12 Oct 2024
Diwali	Sun 12 Nov 2023	Fri 01 Nov 2024

7. As far as practicable meetings have been scheduled to avoid school holidays and major religious festivals, where this does not adversely affect the overall programme. In some cases this has been unavoidable. Members of most committees are able to appoint a substitute if they cannot attend themselves.

8. The programme is very busy so there is limited scope for meetings to be moved or added without creating diary clashes for Members and officers. The Council's Constitution (Part 14.6) contains provisions for cancelling committee meetings where there is no business and scheduling further committee meetings if required. Part 11.5 of the Council's Constitution contains provisions for scheduling special meetings of Council.

Meetings of Council

9. In a year of ordinary elections of councillors to the Council, the annual meeting of Council must be held between the 8th and 21st day after the retirement of councillors[1]. In any other year, the annual meeting of Council may be on any such day in the month of March, April, or May as the Council may fix[2]. There are no Oxford City Council elections scheduled for May 2023, so Council may hold the annual meeting of Council on any day in March, April, or May 2023. The annual meeting of Council is typically held in mid-May and it is proposed that, for consistency, in 2023 it is held on 17 May.

10. Following the elections on 02 May 2024, the date of retirement and assumption of office is Monday 06 May 2024, so in May 2024 Council must hold the annual meeting between 14 and 27 May 2024. The proposed date of 16 May 2024 is early in this window but allows sufficient time for political groups to meet, decide if they wish to propose any immediate changes to the committee structure and nominate Members to seats on committees in time for the Annual Council meeting.

11. Holding the annual meeting of Council on an early date allows the election of the Lord Mayor and the Leader, the appointment of committees and the start of the decision making cycle. A later meeting date would create a longer gap in the decision-making cycle which would have implications for dealing with the Council's business in a timely manner.

12. The Council's budget meeting is scheduled for 15 February 2024, which falls during the week of half-term (12-16 February). This has been difficult to avoid. Council must set the Council Tax at a meeting once the other precepting authorities have set their budgets and in time for some 60,000 Council Tax bills to be produced before the start of the new financial year.

13. A second Council budget meeting has been reserved for 26 February 2024 in case Council or another precepting authority is unable to agree a budget meaning Council is unable to set the Council Tax at its meeting on 15 February 2024.

14. The same principles have been applied to the scheduling of Council meetings in 2024/25.

Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee

15. The regular cycle of Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet meetings is intended to provide for efficient Executive decision making and to allow sufficient time for effective pre-decision scrutiny. Scrutiny Committee is generally scheduled to meet on a Tuesday and Cabinet on the following Wednesday.

16. The Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee meetings scheduled for August 2023 and August 2024 are reserved only for any decisions which must be taken then, and pre-scrutiny of those decisions. If there are no such decisions these meetings may be cancelled.

17. Dates for meetings of the Scrutiny Committee's Finance & Performance Panel and Housing & Homelessness Panel have been included in the programme, should they be reconstituted in the 2023/24 municipal year. Dates for meetings of the Climate & Environment Panel, constituted earlier this municipal year, have not yet been

[1] Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12 S1 (2) (a).
[2] Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12 S1 (2) (b).

included. Dates for Climate & Environment Panel meetings, should the Panel be reconstituted in 2023/24, will be agreed in consultation with the Panel once performance monitoring reporting timescales have been confirmed.

18. Should the Scrutiny Committee establish other standing panels and/or review groups for the 2023/24 municipal year, those panels and/or review groups will set their own meeting dates.

Planning Committees

19. The Oxford City Planning Committee will generally meet on the third Tuesday of each month.

20. The Planning Review Committee is also scheduled to meet monthly to allow for the call-in of decisions taken by the Oxford City Planning Committee. Recent experience is that Planning Review Committee meetings typically take place c. 3 times per year, however to date in the 2022/23 municipal year the Planning Review Committee has not yet met. In some cases, the Planning Review Committee date may be used as an adjournment date if the business of the Oxford City Planning Committee cannot be completed at a scheduled meeting. If the date is not required for this or its original purpose, Planning Review Committee dates may be used for other Member meetings, or cancelled altogether.

Licensing Committees and Sub-Committees

21. The General Purposes Licensing Committee and the Licensing & Gambling Acts Committee are scheduled to meet three times per year with meetings of the two committees held back-to-back (Council will be recommended to appoint the same Members to both licensing committees at its annual meetings).

22. Meetings of the General Purposes Licensing Casework Sub-Committee have been scheduled regularly throughout the year. Two additional meetings have been scheduled per municipal year to account for the increase in workload and to reduce lengthy gaps between meetings so that business can be dealt with in a timely manner.

23. The Licensing & Gambling Acts Casework Sub-Committee has to meet within set timescales and provisional dates for this sub-committee have been scheduled regularly through the year.

Audit and Governance Committee

24. The Audit and Governance Committee is scheduled to meet quarterly to receive audit and risk reports and undertake its other responsibilities. A fifth meeting is scheduled (in September) for the Committee to consider and approve the annual statement of accounts.

Standards Committee

25. The Standards Committee is scheduled to meet three times per year to receive reports from the Monitoring Officer on the number of Code of Conduct complaints received, updates on developments in ethical governance, requests for individual dispensations and proposals for Member training. Where there is little to report meetings may be cancelled by the Head of Law and Governance after consulting the Chair of the Standards Committee.

Appointments Committee

26. Two meetings of the Appointments Committee are scheduled per year for the Chief Executive to report on any changes to the Council's senior management arrangements, as required by the Council's Constitution (Part 9.3(a)(iii)).

27. The Appointments Committee is also responsible for recommending to Council any appointment to the position of Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) and the designation of Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer, and for appointing to the positions of executive director or posts of similar seniority. Additional meetings can be scheduled by the Chief Executive or the Head of Law and Governance after consulting the Chair of the Appointments Committee, should the need arise.

Investigations and Disciplinary Committee

28. This committee would only meet to decide on disciplinary hearings involving a Statutory Officer, Executive Director or Assistant Chief Executive. The Committee and Member Services Manager has delegated authority within the Council's Constitution (7.6(d)) to convene meetings of this committee should the need arise.

Shareholder and Joint Venture Group (SJVG) Meetings

29. The Shareholder and Joint Venture Group (SJVG) is responsible for acting as owner of the Council's companies and for safeguarding and furthering the Council's interests and investments in its companies and joint ventures. The SJVG is scheduled to meet six times per year in total, with two meetings being held every four months, one for Oxford Direct Services and one for the Council's other companies and joint ventures.

30. Members of the Companies Scrutiny Panel will continue to be invited to attend and scrutinise items considered at SJVG meetings, as a means of providing more effective and efficient Scrutiny oversight of the shareholder function.

Training and briefings

31. Training and briefing sessions are offered to assist with Members' learning and development. Dates for training and briefing sessions are included to allow Members to plan ahead. Members are advised to note these dates in their diaries.

32. Compulsory training will always be offered on a choice of dates and times. Non-compulsory training and Member briefing sessions will typically start at 6.00pm. A later start time would have an impact on the employment arrangements of officers.

33. Members have previously been asked to provide feedback on the topics, timings and delivery of member briefings. The responses suggest that there is a clear preference for briefings to be held in the evening (the alternative being at lunchtime) and delivered remotely over Zoom, with the sessions being recorded for the benefit of Members who are unable to attend where possible.

34. A programme of training sessions and briefings on topical issues will be circulated to Members separately by the Committee and Member Services Team.

35. It is recommended that the Head of Law and Governance is authorised to arrange additional training and briefing as requested by officers or Members.

Meeting start times

36. The default start time for all meetings is 6.00pm with the exception of Council meetings which start at 5.00pm. Committees and sub-committees are able to vary this start time and some sub-committees have previously agreed to do so. The two licensing committees may set the start times for their sub-committees or these sub-committees may set their own start times on a case-by-case basis.

37. Any committees wishing to vary the start time to later than 6.00pm must first consult the Committee and Member Services Manager to ensure that these meetings can be suitably resourced and supported by officers.

Meeting locations

38. Most Member meetings are subject to the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires Members to be physically present together in a set location. The exceptions to this are meetings of standing panels and review groups established by the Scrutiny Committee and Member training and briefing sessions, which may be held remotely. Oxford Town Hall is the venue for all meetings held in a physical location and Zoom is the default platform for meetings held remotely. Following the installation of a hybrid meetings solution in the Town Hall, some meeting attendees may join meetings remotely (e.g. Cabinet Members when summoned by the Scrutiny Committee), however Committee and Sub-Committee Members are not permitted to attend remotely and must be physically present at the Town Hall.

Publicising meeting dates

39. Meeting dates will be available online via the Council's website and intranet once agreed by Council. The online calendar is the most effective way to view accurate and up-to-date meeting dates. In addition the meeting details can be downloaded into individual Members' calendars. Where meetings are cancelled or rescheduled during the year, the meeting details in Members' calendars will not update automatically and Members will need to update their calendars manually. The Committee and Member Services Team will circulate instructions to Members on the downloading of calendars.

Legal issues

40. Meetings which the Council is required by legislation to hold have been included in the programme. There are no other legal issues arising from the recommendations in this report.

41. The Head of Law and Governance can cancel or reschedule meetings where there is insufficient business in consultation with the chair, group leaders and Chief Executive if the agenda has not already been published, or arrange additional special meetings after consulting with the relevant committee chair (as set out in Part 14.6 of the Council's Constitution).

Financial Issues

42. The programme of meetings can be delivered within existing resources. There are no financial issues arising from this report.

Report author	Alice Courtney
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Background Papers: None

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2023-24 Municipal year - 2023

May 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
1	2	3	4	5
Hol				
8	9	10	11	12
Hol	Train	Train	Train	
15	16	17	18	19
Train	Train	Annual Council	LA/GPL	
22	23	24	25	26
GPL Sub	OxC PC			
29	30	31		
Hol	LA Sub			

June 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
		Scrutiny	Panel (F)	
12	13	14	15	16
LA Sub	Train	Cabinet	Panel (H)	
19	20	21	22	23
GPL Sub	OxC PC	SJVG		
26	27	28	29	30
Train	Appt		PRC	

July 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
3	4	5	6	7
LA Sub	Scrutiny			
10	11	12	13	14
Standards	Brief	Cabinet		
17	18	19	20	21
Council	OxC PC	PCF		
24	25	26	27	28
GPL Sub	PRC	AGC	SJVG (ODS)	
31				
LA Sub				

August 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
	1	2	3	4
	Scrutiny	Panel (H)		
7	8	9	10	11
		Cabinet		
14	15	16	17	18
	OxC PC		PRC	
21	22	23	24	25
	LA Sub			
28	29	30	31	
Hol				

September 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
				1
4	5	6	7	8
GPL Sub	Scrutiny	Panel (F)		
11	12	13	14	15
Brief		Cabinet		
18	19	20	21	22
LA Sub	OxC PC		PRC	
25	26	27	28	29
LA/GPL		AGC (accounts)		

October 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
2	3	4	5	6
Council			Panel (H)	
9	10	11	12	13
LA Sub	Scrutiny	Brief		
16	17	18	19	20
GPL Sub	OxC PC	Cabinet	PRC	
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			
LA Sub	AGC			

November 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
		1	2	3
		SJVG	Panel (H)	
6	7	8	9	10
Scrutiny				
13	14	15	16	17
PCF	Brief	Cabinet	Standards	
20	21	22	23	24
LA Sub	OxC PC			
27	28	29	30	
Council	GPL Sub		PRC	

December 2023				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
				1
4	5	6	7	8
Scrutiny	Appt	Panel (F)	SJVG (ODS)	
11	12	13	14	15
LA Sub	OxC PC	Cabinet	PRC	
18	19	20	21	22
GPL Sub				
25	26	27	28	29
Hol	Hol			

2023-24 Municipal year - 2024

January 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
1	2	3	4	5
Hol				
8	9	10	11	12
	LA Sub		Brief	
15	16	17	18	19
GPL Sub	Scrutiny	AGC		
22	23	24	25	26
Panel (F)	OxC PC	Cabinet		
29	30	31		
Council	PRC			

February 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
LA/GPL	Scrutiny	Cabinet		
12	13	14	15	16
GPL Sub	LA Sub		Council	
19	20	21	22	23
	OxC PC	Brief		
26	27	28	29	
*Council			PRC	

note: County's budget meeting 13/2; PCC budget meeting 26/1

March 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
				1
4	5	6	7	8
Scrutiny	LA Sub	Brief	Panel (H)	
11	12	13	14	15
PCF	Standards	Cabinet		
18	19	20	21	22
Council	OxC PC		PRC	
25	26	27	28	29
GPL Sub	Panel (F)	SJVG		Hol

April 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
1	2	3	4	5
Hol	LA Sub			
8	9	10	11	12
AGC			Scrutiny	
15	16	17	18	19
GPL Sub		Cabinet		
22	23	24	25	26
	OxC PC	SJVG (ODS)	PRC	
29	30			
	LA Sub			

May 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
		1	2	3
			Election	
6	7	8	9	10
Hol	Train	Train	Train	
13	14	15	16	17
Train	Train		Annual Council	
20	21	22	23	24
LA/GPL	OxC PC	LA Sub		
27	28	29	30	31
Hol	GPL Sub		PRC	

Key to Committees

Licensing Acts casework	LA Sub	Shareholder and Joint Venture Group	SJVG
General Purposes casework	GPL Sub	Member Training	Train
LAC/ GPL main cttee	LA/GPL	Member Briefing	Brief
Parish Counci l	PCF	Bank Holiday	Hol
Audit	AGC	Scrutiny Panels	Panel
		Housing, Finance, Review (	
Planning	OxC PC	Planning Review	PRC

the Annual Coun cil meeting must be held between the 8th day and the 21st day after the day of retirement of coun cillors

2024-25 Municipal year - 2024

May 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
		1	2	3
			Election	
6	7	8	9	10
Hol	Train	Train	Train	
13	14	15	16	17
Train	Train		Annual Council	
20	21	22	23	24
LA/GPL	OxC PC	LA Sub		
27	28	29	30	31
Hol	GPL Sub		PRC	

June 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
3	4	5	6	7
	Train	Scrutiny	Panel (F)	
10	11	12	13	14
GPL Sub		Cabinet		
17	18	19	20	21
LA Sub	Appt			
24	25	26	27	28
Train	OxC PC	SJVG	PRC	

July 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
1	2	3	4	5
LA Sub	Scrutiny	Panel (H)		
8	9	10	11	12
Standards	Brief	Cabinet		
15	16	17	18	19
Council	OxC PC	PCF		
22	23	24	25	26
GPL Sub	PRC	AGC	SJVG (ODS)	
29	30	31		
LA Sub				

August 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
	Scrutiny	Panel (H)		
12	13	14	15	16
		Cabinet		
19	20	21	22	23
	OxC PC			
26	27	28	29	30
Hol	PRC	LA Sub		

September 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
2	3	4	5	6
GPL Sub	Scrutiny	Panel (F)		
9	10	11	12	13
		Cabinet	Brief	
16	17	18	19	20
LA Sub	OxC PC		PRC	
23	24	25	26	27
LA/GPL		AGC (accounts)		
30				
LA Sub				

October 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
	1	2	3	4
			Panel (H)	
7	8	9	10	11
Council	Scrutiny	Brief		
14	15	16	17	18
GPL Sub	OxC PC	Cabinet	PRC	
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	
LA Sub	AGC			

November 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
				1
4	5	6	7	8
Scrutiny		SJVG	Panel (H)	
11	12	13	14	15
PCF	Brief	Cabinet	Standards	
18	19	20	21	22
LA Sub	OxC PC			
25	26	27	28	29
Council	GPL Sub		PRC	

December 2024				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
2	3	4	5	6
Scrutiny	Appt	Panel (F)	SJVG (ODS)	
9	10	11	12	13
	OxC PC	Cabinet	PRC	
16	17	18	19	20
LA Sub	GPL Sub			
23	24	25	26	27
		Hol	Hol	
30	31			

2024-25 Municipal year - 2025

January 2025				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
		1	2	3
		Hol		
6	7	8	9	10
	LA Sub		Brief	
13	14	15	16	17
GPL Sub	Scrutiny	Panel (F)		
20	21	22	23	24
AGC	OxC PC	Cabinet	PRC	
27	28	29	30	31
Council		Scrutiny		

February 2025				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
3	4	5	6	7
	LA Sub	Cabinet		
10	11	12	13	14
LA/GPL			Council	
17	18	19	20	21
	GPL Sub	Brief		
24	25	26	27	28
*Council	OxC PC		PRC	

note: County's budget meeting xxx/2; PCC budget meeting xxx/1

March 2025				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
3	4	5	6	7
Scrutiny	LA Sub	Brief	Panel (H)	
10	11	12	13	14
GPL Sub	Standards	Cabinet		
17	18	19	20	21
PCF	OxC PC	SJVG		
24	25	26	27	28
Council	PRC			
31				
LA Sub				

April 2025				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
Panel (F)	Scrutiny	AGC		
14	15	16	17	18
GPL Sub	OxC PC	Cabinet	PRC	Hol
21	22	23	24	25
Hol	LA Sub	SJVG (ODS)		
28	29	30		

May 2025				
Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
Hol	Train	Train	Train	
12	13	14	15	16
Train	Train		Annual Council	
19	20	21	22	23
LA/GPL	OxC PC	LA Sub		
26	27	28	29	30
Hol	GPL Sub			

Key to Committees

Licensing Acts casework	LA Sub	Shareholder and Joint Venture Group	SJVG
General Purposes casework	GPL Sub	Member Training	Train
LAC/ GPL main cttee	LA/GPL	Member Briefing	Brief
Parish Counci l	PCF	Bank Holiday	Hol
Audit	AGC	Scrutiny Panels	Panel
		Housing, Finance, Review (	
Planning	OxC PC	Planning Review	PRC

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Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 14 December 2022

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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

Cabinet members present:

Councillor Brown
Councillor Aziz
Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Walcott
Councillor Turner
Councillor Chapman
Councillor Munkonge
Councillor Upton

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services
Lucy Cherry, Leisure and Performance Manager
Stephen Gabriel, Executive Director (Communities and People)
Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer
Ted Maxwell, Regeneration Manager
Paula Redway, Cultural Development Manager
Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer and Head of Law & Governance
Dave Scholes, Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
Rachel Williams, Acting Head of Planning Services (Planning Policy)

Also present:

Councillor Dr Christopher Smowton, Chair of Scrutiny

91. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Imogen Thomas, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice.

92. Declarations of Interest

None.

93. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

None.

94. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda

None.

95. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

96. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

97. Scrutiny reports

Councillor Smowton, Chair of Scrutiny, presented the recommendations of scrutiny relating to items on the agenda.

Finance and Performance Panel had met on 7 December and had considered the Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 2. No formal recommendations had been made, although the Panel had drawn attention to slippage on fire doors.

Scrutiny Committee had met on 5 December 2022 and had considered: (i) Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27; (ii) Grant Allocations to Community and Voluntary Organisations 2023/24; (iii) Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2021/22 and (iv) Workplace Equalities and Action Plan.

One recommendation had been made in relation to Grant Allocations to Community and Voluntary Organisations. This related to providing a brief summary of the nature and purpose of organisations in receipt of Community Impact Fund Grants. The recommendation had been accepted, and the information would be published on the Council's website.

One recommendation had been made in relation to the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement. This related to including the amount of housing delivered as a result of site allocation policies in future Annual Monitoring reports, and had also been accepted.

Four recommendations had been made in relation to Workplace Equalities and Action Plan. These had related to setting out a target for the disability pay gap; recording gender identity, including whether an individual identified as trans or non-binary; reporting on work surrounding trans and non-binary policies; and reporting on the LGBT pay gap. The recommendations had been largely accepted, although Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services, highlighted the need to safeguard anonymity and to exercise caution around drawing conclusions based on very small sample sizes of staff with protected characteristics.

Two recommendations had been made in relation to the Thriving Communities Strategy. These had related to clarifying within future versions of the strategy where changes had been made to principles or ways of working, and providing greater clarity on which partners were involved in particular projects and what the nature and level of that collaboration was. Both recommendations were largely accepted. Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture responded that the strategy would be presented to Council for adoption as part of the policy framework, and as part of that process would be amended to show the changes which were intended to be made.

98. Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2021/22

The Acting Head of Planning Services (Planning Policy) had submitted a report to seek approval of the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) and Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2021/22 for publication.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, explained that the Council was required to publish the documents on an annual basis. The AMR assessed the effectiveness of the planning policies contained within the Oxford Local Plan, as well as the implementation of the Oxford Local Development Scheme, the Council's Statement of Community Involvement in Planning and the Duty to Cooperate. The IFS set out information on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions and Section 106 contributions, and the infrastructure items on which CIL was to be spent on in the next five years.

In presenting the report Councillor Hollingsworth drew attention to the positive housing trajectory, which showed that the Council was now ahead of the housing supply projection within the Local Plan. Attention was also drawn to the impact of the Government's changes to the planning use classes system, which meant that all retail uses and all office uses were now essentially within a single use class. Planning permission was therefore no longer needed for changes of building between these uses. The full impact of these changes on high streets and district centres, and on the Local Plan, remained to be determined.

The significant progress in affordable housing completions over the preceding four year period, as shown at figure 3 of the report, was also noted.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2021/22 for publication; and

2. **Delegate authority** to the Acting Head of Planning Services (Planning Policy) to make any necessary minor, non-material corrections to the document prior to publication.

99. Cowley Branch Line Local Funding for Full Business Case

The Executive Director (Development) had submitted a report to (i) seek approval for a funding package and (ii) authority to enter into all necessary contracts in order to undertake the Approval in Principle design and Full Business Case and local connectivity studies for the reopening of the Cowley Branch Line to passengers.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport, informed Cabinet that Network Rail had produced an outline business case for the re-opening the Cowley Branch Line to passengers. The next stage of the project would be a full business case, and funding was required to enable this to proceed. Whilst producing the full business case would not guarantee delivery of the project to re-open the line, there was no prospect of it progressing without the work. Negotiations had taken place with other landowners who would benefit from the re-opening of the line with regard to co-funding.

Councillor Upton highlighted that benefits to the city of the re-opening of the line would be significant, and included potential new rail stations at South Oxford and East Oxford. The funding being sought would cover the infrastructure to be provided, as well as

ensuring that the connectivity between the stations and local communities and businesses was designed to be as effective as possible.

It was noted that, following legal advice, a correction to the second bullet point under recommendation 1 was proposed. The wording '*Up to £3.5m of CIL to be forward funded from local landowners and then be repaid/offset from CIL liabilities for any future development that gains planning consent after the date that contracts are entered into'* was to be replaced with:

'Up to £3.5m of the costs to be funded by local landowners and then be reimbursed from CIL paid for any future development by those landowners that gains planning consent after the date that contracts are entered into'.

Clarification was provided that a landowner would only be reimbursed if their organisation (and not another organisation) gained planning consent.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve the funding strategy and recommend Full Council to approve** a capital budget of £4.56m to deliver the next phase of the project made up of:

    - Up to £289,000 up front contribution from Oxford City Council from already-secured Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds;
    - Up to £3.5m of the costs to be funded by local landowners and then be reimbursed from CIL paid for any future development by those landowners that gains planning consent after the date that contracts are entered into;
    - At least £771,000 from local landowners and Oxfordshire County Council as a non-repayable grant contribution;
    - In the event that the submitted Levelling Up Fund 2 application seeking £4.0m is found to be successful in total or in part, the local funding arrangement described above would be reduced commensurately from one or more of the funding pots outlined above; and

2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development), in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer, the Head of Law and Governance, and the Cabinet Members for Health & Transport and for Finance & Asset Management to agree financial contributions and terms, and then enter into all relevant funding agreements and contracts.

100. Delivery of Affordable Housing (Railway Lane and Marston Paddock)

Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced a report to seek further project approvals and delegations to enable the continued development, and purchase into the Housing Revenue Account, of more affordable housing in Oxford at sites at Railway Lane in Littlemore and Marston Paddock in Old Marston.

It was noted that both sites had received planning permission. At Railway Lane permission for 90 homes - of which 100% were to be affordable housing and at least 50% of these for social rent - had been granted, with construction anticipated to start next summer. Permission for 40 homes had been granted for Marston Paddock, of which 50% were to be affordable; however, once purchased by the Council into the HRA the intention was for all 40 properties to be converted to affordable housing (21 for social rent and 19 for shared ownership). All of the properties at both sites would be

high quality, all-electric and with high thermal efficiency. There would also be a mix of units in terms of size, with some much needed larger properties (4- and 5- bedroomed) to be provided, as well as 12 homes which were adapted for wheelchair users. The units would be delivered in partnership with developers, marking an evolution in terms of the method of delivery of affordable housing by the Council.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Grant project approval** for the continued acquisition of affordable dwellings developed by OCHL for which budgetary provision has been made in the Council's Housing Revenue Account in respect of:

   (i) Railway Lane, Littlemore (referenced in paragraphs 3 to 10 of the report) and
   (ii) Marston Paddock, Butts Lane, Old Marston (referenced in paragraphs 11 to 17 of the report);

2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development), in consultation with the Head of Law and Governance, to approve and facilitate the license to occupy and develop the council owned site in order to facilitate the development within this project approval for Railway Lane, Littlemore; and

3. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development), in consultation with the Executive Director (Communities and People), the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Head of Financial Services/ Section 151 Officer and the Head of Law and Governance, to enter into agreements and facilitate the agreed purchase by the Council of these developments, with all the affordable housing units from OCHL to be held in the HRA, within this project approval for the Railway Lane and Marston Paddock sites.

101. Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2023/24

The Head of Community Services had submitted a report to confirm the criteria and weighting for assessing 2023/24 grant allocations, and to give an interim update showing examples of the effectiveness of the Community Impact Fund grants to date.

Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture, reminded Cabinet that in 2021/2022 a decision had been taken to pool a number of different funding streams and create the Oxford Community Impact Fund with the aim of ensuring that funding was more accessible and aligned to the Council's priorities, and that the grant application process was streamlined. An update showing the impact of grants to date was expected to be brought to Cabinet next autumn, covering the full year of funding from 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

In considering the grant allocation process for 2023/24, it was recommended that applicants be asked to provide information regarding the demographics of their board/staff/volunteer teams, as well as their response to the cost of living crisis. This would not form part of the application process, but would be used within the monitoring process and was aimed at reducing inequalities and seeking to ensure that the process was fair for everyone in the city.

It was noted that the current economic pressures, and in particular the rising costs of energy, were likely to increase the number of requests for assistance from the Fund.

It was noted that grant applications had previously been brought to Cabinet for approval, and clarification was sought as to whether this process would continue. It

was considered appropriate Cabinet be invited to approve Big Ideas and other major and medium-sized grants, with small grants being reported for information. The Head of Community Services confirmed that work was already underway to this effect.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the implementation of the new Oxford Community Impact Fund agreed by Cabinet on 15 December 2021 as part of the strategic grants review; and

2. **Recommend** that applicants are requested to provide information regarding the demographics of their board/staff/volunteer teams and their response to the cost of living crisis in a voluntary capacity as part of project monitoring for grants awarded in 2022-23 and to make this obligatory for grants awarded in 2023-24; and

3. **Note** that a report to Cabinet seeking approval for major and medium-sized grants, and providing information on the allocation of small grants, was expected.

102. Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27

The Executive Director (Communities & People) had submitted a report to present the Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27, and to recommend its adoption by Council as part of the policy framework.

Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture, clarified that the Strategy aimed to improve the way in which the Council worked with and alongside communities, rather than looking to impose solutions. The pandemic and cost of living crisis had demonstrated the excellent work of many thriving community organisations; the Strategy would seek to help people to work more closely together and avoid duplication, provide a voice to communities, and provide autonomy in how communities worked with the Council.

The Head of Community Services highlighted the importance and value of the 10-week Thriving Communities City Conversation which had involved partners, community groups and residents. The outcomes of this process had underpinned and informed the development of the strategy. A desktop version of the strategy was currently being prepared which would include video, and an easy-read version was also available. This was aimed at ensuring the accessibility of the Strategy to everyone. An action plan was also being produced, and it was proposed that an annual update should be brought to Cabinet detailing progress against aims and learning points acquired over the preceding year.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Recommend to Council** to adopt Oxford's Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27 as part of the Council's policy framework, including the following recommendations:

   (i) agree and adopt the Thriving Communities Principles across the Council's work and to encourage our partners to do the same;

   (ii) explore opportunities to improve the inclusivity and sustainability of Oxford's community facilities, and review opportunities as they arise through a business case;

(iii) continue to integrate council services and seek out opportunities to better align our work with partner agencies, including co-location.

2. **Agree** that an annual progress update should be produced for Cabinet, and that the action plan should be regularly reviewed based on new data and insights such as the census.

103. Workforce Equalities and Action Plan

The Head of Business Improvement had submitted a report to (i) seek approval for the publication of the annual Workforce Equality Report 2022, the Gender Pay Gap Report, the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report and the Disability Pay Gap Report; and (ii) share current progress on the Workforce Equalities Report and Action Plan.

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services, highlighted that the Workforce Equalities Report was required to be published annually under the Equality Act 2010. It included information on changes to the demographics of the workforce; actions taken in terms of recruitment and retention to improve diversity; and the pay gaps data. Whilst only the gender pay gap report was required by law, the Council also chose to publish an ethnicity pay gap report and a disability pay gap report. The reports were a snapshot as at 31 March 2022, and had demonstrated significant improvements around the role and seniority of women (which had also had a positive impact on the gender pay gap) and an increase in the percentage of staff from ethnic minorities beyond the set target. The pay gap performances were better than the national average, particularly on gender.

Councillor Chapman highlighted that future areas of focus would include seeking to improve the quality of information obtained from staff and the representation of ethnic minority women in leadership roles. Consideration would also be given as to how trans and LGBT representation in the workforce could be monitored and reported.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Workforce Equality Report 2022;

2. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Business Improvement to make any necessary corrections and minor amendments before publication and publish the Workforce Equality Report;

3. **Approve** the Gender Pay Gap, Ethnicity Pay Gap and Disability Pay Gap reports for this year; and

4. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Business Improvement to publish on the Council's website: (i) the Gender Pay Gap table at paragraph 19 of the report before the deadline of 30 March 2023; (ii) the Ethnicity Pay Gap table at paragraph 27 of the report; and (iii) the Disability Pay Gap table at paragraph 33 of the report.

104. Integrated Performance Report Q2 2022/23

The Head of Financial Services and the Head of Business Improvement had submitted a report to update Cabinet on finance, risk and corporate performance matters as at 30 September 2022.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, highlighted the small adverse variance of £0.193 million against the net agreed budget, but noted that this covered 'movement under the surface'. Many of the factors which had had a positive impact on the budget had been one-off (such as delays to filling staffing roles, delays to developments resulting in greater than expected income from community centres, and delays in expenditure and borrowing for capital projects) whereas some of the negative factors were potentially more embedded. The outturn for the year was expected to be on, or close to, target; however, pressures remained in relation to interest rates, utility costs, the ongoing impact of Covid on items like commercial property income, and construction inflation.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the projected financial outturn for 2022-23 as well as the position on risk and performance as at 30 September 2022.

105. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 - 2026/7 and 2023/24 Budget for Consultation

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to propose a Medium Term Financial Strategy and the 2023/24 Budget for consultation.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, referred to a report to Cabinet on 13 July 2022 which had set out the budget setting strategy and a number of challenges to the Council's financial position in the medium term. He commended officers for their work in achieving a four year balanced budget which sought to safeguard front line services and enable the Council to continue to deliver its priorities. Whilst some increases to charges were proposed, a full Council Tax reduction scheme would remain and there would continue to be significant investment in areas such as affordable housing; community centres; grants; youth ambition; climate change work and advice work. A change to Council Tax charges in respect of second homes and properties empty for more than one year was also proposed, subject to the enactment of Government legislation.

The Local Government finance settlement was expected in the following week, and a cautious approach had been used in relation to the expected level of the settlement.

It was noted that reserves and contingencies remained at a significantly lower level than had been the case prior to the Covid pandemic.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the 2023-24 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets for consultation and the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out in Appendices 1-9, noting:

    a) the Council's General Fund Budget Requirement of £23.433 million for 2023/24 and an increase in the Band D Council Tax of 2.99% or £9.76 per annum representing a Band D Council Tax of £336.31 per annum;

    b) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2023/24 of £51.577 million and an increase of 7% (£7.51 per week) in social dwelling rents from 1 April 2023 giving a revised weekly average social rent of £114.73 as set out in Appendix 5;

c) the increase in shared ownership rental in accordance with the lease as shown in paragraph 88 and the discretion used by the Head of Housing in setting the initial rent for the unsold share of 2% and giving delegated approval to the Head of Housing to set this for future shared ownership rents up to 2.75%;

d) the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme as shown in Appendix 6.

2. **Agree** the fees and charges shown in Appendix 7;

3. **Delegate** to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management the decision to determine whether it is financially advantageous for the Council to enter into a Business Rates Distribution Agreement as referred to in paragraph 22 of the report;

4. **Approve** the payment into the County Council Pension Fund of £5 million in 2023-24 as referred to in paragraph 32 of the report; and

5. **Agree** to implement the changes to Council Tax charges in respect of second homes and properties empty for more than one year as referred to in paragraphs 23-25 from 1st April 2024 when the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is enacted.

106. Treasury Management Mid-Year Report

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report detailing the performance of the Treasury Management function for the 6 months to 30 September 2022.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management highlighted that budgeted investment income and income from loans had been above projection, largely due to higher interest rates and reduced borrowing and lending. However, it was also noted that there were detrimental consequences in other areas of the budget as a result of rising interest rates.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the performance of the Treasury Management function for the six months to 30 September 2022.

107. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2022 as a true and accurate record.

108. Dates of Future Meetings

25 January 2023

8 February 2023

15 March 2023

19 April 2023

All meetings start at 6.00pm.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.58 pm

Chair …….. **Date: Wednesday 25 January 2023**

When decisions take effect:
Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired
Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued
All other committees: immediately.
Details are in the Council's Constitution.

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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

To:	**Council**
Date:	**30 January 2023**
Report of:	**Chair of the Scrutiny Committee**
Title of Report:	**Scrutiny Committee Update Report**

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update Council on the activities of the Scrutiny function
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Dr Christopher Smowton, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That Council resolves to note the update report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction

1. This report provides an update on Scrutiny activity during the period from 11 November 2022 to 20 January 2023.
2. The Committee welcomed Cllr Jemima Hunt as a member of the Scrutiny Committee following her appointment at the meeting of Council on 28 November 2022, replacing Cllr Anna Railton.

Scrutiny Committee 2022/23

3. During this reporting period, the Committee met twice, on 05 December 2022 and on 16 January 2023. A summary of each meeting is set out below.

Scrutiny Committee: 05 December 2022

4. Four substantive reports were considered on 05 December 2022:
    - Thriving Communities Strategy (*Cabinet report*)

- Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2023/24 (*Cabinet report)*
- Authority Monitoring Report and Infrastructure Funding Statement 2021/22 (*Cabinet report*)
- Workplace Equalities and Action Plan (*Cabinet report*)

5. The Thriving Communities Strategy report recommended that Cabinet recommend to Council the adoption of the Thriving Communities Strategy as part of the Budget and Policy Framework. The Committee's attention was drawn to the Thriving Communities Principles including doing things with people rather than to them. The Committee commended the ambition and wide-ranging strategy and recognised the flexibility of the work proposed. The Committee made two recommendations, one which sought greater clarity about changes to ways of working and one which sought greater clarity about the nature of collaboration in partnership working.
6. The Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations report recommended that Cabinet noted the implementation of the Oxford Community Impact Fund agreed in December 2021 and recommended that changes should be made to information provided for project monitoring. The Committee was pleased to hear of support and advice given to organisations that wished to apply for grants but might not yet have been ready to do so. The Committee made one recommendation, namely that a very brief summary of the nature and purpose of individual organisations given grants be provided.
7. The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) and Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) report recommended that Cabinet approved the AMR and IFS for publication. The AMR was a statutory report that effectively functioned as a series of performance indicators with the IFS being a statement which recorded infrastructure funding. The Committee welcomed the detail provided and made one recommendation which was that, in future reports, the Council reports on the amount of housing delivered as a result of site allocation policies.
8. The Equalities Update report recommended that Cabinet approve the Workplace Equality Report 2022 and the publication of the Gender Pay Gap, the Ethnicity Pay Gay, and the Disability Pay Gap reports. The Committee explored the detail and ambition provided in the report and made four recommendations. One related to being explicit over the Council's target regarding the Disability Pay Gap and one related to people being able to self-identify as trans or non-binary. The third recommendation related to the Council reporting on work surrounding trans and non-binary policies and the fourth recommended consideration of the worth of monitoring and reporting on the LGBT Pay Gap.
9. Three tenant ambassadors had agreed to sit as co-opted members of the Housing and Homelessness Panel. The Committee resolved to approve their appointment as co-opted members without voting rights.

Cabinet Responses to Recommendations: December 2022

10. Reports on the items listed in paragraph 4 were submitted to Cabinet on 14 December 2022. All of the Committee's eight recommendations across the four reports considered were agreed by Cabinet.

Scrutiny Committee: 16 January 2023

11. Two substantive reports were considered on 16 January 2023:
    - Flexible Working/Hybrid Working Policy (*Council report*)
    - Disciplinary Policy (*Council report*)
12. The Flexible Working/Hybrid Working Policy report recommended that Council resolve to approve the policy. The Committee recognised that the Council has moved to a standard practice of hybrid working and explored some of the detail of the proposed policy. The Committee made no recommendations.
13. The Disciplinary Policy report recommended that Council resolves to agree the Disciplinary Procedure and Guidance with immediate effect, authorising the Head of Business Improvement to make minor revisions. The Committee noted that the role of the Elected Member would remain as an option and recommended that it be set out which Members would be eligible.

Housing and Homelessness Panel

14. The Housing and Homelessness Panel was due to meet on 30 November 2022, but was adjourned owing to an unfortunate clash with an extraordinary meeting of another committee. The business was not time sensitive and will be carried over to the Panel's next meeting on 02 March 2023.

Finance and Performance Panel

15. The Finance and Performance Panel met on 07 December 2022 and considered reports on the Integrated Performance Report Q2 and the Treasury Management Mid-year Review for April-September 2022. The Panel also noted the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2026-27 and the 2023-2024 Budget for Consultation, prior to the work of the Budget Review Group commencing in January 2023. No recommendations were made to Cabinet.

Budget Review Group

16. Scrutiny of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-25 to 2026-27 and the 2023-2024 Budget for Consultation was considered in detail by members of the Finance and Performance Panel meeting as the Budget Review Group on 04 January, 05 January, 10 January, and 23 January. At the time of writing, it is anticipated that the Finance & Performance Panel will recommend its report be submitted by the Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet after the Panel has met on 26 January 2023.

Climate and Environment Panel

17. Members of the Climate and Environment Panel met on 11 January 2023 to receive a briefing from Professor Nick Eyre, Scientific Adviser to the Council. It is anticipated that two substantive meetings will be scheduled before the end of the municipal year in consultation with the Panel and officers.

Companies Scrutiny Panel

18. The Companies Scrutiny Panel joined the Shareholder and Joint Venture meeting as non-voting members on 08 December to consider reports relating to Oxford

Direct Services. Commercial confidentiality prevents the provision of a summary report.

Report author	Richard Doney
Job title	Scrutiny Officer
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	07485 311341
e-mail	rdoney@oxford.gov.uk

To:	Cabinet
Date:	14 December 2022
Report of:	Executive Director (Development)
Title of Report:	Cowley Branch Line Local Funding for Full Business Case

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To seek approval for the funding package and to enter into all necessary contracts to undertake the Approval in Principle design and Full Business Case and local connectivity studies for the reopening of the Cowley Branch Line to passengers. This includes the parameters for a financial contribution from Oxford City Council, including the ring-fencing of future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24

Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:

1. **Approve the funding strategy and recommend Full Council to** approve a capital budget of £4.56m to deliver the next phase of the project made up of:
    - Up to £289,000 up front contribution from Oxford City Council from already-secured Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds;
    - Up to £3.5m of CIL to be forward funded from local landowners and then be repaid/offset from CIL liabilities for any future development that gains planning consent after the date that contracts are entered into;
    - At least £771,000 from local landowners and Oxfordshire County Council as a non-repayable grant contribution;
    - In the event that the submitted Levelling Up Fund 2 application seeking £4.0m is found to be successful in total or in part, the local funding arrangement described above would be reduced

commensurately from one or more of the funding pots outlined above.

2. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development), in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer, the Head of Law and Governance, and the Cabinet Members for Health & Transport and for Finance & Asset Management to agree financial contributions and terms, and then enter into all relevant funding agreements and contracts.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	**Confidential** – breakdown of Network Rail costs
Appendix 2	Indicative programme for Network Rail
Appendix 3	Indicative programme and costs for public realm and connectivity feasibility work
Appendix 4	**Confidential** – more detailed breakdown of costs regarding public realm and connectivity feasibility work
Appendix 5	Risk register

Introduction and background

1. Oxford City Council ("City") and Oxfordshire County Council ("County") are working in partnership with Network Rail ("NwR"), the Department for Transport ("DfT"), and rail industry stakeholders to deliver a programme of improved rail access, capacity and reliability that is vital to secure better transport connectivity and underpin sustainable growth for Oxford and Oxfordshire and enhance its positive impact within the region, and nationally.
2. Reopening the Cowley Branch Line ("CBL") to passengers (it is currently used for freight services to and from BMW-Mini Plant Cowley), with two new stations in south and east Oxford, is a key project identified within the Oxford Local Plan, the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study. The proposed station known as Oxford South is intended to be next to the Oxford Science Park, Littlemore and the Kassam Leisure Complex, with the proposed station at Oxford East, next to Oxford Business Park, Oxford Retail Park and Blackbird Leys. See Figure 1 for more detail.

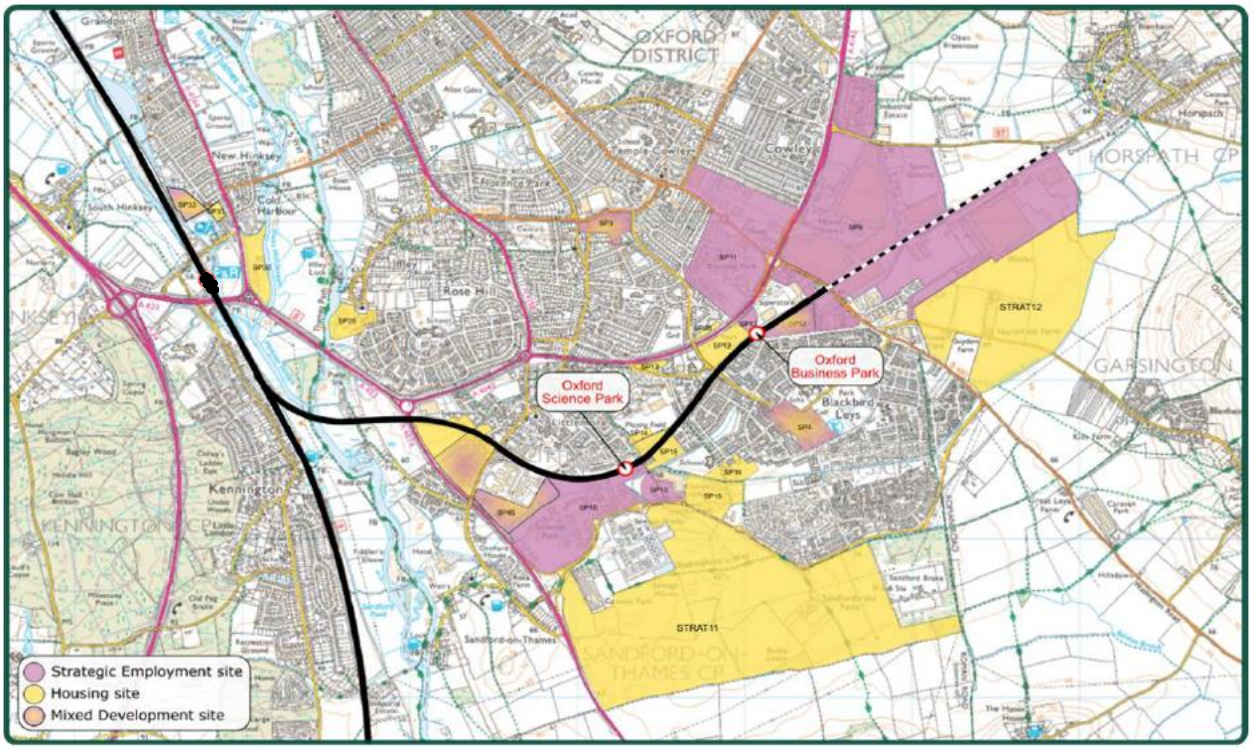

Figure 1. OS Map showing proposed location of two stations in the context of current and proposed future developments and communities

3. The project will improve connectivity to Oxford and London from these areas, which include some of the city's most economically deprived wards, as well as key areas of employment, research and development. The current planning proposal to be worked up through the next phase of work is for the introduction of a half-hourly direct service from the new stations to London Marylebone via Oxford, utilising the existing Chiltern Railways service. Trips between the new stations and Oxford railway station will take under ten minutes providing a significant reduction in journey times compared to present day travel options, with an assumption that the cost will be comparable to current public transport options.

The Outline Business Case and moving to a Full Business Case

4. NwR were awarded £0.714m from the DfT in early-autumn 2021 to undertake PACE Phase 1 (single-option design) and prepare an Outline Business Case, which concluded in October 2022. This work was favourable and now presents the opportunity to move forward to the next stage of detailed work.

5. However, the CBL project does not have committed funding past the current Outline Business Case stage. Consequently, without new funding the project will not progress to the next stage – the development of a Full Business Case ("FBC"). This stage is estimated to cost £4.56m (including progression of the designs for the rail infrastructure, new stations and solutions to ensure wider connectivity and access to the surrounding neighbourhoods and facilities).

6. NwR has a dedicated project team that is working to newly adopted industry principles "Project Acceleration in a Controlled Environment" (PACE). PACE aims to develop and deliver rail project interventions in a quick and efficient manner. Assuming the £4.56m for the FBC can be found, the project programme shows with seamless transition from conclusion of this current Outline Business Case stage into the FBC stage. This could see the FBC finalised in spring 2024.

7. There is a need to commit contractually to the FBC funding in January 2023 in order to avoid missing the window of opportunity where the relevant NwR resource is in place. Missing the January deadline will lead to delay to any opening of the rail line and will increase the risk of other projects winning government support.
8. An application has been made for Levelling Up Fund Round 2 monies ("LUF") to fund the FBC. With delays in the outcome of the application for LUF and the deadlines associated with the CBL project, the City and other project stakeholders have identified the local funding proposal outlined in this report largely based on CIL, which would otherwise conceivably be used for the delivery phase of the project. LUF funding to deliver the FBC would be a more appropriate way to fund this because it would allow for CIL funds to be deployed on the delivery phase.
9. Officers have undertaken a period of negotiation with local landowners close to the proposed line and new stations seeking financial contributions towards the FBC.
10. The City has reached agreement in principle from three local landowners ("Landowners"), with Cabinet approval at the City being a key step before contracts can be signed in January 2023, alongside each organisation's own governance process.
11. The FBC is not a guarantee that funding for the delivery of the project will be provided. The work would though set out the full construction costs to deliver the scheme, and secure all necessary permissions, including planning. If the funding for the construction work was then forthcoming, the earliest the CBL could be reopened is anticipated to be December 2026, which will be further assessed as part of the next phase. However, the CBL scheme is also under considerable competition against other national infrastructure projects for government grant funding. Recent DfT precedent set through the Restoring Your Railways initiative for which our scheme is distinctively aligned, has sought sizeable contributions from promoters of up to 25% of the project delivery cost. The likelihood of the CBL scheme successfully receiving government grant funding for the delivery stage and opening by December 2026, would be greatly strengthened by the size of local funding contribution generated.
12. The important point to note is that while finding a funding package for the £4.56m to deliver the FBC does not guarantee the ultimate delivery of the CBL, without the FBC, there is little realistic chance that the case for the CBL can be made and future delivery funds secured.

Funding the FBC and public realm feasibility work

13. The next stage of project development work to take the scheme to FBC in order to be able to achieve a desired December 2026 date requires the following funding:
    a. NwR has shared its cost estimate of £3.26m (See Appendix 1 - confidential - for cost breakdown and Appendix 2 for indicative programme which was accurate assuming October 2022 funding and project commencement) for the delivery of the FBC. This is focussed on rail infrastructure and stations located within the Network Rail land corridor.
    b. Public realm and connectivity feasibility is expected to be £1.30m (see Appendix 3 for programme and summary cost breakdown and Appendix 4 – confidential – re more detailed cost breakdown). Budget includes cost for City

to manage the work stream. The objective of this is to ensure station access and egress is optimised, especially by sustainable modes.

c. Combined funding requirement of £4.56m needs to be sourced through project beneficiaries local to Oxford, to the extent that LUF monies are not available.

14. The City expects the private sector to play a significant role in the funding of this £4.56m (and in the fullness of time, subject to the scheme progressing to a successful resolution of the FBC, to contributing to the funding of the delivery and implementation costs) for three reasons:

    a. Central government has been clear that 100% government grant-funded public transport schemes are not possible for the foreseeable future;

    b. Both the City and County have limited funds available and a duty to use their finite public resources across Oxford and Oxfordshire respectively;

    c. There are also many other businesses and other organisations which own strategic land within one mile of the proposed CBL railway stations, and this proximity to a new sustainable public transport connection to Oxford and London will create direct benefits to those institutions such as increase in land value, expanded catchment area for attracting workers, the potential to repurpose car parking for more useful or commercially beneficial uses.

15. The local funding strategy which has been agreed in principle, subject to Cabinet approval and each organisation's own governance process, is:

    a. City capital contribution of up to £289,000 from existing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) that has already been secured from developments across the city;

    b. Non repayable grant funding contribution of at least a total of £771,000 to be provided by Landowners and developer contributions already held by Oxfordshire County Council. This is not linked to future unconsented development and therefore not to be offset against any anticipated future CIL liabilities;

    c. Up to £3.5m will be forward-funded by Landowners to the City Council on the basis that it will be refunded / offset from CIL liabilities of any of their future developments that gain planning permission after the date the contract is entered into. To the extent that those developments do not proceed, recovery from CIL is at the Landowner's risk.

16. In order for the local funding to be brought to bear and the FBC and supporting feasibility work delivered, the legal framework which has been agreed in principle, subject to Cabinet approval and each organisation's own governance process, is:

    a. City as "Local Scheme Promoter" enters into a Development Services Agreement ("DSA") with NwR to undertake FBC and into relevant contracts with consultants to deliver the supporting feasibility work;

    b. City signs "Collaboration Agreements" with Landowners, which set out the terms for their funding and their role in ongoing project governance;

    c. City agrees a "Memorandum of Understanding" with County, which sets out a good working relationship between the two local authorities in order to deliver the FBC and feasibility work successfully.

17. The proposed split of funding contributions is the result of negotiations by City officers with Landowners, seeking to share the risk between the private and public sectors, while ensuring that as scheme Promoter, the Council is commensurately committed to the project. These specific contributions of non-repayable grant funding and forward-funding of future CIL payments from developments for each party have been agreed in principle and are not expected to change unless LUF funding is made available:

Organisation	**Risk Capital**	**CIL forward-funded**	**Total contribution to CBL FBC**
Oxford ARC (Oxford Business Park)	£250,000	£1,443,943	£1,693,943
Oxford Science Park	£250,000	£1,443,943	£1,693,943
Ellison Institute for Transformative Medicine	£65,000	£612,113	£677,113
Oxfordshire County Council	£206,000		£206,000
Oxford City Council	£289,000		£289,000
TOTAL	**£1,060,000**	**£3,500,000**	**£4,560,000**

18. Financial and legal terms are subject to due diligence by all parties and contract in January 2023, including specific caveats:
    a. The risk of development not proceeding and therefore CIL not falling due sits with the Landowner and not the City Council;
    b. Quantum of CIL funding available for forward-funding excludes the 5% to administer CIL and 15% for Neighbourhood CIL, which would be recovered at the future date when CIL comes due;
    c. Payment schedule to be determined by back-to-back provisions with NwR, linked to the development programme milestones;
    d. Detailed administrative process for repayment or offsetting of future CIL receipts when development commences to be resolved, following dialogue with City's CIL team and this may involve a revised approach if Government guidance or statute relating to CIL changes.
19. Alternative approaches would have a different balance of financial commitment between the public and private sectors and may not deliver sufficient funding in time for the FBC and supporting feasibility work to be undertaken in 2023, targeting the opening of the line in December 2026.
    a. If City reduced its own contribution, then the private sector would see insufficient public sector buy-in for the project and would withdraw its own commitment – the FBC wouldn't be undertaken at all;

b. Similarly, if local landowner beneficiaries do not make at-risk contributions separate from their development pipeline, then it would be reasonable for City revise its decision to ring-fence CIL as well as its own contribution and its role as local Promoter – consequently, the FBC work would not proceed;

c. If City and the three local Landowners withdrew all local funding, then the scheme would not proceed to FBC let alone future project delivery, because central government has been clear that local funding is a prerequisite.

Decision-making process and proposed ongoing project governance

20. Given the NwR resourcing risks that result in the target of January completion of a DSA, a December 2022 Cabinet decision and Full Council in-year budget change is needed for the project to proceed. Cabinet are being asked to delegate the detail of the relevant funding agreements and contracts to the Executive Director for Development in consultation with the S151 officer and Monitoring Officer.

21. Once work on the FBC and feasibility studies are underway their progress will be considered by a Programme Panel that comprises the programme lead for the City Council, County Council, NwR and each of the Landowners. The City Council and NwR are also seeking the involvement of DfT in the Programme Panel.

22. Each of the organisations represented on the Programme Panel shall have to comply with their own governance requirements and the role of the Programme Panel shall be to inform that process only. This will be set out in the relevant funding agreements and contracts.

Programme

23. If Cabinet agrees with the recommendations, then December 2022 and January 2023 will be used for legal due diligence by all parties to the agreements, seeking to enter the relevant contracts before the end of January 2023. These agreements would need to be signed before the 30 January Council meeting where the budget would require approval.

24. NwR has a 15-month programme for the next stage of work as per Appendix 2, commencing in February 2023 subject to contracts being signed in January 2023.

25. The public realm and connectivity feasibility's programme is as per Appendix 3.

26. As the Promoter for the scheme, City will be responsible for coordinating the Programme Panel and for providing overall project management resource and the procurement function for the public realm and connectivity feasibility work. Preparation for all this (including advertising for a "Rail Development Regeneration Manager") will need to commence in December 2022.

Financial implications

27. The City Council would be committing up to £289,000 CIL from money that has been secured to date, but not yet allocated to other schemes.

28. In addition to this, the City Council would pre-allocate the CIL available from future development by identified local landowners by up to £3.5m. Given the strategic importance and longstanding ambition to deliver the Cowley Branch Line to support existing and future residents and employees this is considered an effective use of CIL. It has shared the risk with private landowners and avoided the need for the council to borrow money when it does not control the development pipeline.

Whereas the landowners control their own development pipeline so the sooner it comes forward the sooner they are able to repay the forward funding.

29. The financial implications per financial year is shown as an indicative profile in the table below, with the exact numbers and the schedule of payments from Landowners to the Council, and then onto NwR, to be determined. However, they will be staggered such that the cash flow risk and therefore payment risk sit with Landowners (apart from the Council's own CIL contribution) and not with the Council.

Financial year	**2022-2023**	**2023-2024**	**2024-2025**	**2025-2026**	**Total**
Expenditure (of which a maximum of £3.789m total is CIL)	£423,000	£3,223,000	£840,000	£74,000	£4,560,000

30. Para 19 sets out why alternative approaches to funding would jeopardise the project, however it is also important to set out that following this paper's recommendations would most likely have financial opportunity costs for the City. Of current CIL funds, this would be up to £289,000. And of expected future CIL receipts, this would be up to £3.5m. This is therefore up to £3,789,000 of CIL which would not be available to spend on other local public infrastructure projects. However, the strategic importance of the CBL – with its prominence in the City Council's Local Plan and the County Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan – means that its funding through CIL would always be appropriate and a top transport priority for use of CIL. It is more that the timing (in advance of coming due) rather than the principle of the ring-fencing is exceptional and strongly recommended in this case. Furthermore, the next phase of work increases the likelihood and speed of the CBL coming forward for implementation, which in turn would make more sustainable development possible, thus increasing future CIL receipts – so the opportunity cost is not a straightforward one.

31. If the FBC is undertaken, further work would then be required to establish a local funding pot to contribute to the capital delivery costs. A separate funding and financing study is underway to look at how the City and County councils should work with central Government and local employers, landowners and developers to secure contributions to this.

Legal issues

32. As set out above, the council will act as Promoter of the scheme and enter into back-to-back funding agreements and contracts to deliver this funding approach. The council's legal team have instructed Anthony Collins Solicitors to advise on the legal strategy and detail of the funding agreements, MoUs and contracts. The Legal Services Manager is also part of the project board providing advice on this matter.

33. Leading Counsel has advised that CIL receipts may be used to fund feasibility studies and/or detailed design work that is required for the provision of infrastructure. External solicitors advise that feasibility studies by the nature entail the possibility that a project does not proceed.

34. The Development Services Agreement with NwR will be entered by the Council using the negotiated procedure without prior call for competition as:

    a. competition is absent for technical reasons, i.e. that Network Rail have progressed the Outline Business Case and are in communication with the Department of Transport on its content and the subject matter of the agreement is intrinsically linked to the work already undertaken;

    b. no reasonable alternative or substitute exists – in this connection the standard documentation of Network Rail has to be used; and

    c. the absence of competition is not the result of an artificial narrowing down of the parameters of the procurement – it was always intended that the inhouse resource of Network Rail should be utilised as set out the application for Levelling Up funding.

35. The procurement of the consultant or consultants to undertake the connectivity and public realm feasibility work would be undertaken pursuant to the Council's contract standing orders and procurement strategy.

Level of risk

36. Please see attached Risk Register at Appendix 5. As a major infrastructure project, the main risk is that regardless of how well the FBC phase of work is undertaken, due to external factors beyond local control, the CBL scheme and new stations do not end up being delivered – at least within the target timelines. There are mitigations for this risk, but clearly as a scheme which would ultimately rely on significant central Government funding to be delivered, local parties such as the Council cannot be assured of delivery at this stage. However, we do know that not undertaking the FBC would be a guarantee of no CBL delivery in the coming years.

Equalities impact

37. The Cowley Branch Line infrastructure will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment. The decision to progress a Full Business Case for future infrastructure that is focussed on increasing accessibility to public transport for a wider part of Oxfordshire's community is considered positive in terms of equalities impact. Especially given the proximity of the potential new infrastructure to some of the most deprived communities in the city. A detailed Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the design and the infrastructure itself.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

38. The decision to progress a Full Business Case for future infrastructure that is focussed on increasing accessibility to public transport for a wider part of Oxfordshire's community is considered positive in terms of carbon and environmental considerations as it is likely result in a reduction in car trips. NwR have their own national environmental strategy[1] and action plan for biodiversity[2] that this project would need to conform with.

[1] Network Rail Environmental Sustainability Strategy, 2020-2050
[2] Network Rail Biodiversity Action plan

Conclusion

39. Given the strategic importance and longstanding ambition to deliver the Cowley Branch Line to support existing and future residents and employees this is considered an effective use of existing and future CIL. It has shared the risk with private landowners and avoided the need for the Council to borrow money when it does not control the development pipeline. The timing is key to enable the accelerated critical path to achieve completion in 2026 to be maintained. In addition, it enables the single option design and Outline Business Case developed by Network Rail using Department for Transport funding to be utilised whilst it is up to date, maintaining current resources and momentum on the scheme.

Report author	Ted Maxwell
Job title	Regeneration Manager
Service area or department	Regeneration and Economy
Telephone	01865 335704
e-mail	tmaxwell@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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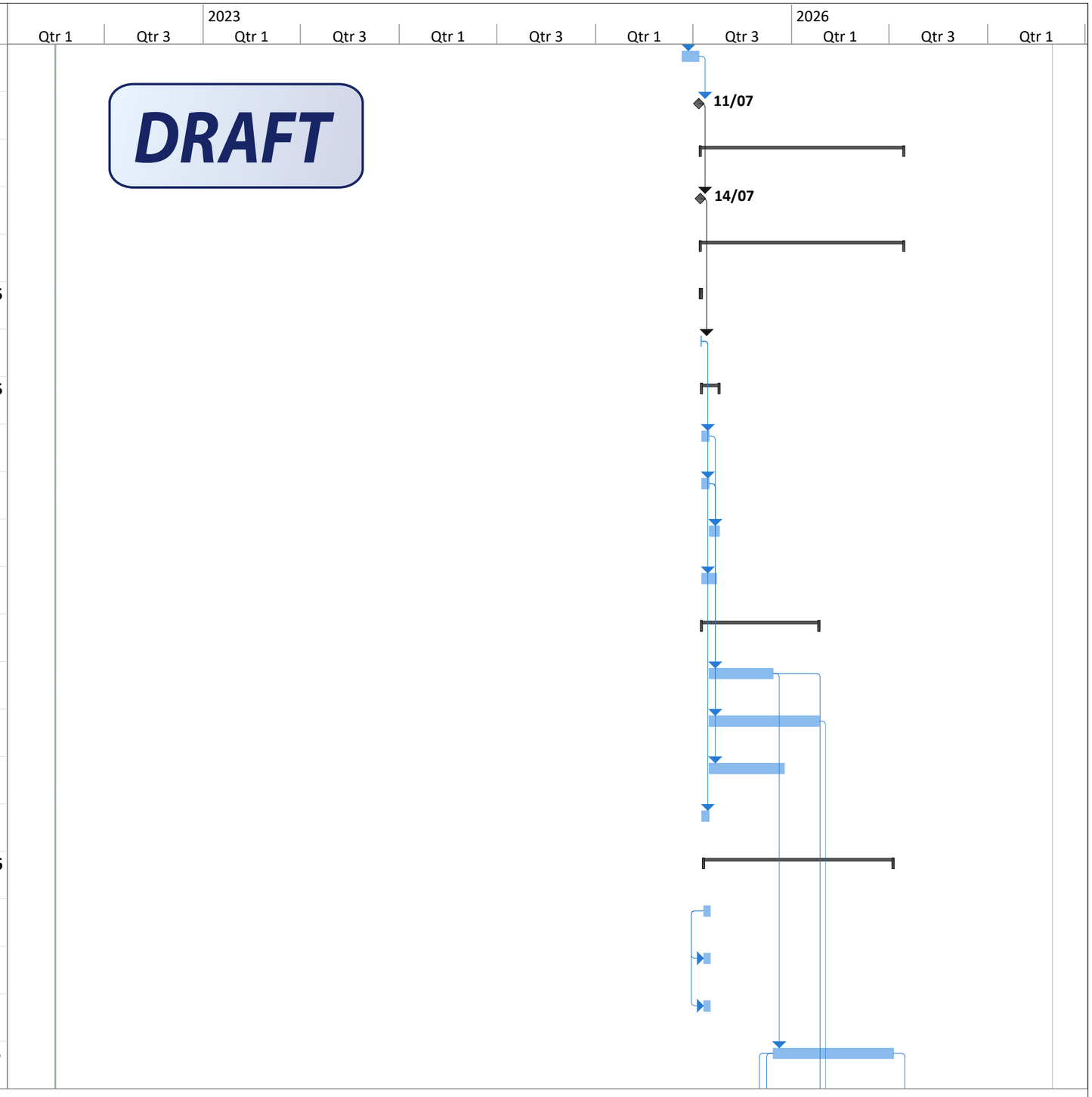
ID	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish
1	**Cowley Branch**	**1261 day**	**Thu 30/06/22**	**Fri 30/04/27**
2	PACE Phase 1 Complete	0 days	Thu 30/06/22	Thu 30/06/22
3	OBC Complete	0 days	Fri 29/07/22	Fri 29/07/22
4	Project Start	0 days	Fri 29/07/22	Fri 29/07/22
5	Authority to develop (sponsor decision)	60 days	Fri 29/07/22	Thu 20/10/22
6	**PACE Phase 2 - Project Design**	**711 days**	**Thu 20/10/22**	**Fri 11/07/25**
7	Start PACE Phase 2	0 days	Thu 20/10/22	Thu 20/10/22
8	**Design Approval (AIP)**	**416 days**	**Fri 21/10/22**	**Fri 24/05/24**
9	Procurement Design Approval	71 days	Fri 21/10/22	Fri 27/01/23
10	Contract Award	27 days	Mon 30/01/23	Tue 07/03/23
11	Surveys	60 days	Wed 08/03/23	Tue 30/05/23
12	Initial Design AIP	108 days	Wed 31/05/23	Fri 27/10/23
13	Initial Design Approved	30 days	Mon 30/10/23	Fri 08/12/23
14	ES4 - Design approved (AIP)	0 days	Fri 08/12/23	Fri 08/12/23
15	**Sponsor Decision**	**416 days**	**Fri 21/10/22**	**Fri 24/05/24**
16	FBC early stages	296 days	Fri 21/10/22	Fri 08/12/23
17	FBC end and decision to build	120 days	Mon 11/12/23	Fri 24/05/24
18	**Construction Ready Design**	**295 days**	**Fri 24/05/24**	**Fri 11/07/25**
19	Start Construction ready design	0 days	Fri 24/05/24	Fri 24/05/24
20	Procurement Construction ready design	135 days	Mon 27/05/24	Fri 29/11/24
21	Construction Ready Design	107 days	Mon 02/12/24	Tue 29/04/25
22	Construction Ready Design Approved	30 days	Wed 30/04/25	Tue 10/06/25

Project: Cowley Plus - Indicative S Date: Fri 01/04/22	Task	Project Summary	Inactive Milestone	Manual Summary Rollup	Deadline
	Split	External Tasks	Inactive Summary	Manual Summary	Progress
	Milestone	External Milestone	Manual Task	Start-only	Manual Progress
	Summary	Inactive Task	Duration-only	Finish-only	

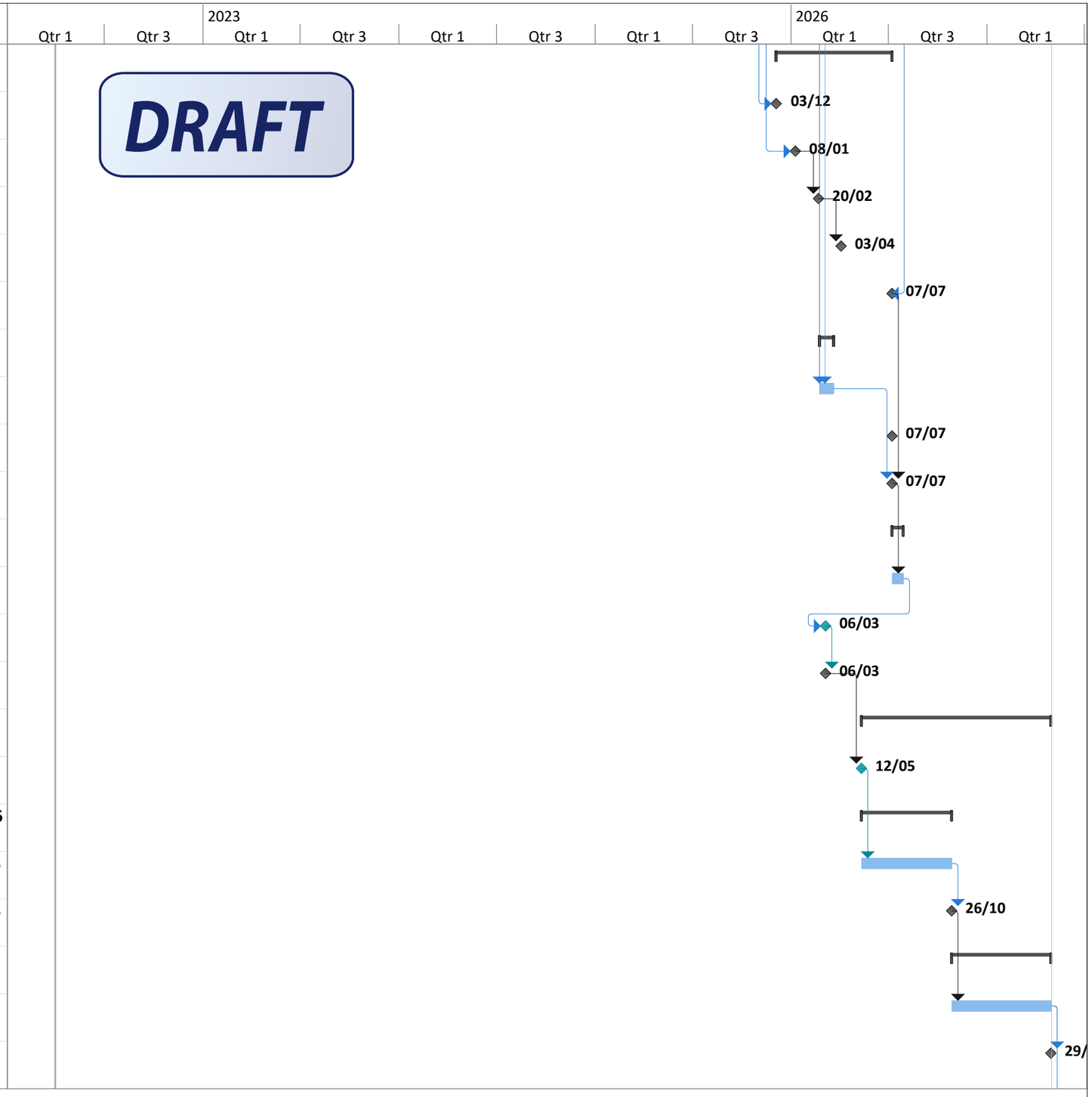
ID	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish
23	Make site available / consents	23 days	Wed 11/06/25	Fri 11/07/25
24	ES5 - Construction Ready Design approved	0 days	Fri 11/07/25	Fri 11/07/25
25	**PACE Phase 3 - Project Deliver**	**271 days**	**Mon 14/07/25**	**Tue 28/07/26**
26	Start PACE Phase 3	0 days	Mon 14/07/25	Mon 14/07/25
27	**Installation**	**271 days**	**Tue 15/07/25**	**Tue 28/07/26**
28	**Stage 1 - site made available**	**2 days**	**Tue 15/07/25**	**Wed 16/07/25**
29	Site available	2 days	Tue 15/07/25	Wed 16/07/25
30	**Stage 2 - Land Clearance / site establishment**	**23 days**	**Thu 17/07/25**	**Mon 18/08/25**
31	De-veg proposed station areas	10 days	Thu 17/07/25	Wed 30/07/25
32	Setup site	10 days	Thu 17/07/25	Wed 30/07/25
33	De-veg rest of the line	13 days	Thu 31/07/25	Mon 18/08/25
34	De-veg DCL	20 days	Thu 17/07/25	Wed 13/08/25
35	**Stage 3 - Groundworks**	**157 days**	**Thu 17/07/25**	**Fri 20/02/26**
36	Business Park Station	85 days	Thu 31/07/25	Wed 26/11/25
37	Science Park	147 days	Thu 31/07/25	Fri 20/02/26
38	DCL - UOR	100 days	Thu 31/07/25	Wed 17/12/25
39	Relay Existing Track on THA	10 days	Thu 17/07/25	Wed 30/07/25
40	**Stage 4 - Install new track (Business Park)**	**253 days**	**Mon 21/07/25**	**Wed 08/07/26**
41	BMW Closure	10 days	Mon 21/07/25	Fri 01/08/25
42	THA - Plain line track	10 days	Mon 21/07/25	Fri 01/08/25
43	THA - S&C Track	10 days	Mon 21/07/25	Fri 01/08/25
44	DCL - Install new track	160 days	Thu 27/11/25	Wed 08/07/26



Project: Cowley Plus - Indicative S
Date: Fri 01/04/22

Task	Project Summary	Inactive Milestone	Manual Summary Rollup	Deadline	
Split	External Tasks	Inactive Summary	Manual Summary	Progress	
Milestone	External Milestone	Manual Task	Start-only	Manual Progress	
Summary	Inactive Task	Duration-only	Finish-only		

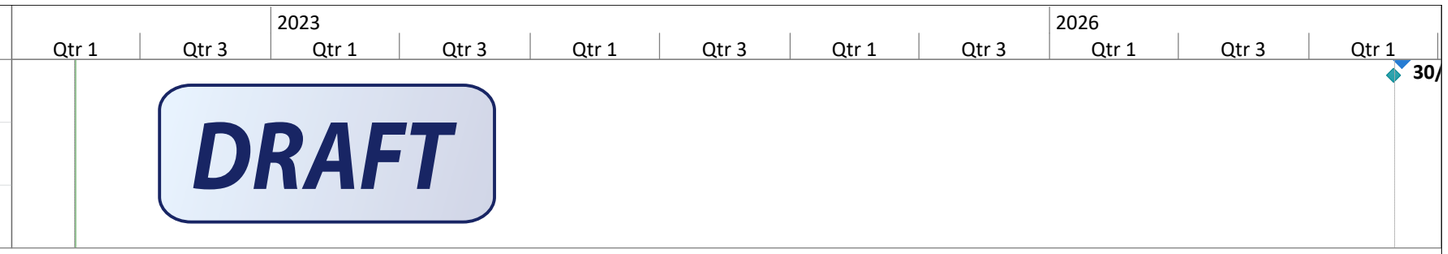
ID	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish
45	**Possessions**	**154 days**	**Wed 03/12/25**	**Tue 07/07/26**
46	DCL - 29hr Sunday x2 activities	0 days	Wed 03/12/25	Wed 03/12/25
47	DCL - 29hr Sundayx2 activities	0 days	Thu 08/01/26	Thu 08/01/26
48	DCL - 29hr Sunday x2 activities	0 days	Fri 20/02/26	Fri 20/02/26
49	DCL - 29hr Sunday x2 activities	0 days	Fri 03/04/26	Fri 03/04/26
50	DCL - 54 hr weekend x2 activities	0 days	Tue 07/07/26	Tue 07/07/26
51	**Stage 5 - Completion**	**20 days**	**Mon 23/02/26**	**Fri 20/03/26**
52	Complete stations	20 days	Mon 23/02/26	Fri 20/03/26
53	**Stage 6 - Comissioning**	**0 days**	**Tue 07/07/26**	**Tue 07/07/26**
54	Stations and track complete	0 days	Tue 07/07/26	Tue 07/07/26
55	**Stage 7 - Driver Training**	**15 days**	**Wed 08/07/26**	**Tue 28/07/26**
56	Driver Training	15 days	Wed 08/07/26	Tue 28/07/26
57	ES6 - Construction Complete	0 days	Fri 06/03/26	Fri 06/03/26
58	End PACE Phase 3	0 days	Fri 06/03/26	Fri 06/03/26
59	**PACE Phase 4 - Project Close**	**253 days**	**Tue 12/05/26**	**Thu 29/04/27**
60	Start PACE Phase 4	0 days	Tue 12/05/26	Tue 12/05/26
61	**Project Demobilised**	**120 days**	**Tue 12/05/26**	**Mon 26/10/26**
62	Project Demobilised	120 days	Tue 12/05/26	Mon 26/10/26
63	ES7 - Project Demobilised	0 days	Mon 26/10/26	Mon 26/10/26
64	**Contract Accounts**	**133 days**	**Tue 27/10/26**	**Thu 29/04/27**
65	Contract Accounts settled	133 days	Tue 27/10/26	Thu 29/04/27
66	ES8 - Contract Accounts settled	0 days	Thu 29/04/27	Thu 29/04/27



Project: Cowley Plus - Indicative S
Date: Fri 01/04/22

Task	Project Summary	Inactive Milestone	Manual Summary Rollup	Deadline
Split	External Tasks	Inactive Summary	Manual Summary	Progress
Milestone	External Milestone	Manual Task	Start-only	Manual Progress
Summary	Inactive Task	Duration-only	Finish-only	

ID	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish
67	End PACE Phase 4	0 days	Fri 30/04/27	Fri 30/04/27
68				
69				



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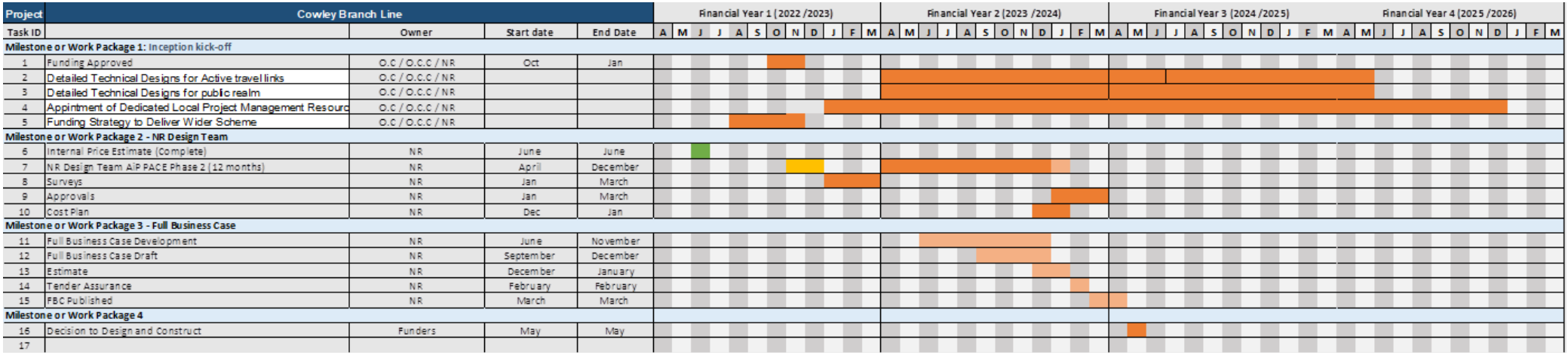
Project: Cowley Plus - Indicative S
Date: Fri 01/04/22

Task	Project Summary	Inactive Milestone	Manual Summary Rollup	Deadline	
Split	External Tasks	Inactive Summary	Manual Summary	Progress	
Milestone	External Milestone	Manual Task	Start-only	Manual Progress	
Summary	Inactive Task	Duration-only	Finish-only		

Appendix 3 Connectivity Programme and Costings

Indicative Programme (See 1-5 below)



Project	Cowley Branch Line				Financial Year 1 (2022 /2023)												Financial Year 2 (2023 /2024)												Financial Year 3 (2024 /2025)												Financial Year 4 (2025 /2026)											
Task ID		Owner	Start date	End Date	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
Milestone or Work Package 1: Inception kick-off																																																			
1	Funding Approved	O.C / O.C.C / NR	Oct	Jan																																																
2	Detailed Technical Designs for Active travel links	O.C / O.C.C / NR																																																		
3	Detailed Technical Designs for public realm	O.C / O.C.C / NR																																																		
4	Appintment of Dedicated Local Project Management Resourc	O.C / O.C.C / NR																																																		
5	Funding Strategy to Deliver Wider Scheme	O.C / O.C.C / NR																																																		
Milestone or Work Package 2 - NR Design Team																																																			
6	Internal Price Estimate (Complete)	NR	June	June																																																
7	NR Design Team AIP PACE Phase 2 (12 months)	NR	April	December																																																	
8	Surveys	NR	Jan	March																																																
9	Approvals	NR	Jan	March																																																
10	Cost Plan	NR	Dec	Jan																																																
Milestone or Work Package 3 - Full Business Case																																																			
11	Full Business Case Development	NR	June	November																																																
12	Full Business Case Draft	NR	September	December																																																
13	Estimate	NR	December	January																																																
14	Tender Assurance	NR	February	February																																																
15	FBC Published	NR	March	March																																																
Milestone or Work Package 4																																																		
16	Decision to Design and Construct	Funders	May	May																																																
17																																																			

Indicative Costings

Item	Objective	Cost	Rationale / explanation
Legal advice	Legal advice regarding consultant procurements and land ownership	£50,000	£2,000-£4,000 for 12-24 months
Project Management Costs	Coordinating rail FBC, connectivity and public realm feasibility work, including the shared governance panel	£265,000	City Council Grade 11 specialist “Rail Development Project Manager” for 36 months, including on-costs
Design and feasibility – active travel links	Undertake initial landscape architect and engineering feasibility work for active travel links to both new CBL stations	£800,000	List of required schemes is based on recommendations from recently-completed Movement and Connectivity study. Allowances are based on County and City officer estimates, revised in early November 2022, which will need to be tested with the market through a procurement process.
Design and feasibility – placemaking and public realm	Undertake initial landscape architect and engineering feasibility work for public realm improvements around both new CBL stations	£185,000	List of required schemes is based on recommendations from recently-completed Movement and Connectivity study. Allowances are based on County and City officer estimates, revised in early November 2022, which will need to be tested with the market through a procurement process.
Total		**£1,300,000**	

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Appendix 5 - Risk Register

Cowley Branch Line local funding for Full Business Case

As at: 10 November 2022

									Gross			Current			Target							
Ref	Title	Risk Description	Opp / Threat	Cause	Consequence	Risk Treatment	Date Raised	Owner	P	I	Score	P	I	Score	P	I	Score	Comments	Control / Mitigation Description	Date Due	Action Status	% Progress	Action Owner
1	Private sector contributions	Lack of clarity and transparency regarding project expenditure and sources of available internal funding from authorities to allocate funds to the project – taken together this could lead to private sector contributions being withheld	Threat	Public sector collaboration with private sector	The project could be stopped due to lack of funds	Reduce	31/10/22	Project Manager	4	4	16	3	4	12	1	4	4	Risk will go to target level after agreement in principle re collaboration agreements and then signed	Oxford City Council will deal with issues raised in a transparent and collaborative manner, pro-actively interfacing with NwR to obtain detailed cost information. The Programme Panel which will be created, will be a transparent forum for all funding bodies to contribute oversight to the progress of works and the approval of project payments	25/11/22	In Progress	50%	Ted Maxwell
2	Oxford City Council decision-making	Risk is that timing of internal governance processes is not aligned with initiating formal funding approval to proceed from January 2023	Threat	Requirement for full council approval for budget change alongside extremely tight project timelines	The project could be stopped due to lack of funds.	Reduce	31/10/22	Project Manager	3	4	12	3	4	12	1	4	4	Risk is being picked up by Legal review of cabinet paper and in discussion with NwR	NwR have confirmed that subject to City Council cabinet decision approval, they will prepare to mobilise in January, ready for February, even if NwR contract can't be signed until 31 Jan at earliest.	14/12/22	In Progress	50%	Ted Maxwell
3	CIL funding amounts	Risk that the level of CIL forecast and assumed for forward funding is not actually achieved, in value or timing	Threat	Uncertainty about development pipelines of landowners	Could be insufficient funds linked to signed CIL agreements in future, so a shortfall between forward-funded amount and actual amount generated from CIL	Accept	31/10/22	Project Manager	2	4	8	2	4	8	1	3	3	Once landowners confirm their current expected development pipeline and CIL value, the very small chance of this risk will be clear. And the risk of any shortfall will sit with Landowners and not the Council.	The City Council are aware through current pre-application discussions that Oxford Science Park and ARC Oxford have strategies to intensify commercial space, and that this is very likely to occur in the plan period.	25/11/22	In Progress	50%	Ted Maxwell
4	Project delivery not achieved due to local funding	Final project delivery is reliant on at least 25% of CapEx coming from local sources. It is possible that FBC is undertaken and there is not sufficient local funding available for future phases in order to unlock project delivery by DfT	Threat	Challenge of creating and implementing a financing / funding strategy which secures significant local contributions to the delivery phase of the project	Future phases of the project do not happen. The FBC does not unlock working rail services in 2026	Reduce	31/10/22	Project Manager	4	5	20	3	5	15	2	5	10	This will be a priority work stream during 2023	Finance and Funding study which is close to conclusion will outline recommended work plan in 2023 and beyond in order to reduce this risk	31/04/23	In Progress	50%	Ted Maxwell
5	Project delivery not achieved due to national funding	Project is dependent upon a significant proportion (circa 75% of CapEx) of Government grant funding from DfT to facilitate delivery. Risk that Oxford City Council fund the Full Business Case stage and subsequent grant funding is not received - and delivery of the project is stalled	Threat	There is a risk that the project is not considered a regional strategic priority, particularly if East-West Rail future stages are not fully-funded/progressed	Future phases of the project do not happen. The FBC does not unlock working rail services in 2026	Reduce	31/10/22	Project Manager	3	5	15	3	5	15	2	5	10	This will be a priority work stream during 2023	The project has a very strong business case, with indicative appraisal demonstrating Very High Value for Money. Oxford City Council's approach to securing a material local funding contribution (circa. 25% of CapEx) will increase the likelihood of unlocking grant funding from DfT. The City Council will continue to closely monitor DfT and wider rail industry attitude towards project, including through the targeted involvement of DfT in the Programme Panel. If the City Council sense that the project is not a priority of DfT, a decision could be made to halt NwR development work	31/04/23	In Progress	20%	Ted Maxwell
6	Cross-authority working	Risk that strategic transport priorities of the authorities are not fully aligned, impacting on the level of committed resources and funding	Threat	Distinct local authorities, not bound together by any legally enforceable agreement	The FBC and supporting studies could be less conclusive or useful if County and City do not work hand in hand together	Reduce	31/10/22	Project Manager	4	3	12	3	3	9	1	3	3	Targeting agreement in principle on MoU in mid Nov 2022	The project is set out as a County Council priority in the LTCP and ORCS. Members and officers from the County Council have publicly stated high-levels of support for early delivery, with an MoU being agreed between the councils	25/11/22	In Progress	70%	Ted Maxwell
7	CIL legislation	Risk that CIL funding strategy is not in compliance with current Central Government guidance and / or that legislation changes in future in a way which removes CIL	Threat	Government guidance and statute on this issue may change over coming years	The basis for the funding strategy may be undermined	Accept	31/10/22	Project Manager	3	3	9	2	2	4	1	2	2	Relies on good information sharing within council re any change in Government guidance / legislation	Funding strategy has been reviewed and formal legal advice received confirming that the approach is sound. If the national legal framework changes, then revised agreements may be required	04/11/23	Not yet started	0%	Ted Maxwell

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