

# Agenda

## Cabinet

**This meeting is held in person and is NOT streamed live**

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Wednesday 15 September 2021**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **The Old Library - Oxford Town Hall**

**For further information** please contact:

John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer, Committee Services Officer

☎ 01865 252217

✉ DemocraticServices@oxford.gov.uk

**Members of the public can attend to observe this meeting and.**

- may submit a question about any item for decision at the meeting in accordance with the [Cabinet's rules](#)
- may record all or part of the meeting in accordance with the Council's [protocol](#)

Details of how City Councillors and members of the public may engage with this meeting are set out later in the agenda. Information about recording is set out later in the agenda and on the [website](#)

Please contact the Committee Services Officer to submit a question; to discuss recording the meeting; or with any other queries.

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*All public papers are available from the calendar link to this meeting once published*

## Cabinet Membership

### Leader/ Chair

Councillor Susan Brown (Chair)                      Leader of the Council

### Cabinet Members

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Councillor Ed Turner          | Deputy Leader - Finance and Asset Management                                      |
| Councillor Tom Hayes          | Deputy Leader - Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford                            |
| Councillor Lubna Arshad       | Cabinet Member for Parks and Waste Reduction                                      |
| Councillor Shaista Aziz       | Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities  |
| Councillor Diko Blackings     | Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security, and Housing the Homeless |
| Councillor Mary Clarkson      | Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism                                   |
| Councillor Alex Hollingsworth | Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery                                  |
| Councillor Mike Rowley        | Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services                                       |
| Councillor Louise Upton       | Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthier Oxford                                      |

Apologies received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting.

*Decisions come into effect after the latest of the expiry of the post-meeting councillor call in period; reconsideration of a called-in decision; or Council's agreement of recommendations.*

# Agenda

Items to be considered at this meeting in open session (part 1) and in confidential session (part 2).

Future items to be discussed by the Cabinet can be found on the Forward Plan which is available on the Council's [website](#)

|   | <b>Pages</b> |
|---|--------------|
| <b>1 Apologies for Absence</b>  |              |
| <b>2 Declarations of Interest</b>   |              |
| <b>3 Addresses and questions by members of the public</b>   |              |
| <b>4 Councillor addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda</b>  |              |
| <b>5 Councillor addresses on neighbourhood issues</b>   |              |
| <b>6 Items raised by Cabinet Members</b>  |              |
| <b>7 Scrutiny Committee reports</b>   |              |
| <p>Scrutiny Committee met on 08 September. The following reports are expected and will be published as a supplement together with any other recommendations to Cabinet from that meeting: Response to EV Strategy recommendations; Recommendations re Aereon QL implementation; Recommendations re Social Value in Procurement; and Response to Domestic Review Group recommendations.</p>  |              |
| <b>8 Integrated Performance Report for Q1</b>   | 11 - 34      |
| <p><b>Lead Member:</b> Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management (Councillor Ed Turner)</p> <p>The Head of Financial Services and Head of Business Improvement have submitted a report to update Cabinet on Finance, Risk and Corporate Performance matters as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.</p> <p>Cabinet is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Note</b> the projected financial outturn as well as the current position on risk and performance as at 30 June 2021; and</li><li><b>Recommend</b> to Council the addition of £10.0 million into the Capital programme as per paragraph 12.</li></ol> |              |

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|    |  |         |
|----|--|---------|
| 9  | <b>Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022/23</b>  | 35 - 60 |
|    | <b>Lead Member:</b> Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities (Councillor Shaista Aziz)   |         |
|    | The Head of Financial Services has submitted a report to seek approval for proposals for consultation on changes to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022/23.  |         |
|    | Cabinet is recommended to:   |         |
|    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Agree</b> that the proposals for the 2022/23 Council Tax Reduction Scheme outlined in the report be subject to consultation for an 8 week period from 20th September 2021; and</li> <li>2. <b>Note</b> the intention of the Head of Financial Services to bring a further report to Cabinet in January 2022 to outline the outcome of the consultation process and make proposals for the 2022/23 Council Tax Reduction Scheme</li> </ol> |         |
| 10 | <b>A report to set out the Council's Treasury Management activity and performance for the financial year 2020/2021</b>   | 61 - 70 |
|    | <b>Lead Member:</b> Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management (Councillor Ed Turner)  |         |
|    | The Head of Financial Services has submitted a report to set out the Council's Treasury Management activity and performance for the financial year 2020/21.  |         |
|    | Cabinet is recommended to:   |         |
|    | 1. <b>Note</b> the report.   |         |
| 11 | <b>A bid for government RSAP funding to support the Council's Homelessness Strategy</b>  | 71 - 76 |
|    | <b>Lead Member:</b> Councillor Diko Blackings  |         |
|    | The Executive Director of Housing has submitted a report to seek approval to proceed with the bid to MHCLG for funding from the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) and to agree to include the required capital match funding in the Council's budget.  |         |

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Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Agree** the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme bid and the further £2m investment in the National Homelessness Property Fund by the Council;
2. **Recommend** to Council that budget provision is agreed for the required match funding of £2m; and
3. **Delegate** to the Executive Director of Housing the entering into of supporting agreements

## 12 Urban Forest Strategy

77 - 170

**Lead Member:** Deputy Leader - Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford (Councillor Tom Hayes)

The Head of Corporate Strategy has submitted a report to seek approval for the Urban Forest Strategy.

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Approve** the Oxford Urban Forest Strategy – A Master Plan to 2050, which sets out the strategic direction for how we, as a city, protect, manage and expand our urban forest to help tackle the climate and ecological emergencies. Officers will take opportunities to seek external funding opportunities to facilitate the implementation of the strategy; and
2. **Authorise** the Head of Corporate Strategy to make minor editorial amendments to the strategy document.

## 13 Minutes

171 -  
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**Recommendation:** That Cabinet resolves to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 21 July as a true and accurate record.

## 14 Decisions taken under Part 9.3 (b) of the Constitution

177 -  
180

The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) had submitted a report asking Cabinet to note the decisions taken by the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution.

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Note** the decisions taken as set out in the report.

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## 15 Decarbonisation programme update

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**Lead Member:** Deputy Leader - Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford (Councillor Tom Hayes)

The Head of Corporate Strategy has submitted a report to provide an update on the decarbonisation programme and seek approval for the de-scoping of the programme to remain within budget and issue contracts for construction works.

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Approve** the de-scoping of the Decarbonisation Programme through the removal of the Ice Rink and Rose Hill Community Centre;
2. **Note** that the full costs of decarbonisation works will utilise 100% of the Salix grant funding available, so there will no longer be any grant contribution available towards the enabling works, contrary to the earlier report to Cabinet;
3. **Note** that the Head of Corporate Strategy will shortly execute the contract for both enabling and decarbonisation construction work on behalf of the Council, as previously delegated by Cabinet; and
4. **Note** the update provided on the Decarbonisation Programme and solar farm investment.

## 16 Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 13 October 2021  | 26 January 2022 |
| 10 November 2021 | 9 February 2022 |
| 15 December 2021 | 16 March 2022   |
|                  | 13 April 2022   |
|                  | 26 May 2022     |

All meetings start at 6.00pm.

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*Oxford City Council, Town Hall, St Aldate's Oxford OX1 1BX*

**17 Matters Exempt From Publication**

If Cabinet wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for Cabinet to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet may maintain the exemption 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.

**PART TWO  
MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION**

**18 Decarbonisation Programme - Confidential Appendix**

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*Decisions come into effect after the latest of the expiry of the post-meeting councillor call in period; reconsideration of a called-in decision; or Council's agreement of recommendations.*

## **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 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 those 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 recording 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.

\*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.

## **How Oxford City Councillors and members of the public can engage at Cabinet**

### **Addresses and questions by members of the public (15 minutes in total)**

Members of the public can submit questions in writing about any item for decision at the meeting. Questions, stating the relevant agenda item, must be received by the Head of Law and Governance by 9.30am two clear working day before the meeting (eg for a Tuesday meeting, the deadline would be 9.30am on the Friday before). Questions can be submitted either by letter or by email (to [cabinet@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:cabinet@oxford.gov.uk) ).

Answers to the questions will be provided in writing at the meeting; supplementary questions will not be allowed. If it is not possible to provide an answer at the meeting it will be included in the minutes that are published on the Council's website within 2 working days of the meeting.

The Chair has discretion in exceptional circumstances to agree that a submitted question or related statement (dealing with matters that appear on the agenda) can be asked verbally at the meeting. In these cases, the question and/or address is limited to 3 minutes, and will be answered verbally by the Chair or another Cabinet member or an officer of the Council. The text of any proposed address must be submitted within the same timescale as questions.

For this agenda item the Chair's decision is final.

### **Councillors speaking at meetings**

Oxford City councillors may, when the chair agrees, address the Cabinet on an item for decision on the agenda (other than on the minutes). The member seeking to make an address must notify the Head of Law and Governance by 9.30am at least one clear working day before the meeting, stating the relevant agenda items. An address may last for no more than three minutes. If an address is made, the Cabinet member who has political responsibility for the item for decision may respond or the Cabinet will have regard to the points raised in reaching its decision.

### **Councillors speaking on Neighbourhood issues (10 minutes in total)**

Any City Councillor can raise local issues on behalf of communities directly with the Cabinet. The member seeking to make an address must notify the Head of Law and Governance by 9.30am at least one clear working day before the meeting, giving outline details of the issue. Priority will be given to those members who have not already addressed the Cabinet within the year and in the order received. Issues can only be raised once unless otherwise agreed by the Cabinet. The Cabinet's responsibility will be to hear the issue and respond at the meeting, if possible, or arrange a written response within 10 working days.

### **Items raised by Cabinet members**

Such items must be submitted within the same timescale as questions and will be for discussion only and not for a Cabinet decision. Any item which requires a decision of the Cabinet will be the subject of a report to a future meeting of the Cabinet.



**To:** Cabinet – 15 September 2021  
Council – 04 October 2021

**Report of:** Head of Financial Services  
Head of Business Improvement

**Title of Report:** Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 1 2021/22

| <b>Summary and recommendations</b>                |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Purpose of report:</b>                         | To update the Cabinet on Finance, Risk and Corporate Performance matters as at 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2021.                  |
| <b>Key decision:</b>                              | No  |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>                            | Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management   |
| <b>Corporate Priority:</b>                        | All   |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>                          | Council Strategy 2020-24  |
| <b>Recommendations:</b> That Cabinet resolves to: |   |
| 1.  | <b>Note</b> the projected financial outturn as well as the current position on risk and performance as at 30 June 2021; and |
| 2.  | <b>Recommend</b> to Council the addition of £10.0 million into the Capital programme as per paragraph 12.                   |

| <b>Appendices</b> |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Appendix A        | General Fund - June 2021 Forecast Outturn            |
| Appendix B        | Housing Revenue Account - June 2021 Forecast Outturn |
| Appendix C        | Capital Programme – June 2021                        |
| Appendix D        | Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – June 2021        |

## Introduction and background

1. This report updates the Cabinet on the financial, corporate performance and corporate risk positions of the Council as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021. A brief summary is as follows:

## Financial Position

- **General Fund** – the outturn position is forecast to be on budget against the net budget agreed by Council in February 2021 of £23.109 million; it should be noted this includes £2.1million of income losses already factored into the budget due to the continuing impacts from Covid. In setting its Budget for 2021-22 and Medium Term Financial Plan at Council in February 2021 the Council was required to draw on £11.3 million of reserves to balance the budget over the medium term as well as reduce expenditure and seek further efficiencies and increased revenue especially from its wholly owned companies to cover reduced income and increased cost arising from the pandemic. Whilst some provision has been made in the MTFP for reduced income streams in future years, the indication is that around some income streams such as car parking this may be insufficient, although this assertion is only based on the first 3 months data.
  - **Housing Revenue Account** – The budgeted surplus agreed by the Council in February 2021 was £0.388 million. The forecast outturn position indicates a surplus of £0.359 million, which is a small adverse variance of £0.029 million;
  - **Capital Programme** – The budget, as approved at Council in February 2021, was set at £186.309 million with carry forward of unspent balances in 2020-21 this was subsequently revised to the latest budget of £203.607 million. The outturn forecast position is currently £190.939 million with a total variance of £12.668 million made up of slippage of £8.668 million and £4.0 million of underspend.
2. **Performance** – There are 24 Corporate Indicators for the current financial year, 13 of which are rated Green (on target); 5 are rated Amber (within a tolerance of target) and 1 is rated Red (outside of target), there are also 5 indicators that are unrated due to either no data being available or no comparable data from previous year to rate against. More details can be found in paragraph 15.
  3. **Corporate Risk Management** – There are two red corporate risks at the end of quarter one. These relate to actions taken to ensure housing delivery and supply for the city of Oxford and to enable sufficient house building and investment; local, national or international factors adversely affecting the economic growth of the city and negative impacts of Climate Change. More details of the risks can be found in paragraphs 13 to 14;

## Financial Position

### General Fund Revenue

4. The overall Net Budget Requirement agreed by the Council in February 2021 was £23.647 million. Since setting the budget, service area expenditure has decreased by a net total of £2.262 million, this is due to a combination of virements within service areas and additions to reserves of grant income received. The Net Budget Requirement remains unchanged.
5. Virements between service areas, were authorised under delegated powers by the Council's Head of Financial Services totalling £0.338 million, the most notable of which relates to the redistribution of funding for Tree Officers from Environmental Sustainability to Planning.

6. The contribution to reserves totals a net movement of £1.992million, with the most significant movement being adding the 2021/22 grant allocation received from MHCLG for both homeless prevention and rough sleeping initiative funding to reserves. This has been paid to us in advance and will be released into Revenue as and when expenditure is incurred.
7. As at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 the General Fund Service Area is not projecting any outturn variances against the latest budget of £33.532 million however there are a number of key areas that continue to be impacted by COVID 19 that are being monitored closely. These include :
- **Car Park income** – the budget for the current year 2021-22 agreed in February 2021 was reduced from £6.7 million by approx. £1.500 million to take account of reduced usage. Income for the first quarter of 2021-22 is 40% down on the revised budget. Shoppers have returned to the city however many businesses are still predominantly working from home leading to the reduced usage of some car parks. The position is being monitored but may result in further reduction in income forecast in the next monitoring report.
  - **Community Centre income** – the budget for the current year 2021-22 was reduced by £0.160 million. The overall position to date for the service is consistent with this although it is being achieved by a saving in premises and employee costs rather than meeting the income target.
  - **Licensing** – the budget for the current year 2021-22 was reduced by £0.030 million and currently income is significantly below the budget for the year although there is some mitigation from staff vacancies. The income forecast currently remains at the original level but this will be reviewed during the year.
  - **Property rental** – the budget in the current year 2021-22 was reduced by £3.700 million due to the significant pressures that COVID 19 placed on this income stream. The forecast remains unchanged but arrears are being closely monitored with 37% of Q1 invoices issued in March 2021 still outstanding.
  - **Town Hall income** – the net income target for the current year was reduced by £0.536 million and this area is only slightly down on budget on a year to date basis so no forecast changes are anticipated.
  - **Events income** – the income budget was reduced by 50% and income has picked up considerably in the last month so it is hoped the target will be met and no forecast changes will be necessary.
  - **Oxford Direct Services** have deferred the decision as to whether to pay a dividend for 2020-21 in this financial year, due to the ongoing impact of COVID and the lack of financial management information available arising from the ongoing problems of the QL system implementation. Further adjusted forecasts will be made in future monitoring reports
  - **Oxford City Housing Limited** – The Company will present their revised business plan to shareholders in July. Developments have been delayed due to COVID and increased corporation tax announced in the chancellors' budget make some form of adjustment in returns from the Company a

likelihood as it seeks to make financial adjustments in its business plan. These adjustments will be included in future monitoring reports.

8. To mitigate some of these losses of income the Council will be submitting a claim through the Sales, Fees & Charges compensation scheme which the Government extended to cover lost income up to and including 30<sup>th</sup> June. It is important to note that the scheme, which covers 75% of losses incurred compared to the budget position allowing for a 5% threshold, does not cover commercial losses from tenant rents or returns from companies.

### **Housing Revenue Account (“the HRA”)**

9. The HRA budgeted surplus agreed by the Council in February 2021 was £0.388 million. The forecast outturn indicates a surplus of £0.359 million, a small adverse variance of £0.029 million against the agreed position. The HRA accounts are showing a significant underspend in the year to date position, this is due to issues arising from the implementation of the new Housing Management System, QL. Since the system went live on 18<sup>th</sup> May, no financial information has been available and the project team are working to resolve the issues. The significant forecast changes are explained below:
  - Dwelling Rent - £1.110 million reduction in rental income is due to some development schemes slipping into the next financial year and the use of a higher inflation rate when setting the budget for the rent increase;
  - Management & Services - £0.243 million increase in expenditure while Other Revenue Spend has reduced expenditure of £0.304 million, this is mainly a realignment of budgets across the two expenditure lines;
  - Interest Paid - £1.254 million reduced expenditure to reflect the lower level of loans taken out during 2020/21 due to reduced activity levels during the height of the COVID 19 pandemic.

### **Capital**

10. The budget, as approved by the Council at its meeting in February 2021, was set at £186.309 million. Since that date the budget has been increased by £10.261 million to take account of unspent balances rolled forward from 2020-21, giving a budget of £196.572 million. Further adjustments since then have been made which increase the budget by £7.068 million to show the latest budget as at 30<sup>th</sup> June to be £203.608 million. In the current circumstance capital expenditure may be affected, this will be reviewed over the quarter and an updated position on likely spend for the year will be reported in the next report.
11. Further net slippage of £8.711 million together with underspends of £4.000 million results in a forecast outturn of £190.897 million. The main items which are being re-timetabled are:

### **General Fund**

- East Oxford Community Centre - £3.030 million slippage – key dates have been agreed and the refurbishment will start towards the end of 2021, with stakeholder engagement currently underway;
- Osney Mead Infrastructure - £0.710 million slippage – overall scheme slippage due to delays with the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS)

and the need to negotiate with the Environment Agency and also with Homes England regarding the funding drawdown;

- City Cycle Schemes - £0.212 million slippage – the scheme is currently in planning but some sites have received objections and this is delaying the delivery of the scheme;
- Motor Transport Vehicle Replacement programme - £0.777 million slippage as the programme of replacement is being reviewed, some vehicles may be delayed while others are brought forward;

### **Housing Revenue Account**

- East Oxford Development – slippage of £0.263 million – this links with the General Fund scheme which is also slipping;
  - Properties purchased from OCHL – the budget for this item has been increased by £10.5 million to take account of additional stage payments to Oxford City Housing Ltd (OCHL) with regard the purchase of social housing together with payment for an additional 17 social dwellings at Elsfield
  - Development sites at Northfield Hostel, Lanham Way, unallocated site 1 and Juniper Way - £14.459 million slippage across the four sites to 2021-22 – all schemes are progressing but are at different stages with some at pre planning and consultation while others are at the feasibility stage.
  - Unallocated Site 2 – underspend of £4 million which is to being used to fund the change of tenure types on the Elsfield development referred to above
12. On 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020 a report was taken to Cabinet in respect of works at Northern Gateway. The report sought approval from Cabinet to enter into an agreement with Thomas White Oxford (TWO) to deliver infrastructure works to Northern Gateway funded by Housing Infrastructure Funds (HIF) from Homes England. Under the Councils Constitution a resolution should have been made by Cabinet to Council to establish a capital budget to enable payment of the monies but unfortunately this was overlooked. Agreement has been made to commence payment of the funds £2.7 million in 2021/22 and £7.3 million in 2022/23 and this report seeks the approval to do so in accordance with the Constitution. For convenience the report referred to may be found at :

<http://mycouncilpages.oxford.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=527&MIId=5575>

### **Corporate Risk**

13. There are two red risks on the current Corporate Risk Register, which are as follows:

- **Housing** – the Council has key priorities around housing which include ensuring housing delivery and supply for the city of Oxford and enabling sufficient house building and investment. Insufficient housing in Oxford leads to an increase in homelessness which has an impact on residents. There are also health and quality of life issues. The Council is implementing delivery methods for temporary accommodation and accommodation for homelessness prevention which include a rent guarantee scheme, a growth deal to facilitate additional affordable housing and a tranche of property

purchases to be delivered via real lettings. In addition the Council’s housing companies are in the process of constructing new affordable homes and the Cabinet has approved plans which will result in the Council’s Housing Revenue Account (“HRA”) purchasing the social housing using borrowing headroom, following the removal of the HRA borrowing cap by central government . This has become more challenging in the short term due to the Covid-19 pandemic which has paused any delivery in the housing supply;

- **Economic Growth** – this relates to local, national or international factors adversely affecting the economic growth of the City. Despite some positive trends, the Risk still remains at Red. Issues relating to inflation, labour market supply, global economy, COVID levels locally, border arrangements, local business support being scaled back and business rates commencing suggest that there are still numerous risks;

14. The table below shows the level of Red, Amber and Green current risks over the last 12 months:

| <b>Current Risk</b> | <b>Q2<br/>2020/21</b> | <b>Q3<br/>2020/21</b> | <b>Q4<br/>2020/21</b> | <b>Q1<br/>2021/22</b> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Red                 | 3                     | 3                     | 3                     | 2                     |
| Amber               | 8                     | 9                     | 7                     | 8                     |
| Green               | 1                     | 0                     | 2                     | 2                     |
| <b>Total Risks</b>  | <b>12</b>             | <b>12</b>             | <b>12</b>             | <b>12</b>             |

### **Performance Indicators**

15. There is one red corporate performance indicators being reported at the end of quarter 1, these relate to:

- The number of people in Oxford estimated to be sleeping rough – actual of 24 against a target of 17 – an increase has been seen in recent weeks which is not uncommon when the weather improves, but when compared to pre-pandemic this number is much lower for the time of year;

### **Financial implications**

16. All financial implications are covered in the body of this report and the Appendices.

### **Legal issues**

17. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

### **Level of risk**

18. All risk implications are covered in the body of this report and the Appendices.

### **Equalities impact**

19. There are no equalities impacts arising directly from this report.

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Report author</b>       | Nigel Kennedy<br>Helen Bishop   |
| Job title                  | Head of Financial Services<br>Head of Business Improvement  |
| Service area or department | Financial Services/Business Improvement   |
| Telephone                  | 01865 252708  |
| e-mail                     | <a href="mailto:nkennedy@oxford.gov.uk">nkennedy@oxford.gov.uk</a> / <a href="mailto:hbishop@oxford.gov.uk">hbishop@oxford.gov.uk</a> |

**Background Papers:** None

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# Appendix A

| <b>General Fund Outturn Report 21/22<br/>@ 30 June 2021</b> | <b>Approved Budget<br/>(per Budget book)</b> | <b>Previous Months<br/>Budget</b> | <b>Current Month<br/>Virements &amp; Ear<br/>Marked Reserve<br/>Transfers</b> | <b>Latest Budget</b> | <b>Projected Outturn<br/>against Latest<br/>Budget</b> |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------|--|
|   | <b>£000's</b>                                | <b>£000's</b>                     | <b>£000's</b>   | <b>£000's</b>        | <b>£000's</b>  |
| S13 - Housing Services                                      | 4,558  | 2,515                             | (18)  | 2,497                | 2,497  |
| S15 - Regulatory Services & Community Safety                | 1,359  | 1,298                             | 24  | 1,322                | 1,322  |
| S22 - Community Services                                    | 5,821  | 6,002                             | 60  | 6,062                | 6,062  |
| <b>Communities &amp; People</b>                             | <b>11,738</b>                                | <b>9,815</b>                      | <b>66</b>   | <b>9,881</b>         | <b>9,881</b>   |
| S09 - Corporate Property                                    | (5,609)                                      | (5,734)                           |   | (5,734)              | (5,734)  |
| S10 - Regeneration & Economy                                | 606  | 666                               | 11  | 677                  | 677  |
| S16 - Planning Services                                     | 377  | 405                               | 1   | 406                  | 406  |
| <b>Development</b>  | <b>(4,626)</b>                               | <b>(4,663)</b>                    | <b>12</b>   | <b>(4,651)</b>       | <b>(4,651)</b>   |
| S01 - Corporate Strategy                                    | 871  | 838                               | (60)  | 778                  | 778  |
| S20 - Environmental Sustainability                          | 1,047  | 689                               | 5   | 694                  | 694  |
| <b>Chief Executive</b>                                      | <b>1,918</b>                                 | <b>1,527</b>                      | <b>(55)</b>   | <b>1,472</b>         | <b>1,472</b>   |
| S26 - Oxford Direct Services Client                         | 11,405                                       | 11,714                            |   | 11,714               | 11,714   |
| <b>ODS Development Director</b>                             | <b>11,405</b>                                | <b>11,714</b>                     |   | <b>11,714</b>        | <b>11,714</b>  |
| S03 - Business Improvement                                  | 8,952  | 8,825                             |   | 8,825                | 8,825  |
| S32 - Financial Services                                    | 3,020  | 2,963                             |   | 2,963                | 2,963  |
| S34 - Law and Governance                                    | 3,387  | 3,328                             |   | 3,328                | 3,328  |
| <b>Corporate Resources</b>                                  | <b>15,359</b>                                | <b>15,116</b>                     |   | <b>15,116</b>        | <b>15,116</b>  |
| <b>Directorate Total Excl SLA's &amp; Capital Charges</b>   | <b>35,794</b>                                | <b>33,509</b>                     | <b>23</b>   | <b>33,532</b>        | <b>33,532</b>  |
| <b>SLA's &amp; Capital Charges</b>                          | <b>(9,538)</b>                               | <b>(9,538)</b>                    |   | <b>(9,538)</b>       | <b>(9,538)</b>   |
| <b>Corporate Accounts</b>                                   | <b>1,825</b>                                 | <b>1,825</b>                      |   | <b>1,825</b>         | <b>1,825</b>   |
| <b>Contingencies</b>  | <b>633</b>                                   | <b>926</b>                        | <b>(1)</b>  | <b>925</b>           | <b>925</b>   |
| <b>Total Corporate Accounts &amp; Contingencies</b>         | <b>2,458</b>                                 | <b>2,751</b>                      | <b>(1)</b>  | <b>2,750</b>         | <b>2,750</b>   |
| <b>Net Expenditure Budget</b>                               | <b>28,714</b>                                | <b>26,722</b>                     | <b>22</b>   | <b>26,744</b>        | <b>26,744</b>  |
| S48D - Transfers To/From Earmarked Reserves                 | (5,067)                                      | (3,075)                           | (22)  | (3,097)              | (3,097)  |
| <b>Net Budget Required</b>                                  | <b>23,647</b>                                | <b>23,647</b>                     |   | <b>23,647</b>        | <b>23,647</b>  |
| <b>Funding</b>  |  |                                   |   |                      |  |
| S47A - External Funding                                     |  |                                   |   |                      |  |
| S47B - Council Tax Funding                                  | 14,911                                       | 14,911                            |   | 14,911               | 14,911   |
| S47C - Parish Precept                                       | (278)  | (278)                             |   | (278)                | (278)  |
| S47D - NDR Funding  | 8,476  | 8,476                             |   | 8,476                | 8,476  |
| S47E - New Homes Bonus                                      | 538  | 538                               |   | 538                  | 538  |
| <b>Total Funding Available</b>                              | <b>23,647</b>                                | <b>23,647</b>                     |   | <b>23,647</b>        | <b>23,647</b>  |
| <b>(Surplus) / Deficit for the year</b>                     |  |                                   |   |                      |  |



# Appendix B

| HRA Report 21/22<br>@ Jun 2021            | Approved Budget<br>(per Budget book) | Latest Budget @<br>30th June 2021 | % Budget Spent to<br>30th Jun 2021 | Projected Outturn<br>against Latest<br>Budget @ 30th Jun<br>2021 | Projected Outturn<br>Variance | Projected Outturn<br>Variance Mvt from<br>Previous Month |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
|   | £000's                               | £'000's                           | %                                  | £'000's  | £000's                        | £'000's  |
| Dwelling Rent                             | (43,595)                             | (43,595)                          | 24%                                | (42,485)   | 1,110                         | 1,110  |
| Service Charges                           | (1,987)                              | (1,987)                           | 19%                                | (1,987)  |                               |  |
| Garage Income                             | (221)                                | (221)                             | 26%                                | (221)  |                               |  |
| Miscellaneous Income                      | (795)                                | (795)                             | 24%                                | (795)  |                               |  |
| Right to Buy (RAF)                        | (52)                                 | (52)                              | 10%                                | (52)   |                               |  |
| <b>Net Income</b>                         | <b>(46,650)</b>                      | <b>(46,650)</b>                   |                                    | <b>(45,540)</b>  | <b>1,110</b>                  | <b>1,110</b>   |
| Management & Services (Stock Related)     | 10,540                               | 10,741                            | 23%                                | 10,741   | 201                           | 243  |
| Other Revenue Spend (Stock Related)       | 1,779                                | 1,517                             | 8%                                 | 1,517  | (262)                         | (304)  |
| Misc Expenditure (Not Stock Related)      | 954                                  | 1,016                             | 21%                                | 1,016  | 61                            | 61   |
| Bad Debt Provision                        | 770                                  | 770                               | 4%                                 | 751  | (19)                          | (19)   |
| Responsive & Cyclical Repairs             | 14,175                               | 14,175                            | 8%                                 | 14,367   | 192                           | 192  |
| Interest Paid                             | 9,026                                | 9,026                             | 25%                                | 7,772  | (1,254)                       | (1,254)  |
| Depreciation                              | 9,079                                | 9,079                             | 25%                                | 9,079  |                               |  |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>                  | <b>46,324</b>                        | <b>46,324</b>                     |                                    | <b>45,243</b>  | <b>(1,081)</b>                | <b>(1,081)</b>   |
| <b>Net Operating Expenditure/(Income)</b> | <b>(326)</b>                         | <b>(326)</b>                      |                                    | <b>(297)</b>   | <b>29</b>                     | <b>29</b>  |
| Investment Income                         | (62)                                 | (62)                              | 25%                                | (62)   |                               |  |
| Other HRA Reserve Adjustment              |                                      |                                   |                                    |  |                               |  |
| Transfer (to)/from MR/OR                  |                                      |                                   |                                    |  |                               |  |
| <b>Total Appropriations</b>               | <b>(62)</b>                          | <b>(62)</b>                       |                                    | <b>(62)</b>  |                               |  |
| <b>Total HRA (Surplus)/Deficit</b>        | <b>(388)</b>                         | <b>(388)</b>                      |                                    | <b>(359)</b>   | <b>29</b>                     | <b>29</b>  |

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| Capital Budget and Spend as at 30th June 2021     |   |                          |                         |                   |                     |                   | Appendix C                |                          |                    |                          |
|---|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
|   |   |                          |                         |                   |                     |                   | 2021/22 Forecast Variance |                          |                    |                          |
| Cost Centre                                       | Capital Scheme                                  | Progress Update Provider | 2021/22 Original Budget | Latest Budget     | Spend to 30/06/2021 | Budget Remaining  | Forecast Variance         | Variance due to Slippage | Over / Under Spend | 2021/22 Outturn Forecast |
|   |   |                          | £                       | £                 | £                   | £                 | £                         | £                        | £                  | £                        |
| <b>General Fund Capital Programme</b>             |   |                          |                         |                   |                     |                   |                           |                          |                    |                          |
| <b>Communities and People Directorate</b>         |   |                          |                         |                   |                     |                   |                           |                          |                    |                          |
| <b>Business Improvement Projects</b>              |   |                          |                         |                   |                     |                   |                           |                          |                    |                          |
| C3044   | ICT Software and Licences                       | Rocco Labellarte         | 245,000                 | 245,000           | 233,159             | 11,841            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 245,000                  |
| C3058   | CRM Replacement                                 | Rocco Labellarte         | -                       | 120,275           | -                   | 120,275           | -                         | -                        | -                  | 120,275                  |
| C3060   | End-Point Devices (Desktops/Laptops)            | Rocco Labellarte         | 60,000                  | 65,775            | 17,161              | 48,614            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 65,775                   |
| C3066   | Telephony Device Refresh                        | Rocco Labellarte         | -                       | 9,271             | 6,792               | 2,479             | -                         | -                        | -                  | 9,271                    |
| C3067   | Paris Payment System, Replacement / PCI DSS     | Tim Martin               | 17,924                  | 102,684           | -                   | 102,684           | -                         | -                        | -                  | 102,684                  |
| C3068   | Windows 2008 Server Replacement                 | Rocco Labellarte         | 121,128                 | 168,804           | -                   | 168,804           | -                         | -                        | -                  | 168,804                  |
| C3070   | Business Process Automation Full Rollout        | Rocco Labellarte         | -                       | 19,515            | -                   | 19,515            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 19,515                   |
| C3072   | Council Website Refresh                         | Rocco Labellarte         | -                       | 36,170            | -                   | 36,170            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 36,170                   |
| C3078   | Revs and Bens System Replacement                | Shaun Butler             | 245,000                 | 463,737           | -                   | 463,737           | -                         | -                        | -                  | 463,737                  |
| <b>Community Services Projects</b>                |   |                          |                         |                   |                     |                   |                           |                          |                    |                          |
| A4820   | Upgrade Existing Tennis Courts                  | Hagan Lewisman           | 35,000                  | 35,000            | -                   | 35,000            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 35,000                   |
| A4833   | Horspath Sports Park                            | Hagan Lewisman           | -                       | -                 | 296                 | (296)             | -                         | -                        | -                  | 0                        |
| A4847   | Rose Hill Community Centre - Parking Management | Dave Morrell             | 10,000                  | 10,000            | -                   | 10,000            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 10,000                   |
| B0075   | Stage 2 Museum of Oxford Development            | Steven Clews             | 35,000                  | 1,051,395         | 1,031,461           | 19,934            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 1,051,395                |
| B0083   | East Oxford Community Centre                    | Doug Kerrigan            | 4,212,439               | 4,430,487         | -                   | 4,430,487         | (3,030,487)               | (3,030,487)              | -                  | 1,400,000                |
| B0084   | Jericho Community Centre                        | Steven Clews             | 200,000                 | 200,000           | -                   | 200,000           | -                         | -                        | -                  | 200,000                  |
| B0096   | Bullingdon Community Centre                     | Douglas Kerrigan         | 1,481,151               | 1,514,578         | 15,506              | 1,499,072         | -                         | -                        | -                  | 1,514,578                |
| T2305   | Parks Paths                                     | Laura Harlock            | -                       | 33,840            | -                   | 33,840            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 33,840                   |
| <b>Housing Services Projects</b>                  |   |                          |                         |                   |                     |                   |                           |                          |                    |                          |
| B0108   | Floyds Row Refurbishment                        | Douglas Kerrigan         | 41,400                  | 41,400            | (111,512)           | 152,912           | -                         | -                        | -                  | 41,400                   |
| C3057   | Housing System Replacement                      | Dave Shaw                | -                       | 128,595           | 105,521             | 23,074            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 128,595                  |
| M5019   | Purchase of Homeless Properties                 |                          | -                       | -                 | 434                 | (434)             | -                         | -                        | -                  | 0                        |
| M5025   | Barton Park - Purchase by Council               | David Watt               | 5,736,037               | 8,231,856         | -                   | 8,231,856         | -                         | -                        | -                  | 8,231,856                |
| M5026   | Housing Company Loans (excl Barton Park)        | David Watt               | 32,200,000              | 26,534,169        | 305,000             | 26,229,169        | -                         | -                        | -                  | 26,534,169               |
| M5032   | Barton Park - loan to OCHL                      | David Watt               | 5,736,037               | 8,198,856         | -                   | 8,198,856         | -                         | -                        | -                  | 8,198,856                |
| M5033   | Blackbird Leys Regeneration (GF Element)        | Andrew Humpherson        | 452,790                 | 454,438           | -                   | 454,438           | -                         | -                        | -                  | 454,438                  |
| M5034   | Affordable Housing Supply                       | Dave Scholes             | -                       | 3,000,000         | -                   | 3,000,000         | -                         | -                        | -                  | 3,000,000                |
| M5035   | Growth Deal Registered Provider Payments        | Dave Scholes             | 6,900,000               | 7,247,000         | -                   | 7,247,000         | -                         | -                        | -                  | 7,247,000                |
| <b>Regulatory &amp; Community Safety Projects</b> |   |                          |                         |                   |                     |                   |                           |                          |                    |                          |
| A4845   | CCTV Suite Upgrade                              | Richard Adams            | 68,688                  | 68,688            | -                   | 68,688            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 68,688                   |
| A4852   | Bodycams for Community Safety Team              | Dan Courtenay            | 60,450                  | 60,450            | -                   | 60,450            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 60,450                   |
| E3511   | Essential Repairs Grant                         | Becky Walker             | 24,948                  | 31,521            | 4,990               | 26,531            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 31,521                   |
| E3521   | Disabled Facilities Grants                      | Becky Walker             | 1,282,378               | 1,417,378         | 157,576             | 1,259,802         | -                         | -                        | -                  | 1,417,378                |
| E3561   | Additional DFG Funding                          | Becky Walker             | -                       | 98,682            | 33,424              | 65,258            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 98,682                   |
| <b>Communities and People Directorate Total</b>   |   |                          | <b>59,165,370</b>       | <b>64,019,564</b> | <b>1,799,808</b>    | <b>62,219,755</b> | <b>(3,030,487)</b>        | <b>(3,030,487)</b>       | <b>-</b>           | <b>60,989,077</b>        |
| <b>Development Directorate</b>                    |   |                          |                         |                   |                     |                   |                           |                          |                    |                          |
| A4853   | City Wide Cycling Infrastructure Contribution   | Ted Maxwell              | 60,000                  | 62,456            | -                   | 62,456            | -                         | -                        | -                  | 62,456                   |
| B0081   | Car Parking Oxpens                              | Steven Clews             | 43,000                  | 235,355           | 50                  | 235,305           | -                         | -                        | -                  | 235,355                  |
| B0086   | Seacourt Park & Ride Extension                  | Douglas Kerrigan         | -                       | 262,499           | (280,030)           | 542,529           | -                         | -                        | -                  | 262,499                  |
| B0092   | Cave Street Development (Standingford House)    | Andrew Humpherson        | 1,407,500               | 1,040,662         | 29,222              | 1,011,440         | -                         | -                        | -                  | 1,040,662                |
| B0098   | 1-3 George Street                               | Andrew Humpherson        | 1,635,200               | 1,926,769         | 7,500               | 1,919,269         | -                         | -                        | -                  | 1,926,769                |



| Cost Centre                          | Capital Scheme                     | Progress Update Provider  | 2021/22 Original Budget | Latest Budget      | Spend to 30/06/2021 | Budget Remaining   | Forecast Variance   | Variance due to Slippage | Over / Under Spend | 2021/22 Outturn Forecast |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
|                                      |                                    |                           | £                       | £                  | £                   | £                  | £                   | £                        | £                  | £                        |
| N6384                                | Tower Blocks                       | Darowen Jones             | 200,200                 | 998,849            | 20,850              | 977,999            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 998,849                  |
| N6385                                | Adaptations for disabled           | Malcolm Peek              | 704,000                 | 704,000            | (13,774)            | 717,774            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 704,000                  |
| N6386                                | Structural                         | Bill Chamberlain/ Malcolm | 846,600                 | 1,233,467          | 22,092              | 1,211,375          | -                   | -                        | -                  | 1,233,467                |
| N6387                                | Controlled Entry                   | Bill Chamberlain/ Malcolm | 312,500                 | 371,083            | 48,230              | 322,853            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 371,083                  |
| N6388                                | Major Voids                        | Steve Carter              | 472,000                 | 472,000            | 14,847              | 457,153            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 472,000                  |
| N6389                                | Damp-proof works (K&B)             | Chris Scott               | 119,000                 | 144,006            | 17,590              | 126,416            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 144,006                  |
| N7057                                | Kitchens                           | Malcolm Peek              | 1,228,080               | 1,571,176          | (5,836)             | 1,577,012          | 87,358              | 87,358                   | -                  | 1,658,534                |
| N7058                                | Bathrooms                          | Malcolm Peek              | 907,266                 | 1,121,666          | 41,708              | 1,079,958          | 62,365              | 62,365                   | -                  | 1,184,031                |
| N6392                                | Roofing                            | Gary Long                 | 1,040,000               | 1,303,521          | (174,161)           | 1,477,682          | -                   | -                        | -                  | 1,303,521                |
| N6395                                | Electrics                          | Malcolm Peek              | 625,000                 | 1,260,391          | 44,016              | 1,216,375          | 70,080              | 70,080                   | -                  | 1,330,471                |
| N6434                                | Doors and Windows                  | Malcolm Peek              | 579,200                 | 603,123            | 97,851              | 505,272            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 603,123                  |
| N7020                                | Extensions & Major Adaptions       | Malcolm Peek              | 265,000                 | 424,672            | (27,135)            | 451,807            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 424,672                  |
| N7026                                | Communal Areas                     | Malcolm Peek              | 198,000                 | 548,889            | 8,274               | 540,615            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 548,889                  |
| N7031                                | Homes at Barton                    | 0                         | -                       | -                  | -                   | -                  | -                   | -                        | -                  | 0                        |
| N7032                                | Great Estates Programme            | Sue Briscoe/ Malcolm Peek | 1,300,000               | 1,226,437          | 78,255              | 1,148,182          | -                   | -                        | -                  | 1,226,437                |
| N7033                                | Energy Efficiency Initiatives      | Malcolm Peek              | 1,252,200               | 1,552,786          | 38,119              | 1,514,667          | -                   | -                        | -                  | 1,552,786                |
| N7042                                | Barton Regeneration                | Sue Briscoe               | 600,000                 | 628,277            | 222                 | 628,055            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 628,277                  |
| N7044                                | Lift Replacement Programme         | Malcolm Peek              | 306,500                 | 410,186            | 6,265               | 403,921            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 410,186                  |
| N7047                                | Social Rented Housing Acquisitions | Dave Scholes              | 2,946,872               | 2,094,246          | 1,134,260           | 959,986            | (60,000)            | (60,000)                 | -                  | 2,034,246                |
| N7048                                | Fire doors                         | Chris Scott               | 530,000                 | 868,979            | (1,701)             | 870,680            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 868,979                  |
| N7067                                | Renewal Of Fire Alarm Panels       | Paul Worts                | 102,000                 | 102,000            | -                   | 102,000            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 102,000                  |
| N7050                                | East Oxford development            | Dave Scholes              | 3,533,000               | 3,240,353          | -                   | 3,240,353          | (263,353)           | (263,353)                | -                  | 2,977,000                |
| N7051                                | Acquisition of Additional Units    | Dave Scholes              | 3,103,606               | 3,196,081          | 3,290               | 3,192,791          | 60,000              | 60,000                   | -                  | 3,256,081                |
| N7052                                | HRA Stock Condition Survey         | Malcolm Peek              | 169,200                 | 142,729            | 555                 | 142,174            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 142,729                  |
| N7054                                | Properties Purchased From OCHL     | Dave Scholes              | 31,418,629              | 35,066,061         | 12,515,000          | 22,551,061         | 10,518,000          | 10,518,000               | -                  | 45,584,061               |
| N7055                                | Use Of Recycled Capital Grants     | Dave Scholes              | -                       | 368,000            | -                   | 368,000            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 368,000                  |
| N7059                                | Boilers Only                       | Malcolm Peek              | 1,512,780               | 1,512,780          | 62,253              | 1,450,527          | 84,111              | 84,111                   | -                  | 1,596,891                |
| N7060                                | Heating Systems                    | Malcolm Peek              | 272,100                 | 60,000             | 19,947              | 40,053             | 3,336               | 3,336                    | -                  | 63,336                   |
| N7061                                | Northfield Hostel                  | Dave Scholes              | 7,900,000               | 7,900,000          | -                   | 7,900,000          | (6,127,000)         | (6,127,000)              | -                  | 1,773,000                |
| N7062                                | Lanham Way                         | Dave Scholes              | 3,050,000               | 3,050,000          | -                   | 3,050,000          | (2,065,000)         | (2,065,000)              | -                  | 985,000                  |
| N7064                                | Unallocated Site 1                 | Dave Scholes              | 5,026,000               | 5,026,000          | -                   | 5,026,000          | (3,660,000)         | (3,660,000)              | -                  | 1,366,000                |
| N7065                                | Unallocated Site 2                 | Dave Scholes              | 4,000,000               | 4,000,000          | -                   | 4,000,000          | (4,000,000)         |                          | (4,000,000)        | 0                        |
| N7068                                | Juniper                            | Dave Scholes              | 2,607,000               | 2,607,000          | -                   | 2,607,000          | (2,607,000)         | (2,607,000)              | -                  | 0                        |
| N7066                                | Next Steps Accommodation Programme | Dave Scholes              | 2,392,000               | 2,992,584          | 413,561             | 2,579,023          | -                   | -                        | -                  | 2,992,584                |
| N7040                                | Blackbird Leys Regeneration        | Andrew Humpherson         | 209,000                 | 273,166            | 7,283               | 265,883            | -                   | -                        | -                  | 273,166                  |
| <b>Housing Revenue Account Total</b> |                                    |                           | <b>79,727,733</b>       | <b>87,074,509</b>  | <b>14,371,860</b>   | <b>72,702,649</b>  | <b>(7,897,103)</b>  | <b>(3,897,103)</b>       | <b>(4,000,000)</b> | <b>79,177,406</b>        |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                   |                                    |                           | <b>186,309,148</b>      | <b>203,607,609</b> | <b>17,242,205</b>   | <b>186,365,404</b> | <b>(12,710,912)</b> | <b>(8,710,912)</b>       | <b>(4,000,000)</b> | <b>190,896,697</b>       |

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## Corporate KPIs – update June 21

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|        | Title   | Service                  | Owner                      | 2021/22 target          | Q1 Target | Q1 Actual | Comments   | RAG     |
|--------|---|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|--|---------|
| CSC004 | % of people from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds with access to skills that lead to high growth jobs in the city            | Communities and Customer | Ian Brooke, Nadeem Murtuja | 3 year target set (80%) | NA        | NA        | No figure for this at the moment   | Unrated |
| FSC002 | % of Council spend with local businesses including SMEs   | Financial Services       | Nigel Kennedy              | 45                      | 45        | 75.47     | Exceeding target   | G       |
| REC001 | Jobs in the city created or saved by OCC  | Regeneration and Economy | Carolyn Ploszynski         | Tracking indicator      | NA        | 153       | 137 Kickstart, 16 non Kickstart. Recruitment continues.  | G       |
| REC002 | Number of Oxford Living Wage employers and employees  | Regeneration and Economy | Carolyn Ploszynski         | 50                      | TBC       | 36        | 15 first time sign-ups to OLW; 21 renewals. Promotional push after the school holidays but given the current economic uncertainties, although optimistic, we are unable to be sure at this time whether the KPI will be met. | A       |
| HPC005 | Total number of affordable homes in Oxford completed in year  | Housing Services         | Stephen Clarke             | TBC                     | TBC       | 49        | 48 of the 49 units are social rent units and 1 affordable rent unit. 45 units are new build and 4 market acquisitions.   | Unrated |
| PSC007 | Planned council housing with planning permission  | Planning Services        | Adrian Arnold              | 1701                    | NA        | No change | No change  | G       |
| RSC006 | % of privately rented homes improved  | Housing Services         | Ian Wright                 | 60                      | 55        | 48        | In Q1 - 201 properties were visited for compliance and HHSRS assessments of these 96 were compliant / improved.  | A       |
| CSC008 | % of people who share protected characteristics that have confidence in the Council's equality, diversity and inclusion programme | Communities and Customer | Ian Brooke, Nadeem Murtuja | Baseline year           | NA        | NA        | Equalities Strategy to be launched for consultation in September will include a question on residents' confidence in the Council's EDI programme. Results will be analysed and reported Dec 21.                              | G       |
| CSC009 | Satisfaction with parks and green spaces  | Community Services       | Ian Brooke                 | 90                      | 90        | 92        | This is slightly out of date as no recent survey has been done due to the pandemic. A more updated survey is planned later in the summer.  | G       |

|        | Title   | Service            | Owner          | 2021/22 target | Q1 Target | Q1 Actual | Comments  | RAG |
|--------|---|--------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|---|-----|
| CSC010 | Sense of community index                                      | Community Services | Ian Brooke     | Baseline year  | NA        | NA        | Thriving Communities Strategy will be launched for consultation in October and will seek results on the SCI which will be analysed and reported on January 22. Research work currently being undertaken to look at practice elsewhere and to assess which model/s to use or develop for this measure  | G   |
| CSC012 | Physically active adults                                      | Community Services | Ian Brooke     | 75%            | 74%       | 76.4%     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•76.4% which is an increase on last year and covers Mid-May 2019 to Mid-May 2020</li> <li>•We have best score in the county</li> <li>•We're almost the best vs our nearest neighbours (Cambridge is 0.6% higher than us</li> <li>•We're much higher than the England overall figure, which is 62.1%</li> </ul>   | G   |
| HSC011 | The number of people in Oxford estimated to be sleeping rough | Housing Services   | Stephen Clarke | 17             | 17        | 24        | We have seen an increase in new rough sleepers in recent weeks, which is not uncommon when the weather becomes warmer. With the exit from Canterbury House in July, we expect to see rough sleeping numbers temporarily increase again at this point. However compared to the pre-pandemic period, the number of rough sleepers is much lower for the time of year.   | R   |
| BIC018 | % of BAME staff   | Corporate          | Helen Bishop   | 13.5           | NA        | 13.08     | It is evident that there has been some progress towards the Council's target of 13.5% since 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019, when the percentage of BAME staff was 12.96%. This upward trend has been consistent since 2018 when the percentage of BAME staff at the Council was 11.96%. To continue this, the Council's People Strategy has established a workstream with several long term activities aimed at culture change. Low turnover rates at the Council present a challenge to achieving the target from a recruitment perspective, however an apprenticeship scheme was launched this year to improve the pipeline of | A   |

|        | Title  | Service              | Owner        | 2021/22 target | Q1 Target | Q1 Actual | Comments   | RAG |
|--------|--|----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|--|-----|
|        |  |                      |              |                |           |           | BAME talent, targeting the local communities of Oxford City.   |     |
| BIC022 | % of transactions carried out online relative to total transaction numbers | Business Improvement | Helen Bishop | 50             | NA        | 52.16     | The month has seen an 8% increase year on year, from 47.33% to 52.16%. This is due to both a reduction in calls to the contact centre and an increase in online transactions. More web forms, job applications, pitch bookings, payments and FixMyStreet submissions have been seen although a reduction in Missed Bin and Planning online enquiries.<br>Cumulatively, this trend follows, with 50.55% transactions carried out online last financial year and 51.99% this. Whilst the pattern in online transactions are the same, there is an increase in calls to the contact centre year on year of 2.56%. | G   |

|        | Title  | Service                      | Owner       | 2021/22 target               | Q1 Target | Q1 Actual | Comments  | RAG |
|--------|--|------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---|-----|
| ESC013 | National greenhouse gas indicator of pathway to net zero Council by 2030 | Environmental Sustainability | Mish Tullar | 526 tonnes of CO2 equivalent | NA        | NA        | Progress towards the Council's zero operational carbon target by 2030 requires an average of 526tCO2e being reduced from the council's carbon footprint each year. Important work has been undertaken to part-fill the funding gap that exists for stretching beyond business as usual to achieve this goal, and deliver progress towards this zero carbon target covering our buildings and operations where the council is paying the bills. OCC has won up to £10.9m of funds from the government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) programme to decarbonise heat provision at 6 major sites as some of our largest carbon emitting buildings (Barton Leisure Centre, Ferry Leisure Centre, Hinksey Outdoor Pool, Leys Leisure Centre, Oxford Ice Rink, Rosehill Community Centre) and investment in a local solar farm. Investigations are proceeding on detailed technical low carbon solutions at these sites including heat pumps to decarbonise heating in these buildings, as well as battery storage and investment in a local solar farm near Bicester. There are some extremely tight timeframes imposed with the funding we have won and other site factors that are challenging, but good progress is being made. | R   |
| ESC015 | Improvement in overall city centre air quality                           | Environmental Sustainability | Mish Tullar | 38                           | NA        | NA        | Result for 2020 for this target was 27ug/m3. While current site specific monitoring is demonstrating Oxford is well within target, official results will not be available until January/February 22 when the full air quality dataset for 2021 has been ratified. Continued home working for a significant proportion of people as well as rollout of major projects including ZEZ and Connecting Oxford are expected to have a positive impact on air quality in the city centre.  | G   |

|        | <b>Title</b>                        | <b>Service</b>               | <b>Owner</b>                | <b>2021/22 target</b> | <b>Q1 Target</b> | <b>Q1 Actual</b> | <b>Comments</b>   | <b>RAG</b> |
|--------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|---|------------|
| ESC016 | Total carbon emissions for the city | Environmental Sustainability | Mish Tullar, Rose Dickinson | Tracking indicator    | NA               | N/A              | The data we use to track this come from BEIS on an annual basis and is two years in arrears. Most recent data for 2019 shows that the city had reduced its emissions by 40.1% by 2019 (compared to a 2005 baseline) – ahead of the 40% by 2020 target that was set. The Carbon budgets and targets for the city, as agreed by the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership, set at target to reduce emissions by 34.8% by 2025, compared to a 2017 baseline. Between 2017 and 2019, we saw a 7% carbon emissions reduction in the city – not enough to be on track for the 2025 target. However, there was a slight increase in the rate of reduction between 2017/18 and 2018/19 (3.0% and 4.1% respectively) – if that trend continued we would expect to meet the 2025 target. Given the continued increase in action on carbon emissions reduction in the city in recent years, that is not an unreasonable assumption. | Unrated    |

|         | Title   | Service            | Owner          | 2021/22 target     | Q1 Target | Q1 Actual  | Comments  | RAG     |
|---------|---|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------|--|---|---------|
| HSC014  | Percentage of council owned stock that has an EPC below C         | Housing Services   | Stephen Clarke | 46                 | NA        | This is an annual measure - data will be provided at end of financial year | We are on track to meet the annual target. Work being done include: Successful bid through the LAD1b scheme to fund improvements of 240 our properties for households with an income below £30k and EPC rating D or below. We will be installing loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, external wall insulation, and air source heat pumps; as part of LAD1b we are selecting 90 of the properties to complete 'whole house assessments' as part of the PAS2035 guidance. Retrofit coordinators will use new software to recommend 'whole house retrofit' solutions; Oxford Direct Services have got PAS2030 accreditation for seven measures and will be completing implementation for OCC once the accreditation is complete, starting with loft insulation and internal wall insulation programmes. OCC and ODS are planning to complete some whole house retrofits in voids; work is being carried out to update all out of date EPCs by 2022. This will give us accurate data to work from. The majority of EPC ratings improve after an EPC survey. All of the up to date EPC information is added to CROHM. | G       |
| CPC017  | Oxford residents' satisfaction with City Council services         | Corporate Strategy | Mish Tullar    | Tracking indicator | NA        | NA   | Review to be undertaken to agree the best approach to measure residents' satisfaction taking into account the impact of the pandemic on the way the council's services have been run.   | Unrated |
| FSC003  | % of Council spend with local businesses (excluding ODS and OCHL) | Financial Services | Nigel Kennedy  | 45                 | 45        | 76.87  | Ahead of target   | G       |
| FSC019a | Total income collection as % of plan (Council Tax)                | Financial Services | Nigel Kennedy  | 96.5               | 29.5      | 30.87  | Collection is above target. This may be an indicator where the impact of Covid on employment is starting to recede. The team continue to be proactive in chasing customers at pre summons stage to resolve any issues   | G       |

|         | <b>Title</b>  | <b>Service</b>     | <b>Owner</b>  | <b>2021/22 target</b> | <b>Q1 Target</b> | <b>Q1 Actual</b> | <b>Comments</b>  | <b>RAG</b> |
|---------|---|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|--|------------|
| FSC019b | Total income collection as % of plan (Business Rates) | Financial Services | Nigel Kennedy | 95.5                  | 28               | 27.84            | Slightly under target by £96k but was the best month so far for payments. We are collecting more money than last year but the collectable debit has increased by 13.6%. The impact of reducing the Expanded Retail and Nursery Discounts from 100% to 66% is likely to impact on collection rates whilst businesses get back to 'normal' | A          |
| FSC020  | Discretionary funding won by the Council              | Financial Services | Anna Winship  | New KPI 2021-22       | Not Set          | £2.3 million     | £1.9m Meanwhile Oxfordshire - to revitalise vacant retail units and transform them into independent shops, cultural venues, creative studios & co-working space.<br>£0.4m for Rough Sleeping Initiative  | G          |
| FSC021  | Efficiencies delivered against plan                   | Financial Services | Anna Winship  | £1,852,175            | £460,000         | £460,000         | Efficiency savings and invest to save projects are currently on target to meet all savings identified in the budget  | G          |

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 15 September 2021  
**Report of:** Head of Financial Services  
**Title of Report:** Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/23

| <b>Summary and recommendations</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Purpose of report:</b>  | To seek approval for proposals for consultation on changes to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022/23 |
| <b>Key decision:</b>   | Yes  |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>   | Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities  |
| <b>Corporate Priority:</b>   | All  |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>   | Council Strategy 2020-24   |
| <b>Recommendations:</b> That Cabinet resolves to:  |  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Agree</b> that the proposals for the 2022/23 Council Tax Reduction Scheme outlined in the report be subject to consultation for an 8 week period from 20th September 2021; and</li> <li>2. <b>Note the intention of the</b> Head of Financial Services to bring a further report to Cabinet in January 2022 to outline the outcome of the consultation process and make proposals for the 2022/23 Council Tax Reduction Scheme</li> </ol> |  |

| <b>Appendices</b> |                                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Appendix 1        | Consultation questions             |
| Appendix 2        | Risk register                      |
| Appendix 3        | Initial Equality Impact Assessment |
| Appendix 4        | Glossary of Terms                  |

## Introduction and background

1. In April 2013 the national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme was replaced by a new Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme. The CTB scheme was funded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and supported people on low incomes by reducing the amount of council tax they had to pay.

2. The CTR scheme is for working age customers and determined locally by Councils rather than nationally by the DWP. The separate scheme that exists for pension age recipients is a national scheme prescribed by regulation and cannot be varied locally. The basic calculation for CTR is an assessment of the household income versus the amount of money that central government says the household needs to live off. A household can be a single person, couples, families with children etc. The scheme works by applying discounts against the council tax liability based on the financial circumstances of a homeowner. The discount reduces the amount of council tax income to be collected by the authority. Whilst the Government initially provided funding for the new local schemes through the Revenue Support Grant, since the Grant has now reduced to zero there is no funding provided by central government for any CTR scheme.
3. Councils are required to review their CTR working age scheme annually, and determine whether or not to revise it. In order to change its scheme a council is required by law to:
  - Consult with the major precepting authorities
  - Consult with other persons it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

The CTR scheme itself must be adopted by the Council, and the approval of the scheme cannot be delegated to an officer or committee.

4. The CTR scheme must take account of and support:
  - Work incentives and in particular avoid disincentives for those moving into work;
  - The Council's duties to protect vulnerable people (under the Equality Act 2010, the Care Act 2014, the Child Poverty Act 2010, the Housing Act 1996); and
  - The Armed Forces Covenant
5. 2018/19 was the first year that Oxford City Council (OCC) amended its CTR scheme to that introduced by the Government in 2013-14. 2019/20 and 2021/22 saw further amendments, including moving to an Income Banded Scheme, the same as for Universal Credit claimants, The Council's scheme still provides a reduction of up to 100% against the council tax liability and is one of the few remaining Councils to do so.
6. When the Council set its budget in February 2021 the annual estimated total loss of council tax income arising from CTR was £11.874 million based on the current CTR caseload. Reflecting an increase as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, as at 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 this has risen to £12.483 million The Council's share of this loss of income based on the Council's Band D council tax at the time that the budget was set was £1.818 million, this has now risen to £1.911m million. At the same point last year the City Councils lost income was £1.739 million.
7. The balance of the income loss is picked up by the major preceptors, Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioners
8. Due to COVID 19 there has been an increase in caseload despite a pause in the roll out of Universal Credit as the DWP diverted resources to deal with new claims, and the cost to the Council and its major preceptors from loss of council tax income

has therefore increased. Caseload is now the highest it has been at the same time for the previous 3 years at 10,191 (as at 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021).

9. Further uncertainty remains around the number of CTR claims the Council is likely to see when the government's furlough scheme ends in September 2021, at the same time as the Self Employed Income Support Scheme. At that point a number of businesses may cease to trade, and employees may be made redundant and CTR claims may increase. As a result council tax lost income will increase.
10. Some of the furloughed workers may already be in receipt of UC/HB and CTR due to low income. Some workers will also have now returned to work as the easing of lockdown fully in July takes effect. More workers are being required to self-isolate which will result in further operational pressures on businesses.
11. Whilst it is impossible to predict how many businesses may cease to trade at the point the furlough scheme ends, it is fairly certain that the number of Universal Credit and CTR cases will increase as this and other business support schemes cease. There are numerous variables that could affect the number of redundancies, and future Cabinet reports will reflect a clearer picture as it emerges.
12. There will also be a clearer indication of how removing restrictions from July and August has impacted on the economic recovery
13. Any increase in the amount of Council Tax due each April will see the amount of CTR increase proportionally, thus increasing the cost of the CTR scheme.
14. Table 1 below sets out the cost and caseload (number of CTR claimants) for the OCC CTR scheme since its introduction. The cost of the scheme is shared by the Oxford City Council (15.31%), the Oxfordshire County Council (73.83%) and the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner (10.86%) in accordance with the proportion of council tax levied by each. The table shows that the gap between the cost to the Council between 2020-21 and 2021-22 to date has increased by £137k compared to a rise of £195k between 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Table 1 Cost of CTR to the City Council and its major preceptors

|                           | 2017/18    | 2018/19    | 2019/20     | 2020/21      | 2021/22 at 1 <sup>st</sup> July |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| Cost of Pension Age       | £3,172,713 | £3,284,610 | £3,554,232  | £3,841,522   | £4,114,145                      |
| Pension Age caseload      | 3,056      | 2,990      | 2,918       | 2,964        | 2977                            |
| Cost of Working Age       | £6,318,785 | £6,541,638 | £6,459,250  | £7,609,169   | £8,369,251                      |
| Working age caseload      | 5,666      | 5,558      | 5,303       | 5,871        | 6,056                           |
| Total Cost                | £9,491,498 | £9,826,248 | £10,013,482 | £11,450,691* | £12,483,396                     |
| Total Caseload            | 8,722      | 8,548      | 8,221       | 8,835        | 9,033                           |
|                           |            |            |             |              |                                 |
| Cost of the scheme to OCC | £1,546,165 | £1,561,391 | £1,579,126  | £1,774,857*  | £1,911,458                      |

Note that figures marked \* are net of any discretionary amounts awarded under s13a. During 2020/2021 additional funding was received that allowed us to award a discretionary CTR amount to those liable to pay Council Tax.

15. The Council's caseload has increased by 131 cases since the start of the 2021/22 financial year. The Council still receives a substantial number of new CTR claims daily which has increased this year largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In other cases changes will be related mostly to income fluctuations.

16. The following changes were made to the OCC CTR scheme for the year 2021/22:
- Annual up-ratings for the Income banded scheme
  - Agreement to up-rate the bands using CPI rather than RPI, in line with the DWP annual up-ratings
  - Move to an Income banded scheme for all claimants
17. By making these changes £120k of staffing savings across Financial Services and Business Improvement were achieved as a result of the reduction in the amount of work required to administer the scheme.
18. In making proposals for the 2022-23 consultation officers have considered a range of options for changing the CTR scheme which seek to continue to streamline the process of award and ongoing administration and also provide options on reducing cost to the Council.
19. Appendix 1 shows the suggested consultation questions for the 2022/23 scheme. These are summarised as:
- Whether or not to increase the Income Bands or to freeze at current levels. Where wages are being increased freezing income bands to current levels will reduce the amount of CTR given although clearly in the current environment post pandemic this impact may be negligible since wage rises in most sectors are unlikely to increase rapidly as business try to initiate their recovery.
  - If we do increase, to use CPI instead of RPI, in line with the DWP up-ratings. CPI is generally lower than RPI and notwithstanding the comments above will lead to lower CTR payments.
  - To consider if the banded income approach should take into account family size. Currently the scheme has a single structure for a total income for all applications, with no regard to household composition
  - To consider giving a reduction of up to 100% for passported cases, limiting the reduction to a % or a fixed weekly amount for all other claims. If we were to reduce the % award, or ask all claimants to pay a set amount, our tax base would increase in future years, as there would be fewer Band D equivalents lost as a result of awarding CTR. As a rough example based on the current caseload of 6056:
    - *If everyone were required to pay £1 per week (so a £52 annual charge being a minimum contribution), based on the City Council's share Council Tax at 15.31%:*
      - Estimated Saving of £48k per annum on CTR expenditure before any tax base amendments
      - The Council may need to consider increasing the write-off provision as other authorities have advised small amounts of CT do not get paid, and we do not take court action for debts below £50.
    - *If everyone were required to pay £2 per week (so a £104 annual charge being a minimum contribution), based on the City Council's share of Council Tax at 15.31%;*
      - Estimated saving of £96k per annum on CTR expenditure before any tax base amendments

- May need to consider increasing income collection staff resources as this could increase the number of cases requiring court action for non-payment.
- May need to consider increasing the bad debt provision as more debts could be written off as people may make a partial payment to bring the level of debt down to under £50
- To automatically reduce the CTR award to a maximum of 75% if there is a non-dependant (adult aged 18 or over) in the property. In cases where there is a disability benefit in payment for the applicant or an additional adult, then the reduction would not be applied. This mirrors the application of the single person discount.

Currently we take into account non-dependant income and this increases administration as we have to calculate income and take any changes into account. What we are proposing is to mirror how a non-dependant's income is accounted for in a UC claim, so that we apply a flat rate deduction regardless of their income, unless there is a disability benefit in payment. In effect this may actually increase the amount of CTR for cases where we are currently applying a high non-dependant charge, and we will model this before bringing back any recommendations to Cabinet in January 2022.

20. The income bandings currently being used and based on the methodology above are shown in Table 2. The figures have been calculated using the 2021 figures for the National Minimum Wages (NMW) and Oxford Living Wage (OLW) which are £8.91 and £10.31 per hour respectively. The band 5 value has been updated by 1.1% which is the RPI figure for September 2020.

Table 2

| Band | Weekly Income     | Discount received | No of claimants |
|------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1    | £0 - £142.99      | 100%              | 793             |
| 2    | £143.00-£213.99   | 75%               | 734             |
| 3    | £214.00-£309.99   | 50%               | 1,350           |
| 4    | £310.00 - £402.99 | 25%               | 1,197           |
| 5    | £403 and above    | 0%                | 1,912           |

21. Within the Consultation provision has been made to consult on whether a minimum council tax amount should be made by all working age claimants. The Council is in the minority of authorities whose scheme is based on 100% of the council tax entitlement. Consulting whether claimants should contribute some amount of council tax before the discount is applied will retain the option for the Council to initiate this change from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022, compared to savings in other areas of the Council's budget, should the Councils forthcoming budget setting round require significant savings to be made from overall net spend.
22. Consultation will be carried out using the Council's online consultation system, and also making use of paper questionnaires if there is no risk associated with Covid-19. The consultation will be promoted by the Council's Communications Team. The consultation will last for a period of eight weeks beginning on 20 September 2021. The proposed consultation document is included at Appendix 1.

### Discretionary support

23. The Council Tax Regulations make provision for discretionary support to be made available on application by a customer who is facing difficulty paying their Council Tax.

### **Financial implications**

24. The current cost of the CTR Scheme has been factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan with the Council bearing the full cost of its share estimated at £1.818 million for 2021-22 from council tax income foregone. The cost of the scheme has already increased due to increased CTR arising from the pandemic, to £1.9 million and this may increase further when central government financial support for businesses and individuals start to fall which in turn will lead to further lost income to the council. Any further increases in the council tax charge in 2022/23 will also lead to increased CTR and reduced income for the Council.
25. The proposed consultation seeks views on changes which affect the future affordability of the scheme. It is worth noting that any changes to the scheme can only affect working age claimants as the scheme for pensioners as set by central government may not be changed. This limits the impact of the changes to £8.4 million of the total estimated scheme cost of £12.5m per annum. Furthermore the Council's element of this is around 15.31%, based on the band D council tax.
- The increase in the loss of income from increased council tax support given to claimants does not get accounted for by the authority until the following financial year as it comes through as losses through the Collection Fund.
26. The Council's preferred option would be to continue with a scheme similar to the current one, awarding up to 100% CTR if resources allow, however there have been substantial impacts from the pandemic which are regrettably not being fully compensated by central government. The budget setting process is where this should be fully considered.

### **Legal implications**

27. Local Council Tax Support came into effect on 1 April 2013 pursuant to the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Section 13A(2) of that Act (as amended) provides:
- 'Each billing authority in England must make a scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of council tax payable, in respect of dwellings situated in its area, by—
- (a) persons whom the authority considers to be in financial need, or
  - (b) persons in classes consisting of persons whom the authority considers to be, in general, in financial need.'
28. Schedule 1A of that Act prescribes what must be included in a Council Tax Reduction Scheme, and places a duty on the authority, each financial year, to consider whether to revise its scheme or replace it with another scheme. The scheme states the classes of person who are to be entitled to a reduction, the type of reduction and whether there are different reductions for different classes. The scheme should also set out the procedure to apply for a reduction and the appeal procedure.
29. Before preparing a scheme, the authority must (in the following order)—

- (a) Consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
  - (b) Publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
  - (c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.
30. The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) 2012 further prescribes what must be included in the scheme.
31. The scheme must be approved by Full Council no later than 11 March before the financial year it relates to. After approval, the scheme must be published.
32. Since the introduction of CTR schemes, there have been a number of legal challenges against other local schemes. Most of these challenges have been in relation to the consultation undertaken and have questioned whether due regard was given to any equality impact assessment when changes were made to schemes. A Supreme Court ruling in 2014 (R. (on the application of Moseley) v London Borough of Haringey) determined that consultation on changes to council tax reduction schemes must provide such information as necessary in order for consultees to express meaningful views on the proposal. Enough had to be said about realistic alternatives, and the reasons for a preferred choice, to enable the consultees to make an intelligent response in respect of the scheme. This would include an option for any current scheme to be retained on the same level of funding with a consequent reduction in funding for other services. There are questions in the consultation paper on these options.

**Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

33. By sending details of the consultation electronically we are reducing the use of paper and reducing the environmental impact of transporting these by post.
34. No other carbon or environmental impacts have been identified as a result of this proposal.

**Level of risk**

35. A risk register is attached at Appendix 2. The identified risks relate to the undertaking of consultation, rather than the changes to the CTR scheme.

**Equalities impact**

36. An Initial Equalities Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 3.

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Report author</b>       | Tanya Bandekar   |
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**Background Papers:** None

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# Appendix 1

## Council Tax Reduction Consultation- 2022/23

### Background

The Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme provides help for Oxford residents on benefits or low incomes to pay their council tax. This help is provided as a reduction in the amount of Council Tax to pay. The reduction can be up to 100% of the Council Tax bill.

Since the end of national council tax benefit (CTB) in April 2013, councils have been responsible for drawing up their own schemes of support. Oxford is one of a small number of councils who have not reduced the overall level of financial support that was available before 2013, even though government funding for Council Tax support has reduced annually, and ended completely in 2019. Because of government cuts to funding and an increase in caseload due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our CTR scheme will cost us more than £1.9 million this year.

In Oxford, 9,033 people currently get help to pay their council tax, of which 6,056 are working age. The amount of help they get depends on their income and their household, with people on some benefits not having to pay anything. These benefits include income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS), Guarantee Credit and income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). People in equivalent circumstances on Universal Credit (UC) will also get 100% CTR support thus protecting the most financially vulnerable. The scheme also currently protects claimants with children and disabled people as this income is ignored when calculating the income band for CTR entitlement.

The Current banded scheme for both Universal Credit claimants and other incomeed claims is;

| Income bands |                            |                              |
|--------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Band         | Your weekly income 2021/22 | Discount on council tax bill |
| 1            | £0 - £142.99               | 100%                         |
| 2            | £143 - £213.99             | 75%                          |
| 3            | £214 - £309.99             | 50%                          |
| 4            | £310 - £402.99             | 25%                          |
| 5            | £403 and over              | 0%                           |

The Council is proposing some amendments to the scheme for 2022/23, and this means we have to ask you for your views on the changes we want to make.

Your CTR will not be affected by our proposals below if you are pension age. Pensioners are still covered by a national scheme of support.

We are consulting you on the following changes we would like to make to our working age CTR scheme:

### Consultation Questions

Please either tick the box next to your answer, or write your response in the space provided.

1. Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?

# Appendix 1

Yes

No

2. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please state which one?

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## CTR Scheme amendments

### Amendment of income bands

From April 2021 the income banded scheme applies to both claimants in receipt of Universal Credit (a single monthly payment which replaces a number of benefits and tax credits paid to working age people. The Department of Work and Pensions began rolling this out to new benefit and tax credit claimants in Oxford in October 2017) and other income streams such as salary.

UC is designed to allow people to vary their hours at work while still getting support for their living, housing and other costs. This can result in people receiving a different amount of UC each month, which can change the amount of CTR that someone receives. As a result it could be difficult for people getting CTR to know how much council tax they need to pay themselves.

An income banded scheme makes it more likely that people will need to pay the same amount of Council Tax each month, with instalments only changing when income increases, or decreases, by enough to move them into the next band.

Our income banded scheme uses the following bandings to determine the amount of support provided:

| Band | Weekly Income     | Discount received |
|------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1    | £0 - £142.99      | 100%              |
| 2    | £143.00-£213.99   | 75%               |
| 3    | £214.00-£309.99   | 50%               |
| 4    | £310.00 - £402.99 | 25%               |
| 5    | £403 and above    | 0%                |

The rationale for the figures above are as follows:

- £143 is 16 hours on the national minimum wage (NMW £8.91) rounded upwards
- £214 is 24 hours on the NMW rounded upwards
- £310 is 30 hours on the Oxford living wage(OLW £10.31), rounded upwards
- £403 is the Benefit Cap uprated by the September 2020 RPI figure

Proposal 1 is that the bands are uprated for 2022/23 as in previous years as follows:

# Appendix 1

- Bands based on the NMW are uprated in accordance with the NMW rate for over 25's from April 2021
- Bands based on the OLW are uprated in accordance with the OLW rate form April 2021
- Band 5 is increased by the Consumer Price Index measure of inflation as of September 2021, in line with the Department for Work and Pensions up-ratings

Uprating the bands in this way will ensure that no-one has to make more Council Tax as a result of getting a pay rise.

Please answer the following questions in respect of the Income Band Scheme:

3. Do you agree with the proposal for uprating the income bands from 2022/23

Yes

No

Don't know

4. Please provide any comments you have on the income band scheme, and this proposal.

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Proposal 2 considers whether or not the Council should freeze the proposed uprating of the Bands for 2022/23 due to affordability.

5. Do you agree with the proposal for freezing the income bands at the 2021/22 amounts?

Yes

No

Don't know

6. Please provide any comments you have on the income band scheme and this proposal.

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# Appendix 1

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Currently the scheme has a single banded structure for a total income for all applications, with no regard to household composition. If the Council changes the scheme to take into account the number of people that make up the family composition. This would take change the maximum entitlement for into account single people claims, couple claims and family claims.

7. Do you think the Council should amend the banding structure to take into account the size of the household?

Yes

No

Don't know

8. Please provide any comments you have on amending the banding structure to take into account the size of the household.

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The Council currently gives a discount up to 100% of Council Tax liability for all applications for CTR. Should the Council consider adjusting the 2022/23 scheme to reflect that people who are in receipt of passported benefits (Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support and Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, and the Standard Allowance of Universal Credit) continue to receive the maximum level of support of 100% and other claims be restricted to a maximum CTR, for example 85%, or pay an amount per week towards their Council Tax- for example £2pw? The will result in claimants having a charge to pay if there is no passported benefit in payment.

9. Do you think we should reduce the maximum amount of CTR for non-passported claimants to a maximum percentage- for example 85%?

Yes

No

Don't know

# Appendix 1

10. Do you think we should reduce the maximum amount of CTR for non-passported claimants so that they pay an amount per week towards their Council Tax- for example £2?

Yes

No

Don't know

11. Do you think that all claimants should make some contribution towards the Council Tax regardless of their Income?

Yes

No

Don't know

12. Please provide any comments you have on reducing the amount of CTR for claimants.

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The Council currently applies a non-dependant charge to a claim where there is an adult in the property who is not included as part of the household. A household is defined as;

- a single person with no other people in their home
- a couple
- a family, where there is child benefit in payment for children in the home.

In cases where there are other people living in the property who are over the age of 18, for example, elderly relatives or older children who are not awarded child tax credit or child benefit, the Council applies a deduction from the CTR entitlement based upon the income for the additional person.

| Gross income on non-dependant | Non-dependant deduction rate |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Less than £149.00             | £4.05                        |
| £149-£216.99                  | £8.30                        |
| £217 to £282.99               | £10.40                       |
| £283 to £376.99               | £12.45                       |

# Appendix 1

This results in the Council needing to ask questions about income details for another person in the home to ensure the claimant receives the correct award of CTR. In order to reduce administration of the CTR scheme, the Council is considering applying a maximum entitlement of 75% where there is a non-dependant in the household, as it is reasonable to expect that person to contribute to the household expenses. This reduction would apply regardless of the income of the non-dependant. In cases where there is a disability benefit in place for the applicant or non-dependant, then the reduction in entitlement would not be applied.

13. Do you think we should restrict the CTR award to 75% where there is at least one non-dependant in the household and neither the claimant nor non-dependant is in receipt of a disability benefit?

Yes

No

Don't know

14. Please provide any comments you have on reducing the amount of CTR for certain households with a non-dependant?

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## Alternatives to reducing the amount of help provided by the CTR scheme

As some of the options proposed may reduce the level of support people can get under CTR for the financial year 2022/23, we would like your views on alternative approaches to funding the increasing costs of the Council's CTR scheme.

Do you think we should choose any of the following options when considering how to fund the CTR scheme? Please select one answer for each source of funding.

15. Increase the level of Council Tax

Yes

No

Don't know

16. Find savings from cutting other council services

Yes

# Appendix 1

No

Don't know

17. Increase fees and charges

Yes

No

Don't know

18. Please use the space below if you would like us to consider any other options.

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19. Please use this space to make other comments on the CTR scheme

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## About you

We ask these questions:

- to find out if different groups of people in Oxford have been able to take part in the consultation and to identify if any groups have been excluded. This means it is not about you as an individual – we want to find out if people with similar characteristics have had their say
- To find out if different groups of people feel differently about the options and proposals in comparison to each other and all respondents. This means it is not about you as an individual – we want to find out if people with similar characteristics have answered in the same way or not.

This information is completely confidential and anonymous.

# Appendix 1

Your personal information will not be passed on to anyone and your personal details will not be linked to your responses.

20. Are you, or someone in your household, getting CTR now?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

21. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Transgender

Prefer not to say

22. What is your age?

16-18

45-59

19-24

60-74

25-44

75 or above

23. What is your ethnic group?

White British

Indian

White Irish

Pakistani

Other White

Bangladeshi

White and Black Caribbean

Other Asian

White and Black African

Caribbean

White and Asian

African

Other Mixed

Black Other

Other (Specify Below)

Chinese

24. If other, please enter details in the space below

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# Appendix 1

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25. Do you consider yourself to have a disability or life limiting illness?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

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# Appendix 2

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| Title                             | Risk description   | Opp/ threat | Cause  | Consequence   | Date Raised | Owner          | Gross |   | Current |   | Residual |   | Comments                 | Controls   |          |        |            |   |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------------|--|---|-------------|----------------|-------|---|---------|---|----------|---|--------------------------|--|----------|--------|------------|---|
|                                   |  |             |  |   |             |                | I     | P | I       | P | I        | P |                          | Control description  | Due date | Status | Progress % | Action Owner  |
| Challenge to consultation process | Customers challenge the effectiveness of the consultation  | Opp         | Due regard not given to statutory guidelines or relevant case law.   | Any changes in the CTR scheme may not be upheld by Tribunals or Courts, when challenged by a customer.  | 21/7/21     | Tanya Bandekar | 3     | 2 | 1       | 2 | 1        | 2 |                          | Reference the relevant regulations and case law in planning the consultation   | 15/9/20  | Green  | 50         | Benefits Manager  |
| Increased customer contact        | Customers are concerned at potential changes to the support they get and contact the Council about them.   | Threat      | Poor explanation of changes, and no mitigation planned.  | Customers are not clear about the impact of the changes.  | 21/7/20     | Tanya Bandekar | 3     | 2 | 1       | 1 | 1        | 1 |                          | Simple explanations given of the proposed changes, together with details of mitigation. A glossary of terms is added to reports and consultaion details online | 15/9/20  | Green  | 50         | Benefits Manager  |
| Council reputation                | Proposals for changes not clearly thought through, and impact not properly understood, resulting in damage to Council reputation   | Opp         | Insufficient modelling undertaken as part of the consultation feedback, and/or impact of changes not properly understood | Informed customers spot impacts of changes that the Council has not properly identified, undermining both the proposals and consultation process. | 21/7/20     | Tanya Bandekar | 3     | 3 | 3       | 2 | 3        | 2 |                          | Expert team from different service areas assembled to work on the proposals, time taken to model changes and understand customer impact.                       | 15/9/20  | Green  | 50         | Benefits Manager  |
| Financial implications            | Costs are not correctly calculated, or a change in economic climate, for example the ending of the current furlough scheme in October 2020 leading to more redundancies means more claimants | Threat      | Poor budgetting. Insufficient modelling of anything that affects the number of claimants                                 | Changes are costed incorrectly and lead to an increase in scheme costs  | 21/7/20     | Tanya Bandekar | 4     | 3 | 3       | 2 | 3        | 2 | Covid-19 implications co | Work with Finance Team to ensure funding available and changes costed  | 15/9/20  | Amber  | 50         | Service Manager, Revenues and Benefits / Financial Accounting Manager |

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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;****

# Appendix 3

**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?

Council Tax Reduction is claimed by low income households in the city. The following groups are over represented in this cohort compared to the general population:

Women

Single parent households

Ethnic Minorities

People with a disability or lifelong illness

Age is not affected by this scheme as Pensioners are covered by the national default scheme and this consultation relates to the working age CTR scheme only.

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

At this stage proposals are only being submitted for consultation. The 2022/23 Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be informed by this consultation process.

This will include:

- Whether or not to increase the Income Bands or to freeze at current levels
- If we do increase, to use CPI instead of RPI in line with the DWP up-ratings
- To consider if the banded income approach should take into account family size. Currently the scheme has a single structure for a total income for all applications, with no regard to household

# Appendix 3

composition

- To consider giving a reduction of up to 100% for passported cases, limiting the reduction to 85% for all other claims
- To automatically reduce the CTR award to a maximum of 75% if there is a non-dependant in the property. In cases where there is a disability benefit in payment for the applicant or an additional adult, then the reduction would not be applied. This mirrors the application of the single person discount.

Within the existing Council Tax regulations, there is provision for discretionary payments to be made to people experiencing hardship. Anyone disadvantaged by the Council Tax Reduction scheme can apply for help from this scheme.

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

The main report seeks approval for consultation about changes to the proposed scheme. This includes general public consultation and advice agencies as well as consulting with the major preceptors. We will use electronic means to consult to avoid respondents using paper forms, as with the current Covid-19 pandemic access to the places we would normally place forms is restricted and we also want to limit any opportunity to spread the virus.

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

Within the existing Council Tax regulations, there is provision for discretionary payments to be made to people experiencing hardship. Anyone disadvantaged by the Council Tax Reduction scheme can apply for help from this scheme.

## Appendix 3

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

The impact will be monitored via applications for discretionary support. This should highlight any areas of concern.

As people see changes in their circumstances, there will be an opportunity to revise the scheme in future years, if there is any unexpected negative impact on certain groups of customers.

We will talk to other Councils who have adopted different approaches to their CTR scheme to see what works well and what doesn't. The Department for Work and Pensions guidance and case law often influences the approach this Council takes as it will inform us of the impact of certain elements of schemes and the adjustments, if any that are needed.

Lead officer responsible for signing off the EqIA: Tanya Bandekar

Role: Revenues & Benefits Service Manager

Date: 21 July 2021

# Appendix 4

## Glossary of Terms

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Working Age           | Age for which the Government expect State Pension to not be claimed. Currently age 66.   |
| Uprating              | Department for Work and Pensions annual income-related social security benefit increases each April. These benefits, and the amount which the government state is required to live on each week are increased each April by a percentage. The increase is based on either the Retail Price Index (RPI) or Consumer Price Index (CPI) as at September the previous year.  |
| Income Bands          | The amount of weekly net income used in the calculation of the award. Some income is not included, such as certain disability benefits. Where income changes but stays within the same band, then there is no change to entitlement, but the change is still recorded.   |
| Capping               | This is a ceiling limit on an award. A capping level could be applied to the council tax bands, so instead of applying Council Tax Reduction (CTR) using all the council tax bands A-H, that only bands A-E are applied. This means that the capping level is at a band E Council Tax amount, and those claims for properties in Bands F-H would only see a maximum level of support to a band E Council Tax liability. The claimant would need to pay the difference between their CTR award and their Council Tax liability.   |
| National Minimum Wage | For 2021/22 the rate is £8.91  |
| Oxford Living Wage    | For 2021/22 the rate is £10.31   |
| Benefit Cap           | <p>The benefit cap is a limit on the total amount of benefit you can get. It applies to most people aged 16 or over who have not reached State Pension Age. A cap is usually applied when a claimant is not in employment for more than 16 hours per week, and is not exempt by disability.</p> <p>The Cap level currently for outer London is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £384.62 per week (£20,000 a year) if you are a couple</li> <li>• £384.62 per week (£20,000 a year) if you are a single parent and your children live with you</li> <li>• £257.69 per week (£13,400 a year) if you are a single adult</li> </ul> |
| Non-dependant         | A non-dependant is an adult who lives with you. This doesn't mean your partner or adult children who are still dependent on you – for example, because they are in education. It could be for example, an adult son or daughter who is working or unemployed and who still lives with you. A deduction is made on the assumption that the 'non-dependant' should make a contribution towards your council tax of at least the amount of the deduction.   |

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 15 September 2021  
**Report of:** Head of Financial Services  
**Title of Report:** Treasury Management Annual Report 2020/21

| <b>Summary and Recommendations</b>               |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Purpose of report:</b>                        | The report sets out the Council's Treasury Management activity and performance for the financial year 2020/21 |
| <b>Key decision:</b>                             | No  |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>                           | Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management   |
| <b>Corporate Priority:</b>                       | All   |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>                         | Treasury Management Strategy  |
| <b>Recommendation:</b> That Cabinet resolves to: |   |
| 1. <b>Note</b> the report                        |   |

| <b>Appendices</b> |
|-------------------|
| None              |

## Executive Summary

- The Council held investments of £79.44 million as at 31st March 2021. Net interest earned during the year, including from loans to companies and external borrowing, was £2.83 million against a target of £3.73 million, an adverse variance of £0.89 million. This relates to two factors:
  - A reduction of £0.18 million in investment interest primarily due to interest rates on general investments (excluding property funds) reducing from the anticipated 0.90% return to 0.42% by the end of March 2021; and
  - A reduction of £0.71 million in interest received from companies, primarily the Housing Company, due to reduction in loans required because of reduced development activity, partly because of the global pandemic.

The loss of interest from the Housing Company is partly offset by reduction in borrowing from the PWLB in relation to the reductions in capital spend.

2. The average rate of return on the Council's investments in 2020/21 was 0.82% compared to 1.27% in 2019/20. The Bank of England base rate remained at 0.10% for the entire 20/21 period.
3. The Council held £198.5 million of fixed rate Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) debt as at 31st March 2021. The debt was borrowed in March 2012 to fund the self-financing of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). All of the debt relates to housing and the maturity profile ranges from 5 to 50 years. A previous loan of £20 million matured on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2021 and was replaced by another loan of £20 million on that date for a period of 50 years at a fixed interest rate of 1.88%. Interest paid on the debt in 2020/21 and charged to the HRA was £6.47 million.
4. Due to the pandemic decisions were made to delay on some areas of capital spend to allow budgeting options to be kept open during the period of uncertainty and reduce the need for additional borrowing.

### **Background**

5. The primary principle governing the Council's investment decisions is the security of the investment, with liquidity and yield being secondary considerations.
6. The Council has a statutory duty to set, monitor and report on its prudential indicators in accordance with the Prudential Code, which aims to ensure that the capital investment plans of local authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable.
7. When considering whether to borrow, the Council's Debt Strategy requires a number of factors to be considered. These include:
  - prevailing interest rates;
  - the profile of the Council's debt portfolio;
  - the type of asset being financed; and
  - the availability of cash balances to finance capital expenditure.
8. The Council fully complied with its Treasury Management Strategy in relation to both debt and investment management in 2020/21.
9. The prudential indicators detailed in the body of this report compare the Council's outturn position against the target set for 2020/21

## Financing the Capital Programme 2020/21

10. Table 1 below shows actual capital expenditure and financing compared to the original budget.

| <b>Table 1 Capital Expenditure and Financing 2020-21</b> |  |                                     |                            |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Capital Expenditure</b>                               | <b>2020/21<br/>Original<br/>Budget<br/>£'000</b> | <b>2020/21<br/>Actual<br/>£'000</b> | <b>Variation<br/>£'000</b> |
| Non-HRA Capital Expenditure                              | 97,564   | 47,341                              | -50,223                    |
| HRA Capital Expenditure                                  | 47,913   | 21,424                              | -26,489                    |
| <b>Total Capital Expenditure</b>                         | <b>145,477</b>                                   | <b>68,765</b>                       | <b>-76,712</b>             |
| <b>Resourced by:</b>                                     |  |                                     |                            |
| Developer Contributions                                  | 6,806  | 1,544                               | -5,262                     |
| Capital Receipts   | 35,401   | 22,480                              | -12,921                    |
| Capital Grants and contributions                         | 5,987  | 6,316                               | 329                        |
| Major Repairs Reserve                                    | 3,674  | 1,784                               | -1,890                     |
| Prudential Borrowing                                     | 86,861   | 36,092                              | -50,769                    |
| Revenue  | 6,748  | 549                                 | -6,199                     |
| <b>Total Capital Resources</b>                           | <b>145,477</b>                                   | <b>68,765</b>                       | <b>-76,712</b>             |

11. Much of the variation to the original budget relates to slippage in the programme, the resources for which will be moved into funding the expenditure in future financial years.

### The Council's Overall Borrowing Need

12. The Council's underlying need to borrow, or Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), is the measurement and control of the Council's overall debt position. It represents all prior years' net capital expenditure which has not been financed by other means, i.e. revenue, capital receipts, grants etc.

13. The CFR can be reduced by:

- The application of additional capital resources, such as unapplied capital receipts; or
- Charging a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), or a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP).

14. Table 2 below shows the Council's CFR as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, this is a key prudential indicator, and shows that actual borrowing is below the CFR:

| <b>Table 2 Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) 2020-21 and 2021-22</b> |   |   |                            |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| <b>CFR</b>   | <b>31st March<br/>2021<br/>Estimate<br/>£'000</b> | <b>31st March<br/>2021<br/>Actual<br/>£'000</b> | <b>Variation<br/>£'000</b> |
| <b>Opening Balance</b>   | <b>246,953</b>                                    | <b>253,733</b>                                  | <b>6,780</b>               |
| Prudential Borrowing   | 86,861  | 36,092  | -50,769                    |
| Minimum Revenue Provision  | -291  | -38   | 253                        |
| <b>CFR Closing Balance</b>   | <b>333,523</b>                                    | <b>289,787</b>                                  | <b>-43,736</b>             |
| <b>External Borrowing</b>  | <b>198,528</b>                                    | <b>198,528</b>                                  | <b>0</b>                   |
| <b>Internal Borrowing</b>  | <b>134,995</b>                                    | <b>91,259</b>                                   | <b>-43,736</b>             |

15. No new external debt was taken out during 2020/21 and as at 31st March 2021 the Council's total external debt was £198.5 million. This is below the CFR and indicates that the Council continues to internally borrow from its cash balances which is the cheapest form of borrowing

#### **Treasury Position at 31st March 2021**

16. Whilst the Council's gauge of its underlying need to borrow is the CFR, the treasury function manages the Council's actual need to borrow by either:

- Borrowing to the CFR;
- Choosing to utilise temporary cash flow funds, instead of borrowing (known as "under borrowing"); or
- Borrowing for future increases in the CFR (borrowing in advance of need)

17. The Council's treasury position as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 for both debt and investments, compared with the previous year is set out in Table 3 below:

| <b>Table 3 : Borrowing and Investments 2019-20 and 2020-21</b> |                            |                               |                            |                               |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Treasury Position</b>                                       | <b>31st March 2020</b>     |                               | <b>31st March 2021</b>     |                               |
|  | <b>Principal<br/>£'000</b> | <b>Average<br/>Rate<br/>%</b> | <b>Principal<br/>£'000</b> | <b>Average<br/>Rate<br/>%</b> |
| <b>Borrowing</b>   |                            |                               |                            |                               |
| Fixed Interest Rate Debt                                       | 198,528                    | 3.15                          | 198,528                    | 3.15                          |
| <b>Total Debt</b>  | <b>198,528</b>             | <b>3.15</b>                   | <b>198,528</b>             | <b>3.15</b>                   |
| <b>Investments</b>   |                            |                               |                            |                               |
| Fixed Interest Investments                                     | 59,000                     | 0.96                          | 48,000                     | 0.48                          |
| Call Accounts  | 7,500                      | 0.90                          | 7,500                      | 0.90                          |
| Variable Interest Investments                                  | 10,465                     | 0.87                          | 8,940                      | 0.01                          |
| Property & Investment Funds                                    | 10,000                     | 4.56                          | 15,000                     | 3.54                          |
| <b>Total Investments</b>                                       | <b>80,960</b>              | <b>1.17</b>                   | <b>79,440</b>              | <b>1.01</b>                   |
| <b>Net Position</b>  | <b>117,568</b>             |                               | <b>119,088</b>             |                               |

18. Overall, the Council earned a weighted average return of 0.82% on its investment which is above the target of 0.51% above average base rate, which equated to 0.61% as at 31st March 2021.

### **Prudential Indicators and Compliance Issues**

19. Some of the prudential indicators provide an overview, others a specific limit on treasury activity. These are detailed below:

20. **Net Borrowing and the CFR** – In order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent, the Council's external borrowing (net of investments) over the medium-term must only be for a capital purpose, and not exceed the CFR except in the short-term. In the short term the Council can borrow for cash flow purposes. Table 4 below highlights the Council's net borrowing position against the CFR, and shows that it is significantly below the limit, due to the level of internal borrowing that has been undertaken.

| <b>Table 4 : Net Borrowing CFR 2019-20 and 2020-21</b> |                            |                            |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Net Borrowing &amp; CFR</b>                         | <b>31st March<br/>2020</b> | <b>31st March<br/>2021</b> |
|  | <b>Actual<br/>£'000</b>    | <b>Actual<br/>£'000</b>    |
| Total Debt   | 198,528                    | 198,528                    |
| Total Investment                                       | 80,960                     | 79,440                     |
| <b>Net Borrowing Position</b>                          | <b>117,568</b>             | <b>119,088</b>             |
| <b>CFR</b>   | <b>253,733</b>             | <b>289,787</b>             |
| <b>Under Borrowing plus Investments</b>                | <b>136,165</b>             | <b>170,699</b>             |

21. In the current climate, internal borrowing is preferable to borrowing externally as the interest rate payable on an external loan is much higher than that which can be earned on investments. Therefore, forfeiting interest receivable on investments is more economical than paying additional interest charges for new external debt. If the net borrowing position, interest rate position and/or CFR changed significantly, the prospect of taking on additional debt would be reviewed.

22. **The Authorised Limit** – The Authorised Limit is the ‘affordable borrowing limit’ required by section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Council does not have the power to borrow above this level unless it explicitly agrees to do so. Table 5 below demonstrates that during 2020/21 the Council’s gross borrowing was within its Authorised Limit. The Authorised Limit allows for some headroom above the Council’s projected CFR.

| Authorised Limit compared to Actual Borrowing | 31st March 2020 |                 | 31st March 2021 |                 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|   | Limit<br>£'000  | Actual<br>£'000 | Limit<br>£'000  | Actual<br>£'000 |
| Borrowing                                     | 338,199         | 198,528         | 532,111         | 198,528         |
| Other Long Term Liabilities                   | 0               | 0               | 0               | 0               |
| <b>Total Borrowed</b>                         | <b>338,199</b>  | <b>198,528</b>  | <b>532,111</b>  | <b>198,528</b>  |
| <b>Amount under Limit</b>                     | <b>139,671</b>  |                 | <b>333,583</b>  |                 |

23. **The Operational Boundary Limit** – the Operational Boundary Limit is the expected borrowing position of the Council during the year. It is possible to exceed the Operational Boundary Limit, for a short period of time, providing that the Authorised Borrowing Limit is not breached. Table 6 below shows the limits for the last two financial years. Actual borrowing remained unchanged at £198.5m hence the limits were not breached during either period.

| Operational Boundaries      | 31st March<br>2020<br>£'000 | 31st March<br>2021<br>£'000 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Operational Borrowing Limit | 302,865                     | 353,523                     |
| Other Long Term Liabilities | 0                           | 0                           |
| <b>Totals</b>               | <b>302,865</b>              | <b>353,523</b>              |

24. **Actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream** – this indicator identifies the trend in the net cost of capital against the net revenue stream and is an indicator of affordability. Table 7 below shows that for the General Fund, the ratio is negative as external loans have been repaid and investment income is positive. The HRA ratio has improved slightly after last year’s reducing income stream, meaning that financing costs as a proportion have also fallen.

| <b>Actual Finance Costs</b>  | <b>2019/20<br/>£'000</b> | <b>2020/21<br/>£'000</b> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Revenue Stream</b>  |                          |                          |
| General Fund   | 27,762                   | 29,412                   |
| Housing Revenue Account  | 45,458                   | 45,581                   |
| <b>Comparison to Actual Revenue Position</b>                         |                          |                          |
| Financing Costs as a proportion of Net Revenue Stream - General Fund | -10.44%                  | -7.02%                   |
| Financing Costs as a proportion of Net Revenue Stream - HRA          | 16.35%                   | 16.30%                   |

Note that the General Fund Revenue Stream above has been adjusted to remove the additional £23.6 million section 31 grants paid in advance of in 2020/21 by the government.

### **Investment Income**

25. Markets are remaining weak as interest rate rise increases look less likely due to the Covid19 pandemic and economic pressures, no rate rise now predicted by Link Asset Services (the Council’s treasury advisors) until September 2023
26. The Council manages its investments in-house and invests with institutions listed in the Council’s approved counterparty list. The Council invests for a range of periods from overnight to 364 days, dependant on cash flow requirements, its view on interest rates and duration limits set out in the Council’s Investment Strategy.
27. During 2020/21, the Council maintained an average investment balance of £104 million and received an average return of 0.82%. The upper limit of non-specified investments allowed in the strategy is 25% of the average investment balance for the preceding calendar year. The average balance for 2020/21 was £113 million giving a limit on non-specified investments of £28.5 million. Property funds and a new Multi Asset Fund fell into the non-specified investment category; their original investment value was £15 million which is within the non-specified limit at 13.2% of the average investment balance.
28. The property funds and the Multi asset Fund are classified as Non-specified Investments within the approved Investment Strategy. The current rate of return on the investments is circa 4.4% per annum. The capital value of the Communities, Churches and Local Authorities (CCLA) Fund has increased by 25.04% between April 2013 and March 2021. The overall value of the Lothbury property fund investment has increased by 15.33% since inception in August 2014. It is important to understand that fluctuations in value are to be expected with property fund investments over the short term and that they are a long term investment; as such, any gains and losses in fund value should be considered over the long term.

29. Actual investment income for 2020/21 was £1.04 million; £0.18m Lower than the budget estimate of £1.22 million. The difference is primarily due to Investment balances and Interest rates being lower than anticipated during the year which can be attributed to higher retention of cash balances and reductions in investment interest rates
30. Fluctuations in the Council's balances have been managed through a mix of instant access and notice accounts, money market funds and short term deposits (up to 364 days). This approach is in line with the Investment Strategy approved by the Council.

### **Interest Rates since 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021**

31. The Council takes advice from Link Asset Services on the appropriate durations to place investments with counterparties. These durations and also the availability of individual counterparties are subject to change dependant on market conditions and the credit ratings of the individual institutions. This means that the investment portfolio has to be actively managed to ensure both the availability of enough suitable counterparties and that the Council achieves the best interest rates possible within the agreed security and liquidity parameters.
32. The Bank of England base rate was reduced to 0.10% in March 2020 and due to uncertainty caused by the Covid19 pandemic and is currently predicted to remain so until September 2023. The Council continues to use money market funds, call accounts and instant access accounts for liquidity purposes, whilst seeking to maximise its returns by arranging longer term deposits where possible. In order to achieve this position, it is vital to maintain a robust cash-flow model which is continuously reviewed and updated. However, given the volatile nature of the Council's cash-flow requirements, it is not always possible to "lock away" funds for as long as may be desirable and so a strategic approach to investments is fundamental in order to achieve the most practicable yet favourable outcome. The council holds £10m investment in property funds and £5m in Multi asset funds. The overall capital value of the funds had fallen due to the Covid19 pandemic but now have seen a recovery in these values and levels are now around pre pandemic levels. . Dividends from the funds were still paid although they reduced slightly during the year and have now fully recovered to previous return levels.

### **Environmental Social and Governance**

33. The Council adopted an ethical investment policy in 2015/16. No changes were made to the policy in setting the 2020/21 Treasury Management Strategy which is set out below:

The Council will not knowingly invest directly in businesses whose activities and practices pose a risk of serious harm to individuals or groups, or whose activities are inconsistent with the Council's mission and values. This would include, inter alia, avoiding direct investment in institutions with material links to:

- a. Human rights abuse (e.g. child labour, political oppression)
  - b. Environmentally harmful activities (e.g. pollutants, destruction of habitat, fossil fuels)
  - c. Socially harmful activities (e.g. tobacco, gambling)
34. The Council had £7.5 million in green deposit notice accounts offered by Barclays Bank who are working in association with Sustainalytics, a leading global provider of environmental, social and corporate governance research and ratings, to achieve a

positive environmental impact. Their green framework covers the following environmental areas:

- Energy efficiency projects and renewable energy
- Sustainable food agriculture and forestry
- Waste management
- Greenhouse gas emission reduction
- Sustainable water

35. The intention is to have a separate Environmental Social and Governance policy within the 2022/23 Treasury Strategy. Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria are a set of standards for a company's operations that socially conscious investors use to inform potential investments. Members will be updated on progress on this in a future report, considering whether and how it can sharpen the ethical aspects of the Council's investment decision-making.

### **Financial implications**

36. These are set out within the body of the report.

### **Legal Issues**

37. The Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2020/21. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).

### **Level of risk**

38. The key risk going forward is around uncertainty still caused by the Covid19 pandemic. Interest rates are anticipated to remain low. Risk assessment and management is a key part of Treasury Management activity, especially in the selection of counterparties when investment is being considered. The Council uses external advisors and counterparty credit ratings issued by the rating agencies to assist in this process.

### **Equalities impact**

39. The Council follows an ethical investment policy, investment interest helps provide council services, which has a beneficial equalities impact.

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
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**Background Papers:** None

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**To:** Cabinet – 15 September 2021  
Council – 04 October 2021

**Report of:** Executive Director of Housing

**Title of Report:** A bid for Government Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme funding to boost the supply of accommodation to prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping, and match-investment funding from Oxford City Council.

| <b>Summary and recommendations</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Purpose of report:</b>  | To seek approval to proceed with the bid to MHCLG for funding from the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) and to agree to include the required capital match funding in the Council’s budget. |
| <b>Key decision:</b>   | Yes  |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>   | Councillor Blackings Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless  |
| <b>Corporate Priority:</b>   | Deliver more, affordable housing   |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>   | Housing and Homelessness Strategy  |
| <b>Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:</b>  |  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Agree</b> the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme bid and the further £2m investment in the National Homelessness Property Fund by the Council;</li> <li>2. <b>Recommend</b> to Council that budget provision is agreed for the required match funding of £2m; and</li> <li>3. <b>Delegate</b> to the Executive Director of Housing the entering into of supporting agreements.</li> </ol> |  |

| <b>Appendices</b> |
|-------------------|
| None              |

## Background and Strategic Context

1. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a statutory duty on Housing Authorities to prevent all households from becoming homeless. This prevention activity is a key responsibility for the Housing Needs Service. If homelessness cannot be prevented, or otherwise relieved, this duty often extends to the provision of emergency interim accommodation, or temporary accommodation (TA).
2. The Council has 114 units of TA used for this purpose. When there is no suitable TA accommodation available, then nightly charge placements have to be made into hotels (noting that homelessness legislation states that no families with children should be placed in B&B/hotel accommodation for more than 6 weeks). Despite an initial spike at the start of the pandemic, the trends show the number of households requiring TA has been decreasing overall, despite in-year fluctuations.
3. However, since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, there has been a marked increase in the proportion of single vulnerable people placed into TA. Single people now occupy over 50% of temporary accommodation and many have high/complex support needs that exceed the accommodation and support provision traditionally offered by the Council. This is causing particular pressure in nightly charge where some single people with high needs stay for prolonged periods of time due to their risk, making placement difficult.
4. In addition, over this time period, the requirement for two bed TA units (acquired in the General Fund) has decreased due to improved prevention work, and therefore the rental income revenue predictions are not being realised due to higher than predicted numbers of voids.
5. A review of the strategy for temporary accommodation highlights work streams required to improve the accommodation supply, to better fit changes in demand. This work is underway and will be the subject of further reports to Cabinet in due course.
6. This report is confined to a proposal that will form part of that strategy and will start to redress the balance of supply and demand for appropriate sized temporary accommodation.

### **Proposal for further Social Investment in the National Homelessness Property Fund (NHPF2)**

7. The Council has invested approx. £10m to date in the NHPF. This comprised of an initial investment of £5m (approved by Council in Sept 2015) as one of the initial funders of the national fund (outside of London), alongside Bristol City Council and Milton Keynes Borough Council, who each invested £5m, plus Big Society Capital who provided a £15m (match funding) investment. The purpose was to enable access to more affordable accommodation locally to help prevent homelessness and reduce temporary accommodation use. The first close of the Fund was in Dec 2015. The Council has since invested another £4.745m. Bristol City has also increased its investment by £5m, and a number of smaller investors and trusts have invested also. These subsequent closes have brought the fund total to £43.6m which has now been fully deployed in Oxford, Bristol and Milton Keynes. The fund closed for investment in Dec 2018, having purchased 229 properties – 69 of them in the Oxford area.
8. As a social impact investment, the Council is also able to see a financial return on the investment, in line with the principles of a balanced treasury management

strategy as well as delivering accommodation to be used for homelessness prevention. The loan was not undertaken using treasury management powers because the balance of service benefits was greater and so service powers were used. The Council used mixed funding sources for this investment, including the use of retained right to buy receipts and borrowing. The fund is now delivering a cash yield of 2% in line with projections and subject to quarterly review, with quarterly distribution of profits. Resonance is expecting the cash yield to increase to 2.3% this summer (2021), excluding any capital variations. In Oxford, the exclusive nominations agreement between St Mungo's, who manage the properties and support clients to sustain the tenancy and then move-on, and the Housing Needs private rented team, have resulted in 107 households having their homelessness prevented, comprising 140 Adults and 137 Children (to Jan 2021).

9. The primary exit strategy for this NHPF (ending Dec 2024) is for Resonance, the Fund Managers, to create a "follow on fund" primarily invested in by large scale institutional investors such as pension funds, who which can acquire the existing housing portfolios from existing investors. This will allow Oxford to release its investment, plus any capital growth, while leaving the property for the Council to access in beyond this period.
10. Resonance has now launched another national fund (NHPF2), specifically targeted at reducing rough sleeping. The legal structure will be the same as before, with a Unit Trust sitting above a Limited Partnership. The length of this fund will be ten years (to the end of 2030). The target size for the fund is at least £100m. £21.3m of funding has already been invested – predominantly from the North West (Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Pension Fund, with match-funding from Big Society Capital). Another local Authority is expected to invest shortly (in a similar arrangement to that being proposed for Oxford City).
11. As an existing investor, Resonance is keen to continue the relationship with Oxford, and has proposed that the Council invest in this new national fund (NHPF2). In summary, the proposition is that Oxford City Council invests c. £2m in this ten-year fund. Resonance would then match-fund this by a further £2m from trusts and investors, and a joint funding bid to the MHCLG through the RSAP bid round, would request that MHCLG also match fund by c.£2m. This would create a £6m fund to invest in property in the Oxford area. It is estimated that this could fund approx. 47 bed spaces to support rough sleepers from the streets and into independent living. More information is provided on the acquisition approach below.
12. Resonance is in partnership with Response, a local housing and support provider for this initiative and the Council would engage with them with regards to nomination and support arrangements. £543k revenue funding for support up to April 2024 is part of the RSAP bid.
13. The proposal is for the Council to invest up to £2m in the NHPF2. This has formed part of a bid to the RSAP programme that was submitted by the 1<sup>st</sup> July deadline. At the time of writing the outcome of our bid is still awaited.

## **Property Acquisition**

14. The £6m investment (£2m NHPF2 fund, £2m MHCLG, £2m Oxford Council) is proposed to be deployed as follows:

- 50% portfolio split into 3-4 Bed HMOs in Oxford City equating to c. £310k per unit (purchase price, acquisition costs, refurbishment) equating to c.10 units or min 30 bed spaces (more if the odd 4 bed property is acquired) – This approach ensures no completion in the city one bed acquisition market with the current RSAP funding initiative
- 50% portfolio spend on 1 bed flats outside of Oxford City c.£175k total investment per unit as above. Equating to 17 units. (Property to be sought in 'Next nearest' areas adjacent to the city and well connected to services and public transport)

15. For the 47 bed spaces - this would equate to a cost to Oxford of c£42k per bed space which is considered excellent value for money.

## **Support Provision and Nominations**

16. The support package and tenant pathway will be bespoke to Oxford's needs and to fit with Response's operational reach and support model. The support arrangements are yet to be fully determined. Nomination agreements and support costs to fund these beyond RSAP revenue funding are yet to be confirmed although there is an expectation that future MHCLG programmes will seek to provide projects that are already supported with grant with further revenue support, this is subject to the Autumn spending review.

## **Financial Implications**

17. Whether the money advanced to the Fund is undertaken through reliance on investment powers, or statutory powers driven by service objectives, it would be deemed capital expenditure. It would be an Unregulated Collective Investment Scheme for the purpose of Financial Services and Markets Act 2000.

18. Where the Council incurs capital expenditure funded by borrowing, it needs to consider whether a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) is necessary to pay for the capital cost incurred and if so, how much. The Head of Financial Services considers that there is no requirement to make an MRP over the term of the investment because the capital receipt would be used to repay the debt liability at the end of the investment period. This approach has previously been accepted by the Council's auditors with regards to the previous NHPF investment.

19. As this fund is targeted on a wider geography than the first national fund, and is focused on one bed homes for vulnerable single persons, the financial modelling is different – indeed more favourable for investors. The key financial assumptions are:

- Ten year fund (to end 2030)
- Target NIY – 4% average
- Target Cash Yield – 3% to Investors
- Lease Rent – Local Housing Allowance

- Assumption on Rent Increase – 2% in model but will be driven by any changes to LHA at 31st March rather than fixed amount
- Capital Appreciation Assumption – 4% per annum
- Target IRR - 5% (income during life of fund plus value of properties at exit)
- Investor Reporting – as per other funds Quarterly Investor Reporting, Annual Social Impact Report as well as Advisory and Annual General Meeting

20. At the end of the ten years, the expectation is that the Council would take out its investment (so no MRP) and an institutional investor/ pension fund would then take it over. The Council can continue to have access to the properties in beyond this period and into the future.

21. An investment on the proposed business case and model, as outlined above, is considered viable and cost effective, with the expected returns exceeding the equivalent borrowing rate from the PWLB on a ten-year fix.

22. This initiative does not provide a base revenue saving to the Council's homelessness budget but does mitigate the risk of a pressure on this budget.

### Legal issues

23. The Local Government Act 2003, section 12, provides a local authority with the power to invest for "any purpose relevant to its functions under any enactment, or for the purposes of the prudent management of its financial affairs".

24. In entering into arrangement to invest or obtain funding the Council will be required to adhere to contracts terms under agreement.

25. Any such agreements will be reviewed and negotiated by Oxford City Council Legal Services as per normal process and procedure.

### Equalities impact

26. There is a positive impact around securing suitable and affordable accommodation locally for vulnerable homeless households in high housing need.

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
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|                                |
|--------------------------------|
| <b>Background Papers:</b> None |
|                                |

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 15 September 2021  
**Report of:** Head of Corporate Strategy  
**Title of Report:** Oxford Urban Forest Strategy – A Master Plan to 2050

| Summary and recommendations   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Purpose of report:</b>   | To seek approval for the Urban Forest Strategy  |
| <b>Key decision:</b>  | No  |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>  | Councillor Tom Hayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford |
| <b>Corporate Priority:</b>  | Zero Carbon Oxford  |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>  | Council Strategy 2020-24  |
| <b>Recommendations:</b> That Cabinet resolves to:   |   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Approve</b> the Oxford Urban Forest Strategy – A Master Plan to 2050, which sets out the strategic direction for how we, as a city, protect, manage and expand our urban forest to help tackle the climate and ecological emergencies. Officers will take opportunities to seek external funding opportunities to facilitate the implementation of the strategy; and</li> <li><b>Authorise</b> the Head of Corporate Strategy to make minor editorial amendments to the strategy document.</li> </ol> |   |

| Appendices |  |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Draft Oxford Urban Forest Strategy – A Master Plan to 2050 |
| Appendix 2 | Risk Register  |
| Appendix 3 | Equalities Impact Assessment                               |
| Appendix 4 | Public consultation – summary of results                   |

## Background

- In response to rising concern about the urgent need for action, on 28 January 2019 Oxford City Council unanimously declared a climate emergency and provided for a Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change. Oxford became the first UK city to hold a Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change in September and October 2019.

2. 90% of the randomly selected representative sample of 50 Oxford residents that made up the Citizens' Assembly responded to the key question asked of them and felt that Oxford should aim to achieve 'net zero' sooner than 2050. There was also widespread belief that Oxford should be a leader in tackling the climate crisis. Assembly members recognised that action is required to stop climate change and habitat loss in order to avoid significant and irreversible environmental damage. The Assembly opted for the most ambitious biodiversity vision which represented the greatest change to the way people live now.
3. In response to the Citizens' Assembly the City Council committed to a number of actions including the development of an Urban Forest Strategy.
4. Oxford has similar canopy cover to London, which is relatively high compared to other cities, such as Glasgow or Bristol. The majority of our urban forest, and where there is potential for expanding it, is on private land and out of the council's direct control. For example, 19% of the city's land use is private gardens. This presents a great opportunity for planting. We need residents, private land owners and our communities, businesses and institutions to work together, as a city, to deliver the aims of the strategy if it is to have the greatest impact.
5. This is a good moment to celebrate our urban forest and take action to expand, enhance and protect it. Not only do we face climate and ecological emergencies, but the COVID 19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of our natural environment particularly for our mental health and wellbeing. A survey by Natural England showed that around 9 out of 10 people agreed that natural spaces are good for mental health and wellbeing. More than 40% noticed that nature, wildlife, and visiting local green and natural spaces have been even more important to their wellbeing since the coronavirus restrictions began.
6. Oxford's urban forest comprises all the trees and woody vegetation in our city that provide us with numerous benefits, also known as ecosystem services, such as clean air, spaces for recreation and carbon storage. Not only does our urban forest provide essential environmental benefits but importantly investing in our urban forest can help us to raise living standards and tackle inequalities in our city. The data used to develop the strategy shows a correlation between low canopy cover and areas of deprivation in Oxford.
7. The strategy sets a strategic framework for managing our urban forest and seeks to maximise the benefits for both nature and all Oxford's residents and visitors.

### **Public Consultation**

8. An online public consultation was carried out from 28th June to the 26th July. 134 responses were received to the consultation. The consultation was publicised using social media, press releases and direct contact with key stakeholders and community groups. The full draft strategy was made available and it was accompanied by a short questionnaire consisting of 5 questions.
9. Over 90% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that deprived areas with low canopy cover should be prioritised in the strategy. Over 90% of respondents agreed that biodiversity and opportunities for planting in the Nature Recovery Network should be prioritised in this strategy. The Nature Recovery Network identifies areas where conservation efforts will have the most benefits

for wildlife and the ecosystem services that they provide. Respondents were asked if there are other areas or issues that they would like to see prioritised in the strategy. Responses were varied. The most frequently mentioned issue related to prioritising street trees. The strategy identifies street trees as a key treescape within our urban forest. Principles for street tree management and opportunities to increase them are set out in the strategy. The next steps will specifically identify opportunities for planting and for community engagement through initiatives such as the Trees for Streets project.

10. The consultation questionnaire also asked respondents for their ideas on how we can engage with our communities. The responses are full of creative and practical ideas for events and collaborative working. We also asked what would encourage respondents to plant a tree in their own garden.
11. The full list of responses to all questions asked and how comments have been addressed is included in Appendix 4.
12. The strategy is available to view in Appendix 1 and has been updated following the public consultation to incorporate comments wherever relevant.

### **The Strategy**

13. This strategy is for the whole city, not just council land. It's a long term master plan to 2050 which sets a framework for action. Objectives are set out into 3 parts:
  - Protect, Improve and Manage
  - Expand, Enhance and Develop
  - Engage, Promote and Employ
14. The vision for our urban forest is for it to support the city to address and adapt to climate change and habitat loss whilst conserving and enhancing its distinctive character. We want all communities, regardless of postcode or income, to thrive in nature where they live, and feel pride in Oxford as a liveable city that is healthy, biodiverse, resilient and beautiful.
15. This strategy follows the principle of “right tree, right place” and seeks to ensure high quality planting in order to maximise benefits for nature and for people. In order to support wider biodiversity objectives the strategy makes clear what habitats may or may not be suitable for planting trees and what kind of species we seek to encourage.
16. The strategy establishes important principles that we want to promote in the management of our urban forest and for benefits to be maximised. Data from the Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project, which has informed this strategy, has shown that there are opportunities to increase canopy cover in deprived areas of the city where cover tends to be lower and where we also have higher levels of physical and mental health problems.
17. Another key area of focus is on biodiversity and increasing canopy cover within the Nature Recovery Network (where appropriate). A network map is in development led by a partnership of local nature conservation organisations and

local authorities<sup>1</sup>. Our urban forest provides a space for our communities to come together as well as a reason for them to come together. Engagement and creating a sense of ownership in communities is essential to successful management of our urban forest.

### **Next Steps and Delivery**

18. The strategy sets out the initial next steps and actions required to deliver the strategy.
19. Seek out external funding opportunities to develop a comprehensive engagement strategy that will better coordinate projects across the city and engage more stakeholders by using and developing existing forums to include encouraging residents to plant trees in their own gardens where appropriate
20. Ensure that the opportunities are taken to input into the review of the Oxford Local Plan 2040 to ensure emerging policies optimise opportunities to implement the strategy
21. Address funding constraints for street tree planting and maintenance by exploring innovative funding mechanisms.

### **Monitoring and Review**

22. It is proposed to review the strategy every 10 years. The long review period is necessary in order to give us a chance to see more change as trees have had more time to grow. The review will include undertaking a canopy cover assessment to assess our canopy cover and enable us to compare it against our existing baseline. The health and composition of our urban forest can be revisited at this time too. The review will also assess levels of engagement in tree planting and management initiatives.

### **Financial implications**

23. As a council we already have policies in the Oxford Local Plan that support the protection of trees ( Policy G7) and we are involved in some street tree initiatives. However, to deliver the additional objectives of this strategy, officers will need to work with external partners to raise funds.
24. Roles and responsibilities across the council relating to trees and biodiversity are spread between tree officers in planning, the ecology and biodiversity officer in Environmental Sustainability and officers in the parks service and ODS. Parks and ODS work relates only to trees on land that is owned or managed by Oxford City Council. The Council does not have an officer responsible for our urban forest at a strategic level.
25. The City Council has an important leadership role to play in the city. The majority of our urban forest is on land that is outside of the direct control of the City Council. The City Council is uniquely positioned to effectively coordinate action through our existing partnerships, engagement activities and the central role that we play in place making through the planning system. Taking a leadership role

---

<sup>1</sup> The partnership includes: Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC), Wild Oxfordshire, the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) and overseen by Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Advisory Group (BAG), of which Oxford City Council is a member. It has been adopted by the Oxfordshire Environment Board (OxEB).

and strategic approach in this area would enable us to maximise the benefits of the urban forest for the city as a whole.

26. The City Council is under resourced for providing the coordination and leadership role that would make delivery of the strategy as effective as possible. Exploring the possibility of joint funding from a range of partners. Existing projects such as the Oxfordshire Treescapes Opportunity Mapping Project can help to deliver some of the aims of the strategy.

### **Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

27. This proposed strategy complies with Oxford City Council's policies and commitments relating to carbon reduction and safeguarding the environment. The strategy brings us closer to our commitment to becoming a Zero Carbon Council by 2030 or earlier and Zero Carbon Oxford by 2040 or earlier. The Urban Forest Strategy provides a strategic direction for the city to maximise the benefits from our urban forest. These benefits include helping us to adapt to climate change by reducing the urban heat island effect, improving air quality, reducing flooding, storing carbon and protecting our biodiversity.
28. The Urban Forest Strategy will support the delivery of the following plans and strategies:
- a. The Council Strategy 2020 – 2024: Includes the priority to pursue a zero carbon Oxford
  - b. Oxford Local Plan 2036: Includes commitments to biodiversity and increasing canopy cover within new developments.
  - c. The Biodiversity Action Plan
  - d. The Green Space Strategy 2013 - 2027

### **Legal issues**

29. There are no legal implications.

### **Level of risk**

30. Please refer to Appendix 2.

### **Equalities impact**

31. The data supporting the strategy shows that there is a correlation between low canopy cover and areas of deprivation in Oxford. The strategy sets out that we will prioritise these areas in order to ensure that the benefits of our urban forest are provided for all our residents. The improved environmental quality that our urban forest brings can lead to better physical and mental health amongst all our citizens, thus helping to tackle some of the inequalities in the city. The strategy may help to attract more investment towards tree planting for areas of deprivation in the city. It is expected that this Urban Forest Strategy will have a positive impact on reducing inequality in Oxford. Please refer to Appendix 3.

|                            |  |
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**Background Papers:** None

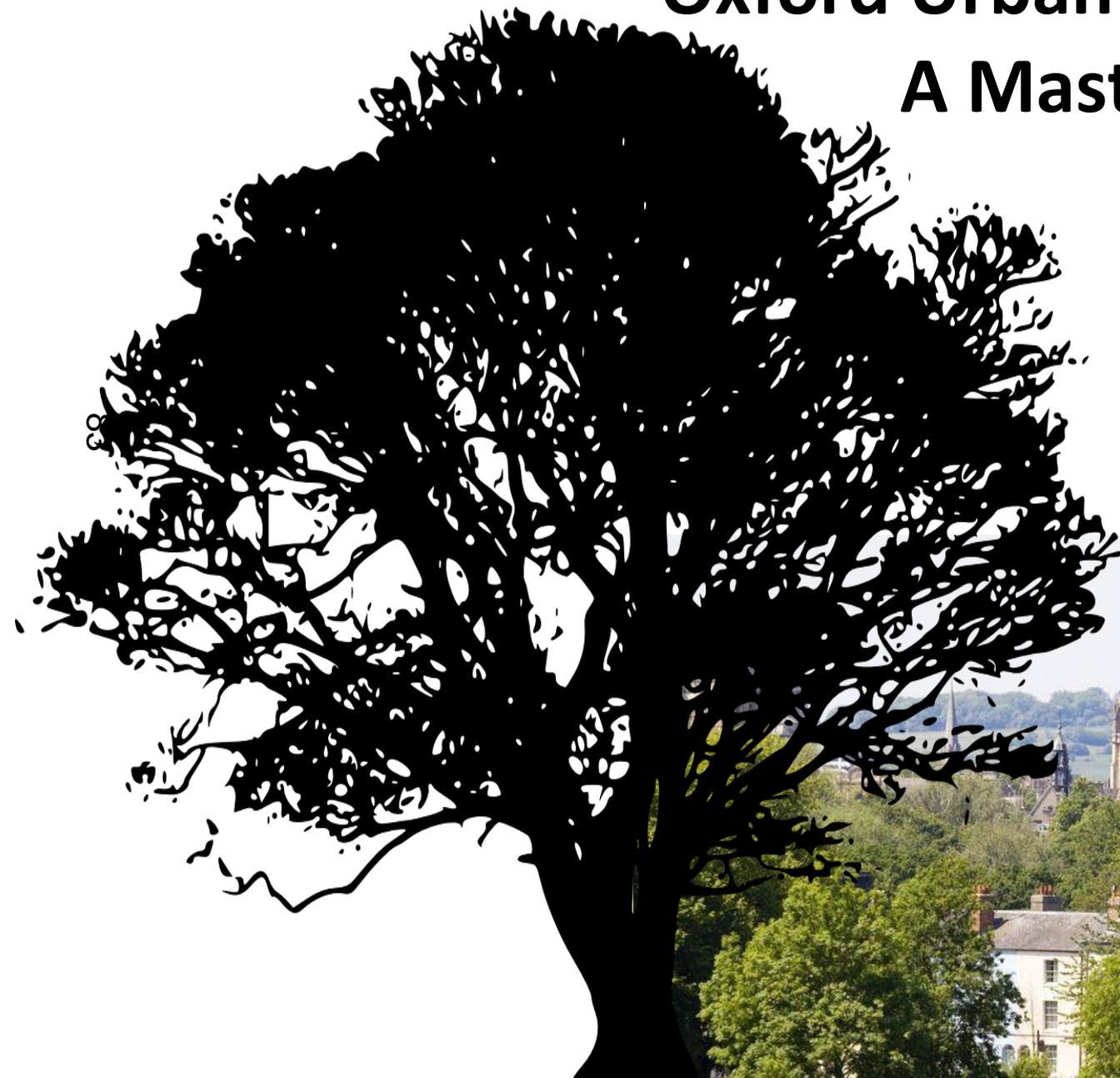
Appendix 1

# Oxford Urban Forest Strategy

## A Master Plan to 2050

SEPTEMBER 2021

[www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk)



# Appendix 1

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Thank you to all of the organisations for their help in developing this strategy. Particular thanks to the Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), Wild Oxfordshire, Oxford Direct Services, Environmental Change Institute and Earthwatch Institute.

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## Foreword

2020 and 2021 have been years of unparalleled loss and uncertainty. Until the rollout of the vaccines is complete, we will not truly be through this crisis, but now is the time to draw breath and plan for a healthier, greener, and fairer city, and that means putting a richer natural environment at the heart of all neighbourhoods.



*Councillor Tom Hayes planting an Earthwatch "Tiny Forest" in Foxwell Drive*

Oxford's communities have been responding to the challenges of the pandemic by showing ever greater partnership and innovation. Now is the time to nurture the new collaborative ways of working, and the new way of viewing the city as interconnected (of people, and of people and planet). This will be especially important not only to

respond to the crises which exist today (the pandemic and climate change) but also those which will surely follow (pandemic-related social, economic, racial, and health inequalities). By creating community action to enhance our natural environment, we can create new belongings to people and place, but as critically, tackle inequality and deprivation.

In respect to biodiversity, are we truly meeting the climate emergency that we declared unanimously as a City Council and the ecological emergency that we face? With the potential for trees to cool our streets, enhance our wellbeing, and meet the climate crisis

we face, we must increase our on-street canopy cover and urban forest generally in proportions equal to the demanding expectations of our climate emergency motion and the scale of the crisis we face.

We committed to do everything in our control and influence to deliver against the challenges laid out by the scientific community. By locking in carbon, trees and other green infrastructure represent an important contribution to the Council's ambitious targets to reduce its carbon emissions to zero by 2030 and deliver a Zero Carbon Oxford by 2040.

Investing more in Oxford's largest ever street and parks tree planting programme and pledging to work with community and third-sector organisations to plant more, will be yet another example of the seriousness with which this Council treats our responsibilities to Oxford's current and future residents. I want to thank all those organisations and partners which have contributed to this Strategy.

Oxford's carbon emissions amount to nearly 10 times the total carbon storage of Oxford's urban forest. We need to do more and this Strategy seeks to do more and to do it for the whole of the city.

**Councillor Tom Hayes**

**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford at Oxford City Council**

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## Executive Summary

This strategy seeks to set a direction for Oxford, as a city, to protect and manage, grow and expand our urban forest to help tackle the climate and ecological emergencies that we face. It's a long term master plan to 2050 which sets a framework for action.

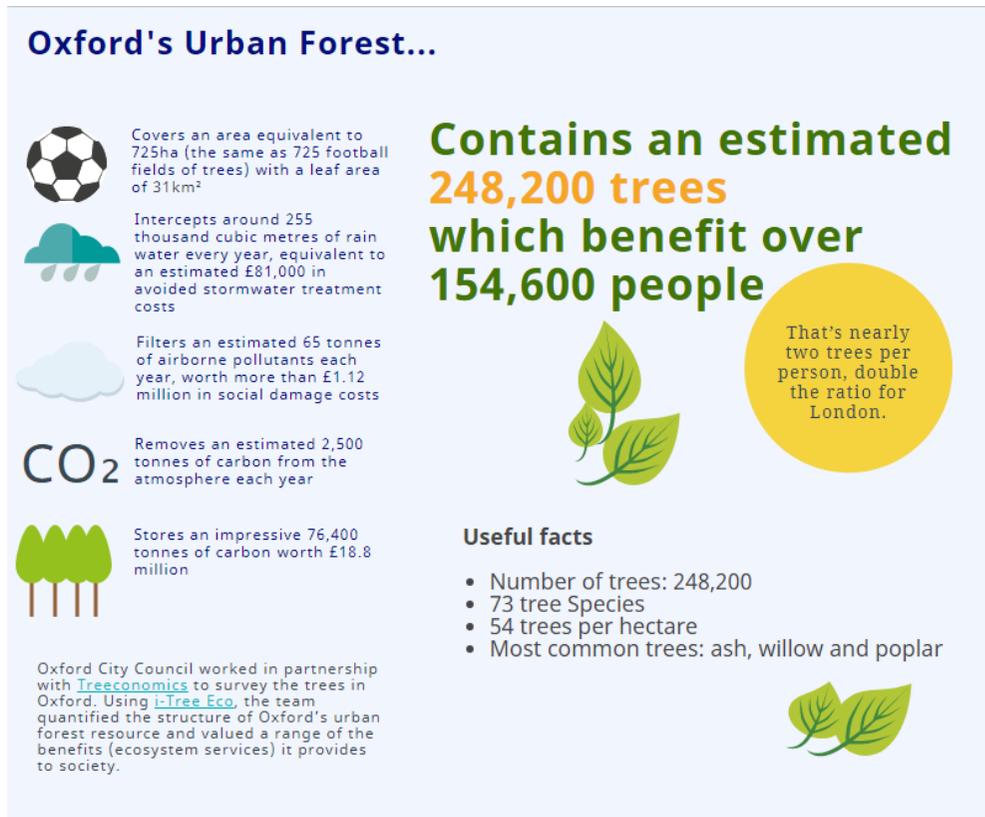
Our urban forest is made up of all the trees and woody vegetation in our city and provides us with numerous benefits, also known as ecosystem services, such as clean air and carbon storage.

The vision for our urban forest is for it to support the city to address and adapt to climate change and habitat loss whilst conserving and enhancing its distinctive character. Regardless of income and postcode, all communities will be able to thrive in nature where they live, and feel pride in Oxford as a liveable city that is healthy, biodiverse, resilient and beautiful.

**This strategy follows the principle of “right tree, right place” and seeks to ensure high quality planting in order to maximise benefits for nature and for people.**

Objectives are set out into 3 parts:

- Protect, Improve and Manage
- Expand, Enhance and Develop
- Engage, Promote and Employ



The strategy is for the whole city and we need the council, citizens, and communities to work together to deliver the aims of the strategy if it is to have the greatest impact.

External funding opportunities will be sought to get resources to develop detailed planting and engagement plans with key stakeholders and partners to help achieve the objectives of this strategy.

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## 1. Introduction

In response to rising concern about the urgent need for action, on 28 January 2019 Oxford City Council unanimously declared a climate emergency and provided for a Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change<sup>1</sup>. Oxford became the first UK city to hold a Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change in September and October 2019.

90% of the randomly selected representative sample of 50 Oxford residents that made up the Citizens' Assembly responded to the key question asked of them and felt that Oxford should aim to achieve 'net zero' sooner than 2050. There was also widespread belief that Oxford should be a leader in tackling the climate crisis.



*David Attenborough mural on East Oxford Games Hall*

Biodiversity was a key theme considered by the Assembly. Assembly members were presented with visions of possible futures for Oxford, each listing a series of co-benefits and trade-offs. Taking specific actions to address climate change, such as proactively putting in measures to protect and expand our urban forest, provides us with co-benefits. This means that not only do we tackle the climate emergency but we also improve health and wellbeing, the economy and our environmental quality. The Assembly opted for the most ambitious biodiversity vision which represented the greatest change to the way people live now. Addressing climate change and habitat loss as an emergency means we recognise that we need to accelerate our plans.

Our natural environment, including our trees and forests, play an important role in reducing the effects of climate change and supporting our biodiversity. They provide us with ways to adapt to it through the ecosystems services they provide such as carbon capture, reducing flooding, giving us clean air and supporting our health and wellbeing. They can provide us with beautiful environments that create a sense of place that should be accessible to everyone. But most important of all, they are sanctuaries that connect us to the natural world and for that we need them to be cherished.

Oxford's total canopy cover, including trees and shrubs is similar to that of London. It is quite high compared to other cities like Bristol or Glasgow. This Urban Forest Strategy celebrates our forest resource and the benefits it brings and provides for it to be protected, enhanced and expanded for everyone now and for generations to come. This strategy must be seen in the wider context

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of the significant changes needed in our society to reduce our carbon emissions and the global, national and local plans to achieve net zero<sup>2</sup>, as well as the need to reduce air pollution and protect public health.

With greater awareness of climate change, tree planting has become increasingly popular. However, planting the right trees in the right places is essential. Planting trees on important habitats like wetlands or species-rich grasslands will harm our natural environment by destroying these rarer habitats. In addition, these types of habitat often sequester more carbon than trees so planting trees is not always the best solution.

**This strategy follows the principle of “right tree, right place” and seeks to ensure high quality planting in order to maximise benefits for nature and for people.**

The strategy seeks to protect and enhance the beauty of Oxford by taking account of Oxford’s distinctive landscape character and its relationship to the built environment.

The strategy is for the whole city, not just city council land. The council’s remit includes the management of city council land and our public parks, tree protection orders and formulation and implementation of planning policy. The council also has an important leadership and influencing role. However, the vast majority of our urban forest, and where there is potential for expanding it, is on private land and out of the council’s direct control. For example, 19%

of the city’s land use is private gardens. This presents a great opportunity for planting. We need residents, private land owners and our communities, businesses and institutions to work together, as a city, to deliver the aims of the strategy if it is to have the greatest impact.

Empowering communities and people to enhance our urban forest and our biodiversity will help to create zero carbon citizens. Where our urban forest and our biodiversity is enhanced in deprived parts of Oxford, and where citizens on lower incomes are playing a leading role, this strategy will help to develop a fairer, more inclusive city.

The strategy seeks to do three things: protect what we have – **Protect, Improve and Manage**, expand what we have - **Expand, Enhance and Develop** and engage people in the process - **Engage, Promote and Employ**. This framework acknowledges that our existing trees are just as important as planting new trees and that engagement is going to be fundamental to achieving the aims of the strategy.

The strategy has been developed taking inspiration and guidance from a number of sources including: The Greater Lyon Tree Charter<sup>3</sup>, the Woodland Trust<sup>4</sup> and the invaluable resources produced by the Trees and Design Action Group (TDAG)<sup>5</sup>. The strategy will complement existing City Council strategies such as the Green Spaces Strategy and the City’s Biodiversity Action Plan. The approach of this strategy has been aligned with Oxfordshire County Council’s emerging tree strategy.

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## 1.1. What does the strategy cover?

The strategy is about our urban forest which is not just trees but also includes other woody plant vegetation, such as shrubs and hedgerows, which are fundamental to the forest ecosystem and the ecosystem services they deliver.

Ecosystem Services are the benefits people derive from ecosystems such as clean air, raw materials, flood protection and spaces for recreation.

To get a sense of how important our urban forest is, imagine an Oxford without any trees. The negative impact on mental and physical health, quality of life, desirability as a place to live and work, and as a place for tourism, recreation or shops and services would be huge.

Our urban forest is part of our Green Infrastructure. Green Infrastructure is a term that is defined in national planning policy and refers to planned networks of green spaces (such as parks and woodlands) and green features (such as street trees) that provide quality of life and environmental benefits. Thinking of these green spaces as infrastructure recognises that our green spaces can help deliver wider planning policy and is integral to creating sustainable communities.

In 2015 Oxford City Council commissioned Treeconomics to undertake a canopy assessment and subsequent iTree Eco



assessment of our urban forest resource. From this work, we have a good understanding of our canopy cover, species make up, health of our trees and its distribution. We also have an understanding of the value of the ecosystems services that our urban forest provides.

This strategy sets out a vision, aims and a set of 9 objectives which seek to ensure that our existing forest resource is managed effectively and to set principles as to where new planting should take place.

The strategy links to the tree opportunity maps produced by the Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project. These maps will help to guide where tree planting will have the maximum

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benefits in relation to particular ecosystem services. The maps have identified that there are opportunities for planting within areas designated as a Nature Recovery Area that would contribute to protecting and enhancing our biodiversity and in the most deprived areas of Oxford which will help to improve the quality of life for communities in these areas.

The principal output will be to develop a detailed planting and engagement plan with partners and key stakeholders that reflect the principles established in this strategy. The strategy will be reviewed every 10 years. This gives us time to see more change as trees have had time to grow.

The strategy is intended to set a strategic direction for the city as a whole, including approaches to tree planting on private land. It is not intended to cover detailed aspects of tree management such as risk and liability issues or interpret existing planning policy which is covered elsewhere.

## 1.2. Oxford City Council partners and stakeholders

Oxford City Council has a strong focus on partnership working. The City Council will work with the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership<sup>6</sup> (ZCOP) that it has established to help deliver the strategy, along with many others. The aim of ZCOP is to provide a forum for major organisations and employers based in and around Oxford to work together to help the city achieve net zero by 2040—ten whole years ahead of the UK’s national target of 2050. In order to provide a holistic approach the scope extends beyond emissions reduction and includes nature and biodiversity. The core members include major local institutions, businesses and organisations such as BMW, the

Universities, both NHS Trusts, LandSec, SSEN, Unipart, and Oxfordshire County Council.



*Florence Park*

Alongside the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership are other stakeholders and partner organisations fundamental to the development and delivery of this strategy.

These include organisations dedicated to advocating for our natural environment and helping our communities to join together and take action such as:

- Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project
- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)
- Wild Oxfordshire

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- Oxford Direct Services
- Oxford Green and Blue Spaces Network (GBSN) members
- Oxford Preservation Trust
- Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
- Community Action Groups (CAG) Network
- Environmental Change Institute
- Oxford Civic Society
- Earthwatch Institute Europe

## Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project

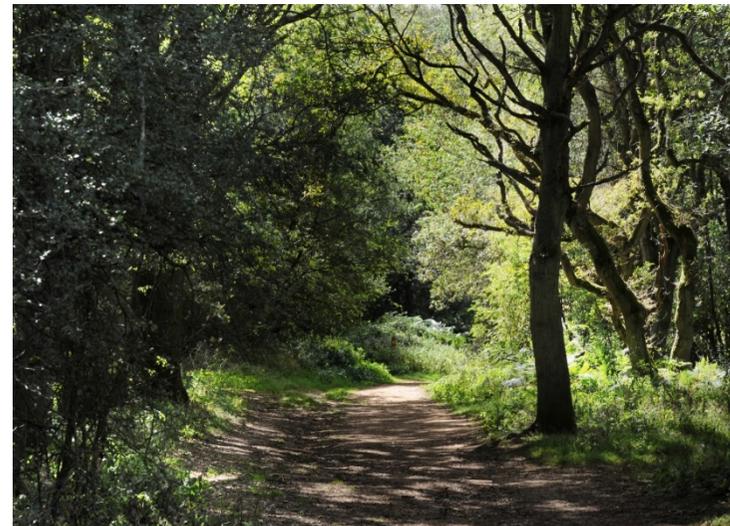
The Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project is a project that is part of the campaign to double tree cover in the UK. Led by the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, the project is working to create a tree planting opportunity map for Oxfordshire to show where tree cover might be increased. This mapping project seeks to provide a clear land use plan which helps to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places. The project uses an ecosystem services approach and is intended to be used to help form public policy and strategies and to guide individual plantings. Initial mapping undertaken for Oxford city has been used to inform this strategy. More information about the project can be found here: <https://www.oxtrees.uk/>

The rising awareness of climate change and climate and co-benefits of biodiversity enhancement will lead to new groups, communities, and innovations being tried out. The Council will seek to support new organisations and communities to engage with this strategy. Nevertheless, trees are a matter for all citizens and with most of Oxford's residents having gardens, and many businesses and other

organisations having grounds, there is a real opportunity for individual action that can make a very real difference – and this is also a key part of our strategy.

## 1.3. Plans, policies, influencing strategies

The Oxford Urban Forest Strategy is based on best practice and national guidance. It has links to and supports the aims of a number of other local strategies, policies and planning documents. For example, this strategy covers elements of biodiversity, but it is not a replacement biodiversity strategy for the city. It must be viewed in conjunction with other relevant biodiversity strategies and biodiversity legislation. Relevant complementary strategies, policies and guidance are listed in Appendix 1.



Shotover Country Park

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This will be achieved through the following objectives:

## **Protect, Improve and Manage**

1. Manage existing tree and vegetation resource according to best practice and improve vegetation health
2. Improve biosecurity and manage ash dieback and other pests and diseases according to best practice

## **Expand, Enhance and Develop**

3. Increase urban forest canopy cover using the right tree, right place principle
4. Increase resilience through greater urban forest diversity
5. Prioritise areas where new tree and other vegetation planting benefits can be maximised
6. Improve biodiversity and contribute to nature recovery areas
7. Conserve and enhance landscape character

## **Engage, Promote and Employ**

8. Engage with key stakeholders, communities, businesses and other organisations, and citizens - particularly residents living in deprived parts of Oxford which especially stand to gain from an enhanced Urban Forest
9. Create opportunities to reap economic benefits from our urban forest

## 2. Oxford's Urban Forest Strategy

### 2.1. Vision, aims and objectives

Oxford's Urban Forest will support the city to address and adapt to climate change and habitat loss whilst conserving and enhancing its distinctive character. Regardless of income or postcode, all communities will be able to thrive in nature where they live, and feel pride in Oxford as a liveable city that is healthy, biodiverse, resilient and beautiful.

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The strategy aims to:

- maintain and enhance Oxford's Urban Forest to secure its biodiversity value and the ecosystem services which flow from it
- ensure our urban forest plays a role in the city addressing and adapting to climate change and other challenges
- create a healthier place for people in nature and provide a richer biodiversity in deprived parts of Oxford
- engage and involve all communities and citizens

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random point sampling and has produced estimates for each ward and for the city as a whole.

- **Treeconomics iTree ECO**

In 2017 Oxford City Council commissioned Treeconomics to undertake a further assessment of our urban forest using their i-Tree ECO methodology. This methodology includes undertaking a “bottom-up” survey of trees within the city using sampling plots. It provides information on the structure and composition of the urban forest, such as species, size and age, and allows the benefits of our urban forest to be quantified and valued. For example, how much carbon is stored or how much pollution is removed from our air. The full report is available to view on the City Council’s website.<sup>8</sup>

- **BlueSky Data from Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project**

This data, from 2015, uses aerial imaging and maps actual trees and their size rather than using sampling methods as i-Tree does. This data is likely to be more accurate. The BlueSky data is being used by the Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project.

i-Tree data showed that our total Canopy Cover is 22.3% (this includes shrubs as well as trees) and that our Tree Canopy Cover is 15.9%. The BlueSky data shows that our Tree Canopy Cover is likely to be slightly higher at 17.1%. This data is a more accurate measure of canopy cover and we will use this as the basis for analysis going

## 3. Oxford’s Urban Forest

Oxford’s urban forest is made up of trees and woody vegetation, such as shrubs and hedgerows. It provides Oxford’s residents and wildlife with a huge range of benefits. However, for many people the most critical role that our urban forest plays is enhancing their enjoyment of life and the sense of wonder that trees and green spaces instil.

In Oxford we have outstanding forests and woodlands in and around the City such as Brasenose Wood and Shotover. We have stunning iconic tree lined streets such as St. Giles and trees that help to form important wildlife corridors such as the Boundary Brook Wildlife Corridor. We also have valuable tree collections from around the world such as in Headington Hill Park, University Parks and the Botanic Gardens. We also have trees in our neighbourhoods that create a sense of place for our communities.

### 3.1. Canopy cover data

We know quite a lot about our urban forest and have a range of sources of canopy cover data.

- **Treeconomics i-Tree Canopy Cover Assessment**

In 2015 Oxford City Council commissioned Treeconomics to undertake a canopy cover assessment<sup>7</sup>. This was undertaken using the i-Tree Canopy software tool. This tool uses aerial imagery and

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forward. Although our data is now a little out of date, it still provides us with a very useful baseline.

Oxford's total canopy cover, including trees and shrubs (22.3%), is quite high compared to other cities. Oxford has a similar canopy cover to that of London (21.9%) but has significantly higher canopy cover than cities like Bristol (14%) and Glasgow (15%) but slightly lower than Birmingham (23%) and Exeter (23%).

The i-Tree data shows that we have 74 tree species but the most common are Ash, Willow and Poplar. We also know where our canopy cover is and which areas may need prioritising.

Figure 1 demonstrates what proportion of land has tree cover compared with the other types of land use in each ward. (Note this analysis was conducted against the former ward boundaries.) Areas with a larger proportion of industrial and commercial activities tend to have lower canopy cover. Figures 2 and 3 shows where our canopy cover is in Oxford. The darker an area, the higher the canopy cover. The low canopy cover in Jericho and Osney can be accounted for because Port Meadow, a significant area of open space with few trees, is located in this ward.

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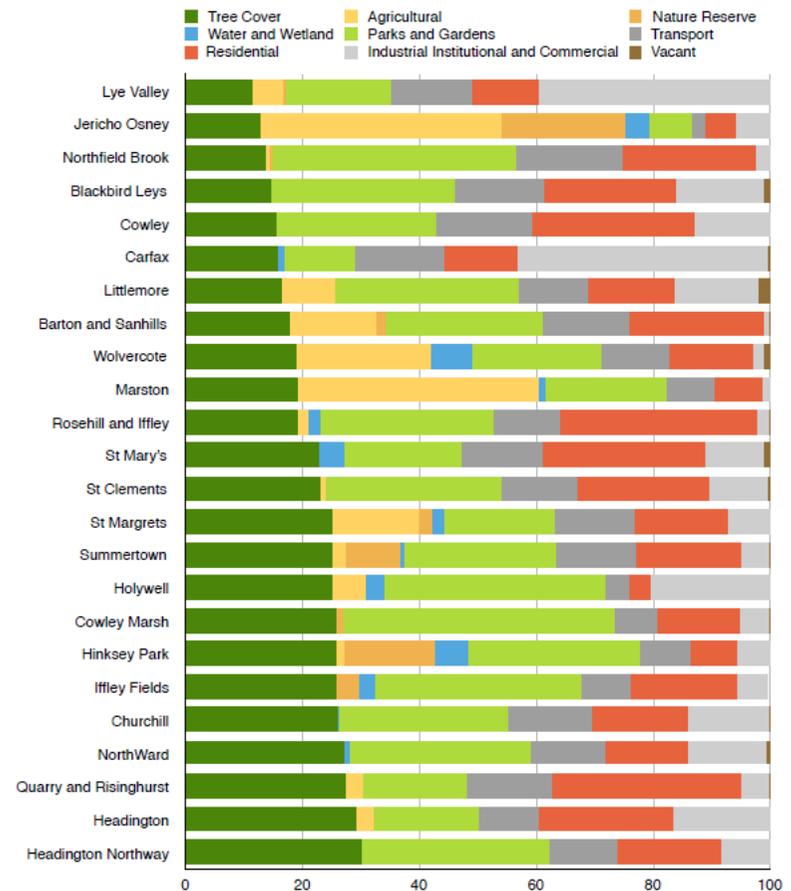
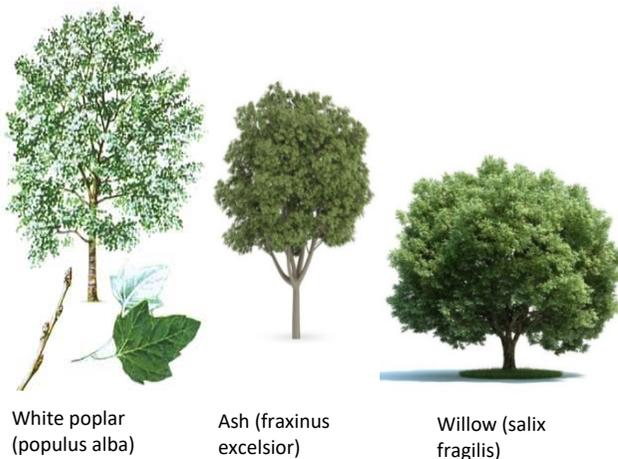
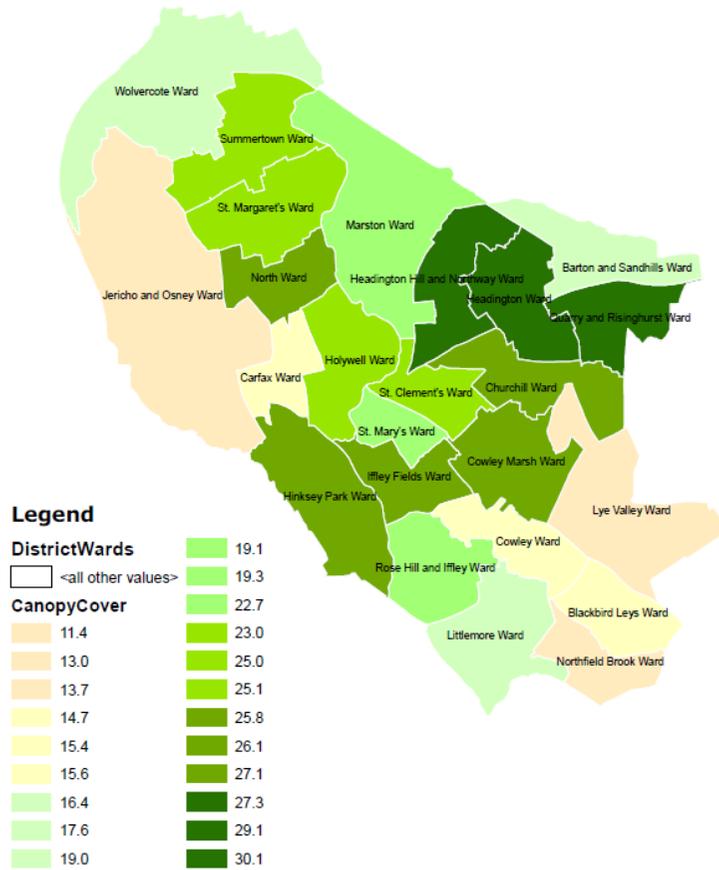


Figure 1 - % Land Use by Ward

Source: Treeconomics iTree Canopy Cover Assessment 2015

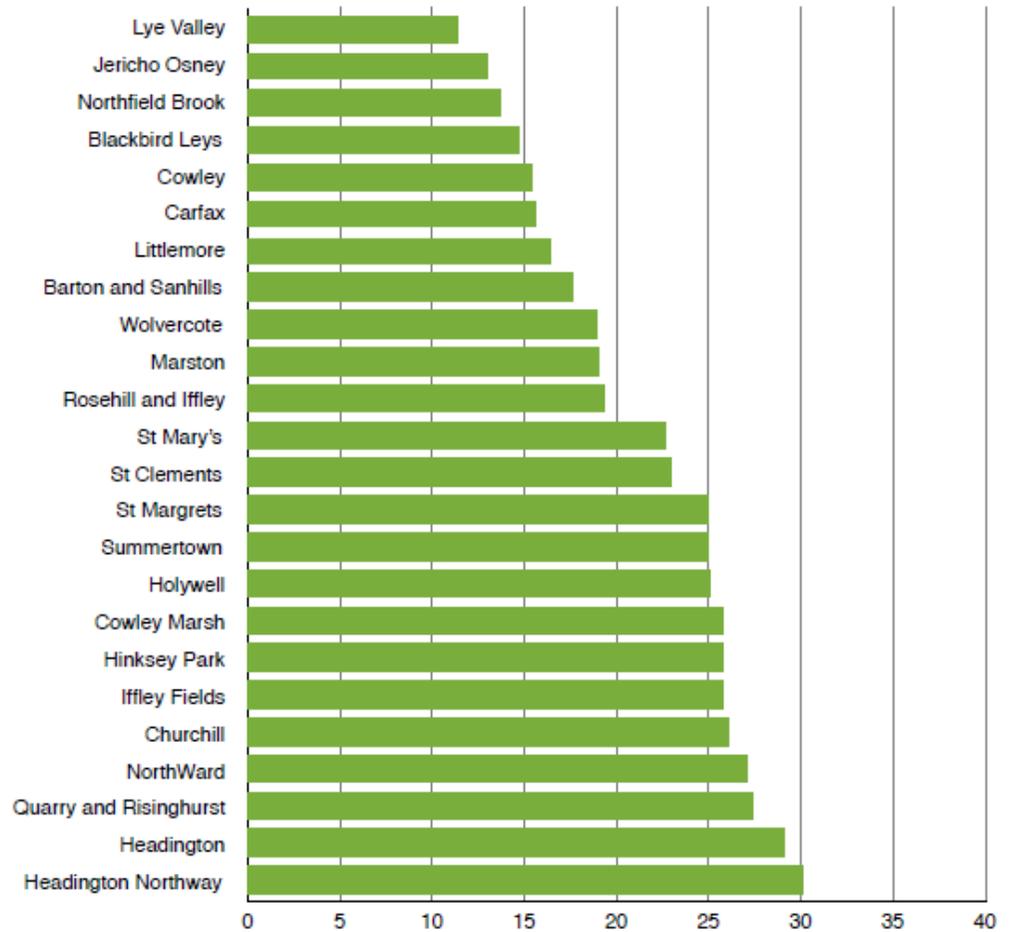
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**Figure 2 – Canopy Cover Percentages by Ward**

Source: Treeconomics iTree Canopy Cover Assessment 2015



**Figure 3 - Canopy Cover by Ward**

Source: Treeconomics iTree Canopy Cover Assessment 2015

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## 3.2. Treescapes

Where is our urban forest? Our Urban forest can be found all over our city from street trees, trees in graveyards, hedgerows, and even in private gardens. It is easy to think of our urban forest as just trees, but it is important to recognise the value of other woody vegetation too, particularly hedgerows. Hedgerows are a hugely undervalued resource that is currently at risk from being lost from our towns and cities. Hedgerows provide many of the same benefits as trees but are particularly important as wildlife corridors because they support a large number species such as pollinating insects and birds.

We have categorised the different areas where we find our urban forest into different “treescapes”. A treescape describes an area of trees or shrubs that forms a function in its environment. These are the main treescapes that are relevant to Oxford:

- Street trees
- Parks, graveyards and open spaces
- Institutional grounds and landscaping (schools, hospitals, universities, business parks etc.)
- Residential gardens
- Allotments and community orchards
- Vegetation along waterways, railway lines and roadside verges
- Woodland and nature reserves
- Farmland/agricultural land
- Hedgerows

Each treescape provides a variety of ecosystems services valuable to Oxford. The types of trees or vegetation required will differ depending on the function and conditions of each treescape.



*Headington Hill*

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Public Parks  
and Open  
Spaces

Residential  
Gardens

Allotments and  
Community  
Orchards

Linear Routes  
(along railways  
or waterways)

Woodlands and  
Nature Reserves

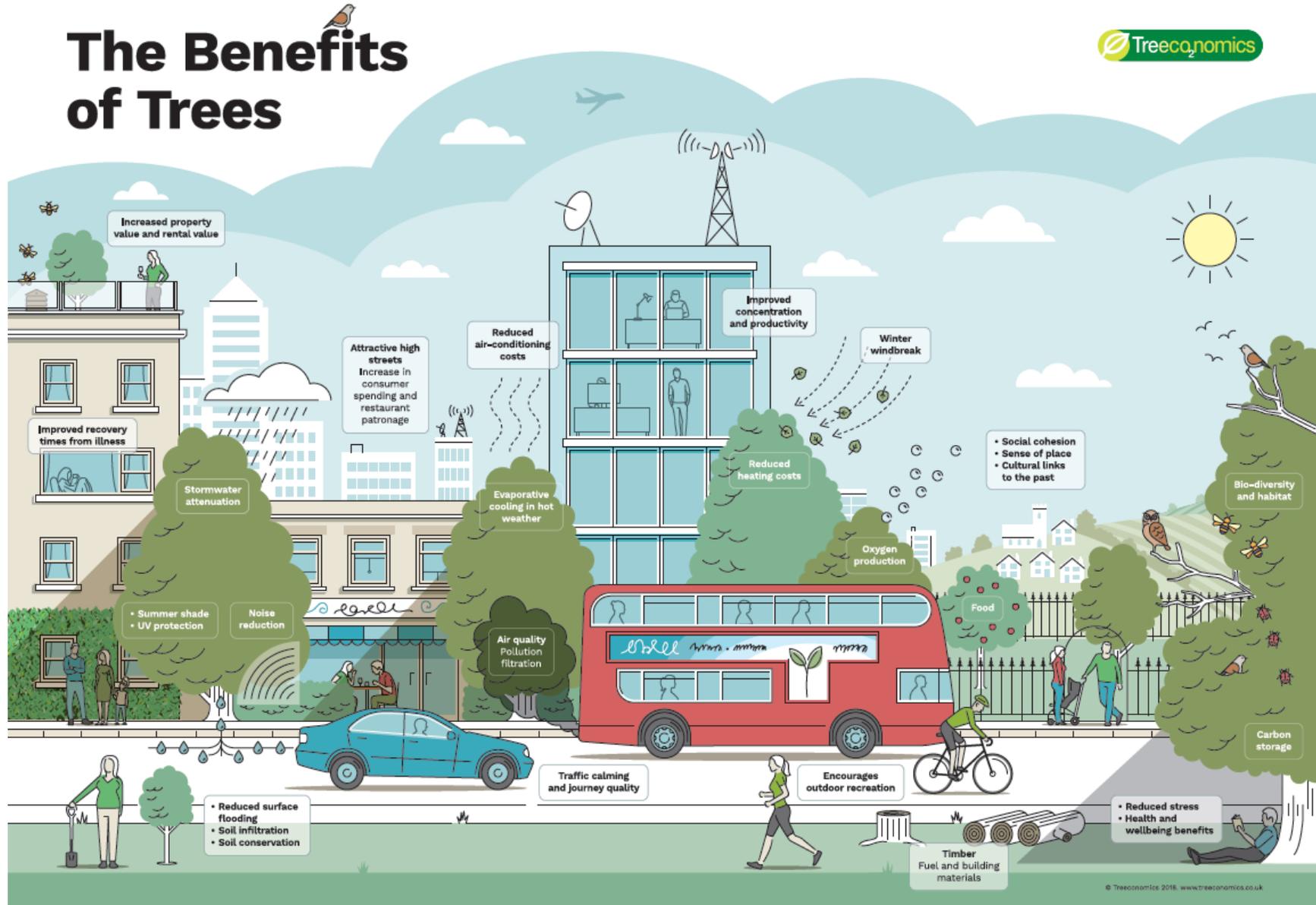
Graveyards

Street  
Trees

Institutional  
Grounds  
(Universities,  
schools, hospitals  
etc)

Source: Google Maps

## The Benefits of Trees



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## 4. Ecosystems Services and the Value of our Urban Forest

There are a huge number of benefits of urban forests and the wildlife within them. We call these ecosystems services. Our urban forest, and the trees, vegetation and wildlife that it is made up of, is beautiful and makes our city a great place to live. The main benefits Oxford's urban forest provides are outlined in this section.

### 4.1. Physical and mental health and wellbeing

A survey by the Mental Health Foundation in 2018 found that 74% of people have at some point felt stressed to the point of being overwhelmed or unable to cope. Poor environmental conditions such as noise and air pollution can have a detrimental impact on our mental health and can impair our ability to sleep or exercise efficiently. Studies have shown that nature can have significant positive impacts on mental and physical health. National Trust research<sup>9</sup> shows a return of £200 billion in physical and mental health benefits for £5.5 billion invested in urban green infrastructure. A recent survey by Natural England showed that around 9 in 10 people agreed that natural spaces are good for mental health and wellbeing.

Access to green space and recreation areas often gives us more opportunities for physical activity. Having good physical health often goes hand in hand with having better mental health. We also often use our green spaces for recreation, to socialise, to walk or to play sports. There are also many community groups and volunteer programmes which get people outdoors and managing our wild spaces. The connection to community and sense of achievement are

also good for our mental health. Our urban forest also provides habitat for wildlife, such as birds, bees and butterflies. Studies suggest that simply observing wildlife and animals can have a calming effect. Furthermore, art is often inspired by nature and the act of creating can be relaxing and good for mental wellbeing too. Ensuring that people have access to green spaces and the presence of trees in their communities is vital to our health and wellbeing. The expectation is that expanding our urban forest and enhancing our biodiversity and green spaces will lead to improvements in mental health. This is particularly important among people and communities that are more deprived.

### 4.2. Urban Heat Island effect

The Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect happens when temperatures in cities and towns are higher (particularly at night) compared to rural areas because of the heat retained by artificial surfaces (such as the tarmac and concrete in roads and buildings). Temperature differences have been measured up to ten degrees higher in UK cities. Why is this a problem? Excessive heat causes excess deaths. Public Health England reports that over the past four years over 3,400 people have died early during periods of extreme heat in England. We know that climate change is likely to result in significantly hotter and drier summers and the effects of this will be particularly felt in urban areas. The UHI effect also causes increased energy costs, greater carbon emissions, increased air pollution and transport network disruptions (road surface melting, rail tracks buckling etc.).

Alongside measures such as reducing energy consumption and increasing the reflective capacity of surfaces in cities, our urban

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forest plays an important role in reducing the UHI. Trees intercept solar heat, absorb carbon dioxide and actively cool the air through transpiration. Trees must have access to sufficient water in order to be healthy and transpire effectively. Combining street trees with sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) could be an effective way to achieve multiple benefits.

Understanding the Urban Heat Island effect in Oxford and the role the urban forest can play to reduce its impact is part of the objective that seeks to maximise benefits from our urban forest. Currently, we have no information specific to Oxford on this phenomenon.

## 4.3. Air quality and emissions

In Oxford, we know that 81% of our carbon emissions come from our buildings and the rest (16%) mainly from on-road transport<sup>10</sup>. Our urban forest plays a role in helping to reduce these emissions by directly absorbing carbon dioxide and indirectly by shading surfaces and reducing temperatures. In many institutional buildings and offices, that means a reduced need for air conditioning and the carbon emissions that result from it. Using trees and planting to make attractive walking and cycling routes encourages people to use more sustainable forms of transport as well as directly removing pollutants from the air caused by polluting road vehicles. Oxfordshire County Council's emerging transport strategy might assess such opportunities. This strategy seeks to support and promote such plans, developed in partnership with Oxford City Council, which can help us to achieve these benefits.

Air pollution can cause and exacerbate many health conditions. Exposure to poor air quality has been shown to be directly related to

diseases such as cancer, asthma, stroke, heart disease, obesity and dementia. To tackle this problem the whole of the city of Oxford has been declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

Oxford City Council has produced an ambitious Air Quality Action Plan<sup>11</sup> to significantly reduce emissions in Oxford. Oxford is the first UK local authority to set out a city-wide air pollution reduction target that goes beyond the legal targets set out by the UK Government.

Trees and vegetation, when correctly sited, can help reduce the impacts of certain types of pollution through dispersion and deposition. Defra acknowledges that vegetation can help to reduce air pollution in cities. However, they state this is primarily by affecting how these pollutants are dispersed and not by the removal of pollutants<sup>12</sup>. Defra's Air Quality Action Group (AQEG)<sup>13</sup> makes clear that trees can have air quality benefits but on their own they are not a solution to the air quality problems at a city scale.

**In Oxford our urban forest is estimated to filter 65 tonnes of airborne pollutants each year. This can be calculated as a saving of over £1.12 million in social damage costs.**

The urban forest can help with other forms of pollution too, such as noise pollution. Noise pollution can cause stress and mental health problems. It not only affects our behaviour but that of our wildlife too. Forest Research says that planting "noise buffers" can reduce noise by up to 50% if done correctly. Guidance on how to maximise using trees and vegetation as noise buffers will be promoted through this strategy.

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## 4.4. Community cohesion and engagement

Our green spaces provide a space for communities to socialise and to relax. However, our urban forest plays a role beyond simply providing a space to be, many people are actively involved in managing it too. Forest schools, volunteer conservation groups, community tree planting projects and citizen science projects are all examples of how communities can engage with our urban forest. Community orchards and the planting of fruit trees in public spaces also brings communities together for harvesting. Often the most successful engagement comes from communities having a sense of ownership of their environment. This strategy seeks to involve more people in such projects from all parts of the city.

## 4.5. Biodiversity

Biodiversity includes all living things, including all plants and animals and the complex ecosystems which they are part of. It is being recognised all over the globe that biodiversity loss as well as climate change pose a real and significant planetary emergency. The National Biodiversity Network State of Nature report 2019 reported that biodiversity in the UK had fallen by 60% since 1970. In 2010, the Lawton Report advocated for biodiversity efforts to focus on the principle of “more, bigger, better, joined”. The practical application of this principle is relevant now more than ever, and the development of Nature Recovery Networks and improving the management of existing wildlife habitats is underway locally and nationally.

Oxfordshire is currently developing one of these Nature Recovery Networks. The network identifies areas where conservation efforts

will have the most benefits for wildlife and also the ecosystem services that they provide. A network map is in development led by a partnership of local nature conservation organisations and local authorities.<sup>14</sup>

The Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project mapping demonstrates that there are opportunities in Oxford for the planting of trees and hedgerows that could significantly benefit the Nature Recovery Network by linking habitats.

Oxford is home to a number of legally protected habitats and species many of which make up our urban forest including: traditional orchards, hedgerows, wet woodland, hedgehogs, water voles and swifts. This strategy will help to direct actions that contribute to the protection of these important habitats and species.

### *Native vs non-native*

Species that are considered native are species that became established in the UK after the last ice age over 10,000 years ago. Native trees and other vegetation are important because the other plants and animals that colonised over that same time developed alongside them using them for their food and habitat. Non-native species refer to species that have been brought to the UK by people. Non-native species do not share the same long relationship with these other plant and animal species and do not support them so well. Native tree and plant species have a much higher biodiversity value than non-native ones because they support the life cycle stages of thousands of native invertebrates, bats and birds. This strategy promotes the use of native species wherever possible. Where non-native species are planted, they should be climate appropriate and their biodiversity value can be enhanced by

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selecting near-native varieties or those with edible fruits, seeds or nectar.

**Native species have a much higher biodiversity value than non-native species. Native species should be prioritised over non-natives wherever possible.**

## 4.6. Flood control and water quality

For many parts of Oxford flooding is a significant issue and with wetter winters predicted in the future, it is set to continue. Significant areas of Oxford including South and West Oxford, Port Meadow, and Lower Wolvercote are located within the floodplain of the River Thames and its tributaries. North eastern areas, towards Marston, are located in the Cherwell floodplain, Florence Park areas and parts of Cowley are at risk of flooding from the Boundary Brook, and other areas are at risk of flooding from smaller watercourses, such as the Littlemore Brook or Northmoor Brook. Most of Oxford's flooding is caused by river flooding, where the rivers burst their banks after periods of heavy rainfall. However, this can be compounded by surface water flooding, this occurs where hard surfaces cannot absorb heavy rainfall.

Oxford's urban forest can help with both flooding from rivers and surface water flooding. Canopy cover intercepts the rain and slows it down before it hits the ground. This allows the rain to reach, and infiltrate into the ground more slowly and also allowing some of the water to evaporate back into the atmosphere without it ever even reaching the ground.

**In Oxford, our urban forest intercepts around 80 thousand cubic metres of rain each year, which is approximately £120,000 saved in stormwater treatment costs.**

By reducing the volume of run-off entering the sewer system, the volume eventually reaching watercourses is also reduced, which can also help reduce flood risk from rivers and reduce raw sewage spillover. Designing urban trees so that they allow more water into the soil (such as removing the asphalt around tree pits) can also help reduce surface run-off.

For river flooding, trees can slow the flow of run-off from farmland into water courses and they provide structure to the soil. However, the benefits of tree planting to significantly reduce river flooding would need to be in the form of flood management upstream to help reduce run-off from farmland. An example is Wild Oxfordshire's Evenlode Catchment Project<sup>15</sup> where a natural flood management demonstration project is being undertaken, and the Environment Agency is looking into more projects of this nature in the Thames Valley.

In Oxford we encourage sustainable drainage systems (or SuDS) in our new developments. There is the potential to incorporate our urban forest into SuDS designs such as in rain gardens (spaces that allow water to infiltrate into the ground naturally) but also through more engineered solutions, such as incorporating SuDS into tree pit design. Not only is this a good use of space but the trees are more likely to reach their full potential.

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The Oxfordshire TreescapE Opportunity Mapping Project is mapping the potential for planting in our riparian<sup>16</sup> zones that could contribute to reducing soil erosion in flood events. A recent study by the Environment Agency<sup>17</sup> showed that wooded buffers scored highly for controlling diffuse pollution, carbon retention and flood management. The study highlighted that trees can reduce airborne spray drift of chemicals used in agriculture as well as tree roots helping to stabilise banks and filtering and trapping pollutants. Trees along rivers also increase shading which cools water temperature and contributes to reducing stress on aquatic life. Some of Oxford's riparian buffer zones overlap with the Nature Recovery Areas and scope for maximising benefits should be assessed.

## 4.7. Carbon storage

Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it as timber. Some of this carbon dioxide is rereleased from wood in the natural processes of decay by bacteria and fungi or by combustion for example, if used as a source of fuel. Putting timber into long-term uses such as construction or furniture keeps the carbon stored for longer. Studies are showing that older, larger trees store significantly more carbon compared to smaller trees. We need to ensure that our largest and oldest trees are healthy so that we maximise their benefits and that we replace with large tree species where appropriate.

**In Oxford our urban forest is estimated to remove approximately 2,500 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere each year. This service has an estimated**

**value of £619,000. Our urban forest stores over 76,000 tonnes of carbon worth over £18 million.**

Objectives in this strategy seek to ensure that our mature trees that are storing more carbon are properly taken care of. New planting will also seek to include species that we know store the most carbon.

## 4.8. Landscape character, heritage and culture

Oxford's landscape and its relationship to the built environment is iconic. Potential land-use changes, including tree planting, should consider impacts and seek opportunities to enhance Oxford's distinctive character. In 2002 the Countryside Agency in partnership with Oxford City Council undertook a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment. Although this study is now quite old, it is still relevant. This study outlines the role trees play in the landscapes and identifies some opportunities for enhancement through planting and management. Landscape Character Assessment specifically identifies where new tree planting should be focused to maintain or enhance the character. E.g. Church Cowley Core "...encouraging the planting of new large trees to ensure the long-term survival of the leafy character of this area." The principles for how to ensure that landscape character is conserved and enhanced through this urban forest strategy will be guided by this document.

In 2015 Oxford City Council, in partnership with Oxford Preservation Trust and Historic England undertook an Assessment of the Oxford View Cones<sup>18</sup>. Oxford is famous for its skyline and being able to walk in the surrounding countryside and look back at the city's "dreaming spires" is acknowledged to have significant inheritance value and should be managed for future generations. Within the assessments

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of each view cone are details on where tree planting can be used to enhance the quality of views and also where tree management is recommended to re-establish views. Trees play an important role in adding to the quality of views by providing an aesthetic green setting. E.g. the trees in North Hinksey and the valley beyond help to screen some of the 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial buildings such as Osney Mead and Oxpens. This strategy seeks to ensure that consideration is given to views as important heritage assets where new planting schemes are concerned.

## *Notable trees*

There are so many trees or groups of trees in Oxford that have stories that surround them. Many of them feature in literature from Tolkien to Pullman and Matthew Arnold. There was an outpouring of emotion for the pink blossomed Almond tree outside the University Church of St Mary the Virgin on the High Street when it was felled in 2019 due to safety reasons. Evidence suggests that the tree suffered in the heatwave of summer 2018 and was adversely impacted by the heavy traffic flows of large vehicles passing in close proximity. Replacement trees have since been planted.

The great Yew Tree in Iffley Churchyard is thought to be one of the oldest trees in Oxfordshire. It is at least as old as the church, built in 1160, but is likely to be older and evidence that it may have been a pre-Christian site of worship. The tree may also have been the inspiration for Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.

Oxford has a wealth of notable trees. Many of these trees may not be notable in the technical sense but are notable to the people who live by them and look out at them every day.

This strategy gives us an opportunity to celebrate these trees and to identify actions that will help us to plan for their replacement. Tree Protection Orders only require replacement trees to be planted after the loss of the original tree. If we wait for trees to die before we replace them, then we will have a significant hole where the tree once stood. However, if we plan ahead, we can plant “understudy” trees otherwise known as “succession” tree planting. These trees will be growing and preparing to replace the original tree when it dies. Oxford City Council looks to secure succession tree planting when approving landscape plans that are required by planning conditions. However, it is important to bear in mind that some trees occupy the perfect location and their loss can only be mitigated by planting in



Almond Tree on the High Street Credit: Tejvan Pettinger

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exactly the same place. The City Council's planning conditions will only cover a small portion of such trees. This strategy seeks to encourage landowners and managers and communities to identify trees that are important to them and to assess opportunities for planting understory trees where appropriate.

There are many other ways we can celebrate and raise awareness of our notable trees such as "Green Plaque" schemes, like the blue plaque scheme but for trees, tree walking trails or tree story competitions.

## 4.9. Economic benefits and tourism

Economic benefits of urban forest include: the production of by-products (such as timber, mulch and fruit), tourism, increased property values, increased inward investment (high quality landscaping attracts business) and trees can be valued as assets, giving them a financial worth. Our urban forest is also important for our pollinators that are essential to our agriculture, allotments and city farms<sup>19</sup>. Oxford is regarded as the tourism gateway to the rest of Oxfordshire. Approximately 7 million people visit each year and they contribute over £750 million worth of income for Oxford's local businesses. The setting of the city and the university with its parks and grounds and its setting within the landscape feature heavily on making it a special place to visit.

The economic benefits from wood by-products are less significant in an urban forest like Oxford due to the lack of space for any sizeable production. Furthermore, orchards are unlikely to be large enough to justify the equipment costs for a commercial operation. There is potential for community orchards and opportunities to develop these should be encouraged. Our urban forest also directly provides

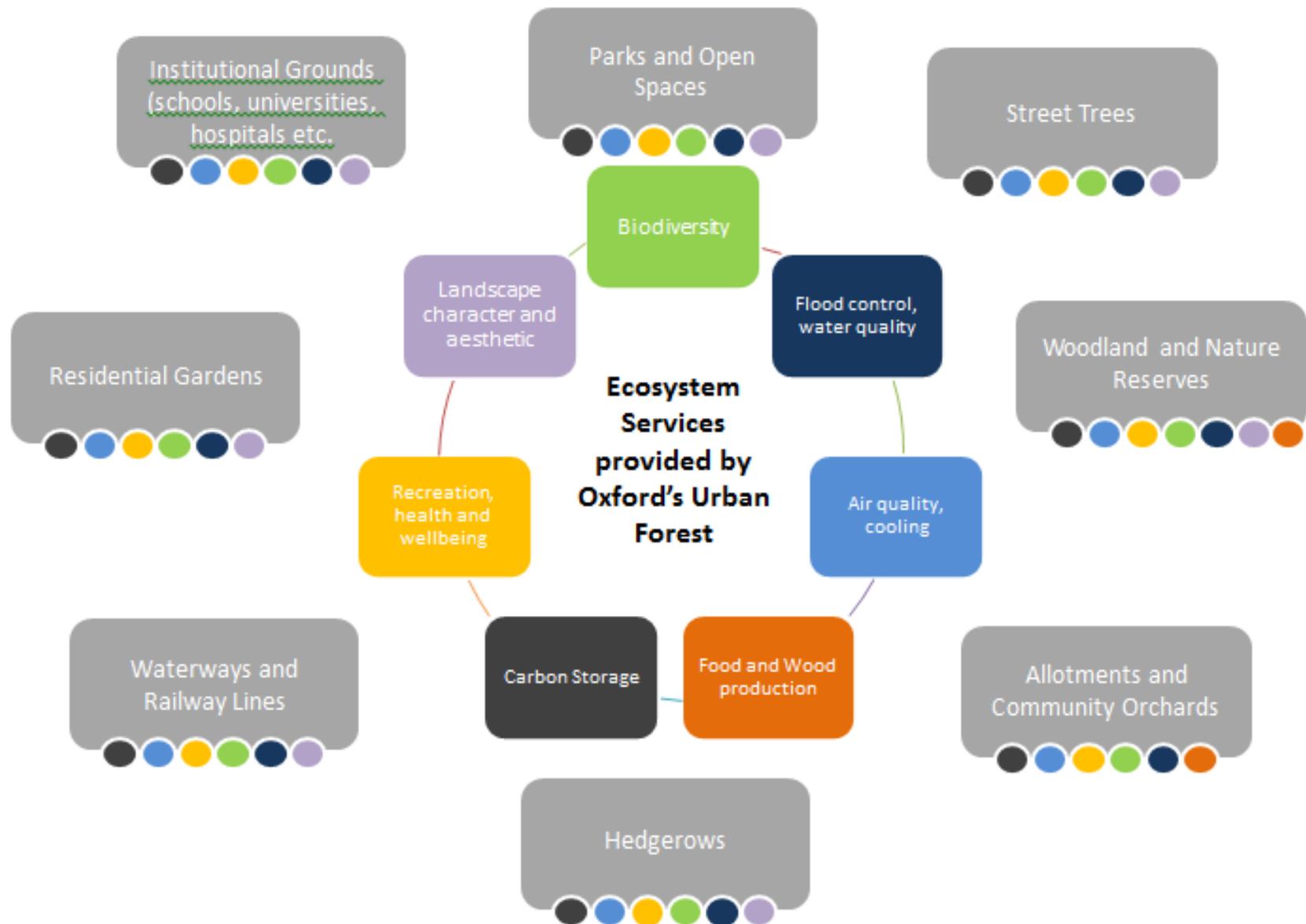
employment such as through tree surgeons and grounds maintenance companies. Research by the Woodland Trust has shown that woodland management can be significantly cheaper to maintain than some types of grassland<sup>20</sup>. Landowners and managers could benefit economically from shifting their land-use to woodland.

Other economic benefits of the urban forest relate to reduced building energy costs from tree shading and the contribution that trees make to raising property values and investment potential. Studies have shown that people actually spend more if they are shopping in areas with more trees<sup>21</sup>. The importance of good quality place making and design for our economy as well as quality of life is demonstrated. Developers, decision makers and other key stakeholders are encouraged to think about how they can generate the most value from our urban forest.

There are so many benefits of our urban forest but it is also important to acknowledge that trees don't always come without their problems. Some evidence shows that street trees can trap pollutants in certain circumstances and many people suffer health issues from pollen. Such negative impacts give more weight to the need for using the right tree, right place principle where negative impacts can be minimised.

**Whilst it is useful to be able to quantify the benefits that we derive from our urban forest we must recognise that trees and the wildlife they support have an intrinsic value irrespective of their benefits to people.**

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## 5. What can we learn from our data?

The Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project uses an ecosystems services approach to determining which trees are suitable for specific locations and has identified:

- A clear correlation between low canopy cover in the southern part of the city and areas of deprivation.
- Scope for prioritising the Nature Recovery Network (NRN) in expanding our urban forest.

Figure 4 shows our canopy cover in Oxford. Figure 5 shows the land use by habitat most relevant to trees and where there may be opportunities for more trees. The highest percentage land use is buildings. 19% of land area is gardens (private residential gardens), which presents an interesting opportunity for new trees. There may be other opportunities in farmed land (13%), roadsides and verges (13%), and amenity grassland (13%).

### 5.1. Deprivation

Oxford has high levels of inequality. According to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>22</sup>, 9 of Oxford's 83 neighbourhood areas were among the 20% most deprived areas in England. These areas are located in The Leys, Rose Hill, Littlemore, Carfax and Barton. These areas experience higher levels of low skilled workers, households on low incomes and crime rates. There are also areas where deprivation for children is in the 10% most deprived nationally. These figures also show that 12 neighbourhood areas in North Oxford, Marston,

Headington, Quarry and Risinghurst and Jericho and Wolvercote are among the top 10% least deprived in the country. We know that poverty increases the risk of poor mental health<sup>23</sup>. Figures 6, 7 and 8 demonstrate that there is a general trend for lower canopy cover in more deprived areas of the city.

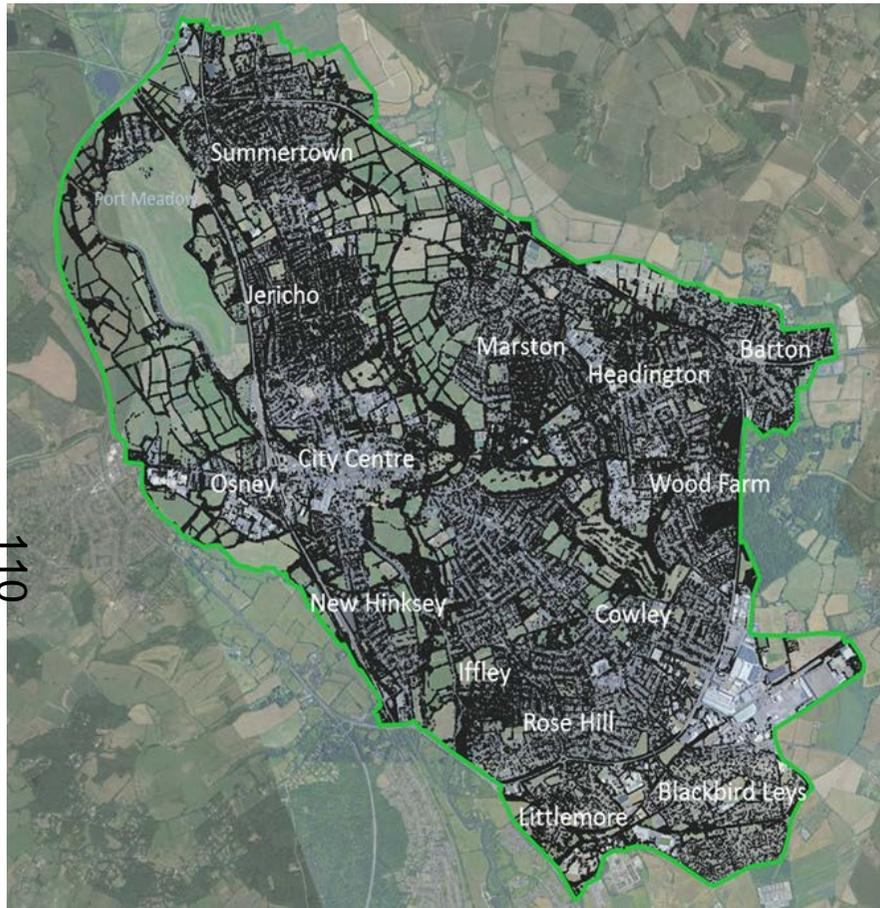
The Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project has identified that within the areas of deprivation there is potential to increase:

- trees in private and communal gardens
- street trees
- trees in public parks and open spaces

The expectation is that increasing canopy cover will contribute to improving environmental quality, community cohesion and physical and mental health of residents in these areas that in turn can contribute to reducing deprivation.

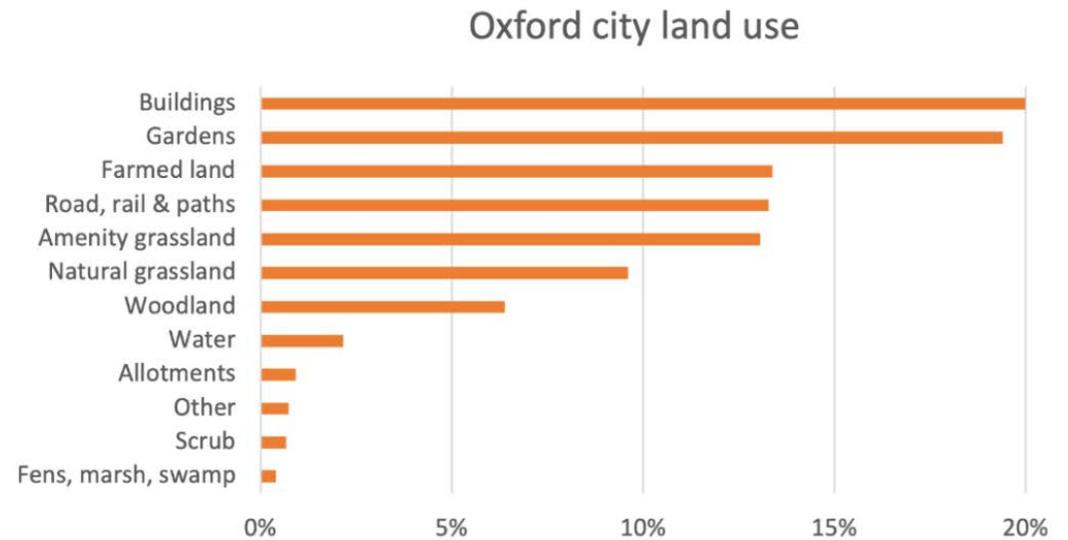
Areas of deprivation in Oxford have been identified using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). IMDs create a measure to show the relative deprivation between areas<sup>24</sup>. Multiple components are weighted to combine into a single score of deprivation. The components used are: income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services and living environment.

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**Figure 4 Canopy Cover in Oxford**

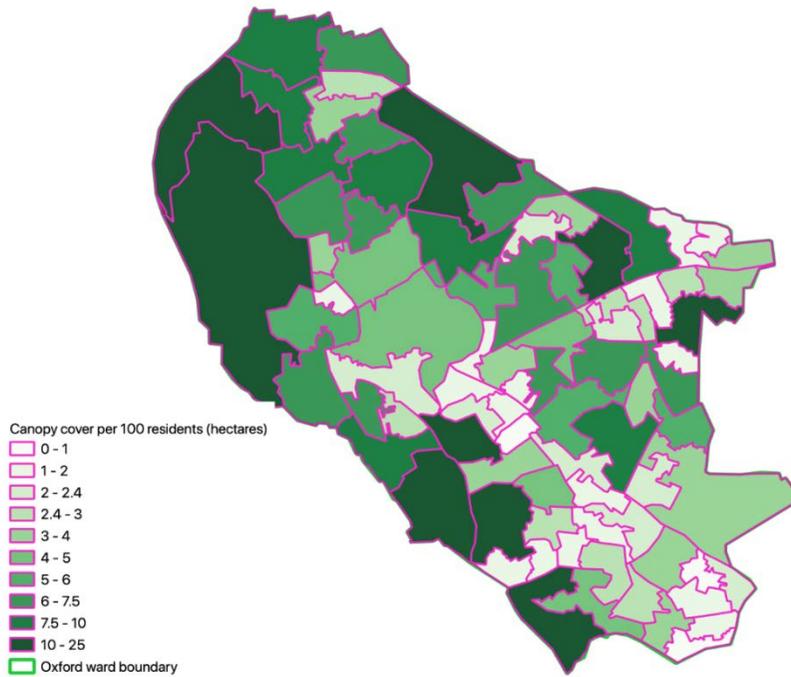
Source: Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project (BlueSky data)



**Figure 5 % Land Use in Oxford**

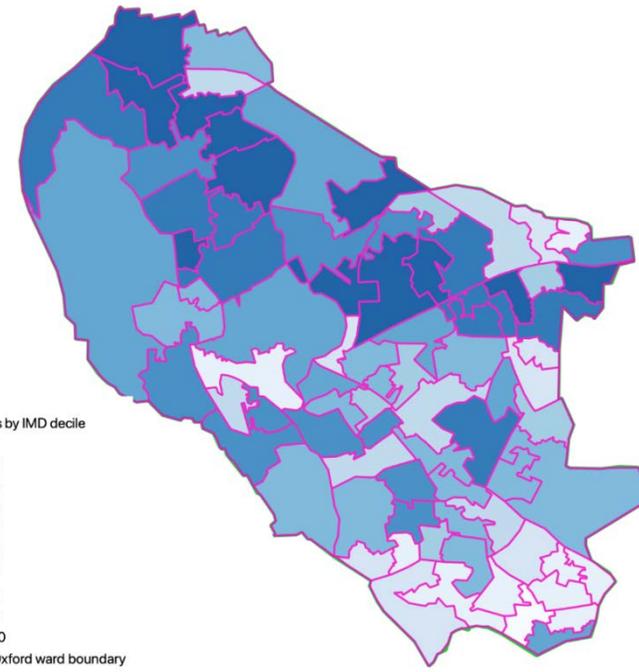
Source: Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project (BlueSky data)

## Correlation between Low Canopy Cover and Index of Multiple Deprivation



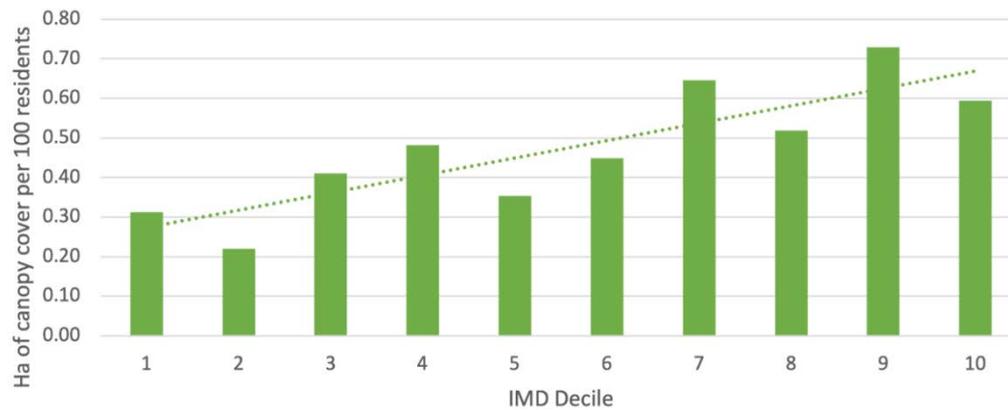
**Figure 6 Canopy Cover per 100 Residents (ha)**

Source: Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project (BlueSky data)



**Figure 7 - Index of Multiple Deprivation by LSOA\* (deciles - 1 most deprived to 10 least deprived)**

Source: Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project (BlueSky data)



**Figure 8 - Canopy Cover (ha) per 100 residents by Index of Multiple Deprivation decile (with trend line)**

Source: Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project (BlueSky data)

\*Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales.

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## 5.2. Nature Recovery Network (NRN)

The Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Network (NRN) identifies areas where conservation efforts will have the most benefits for wildlife and the ecosystem services that they provide.

Oxford has an important role in the Nature Recovery Network and linking to the wider county as it lies at the confluence of the Thames and Cherwell (see figure 10).

There are opportunities to increase canopy cover in areas such as Jericho and Osney, Wolvercote and Marston where canopy cover is lower and also corresponds to the Nature Recovery Network. However, it is important to note that the low canopy cover in Jericho and Osney Ward is significantly affected by the presence of Port Meadow. Port Meadow is one of the largest open spaces in the north of the city. The River Thames flows through it and the flood plains provide important habitat for many species of flora and fauna some of which are rare. Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common are a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for this reason. Tree planting is unlikely to be appropriate in much of this area.

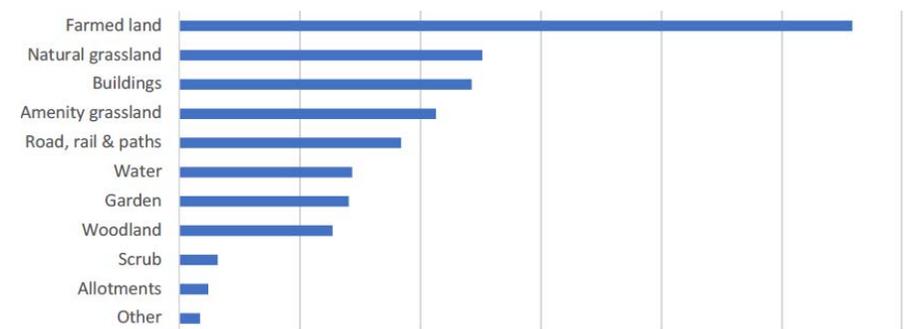
A principle objective of this strategy is to strengthen the Nature Recovery Network. The Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project data shows us that the Nature Recovery Network covers 37% of Oxford's area.

Figure 9 shows the land uses within the Nature Recovery Network and identifies that farmed land presents a potential opportunity for increasing our canopy cover. There is not a great deal of overlap

between our Nature Recovery Network and the areas of deprivation (as shown below Fig 11). 91% of the Nature Recovery network falls within the least deprived parts of the city. A focus on the NRN is unlikely to address deprivation significantly and so these two areas of priority will need to be developed independently of each other. However, where there are overlaps, then these areas should be prioritised.

Within the Nature Recovery Network the focus should be on identifying opportunities for:

- new woodland
- hedgerows
- joining up habitats



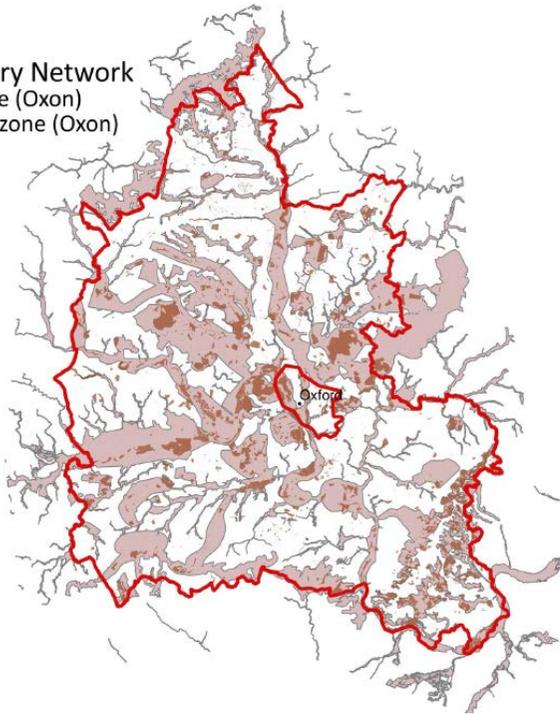
**Figure 9 - Land Use within the Nature Recovery Network (ha)**

Source: Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project (BlueSky data)

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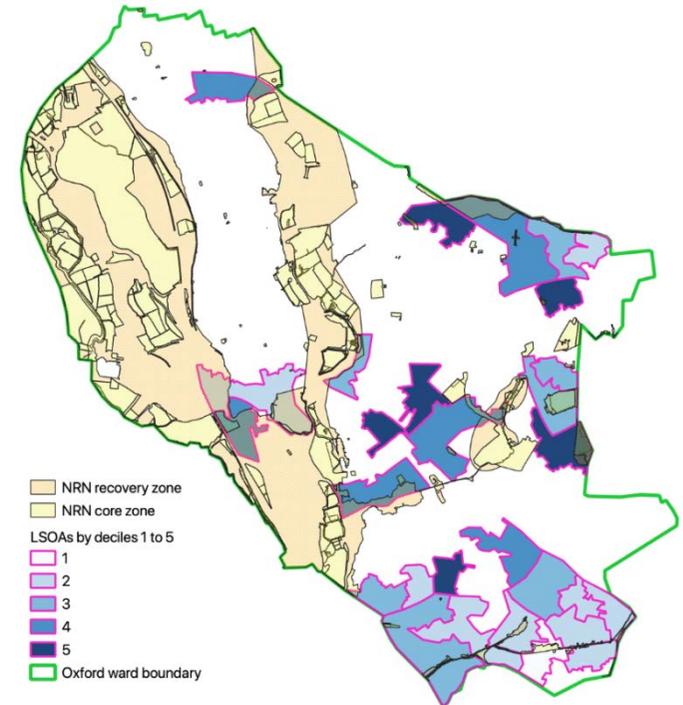
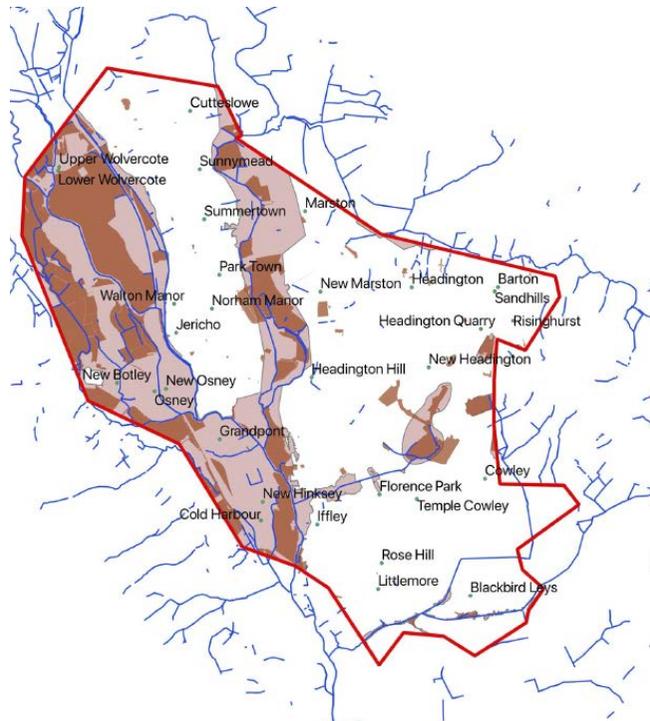
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Nature Recovery Network  
 NRN\_CoreZone (Oxon)  
 NRN recovery zone (Oxon)



**Figure 10 - Nature Recovery Network in Oxfordshire and Oxford**

Source: Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project



**Figure 11 - Nature Recovery Network and Index of Multiple Deprivation (most deprived deciles 1 to 5)**

Source: Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project (BlueSky data)

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## 6. Threats to Oxford's Urban Forest

### 6.1. Climate change

Climate change is projected to bring us hotter drier summers, and very wet winters. We are likely to experience extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and flooding. The environmental conditions that our urban forest depends on will change and could make it more susceptible to decline. New pests and diseases are likely to emerge and some tree species may not adapt as well to new environmental conditions.

### 6.2. Lack of diversity and biosecurity

A lack of diversity in the urban forest can make it vulnerable to disease or the impacts of climate change. A healthy ecosystem will have a good range of age, species and spatial diversity. The iTree Eco Report recorded 74 different tree species in Oxford. This represents reasonable species diversity. However, the largest percentage is Ash at 11%. Ash is particularly vulnerable to disease. The loss of 11% of our tree stock would be significant. Fragmentation of habitats can weaken diversity. Maintaining and developing networks of green spaces is crucial to healthy populations and healthy trees are more resilient to pests and disease.

Biosecurity is important for preventing pests and diseases from establishing and spreading. Biosecurity refers to a set of precautions that prevent the introduction and spread of diseases and pests such as insects, bacteria or fungi. Our industry professionals, land managers and land owners all play an important role in helping to maintain our biosecurity.

### Ash Dieback

The Woodland Trust warns that ash dieback will kill over 80% of ash trees across the UK. It is caused by a fungus which penetrates the tree, blocks its water transport systems which eventually leads to death. The impact of such a huge loss of trees will have a significant impact on biodiversity and our landscapes. The practical costs of managing the disease and of losing the ecosystems services they provide will be huge. Some ash trees may be tolerant to ash dieback so some population recovery may be possible over a long period of time.

### 6.3. Ageing or declining tree population

Trees can decline for a number of reasons such as age, unfavourable growing conditions, pest or disease problems or environmental stresses. Stressed trees are more vulnerable to pests and disease and the ecosystems service benefits they provide will not be being realised to their full potential.

### 6.4. Increase in urban development or inappropriate development

Addressing the need for housing is a key priority for Oxford City Council. The Local Plan includes policies on protecting and enhancing Green Infrastructure and how to compensate and mitigate for loss of trees through new development. Inappropriate tree-planting, lack of space for nature and lack of appropriate maintenance are also significant threats to our urban forest.

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## **Tree Felling and Replacement**

The felling of trees is a concern to many people. Oxford City Council has a Tree Management Policy that sets out that a tree will only be felled if it is identified as dead, dying, diseased, dangerous (and is posing an unacceptable risk to public safety) or damaging property (e.g. subsidence when confirmed by technical evidence). This policy also specifies that any felled tree will be replaced, although it is not always possible or prudent to replace in exactly the same location. Other landowners and managers in Oxford will be encouraged to adopt Tree Management Policies to protect trees from unnecessary felling and to always replace them.

## 7. Right Tree, Right Place

### Deciding where and how to develop our urban forest – right tree, right place

Our urban forest is not just about our trees. Our urban forest includes our trees but also our wild places, cultural landscapes and providing ecosystem services such as carbon storage. Tree planting may not always be the most appropriate solution. This section shows us where planting trees is and isn't appropriate in Oxford.

Creating the conditions for natural regeneration is a great low carbon way of helping new woodlands establish. So consider this as an option first, before deciding to plant trees.

#### Is the site suitable for natural regeneration?

Sites suitable for natural regeneration will be protected from deer and rabbits, have limited ground or soil disturbance, be close to a seed source and have a history of woodland or tree/scrub cover.



Check out Flora Locale's technical advisory note: "Creating Woodlands Naturally" [www.floralocale.org](http://www.floralocale.org)



Tree planting may be the preferred option if the setting is parkland, a cultural landscape or being used as a community or partner engagement tool.

#### What type of site is it?

The following page shows different habitat types and geographical features in Oxford. If tree or vegetation planting is the preferred option then it is important to understand if the proposed site is appropriate for tree planting. Particular habitats such as wetlands and limestone grassland are not suitable for tree planting. It's a good idea to always seek advice before planting anywhere to make sure you get the most out of it.

#### GENERAL ADVICE

Reduced pesticide, sympathetic management and structural complexity will all benefit a whole range of wildlife, from plants to invertebrates, pollinators, mammals and bats and birds. Always try to plant native tree species (except in orchards) and try to see what is growing naturally in hedges, field corners and unmanaged places for the most suitable, locally adapted species.

#### Species

Native species have a much higher biodiversity value than non-native species. Native species should be prioritised over non-natives wherever possible.

Native species suitable for Oxford include: field maple, oak, blackthorn, small leaved lime, hornbeam, birch, hazel, holly, hawthorn, wild cherry, crab apple, various willows, black poplar.

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## Residential Gardens

Residential gardens make up a significant part of green infrastructure in urban areas. They can provide important habitats and corridors for wildlife, can reduce surface water runoff and reduce the energy demand of buildings. However, domestic gardens can also introduce problems, such as the introduction of invasive or non-native plant species or the misuse of fertilizers or pesticides. Choose correct size and species such as flowering and fruiting species. Apples, pears, cherries, hawthorn, blackthorn and bramble are all good for encouraging wildlife into the garden and tend to be small. Please also consider neighbours..

## Right Tree, Right Place

### Institutional Grounds and Landscaping (schools, hospitals, business parks etc)

There are potentially lots of opportunities for greening up sites. Check to see what habitat types you have on your grounds before planting. Choose appropriate species, whilst native species are normally preferable, there may be instances where exotics are appropriate for example if there is a story, history or to continue a designed planting scheme.

**Always ensure you have the landowners permission**

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Don't Plant</b>                  |
| <b>Seek Advice</b>                  |
| <b>Go Ahead but Follow Guidance</b> |

### Agricultural Land

Agricultural land is often suitable for tree planting due to the limited wildlife interest/value. It is important to be considerate of hedges and in-field trees though. Permanent pasture is better but a mix of grass, scrub and trees will likely be best for nature. Find out if the site has a tree-past, such as orchards. Re-planting with appropriate fruit trees could be a good decision.

**Street Trees**  
Street trees make our streets beautiful and characterful. They make our neighbourhoods more desirable places to live, not just for people but for wildlife too! They provide significant environmental and cultural benefits to our streetscapes. However, streets are an unnatural environment for trees and therefore need specific protection and management. We need to make sure we all see them as a public asset and value them accordingly. Street trees should follow TDAG Trees in hard landscapes guide and tree pits that also contribute to Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems should be considered.

### Allotments and Orchards

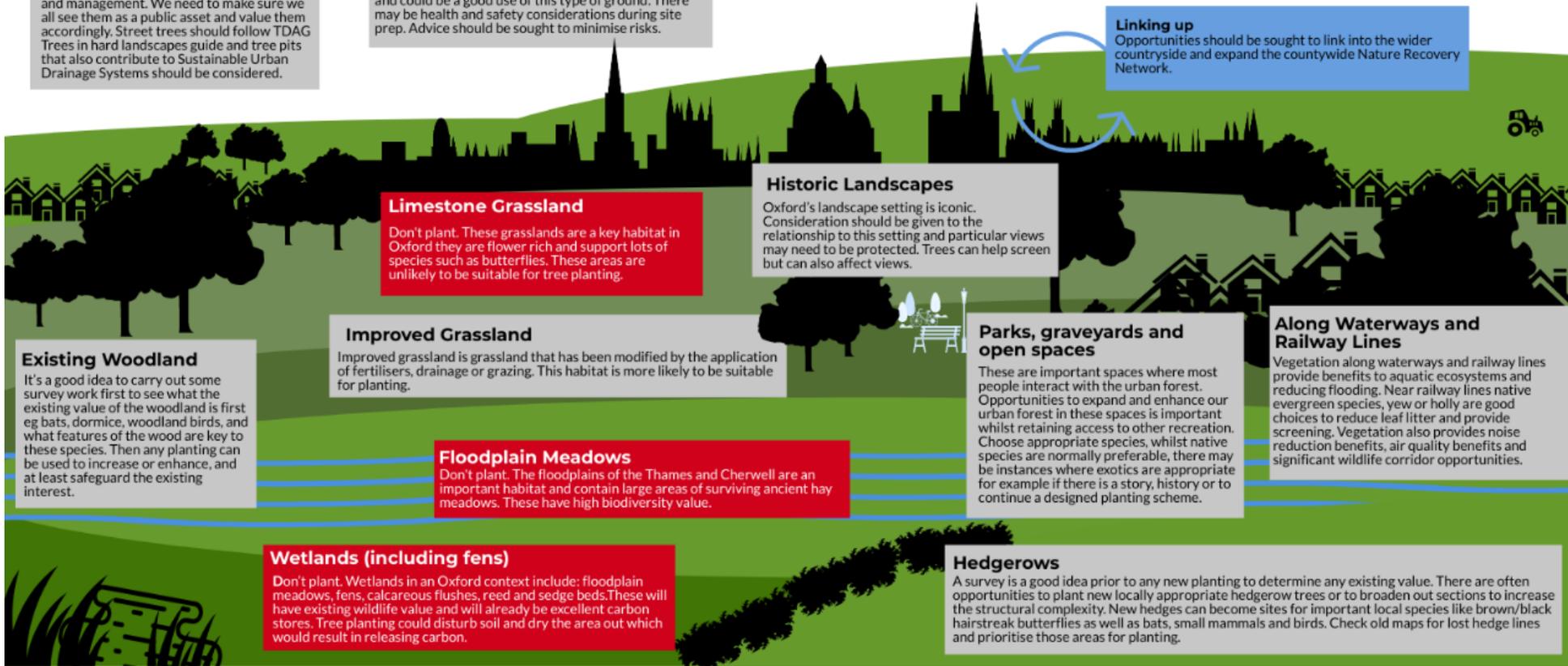
Orchards are recognised as a priority habitat. Encourages healthy eating, reducing food miles, recreation, health and wellbeing. Potential for small fruit trees on allotments but shade issues need to be considered.

**Former Landfill**  
There are a number of former landfill sites in Oxford. Some of these sites may be suitable for tree planting and could be a good use of this type of ground. There may be health and safety considerations during site prep. Advice should be sought to minimise risks.

**Nature Reserves**  
Most legally protected nature reserves/ local wildlife sites/Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) will have a management plan or strategy guiding their progress, so tree planting may or not be compatible, check with the site manager/owner

**Linking up**  
Opportunities should be sought to link into the wider countryside and expand the countywide Nature Recovery Network.

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**Existing Woodland**  
It's a good idea to carry out some survey work first to see what the existing value of the woodland is first eg bats, dormice, woodland birds, and what features of the wood are key to these species. Then any planting can be used to increase or enhance, and at least safeguard the existing interest.

**Improved Grassland**  
Improved grassland is grassland that has been modified by the application of fertilisers, drainage or grazing. This habitat is more likely to be suitable for planting.

**Floodplain Meadows**  
Don't plant. The floodplains of the Thames and Cherwell are an important habitat and contain large areas of surviving ancient hay meadows. These have high biodiversity value.

**Wetlands (including fens)**  
Don't plant. Wetlands in an Oxford context include: floodplain meadows, fens, calcareous flushes, reed and sedge beds. These will have existing wildlife value and will already be excellent carbon stores. Tree planting could disturb soil and dry the area out which would result in releasing carbon.

**Limestone Grassland**  
Don't plant. These grasslands are a key habitat in Oxford they are flower rich and support lots of species such as butterflies. These areas are unlikely to be suitable for tree planting.

**Historic Landscapes**  
Oxford's landscape setting is iconic. Consideration should be given to the relationship to this setting and particular views may need to be protected. Trees can help screen but can also affect views.

**Parks, graveyards and open spaces**  
These are important spaces where most people interact with the urban forest. Opportunities to expand and enhance our urban forest in these spaces is important whilst retaining access to other recreation. Choose appropriate species, whilst native species are normally preferable, there may be instances where exotics are appropriate for example if there is a story, history or to continue a designed planting scheme.

**Along Waterways and Railway Lines**  
Vegetation along waterways and railway lines provide benefits to aquatic ecosystems and reducing flooding. Near railway lines native evergreen species, yew or holly are good choices to reduce leaf litter and provide screening. Vegetation also provides noise reduction benefits, air quality benefits and significant wildlife corridor opportunities.

**Hedgerows**  
A survey is a good idea prior to any new planting to determine any existing value. There are often opportunities to plant new locally appropriate hedgerow trees or to broaden out sections to increase the structural complexity. New hedges can become sites for important local species like brown/black hairstreak butterflies as well as bats, small mammals and birds. Check old maps for lost hedge lines and prioritise those areas for planting.

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## 8. Objectives and Principles for Planting

### Protect, Improve and Manage

#### Objective 1 – Manage our existing tree and vegetation resource according to best practice and improve vegetation health

- Existing trees are just as important as planting new.
- Benefits are not maximised from unhealthy trees.
- Healthy trees are more resilient to disease and pests.
- Healthy trees are more resilient to the effects of climate change.
- Healthy trees are safer.
- Larger, older trees are important carbon stores.
- Larger, older trees sustain and enhance urban biodiversity when maintained in good ecological condition.
- Natural regeneration should be the preferred approach where land is suitable and available especially when adjacent to diverse high-quality native woodland.
- Oxford has a wealth of historic, notable trees that have a heritage and cultural value.
- Larger, older trees provide more canopy cover.
- Trees with sufficient space for their roots are more resilient.
- Larger, older trees provide greater benefits from thermal cooling.
- Trees should only be felled if absolutely necessary. For example, if they are dead, dying, diseased, dangerous (and is posing an unacceptable risk to public safety) or damaging

property (e.g. subsidence when confirmed by technical evidence).

- Felled trees should always be replaced

Oxford City Council will lead by example in the management of our parks, street trees and housing stock. We will promote best practice guidance and a city wide approach.

#### What does this mean for you?

##### Individuals

- Interact with our urban forest, get involved in helping to manage and monitor it either at home or in your community.
- Protect and respect the trees and nature we already have.
- Individuals will be empowered with knowledge and support to effectively manage and monitor trees in private green spaces to bring them into better ecological condition.

##### Landowners and land managers

- We want a balanced approach to tree risk management to be taken across the city following best practice guidance.
- We want to encourage our landowners and land managers to take an asset management approach to their trees.
- Land managers/owners will be empowered with knowledge and support to effectively manage and monitor trees in private green spaces to bring them into better ecological condition.

#### Objective 2 - Improve biosecurity and manage ash dieback and other pests and diseases according to best practice

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## Expand, Enhance and Develop

### Objective 3 - Increase urban forest canopy cover using the right tree, right place principle

- Canopy cover increases with new planting and good management of existing trees.
- Long-term success of planting schemes depend on the right species being planted in the right places.
- To be successful tree planting schemes must plan beyond the planting stage and include measures to protect and nurture young trees for up to a minimum of 5 years.
- Creating the right conditions for natural regeneration, in the appropriate locations, is as important as new tree planting.
- Newly planted forests can enhance carbon sequestration capacity (by trees and in soils).
- To be successful, new planting schemes must involve local communities and stakeholders in the planning, planting and care of the tree to engender a sense of “ownership”.
- Community engagement and citizen science projects will be key to monitoring our progress

Oxford City Council will lead by example and will undertake actions to support this objective including developing a tree planting plan to assess land within the Council’s control for tree planting and natural regeneration potential. This tree planting plan can be made available to other landowners and manager to be used as a model to expand their own tree resource. The council will provide guidance on appropriate species, sites and maintenance for the wider community. The council will implement planning policy in the best

- Oxford risks losing 11% of its urban forest due to Ash dieback.
- Managing ash dieback properly and according to best practice – including identifying resistant individuals and avoiding preventative felling - can help reduce the spread of the disease.
- Healthy ash trees are more resistant to ash dieback.
- Influencing our supply chains can improve local and national biosecurity.
- Protecting our existing urban forest helps to retain and increase our canopy cover.

Oxford City Council will lead by example in the management of our parks, street trees and housing stock. We will promote best practice guidance and a city wide approach.

#### What does this mean for you?

##### Individuals

- Be aware of how you can avoid spreading pests and diseases when you travel to and from wooded areas.
- Learn to spot common diseases in trees and report them.

##### Landowners, land managers and businesses

- Become Plant Healthy certified to protect local and national biosecurity.
- Be part of a joined up approach to managing Ash dieback in Oxford.
- Be prepared when new threats become apparent and work together to ensure a joined up response.

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possible way to secure canopy cover gain through the planning system. The Council will monitor progress towards expanding and enhancing our urban forest and will involve key partners, stakeholders and encourage citizen science projects to help with monitoring and management.

## What does this mean for you?

### Individuals

- If appropriate, plant a tree or a hedgerow in your garden or encourage your employer to plant trees
- Get involved in a community tree planting project, or initiate one.

### Landowners, land managers and businesses

- Assess your land for tree planting or natural regeneration potential in line with guidance.
- Support a community tree planting scheme either via offering up land or financial support for set up, maintenance and ongoing monitoring.

## **Objective 4 – Increase resilience through greater urban forest diversity**

- Increased species diversity leads to increased resilience to climate change.
- Greater diversity provides resilience against pests and diseases.
- Diversity of age and size as well as species is also important for a healthy urban forest.

- Large trees need more space. Where there are opportunities for planting large trees such as oak and beech these should be prioritised.
- Large trees that grow to a great age provide opportunities for roosting and nesting, greater canopy cover and great value for their aesthetic and landscape value.
- Oxford has a large number of species present. However, three species dominate making it vulnerable.
- Increasing tree density in already wooded areas could increase canopy cover and species diversity.
- Different species have different carbon storage capabilities.
- Tree and shrub species should prioritise local species that insects, birds and other species are adapted to live on.
- Tree and shrub species should be chosen that provide food sources, shelter and breeding opportunities for a large variety of wildlife.

Oxford City Council will lead by example in our own operations and land management and will develop a set of principles for improved resilience to support other land managers and land owners in the city. We will seek to work with the arboricultural industry and local garden centres and nurseries to influence the type of species that are purchased and planted.

## What does this mean for you?

### Individuals

- If planting trees as part of a community group or private householder, make sure you are choosing an appropriate species.

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## Landowners, land managers and businesses

- Be part of a joined up approach to trying to increase resilience in Oxford by adhering to any agreed principles and best practice guidance.
- Support citizen science projects by providing funding and taking part in citizen science monitoring programme.

## **Objective 5 – Prioritise areas where new tree and other vegetation planting benefits can be maximised**

- Multiple benefits should be sought from new planting, balancing ecological and social benefits.
- In the first instance priority should be given to focusing on increasing canopy cover in the Nature Recovery Network and most deprived areas.
- Planting should involve increasing habitat diversity and connectivity combining quality and quantity.
- Taking an ecosystem service approach that balances biodiversity, carbon storage and other ecosystem services helps to identify and prioritise the benefits.
- Benefits such as reducing flooding, reducing urban heat island effect and improving air quality will need to be looked at in detail on a site specific basis.
- All opportunities to promote and realise health and well-being benefits should be taken.
- Engagement with communities, particularly schools and community groups, in more deprived areas of the city.

- In order to maximise community engagement, specific activities need to be targeted to engage communities where there is currently a low level of tree cover, providing outreach, engagement and learning opportunities – in particular working with schools and community groups in more deprived areas of the City.

Oxford City Council will assess potential for new planting as identified in the Trees for the Future opportunity maps. We will work with other landowners and stakeholders to prioritise these areas for planting. We will work with community groups to provide guidance and support to homeowners wishing to plant in their gardens or communities.

## What does this mean for you?

### Individuals

- Get involved with a local community group, encourage your community group to support other community groups e.g. for areas with high canopy cover your group could support other areas of Oxford with lower canopy cover.
- If appropriate, consider planting a tree within the curtilage of your house to provide shade to your house or hard landscaped areas. Encourage your employer or school to do the same.

### Landowners, land managers and businesses

- Be part of a joined up approach to trying to increase canopy cover in prioritised areas.
- Consider helping to support projects that aim to help deprived areas increase their canopy cover.

- Be part of a joined up approach to promoting health and well-being benefits.
- Assess potential for planting on your land to address specific issues such as improving air quality, providing shade to buildings and hard landscaping or incorporating natural flood management.

### Objective 6 – Improve biodiversity and contribute to nature recovery areas

- More, bigger, better, joined is the approach we need to take in order to halt biodiversity loss.
- Our urban forest can contribute to providing new habitat for wildlife and joining up habitats.
- Native species planting should be prioritised wherever possible.
- Where non-native trees are planted they should be near-native varieties with edible fruit, seeds or nectar.
- Tree and vegetation management should consider biodiversity. E.g. leaving fallen and standing deadwood wherever possible for the biodiversity benefits it brings and reducing over clearance of vegetation such as shrubs.
- Tree planting can be detrimental to habitats with existing biodiversity value as non-woodland habitats such as fens and flower rich grassland.

Oxford City Council can work with landowners who have land in the Nature Recovery Network to support them in what and where to plant.

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## What does this mean for you?

### Individuals

- Get involved in a local community group or join a conservation work party.
- Encourage more wildlife into your garden, plant a native tree.

### Landowners, land managers and businesses

- Ensure biodiversity is built in to tree management plans and grounds management plans using best-practice guidance.

### Objective 7 - Conserve and enhance landscape character

- Oxford's landscape and its relationship to the built environment is iconic.
- Potential land-use changes should consider impacts and seek opportunities to enhance Oxford's distinctive character.
- Oxford has a wealth of notable trees with a particular historic or cultural significance.
- Oxford has significant protected views and distinct character areas that should be considered when planting trees.

Oxford City Council can provide guidance to land managers and landowners on protecting and enhancing features of significance. We will help coordinate information on notable trees identified in the landscape character assessments and view cones studies and review plans for their management.

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## What does this mean for you?

### Individuals

- If you have a tree that contributes to the character of your area, consider planting an “understudy” tree.
- Get involved with helping us to celebrate our notable trees.

### Landowners, land managers and businesses

- Ensure that tree management plans acknowledge the potential impact on landscape character and view cones.

## **Engage, Promote and Employ**

### **Objective 8 - Engage with communities and key stakeholders**

- Understanding the value of our urban forest is the first step in saving it.
- Engagement and creating a sense of ownership in communities is essential to successful management of our urban forest. Our trees need us and we need our trees.
- Our urban forest provides a space for our communities to come together as well as a reason for them to come together.
- A large proportion of our urban forest is on private land and out of the control of Oxford City Council.
- Working together with all our communities, landowners and stakeholders is essential for a coordinated citywide approach to care and monitoring.
- We can divide our stakeholders into the landowning groups, the supply chain, the implementers and the maintainers.

Oxford City Council will reach out to our communities through our community organisations and networks and to individual citizens, to involve our stakeholders and communities in the delivery of the strategy.

## What does this mean for you?

### Individuals

- Get involved in a local community group, join a conservation work party.
- Get out into your local park and enjoy the trees.
- Plant a tree in your garden – follow the Right Tree, Right Place approach
- Wildlife-friendly gardening

### Landowners, land managers and businesses

- Encourage landowners to plant trees in appropriate areas on their land – follow the Right Tree, Right Place approach
- Provide communities with opportunities, such as providing land and/ or support for developing initiatives.

### **Objective 9 – Understand the value of our urban forest and create opportunities to reap economic benefits from it**

- Economic benefits of urban forest include: by-products (timber, mulch and fruit), tourism, increased property values and increased inward investment.

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- Improving environmental quality, reducing impacts such as flooding and improving mental and physical health can have indirect economic benefits.
- Trees should be valued as assets, giving them a financial worth.
- Commercial forestry is not likely to be appropriate in an Oxford context but opportunities exist for green waste management etc.
- Tourism is important for the local economy. The quality of our local environment is fundamental to its attractiveness as a place to visit.
- Woodland management can be significantly cheaper than maintaining some types of grassland.

Oxford City Council will continue to develop the benefits of tourism to our city. We will explore opportunities for generating income from our urban forest.

What does this mean for you?

## Individuals

- Get involved with local initiatives to plant trees in your area.

## Landowners, land managers and businesses

- Explore opportunities for generating income from your land.
- Value the economic benefit that trees provide to your area/business.
- Take an asset management approach to managing your trees.



*Blackbird Leys Park Copse*

# Appendix 1

## 9. Implementation

### 9.1. Tree management and responsibilities

Trees in private ownership are the responsibility of the landowner. Oxford City Council has a Tree Management Policy<sup>25</sup> which relates to the practical management of trees owned by the City Council. Most institutions and landowners will have their own management plans that relate specifically to the trees they own. Most street trees are owned by Oxfordshire County Council as the Highways Authority.

The Council's Planning Department manage the controls for trees that are covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) or where they are protected through Conservation Areas. Tree Protection Orders are made to protect individual trees or groups of trees that provide a significant amenity benefit to an area.

The City and County Councils can also create and influence policy in this area for example through Local Plan Policy making or Green Infrastructure Strategies. Oxford City Council planning policy requires new developments to demonstrate an increase in overall canopy cover and there are also requirements with regards to net gain and off-site compensation measures. Net gain is where development leaves biodiversity in a better state than it was before. The net gain concept comes from national planning policy and is a key principle of the Government's 25-year Environment Plan. Any development in Oxford that will result in negative impacts on biodiversity must demonstrate how an overall net gain will be achieved.<sup>26</sup>

There are also duties to protect legally protected nature sites such as Ancient Woodland. For more information see Appendix 2 for a table showing the variety of organisations who are involved in caring for our urban forest.

### 9.2. What's already going on?

Lots of great action has been going on in Oxford over the last few years to celebrate and support our urban forest. We are not starting from scratch with this strategy. In the last five years, Oxford City Council, with the help of local communities, has planted over 7000 new trees. Community organisations are also very active for example, Low Carbon West Oxford have planted over 2000 trees and have developed a local tree walk guide to the trees in the local area.



*Earthwatch Tiny Forest Foxwell Drive, January 2021*

There are also community groups setting up community orchards and "tiny forests"<sup>27</sup>, an initiative led by the Earthwatch Institute. Two

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tiny forests have been planted at Meadow Lane Nature Reserve and Foxwell Drive to help preserve and promote biodiversity in the city. These tiny forests are about the size of a tennis court and will contain about 600 trees each.

There is also the ongoing amazing work of all the volunteers who participate in work parties to help manage sites such as our ancient woodland at Shotover. Whilst there is a great deal of energy and positive activity we must be aware of the significant threats that our urban forest faces.

## 9.3. Funding

Achieving the aims of this strategy and securing the future of our urban forest depends on ongoing financial support from key stakeholders in the public sector, the private sector, including developers, businesses and landowners and also from the wider community. Council budgets are tight owing to central government underfunding so we need our communities and businesses to help us share the cost and help us to deliver the strategy. We will all benefit from our collective effort.

Understanding the costs involved in successful planting projects tree stock is vital, in particular, ensuring that ongoing maintenance is accounted and planned for.

The City Council and its wholly owned company, Oxford Direct Services (ODS) will continue to manage our parks and street trees

and will continue to source funding whenever it becomes available. For the many community groups that are already doing such great work in this area, the funding that they bring in for planting management work is also vital. It is hoped that this strategy will help to align many of these projects to help us to work towards a common goal.

## 9.4. Monitoring and Review

The strategy will be reviewed every 10 years. In this process the question of “what have we got?” will be revisited. The canopy cover assessment will be repeated using iTree or similar. This process will enable us to check progress against our objectives, assess what approaches or projects were successful and where improvements could be made. The review process will involve the key stakeholders and will invite engagement from our communities.

## 9.5. Delivery and next steps

This strategy seeks to set a high level strategic direction for the city. Key stakeholders and our communities have been involved in developing this strategy.

There are so many great projects and initiatives already occurring in Oxford that we have a great base to build on. The next steps will be dependent on achieving external funding opportunities to implement the steps as set out in the table below.

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## Next steps and initial actions in achieving the vision

- 1. Better coordinate projects across the city and engage more stakeholders**  
Coordinating projects and stakeholders will require resources. External funding will be needed to establish a coordinator role working with partners and communities to deliver the aims of the strategy.
- 2. Develop a detailed planting plan working collaboratively with our partners, communities and stakeholders**  
The detailed planting plan will set a realistic target based on identified planting opportunities and mechanisms for delivering them. It will use state of the art tree planting guidance and data from the Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project.
- 3. Ensure that the planning system is being used to its full extent to deliver the aims of the strategy**  
Developers will ensure species choices for new developments are aligned with detailed planting plans and will deliver well designed habitat networks. Net gain and compensation opportunities will be maximised wherever possible.
- 4. Address funding constraints for street tree planting and maintenance by exploring novel funding mechanisms**  
Oxford City Council and Oxford Direct Services are responsible for managing and maintaining our street tree stock. Opportunities for increasing canopy cover through street trees is currently being explored, such as through community tree sponsorship schemes. Such schemes will enable multiple objectives to be achieved by engaging the community in increasing our canopy cover within particular treescapes.

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### Appendix 1 Plans, Policies, Guidance and Influencing Strategies

- Oxfordshire's Forthcoming Nature Recovery Strategy
- Oxfordshire's Forthcoming Environmental Investment Strategy
- Urban Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee (FWAC)
- Oxford's Local Plan 2016 -2036
- Technical Advice Note (Trees)
- [Oxford City Council Tree Management Policy 2016](#)
- Oxford's Sustainability Strategy
- [Oxford City Council Response to Citizen's Assembly 2019](#)
- Oxfordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2018 – 2023)
- Oxford Transport Strategy (Volume 8 of the LTP)

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- Oxford Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP)
- Oxford Green Spaces Strategy (2013 – 2027)
- Oxford Biodiversity Strategy
- Flooding/Suds
- Air Quality Action Plan
- Oxfordshire Energy Strategy

- [Oxford Landscape Character Assessment](#)
- [Biodiversity Review for Oxford City Council Parks and Nature Areas 2020](#) – A review of biodiversity and habitat management in Oxford City Council's Green Spaces, and a proposal of actions for further improvements.

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## Appendix 2 - Who is responsible for our urban forest?

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|   | Policy Makers | Landowners | Managers and Maintainers | Planters | The Supply Chain | Advisors |
|---|---------------|------------|--------------------------|----------|------------------|----------|
| Oxford City Council and Oxford Direct Services <sup>28</sup>      | ✓             | ✓          | ✓                        | ✓        |                  |          |
| Oxfordshire County Council  | ✓             | ✓          | ✓                        | ✓        |                  |          |
| Institutional land (universities, schools, hospitals etc.)        |               | ✓          | ✓                        | ✓        |                  |          |
| Local businesses  |               | ✓          | ✓                        | ✓        |                  |          |
| Developers  |               |            |                          | ✓        |                  |          |
| Private householders  |               | ✓          | ✓                        | ✓        |                  |          |
| Individuals   |               | ✓          | ✓                        | ✓        |                  |          |
| Community Groups  |               |            | ✓                        | ✓        |                  |          |
| Nurseries and garden centres                                      |               |            |                          |          | ✓                |          |
| Arboricultural Industry (tree surgeons, landscape gardeners etc.) |               |            | ✓                        | ✓        |                  |          |
| Network Rail  |               | ✓          | ✓                        | ✓        |                  |          |
| Canals and Rivers Trust   |               | ✓          | ✓                        | ✓        |                  |          |
| Environment Agency  |               | ✓          | ✓                        |          |                  |          |
| BBOWT   |               |            |                          |          |                  | ✓        |
| Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project                 |               |            |                          |          |                  | ✓        |
| TDAG  |               |            |                          |          |                  | ✓        |

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## References

<sup>1</sup> Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change  
[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20011/environment/1343/oxford\\_citizens\\_assembly\\_on\\_climate\\_change](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20011/environment/1343/oxford_citizens_assembly_on_climate_change)

<sup>2</sup> Net Zero – any carbon emissions are balanced by absorbing an equivalent amount of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The UK Government has legislated that the UK will reach net zero by 2050. In 2019 Oxford City Council held a Citizen's Assembly to discuss how Oxford can achieve net zero. The Council's response can be found in this [report](#).

<sup>3</sup> [The Greater Lyon Tree Charter](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Woodland Trust](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Trees and Design Action Group](#) (TDAG)

<sup>6</sup> For more information on the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership and the full list of members go to:  
[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1764/council\\_outlines\\_next\\_steps\\_for\\_zero\\_carbon\\_oxford\\_partnership](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1764/council_outlines_next_steps_for_zero_carbon_oxford_partnership)

<sup>7</sup> Oxford i-Tree Canopy Cover Assessment 2015  
<https://www.treeconomics.co.uk/projects/oxford-i-tree-canopy-cover-assessment/>

<sup>8</sup> Oxford iTree ECO study  
[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20198/trees\\_woodlands\\_and\\_hedges/1348/oxford\\_i-tree\\_eco\\_study](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20198/trees_woodlands_and_hedges/1348/oxford_i-tree_eco_study)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/press-release/new-research-shows-55bn-fund-needed-to-level-up-access-to-urban-green-space-as-part-of-uks-green-recovery>

<sup>10</sup> [Climate Emergency Strategy Support Report 2019](#) produced by Anthesis as background for the Oxford City Council Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change.

<sup>11</sup> [Air Quality Action Plan](#) -  
[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/133/air\\_quality\\_action\\_plan](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/133/air_quality_action_plan)

<sup>12</sup> <https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/laqm-faqs/faq105.html>

<sup>13</sup> [Impacts of Vegetation on Urban Pollution, DEFRA Air Quality Expert Group](#)

<sup>14</sup> Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC), Wild Oxfordshire and The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) and overseen by Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Advisory Group (BAG). It has been adopted by the Oxfordshire Environment Board (OxEB).

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/biodiversity/river-catchments/evenlode-catchment/projects/river-restoration-including-water-quality-natural-flood-management-measures/>

<sup>16</sup> Land adjacent to a river or stream

<sup>17</sup> 3D buffer strips – designed to deliver more for the environment October 2020, Environment Agency

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/928117/3D\\_buffer\\_strips\\_designed\\_to\\_deliver\\_more\\_for\\_the\\_environment\\_-\\_summary.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928117/3D_buffer_strips_designed_to_deliver_more_for_the_environment_-_summary.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [www.urbanbees.co.uk/trees/trees.htm](http://www.urbanbees.co.uk/trees/trees.htm)

<sup>18</sup> Oxford View Study

[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20064/conservation/876/oxford\\_views\\_study](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20064/conservation/876/oxford_views_study)

<sup>19</sup> [www.urbanbees.co.uk/trees/trees.htm](http://www.urbanbees.co.uk/trees/trees.htm)

<sup>20</sup> Woodland Trust "Trees or Turf? Best value in managing urban green space" <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/1828/trees-or-turf-for-urban-green-space.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Wolf, Kathleen "Business district streetscapes, trees and consumer response" Journal of Forestry

[http://www.naturewithin.info/CityBiz/BizTreesAll\\_JFor.pdf](http://www.naturewithin.info/CityBiz/BizTreesAll_JFor.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> [Index of Multiple Deprivation Oxford Report 2019](#)

<sup>23</sup> [Poverty and Mental Health](#), Mental Health Foundation

<sup>24</sup> The map data has used Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) which are a geographic hierarchy for reporting statistics in small areas.

<sup>25</sup> Oxford City Council Tree Management Policy -

[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1907/tree\\_management\\_policy](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1907/tree_management_policy)

<sup>26</sup> Oxford City Council Technical Advice Note – Green Spaces

[file:///C:/Users/egreen2/Downloads/TAN\\_9\\_GREEN\\_SPACES\\_following\\_comments\\_v2.pdf](file:///C:/Users/egreen2/Downloads/TAN_9_GREEN_SPACES_following_comments_v2.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> <https://earthwatch.org.uk/get-involved/tiny-forest>

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<sup>27</sup>Oxford Direct Services (ODS) is a social enterprise wholly owned by Oxford City Council. ODS is responsible for delivering council services

such as parks maintenance and street tree maintenance and management.

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# Appendix 2

## 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 |
| Council Reputation        | Customer and stakeholder dissatisfaction with the scope and objectives                 | T           | Poor planning/ poor consultation  | Damage to City Council reputation. Need for revisions to the strategy.                                | 18/06/21    | EG    | 2     | 1 | 1       | 1 | 1        | 1 |          | Reduce the risk - public consultation to be undertaken. Strategy developed with key stakeholder input.  |          |        |            |              |
| Council Reputation        | Failure to achieve objectives set out in the strategy.                                 | T           | Poor planning/ inadequate budget/ inadequate resources planned for delivery | Failure to achieve objectives. Damage to City Council reputation. Need for revisions to the strategy. | 18/06/21    | EG    | 2     | 3 | 2       | 2 | 2        | 2 |          | Reduce the risk - the need for resources to be allocated for delivery has been raised however no internal resources are available so external funding will be sought.   | 09/21    |        |            | AF           |
| Council Reputation<br>133 | Failure to lead by example in tree management and planting as a landowner and manager. | T           | Poor planning/ inadequate budget/ inadequate resources planned for delivery | Failure to achieve objectives. Damage to City Council reputation.                                     | 18/06/21    | EG    | 2     | 2 | 2       | 1 | 2        | 1 |          | Reduce the risk - ODS and parks management teams have been involved in the development of the strategy. The objectives of the urban forest strategy are aligned with the Council's internal Tree Management Policy. |          |        |            |              |

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# Appendix 3

## 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?

The intention of the Urban Forest strategy is to promote and seek opportunities to plant the right tree in the right place. The preparation of the strategy has highlighted that in areas of deprivation across the city there is less tree cover. This study provides the evidence base and hence the narrative as to why we need to maximise opportunities for tree planting in such areas when it is appropriate to do so. Residents and other landowners will be encouraged to increase tree-planting on their own land. However that option will not be available to some - typically lower income – households who lack a garden. So we will also seek to connect individuals with community-based tree-planting initiatives. Officers can seek external funding opportunities and work with external partners to bid for funding for tree planting when it appropriate to do so. Officers at the City council and ODS are already seeking out opportunities to develop tree planting schemes where appropriate to do so on council-owned land.

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 strategy contains an action plan and officers will work both internally and externally with relevant partners to bid for appropriate money to implement the strategy.

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

The strategy has been out to consultation and a summary of responses is found in Appendix 4. As the implementation of strategy can only be achieved through working with local groups and external stakeholders that very process ensures a high level of consultation and interaction with groups to ensure we achieve the appropriate type and scale of planting across the city. The following lists the organisations we would expect to consult and work with as outlined in the UFS:

- Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Mapping Project
- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)
- Wild Oxfordshire
- Oxford Direct Services
- Oxford Green and Blue Spaces Network (GBSN) members
- Oxford Preservation Trust
- Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
- Community Action Groups (CAG) Network
- Environmental Change Institute
- Oxford Civic Society
- Earthwatch Institute Europe

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

N/A

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

The UFS outlines the monitoring and review processes.

Lead officer responsible for signing off the EqIA: Amanda Ford

Role: Head of Corporate Strategy

Date: 27 August 2021

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)

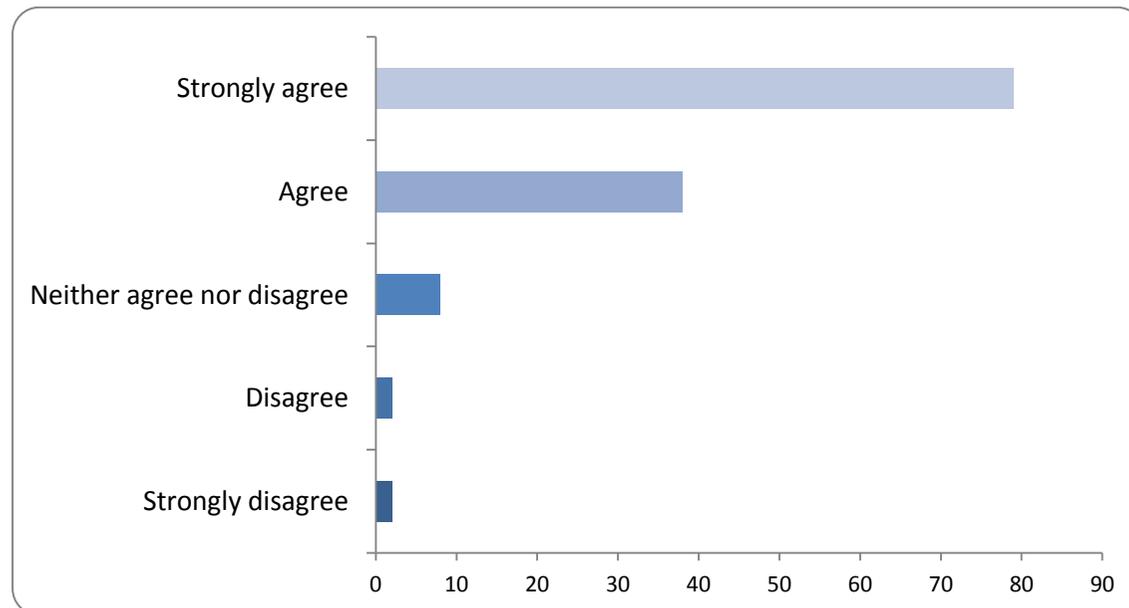
# Appendix 4

## Appendix 4 - Public Consultation – Summary of questionnaire results

An online public consultation was carried out from 28th June to the 26th July. We received 134 responses to the consultation in total. The consultation was publicised using social media, press releases and direct contact with key stakeholders and community groups. The full draft strategy was made available and it was accompanied by a short questionnaire consisting of 5 questions. The results of the consultation are included below.

**Question 1 - We have identified that there is a correlation between low canopy cover and areas of deprivation. The strategy seeks to prioritise areas of deprivation for new planting. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this prioritisation?**

There were 129 responses to this question.



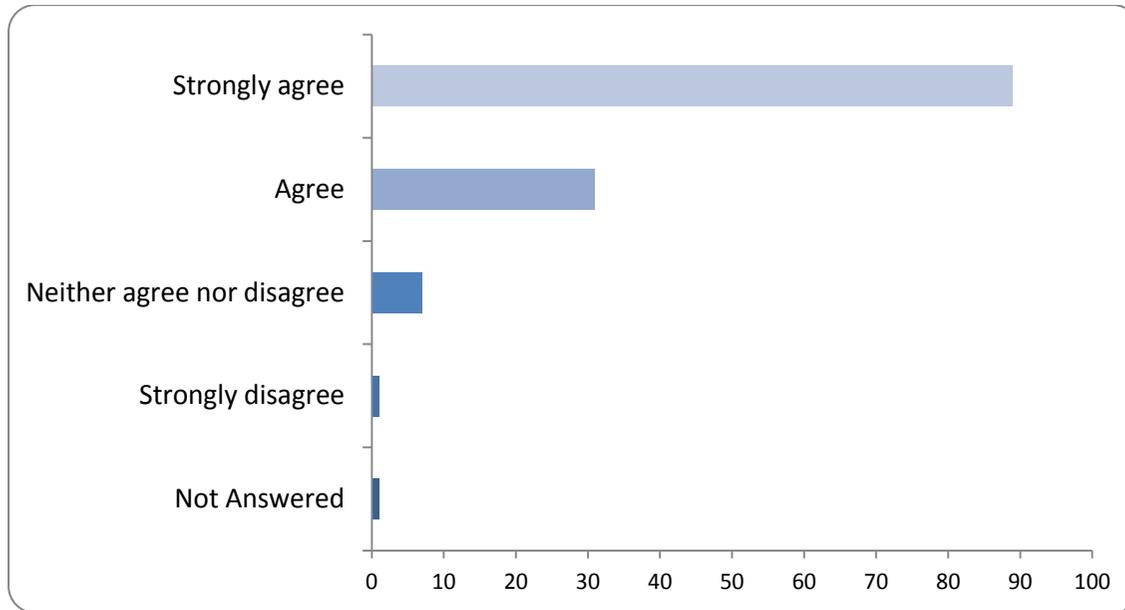
## Appendix 4

| <b>Option</b>                     | <b>Total</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| <b>Strongly agree</b>             | 79           | 61.24%         |
| <b>Agree</b>                      | 38           | 29.46%         |
| <b>Neither agree nor disagree</b> | 8            | 6.20%          |
| <b>Disagree</b>                   | 2            | 1.55%          |
| <b>Strongly disagree</b>          | 2            | 1.55%          |
| <b>Not Answered</b>               | 0            | 0.00%          |

# Appendix 4

**Question 2 - Biodiversity is a key theme in this strategy and it seeks to prioritise finding opportunities for new planting within the Nature Recovery Network. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this prioritisation?**

There were 128 responses to this question.



## Appendix 4

| Option                     | Total | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| Strongly agree             | 89    | 68.99%  |
| Agree                      | 31    | 24.03%  |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 7     | 5.43%   |
| Disagree                   | 0     | 0.00%   |
| Strongly disagree          | 1     | 0.78%   |
| Not Answered               | 1     | 0.78%   |

### Question 3 - Are there other areas or issues that you think the strategy should prioritise?

There were 88 responses to this question. These are summarised below.

| Suggestions   | Number of Times Mentioned | Oxford City Council's Comments  |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| People engagement and support for communities to enhance understanding, use, maintain and value them. Engage people in the planning | 6                         | <b>Addressed</b> – Objective 8 of this strategy specifically relates to community engagement. This strategy sets a strategic direction, more detailed next steps are included in the strategy including the development of a comprehensive engagement strategy.       |
| Increasing hedgerows and providing good quality hedgerow guidance. Trim hedges at times that protect biodiversity.                  | 3                         | <b>Addressed</b> - Hedgerows are specifically mentioned and their importance highlighted throughout the strategy. Links to guidance on hedge management is included in the “What Can You Do?” resources that will be publicised along with the Urban Forest Strategy. |

## Appendix 4

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| Improve access to nature/<br>green space.  | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> – this strategy fundamentally supports improving access to nature and green space. The Council has a Green Space Strategy that specifically addresses improving access to green space.<br><a href="https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/2874/green_space_strategy_2013-2027">https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/2874/green_space_strategy_2013-2027</a>   |
| Verge cutting and management. Reducing mowing/ limit to specific times of year for the benefit of biodiversity | 7 | <b>Not addressed</b> - Whilst the strategy identifies road verges as a potential opportunity area for new planting, these comments relate specifically to the management of grass and wildflower verges that are not included in this strategy. In 2020 the City Council completed a biodiversity review of Oxford's parks and green spaces. Verge management is specifically addressed in this document which can be found here:<br><a href="https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7273/oxford_green_spaces_biodiversity_review_2020">https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7273/oxford_green_spaces_biodiversity_review_2020</a> |
| Education via trees and their benefits   | 3 | <b>Addressed</b> - The strategy sets out in detail the benefits of trees. Next step engagement work will involve schools and community groups to educate about our trees and their benefits.   |
| Avoid mowing green spaces when plants are seeding and leaving fringes  | 5 | <b>Not addressed</b> - These comments relate specifically to the management of grass and wildflower areas that are not included in this strategy. In 2020 the City Council completed a biodiversity review of Oxford's parks and green spaces. Grass cutting regimes are specifically addressed in this document which can be found here:<br><a href="https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7273/oxford_green_spaces_biodiversity_review_2020">https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/7273/oxford_green_spaces_biodiversity_review_2020</a>   |
| Concerns about building in the green belt/ protection of the green belt  | 5 | <b>Not addressed</b> - The Council's policies relating to development in the green belt are set out in the Local Plan 2016 to 2036. Green belt policy does not form part of this strategy.<br><a href="https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20067/planning_policy/1311/oxford_local_plan_2016-2036">https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20067/planning_policy/1311/oxford_local_plan_2016-2036</a>  |
| Concerns about tree felling especially if lost through new   | 7 | <b>Addressed</b> – An additional paragraph has been included in the Threats to Oxford's Urban Forest section which explains that Oxford City Council has a tree  |

## Appendix 4

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| development/ especially mature trees.  |    | management policy on when it is appropriate to fell a tree and its policy on replacement planting. The paragraph states that other landowners and managers will be encouraged to do the same. Additional text has also been added to Objective 1 – Manage our existing tree and vegetation resource according to best practice and improve vegetation health – and states that trees should only be felled in certain circumstances and should be replaced. The strategy already includes information about how the planning system requires developers to increase overall canopy cover on sites and provide net gain.                       |
| Support for planting trees in private gardens eg supplying trees for those living in social housing.   | 5  | <b>Addressed</b> – the strategy identifies planting in gardens as an opportunity area and commits to developing detailed planting plans.  |
| Increase street trees. Improve their protection, management and community engagement with looking after them. Remove hard standing where possible and consider using planters. | 14 | <b>Addressed</b> – the strategy identifies street trees as a key treescape within our urban forest and sets out the many benefits of street trees. Principles for street tree management and opportunities to increase them are set out in the strategy. The next steps will specifically identify opportunities for planting and for community engagement through initiatives such as the Trees for Streets project.   |
| Increase street trees in the city centre specifically eg Broad St, High st, Cornmarket St, Beaumont st   | 9  | <b>Not addressed</b> - This strategy does not directly address this point. The purpose of the strategy is to set out a strategic direction for the city as a whole and commits to detailed planting plans being developed next. It was not the intention of this strategy to specific exactly where new trees would be located. The need to address the Urban Heat Island Effect through street tree planting in built up areas is an objective of the strategy. Increasing street trees in the city centre will form part of tackling that problem. This feedback will be carried through to the next stages of our detailed planting plans. |
| Increase street trees in urban sub-centres eg Templars Square  | 1  | <b>Not addressed</b> - This strategy does not directly address this point. The purpose of the strategy is to set out a strategic direction for the city as a whole and commits to detailed planting plans being developed next. It was not the intention of this strategy to specific exactly where new trees would be located. The need to address the Urban Heat Island Effect through street tree planting in built up areas   |

## Appendix 4

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|   |   | is an objective of the strategy. Increasing street trees in urban sub-centres will form part of tackling that problem. The strategy prioritises trees in more deprived areas of the city and this could be an area to focus in this part of the city. This feedback will be carried through to the next stages of our detailed planting plans. |
| Provide manpower and funding to assist communities in their tree/gardening planting and management initiatives. | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> - This strategy is setting a strategic direction for our urban forest. Next steps and how to deliver this identify funding and community engagement opportunities. This feedback will be incorporated into the next steps.  |
| Require new trees as part of new developments   | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> - The strategy includes information about how the planning system requires developers to increase overall canopy cover on sites and provide net gain.   |
| Ongoing care and management of trees once planted.  | 6 | <b>Addressed</b> - The need for appropriate post planting long-term maintenance and care is made clear throughout the strategy. Objective 3 specifically states that long-term maintenance is required for young trees for a minimum of 5 years.   |
| Community tree planting drives with communities eg friends of groups  | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> - This kind of activity will be part of the engagement plan committed to in the next steps. This feedback will be incorporate into these plans.   |
| Existing trees should be conserved and cared for – pruning should be proportionate                              | 3 | <b>Addressed</b> - This is specifically addressed in Objective 1 – Manage our existing tree and vegetation resource according to best practice and improve vegetation health   |
| Engage with schools and nurseries in particular eg junior treewarden scheme.                                    | 3 | <b>Addressed</b> – engagement with schools is acknowledged as being a key part of successful engagement. It will form a key part of the next steps.  |
| Plant climate change appropriate species  | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> – in the section on native and non-native species, the strategy specifically states that climate appropriate species should be chosen. Objective 4 relates to species diversity and includes species diversity for climate change.  |
| Use trees and vegetation to reduce the impacts of the urban heat island effect.                                 | 7 | <b>Addressed</b> - The strategy provides comprehensive information on the Urban Heat Island Effect and includes actions on addressing this phenomenon in Oxford in objective 5.  |
| Ensure a proportionate amount of new planting is a  | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> - The requirement for new planting is specified in planning policy in the Local Plan 2016 - 2036. This strategy summarises what the planning policy   |

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| requirement of planning in new developments.  |   | requirements are in relation to increasing overall canopy cover and net gain through new development.  |
| Private landowners and managers disregarding rules – insufficient enforcement of regulations. | 2 | <b>Not addressed</b> - This strategy sets a strategic direction for expanding and enhancing our urban forest. It's remit does not include enforcement of regulations.  |
| To help with flood protection   | 4 | <b>Addressed</b> – the strategy sets out details of how the urban forest can help with flood protection and the issues of flooding in an Oxford context. Objective 5 relates to maximising benefits of our urban forest such as this. Next step detailed planting plans will assess opportunities further. |
| Increase carbon capture   | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> – the strategy sets out details of how the urban forest can help with carbon capture. Objective 5 relates to maximising benefits of our urban forest such as this.  |
| Reduce air pollution  | 3 | <b>Addressed</b> – the strategy sets out details of how the urban forest can help with air quality. Objective 5 relates to maximising benefits of our urban forest such as this.   |
| Reduce runoff   | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> – the strategy sets out details of how the urban forest can help with reducing run-off. Objective 5 relates to maximising benefits of our urban forest such as this.  |
| Improve river water quality   | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – the strategy sets out details of how the urban forest can help with improving water quality. Objective 5 relates to maximising benefits of our urban forest such as this.   |
| Leave deadwood insitu for biodiversity benefit where possible – balance with risk.            | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – deadwood management is specifically identified in Objective 6 as being beneficial for biodiversity.   |
| Prioritise trees over parking/roads – combine planting and car parks                          | 5 | <b>Not addressed</b> - This strategy cannot set land-use priorities. However, detailed planting plans will seek opportunities for tree planting. The planning system seeks to increase canopy cover through new development – which includes car parks.  |
| Plant mini woods  | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – the concept of mini woods is identified in the strategy and the Earthwatch Tiny Forests is used as an example.  |
| Plant orchards or edible trees  | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> – the benefits of and opportunities for orchards, particularly  |

## Appendix 4

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|  |   | community orchards is addressed in the strategy.  |
| Provide information boards where enhancements are being made to engage the community.  | 1 | <b>Not addressed</b> - The next steps of delivering the strategy will include engagement activities. This suggestion will be taken forward to the development of the next phase.  |
| Increase diversity of habitats within our public parks and green spaces                | 1 | <b>Not addressed</b> - The strategy acknowledges the importance of supporting a range of habitats for biodiversity. However, this strategy relates specifically to the urban forest and is not an overall biodiversity strategy. The Council's biodiversity strategy is due to be reviewed and updated. This feedback will be communicated to the Ecology Officer.  |
| Link with strategic plans for wider area. E.g. county and Ox-Cam ARC                   | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> – a key priority of the strategy is to focus on the Nature Recover Network (NRN). The NRN is a county wide network where conservation efforts will have the most benefit. The Ox-Cam ARC is beyond the remit of this strategy.   |
| Increase planting in our public parks – prioritise over lawn                           | 2 | <b>Not addressed</b> – this strategy acknowledges that there are opportunities to plant within our public parks and green spaces. It is important to note that the City Council also has responsibilities to ensure green spaces for sports etc. The Council has a Green Space Strategy that specifically addresses our standards for access to green space and play areas etc. In developing next step detailed planting plans the balance will need to be found.<br><a href="https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/2874/green_space_strategy_2013-2027">https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/2874/green_space_strategy_2013-2027</a> |
| Use greener transport infrastructure changes as an opportunity for more tree planting. | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – added in a paragraph about working in partnership with the county council on their emerging transport strategy to seek such opportunities.   |
| Protection of biodiversity   | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> - Protection of biodiversity is a key part of this strategy although it is not specifically a biodiversity strategy. Objective 6 specifically relates to the protection of biodiversity and contribution to Nature Recovery Networks.  |
| Increase pedestrianized areas and plant them   | 6 | <b>Not addressed</b> - This is beyond the scope of this strategy. The Local Plan 2016 – to 2036 and County emergency transport strategy cover pedestrianisation. New opportunities for street trees through new pedestrian zones will be sought through the next phases of the strategy delivery.   |

## Appendix 4

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| Protect greenfield sites from development, favour brownfield sites.  | 2 | <b>Not addressed</b> - This is beyond the scope of this strategy. The Local Plan 2016 to 2036 sets out the planning policies relating to development sites.  |
| Negative environmental impacts of trees not addressed in the strategy eg pollen or trapping of pollution problems if the wrong tree is in the wrong place. | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> – an additional paragraph has been added stating that trees don't always come without their problems eg pollen and pollution trapping and that right tree, right place principle can minimise these issues.   |
| Provide incentives for private landowners to plant trees eg providing them with trees.   | 2 | <b>Not addressed</b> – The importance of private gardens for expanding our urban forest is acknowledged in the strategy. The next steps of delivering the strategy will include engagement activities and identifying ways to incentivise residents. This suggestion will be taken forward to the development of the next phase.   |
| Biodiversity net gain to be formalised and made a mandatory requirement of highway maintenance and highways schemes.                                       | 1 | <b>Not addressed</b> - Biodiversity net gain is talked about in the strategy. Formalising policy with regard to its use is beyond the scope of this particular strategy. This feedback will be relayed to the relevant officers dealing with the development of the net gain policies.   |
| Replace trees that have been removed   | 3 | <b>Addressed</b> – additional text has been added to set out that Oxford City Council has a policy regarding tree replacement and sets it out in the principles for managing our trees under Objective 1.  |
| Ensure long-term maintenance of green spaces with biodiversity interest.   | 1 | <b>Not addressed</b> – this strategy fundamentally supports maintaining high quality nature and green space. However, it is beyond the scope of this strategy. The Council has a Green Space Strategy that specifically relates to green space.<br><a href="https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/2874/green_space_strategy_2013-2027">https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/2874/green_space_strategy_2013-2027</a> |
| Promote wildlife corridors, remove barrier to wildlife, do not isolate trees from each other. Plant around trees   | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> - Wildlife corridors are specifically identified in the strategy. Objective 6 relates to biodiversity and contributing to the Nature Recovery Network. Best practice guidance is promoted through this strategy.  |
| Prioritise native species  | 7 | <b>Addressed</b> - Native species and their importance is specifically addressed in the strategy. Objectives 4 and 6 cover this.   |

## Appendix 4

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| Reduce urban wind tunnels  | 1 | <b>Not addressed</b> - Although not specifically addressed understanding urban wind tunnels will form part of understanding our urban heat island effect which is set out in objective 5.  |
| Reduce noise pollution from streets  | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> - The benefits of trees for reducing noise pollution is mentioned and comes under objective 5.  |
| Make more space for wildlife generally not just trees                                    | 1 | Not addressed – This strategy is not a biodiversity strategy for the City. It supports biodiversity objectives specifically in relation to trees and woody vegetation.   |
| Plant on wildlife poor areas rather than wildlife opportunity areas.                     | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> - The strategy sets out clearly which habitats that already support biodiversity are appropriate for tree planting. The infographic included in the Right Tree, Right Place section of the strategy outlines Oxford's key habitats and their suitability for tree planting.                                   |
| Focus on edible plants for biodiversity and pollinator friendly plants                   | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> – the value of providing a range of species that includes vegetation and trees that produce berries and food sources for biodiversity is outlined in the strategy. Specific species are listed as being important for this function.  |
| Prioritise areas with heavy traffic  | 5 | <b>Addressed</b> – The contribution that trees make to improving air quality and using green infrastructure to address wider transport objectives, such as encouraging walking or cycling, is outlined in the strategy. Objective 5 addresses these issues.  |
| Clear and ambitious targets  | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> - As part of the implementation plan for the strategy a detailed planting plan is proposed. Once a comprehensive assessment of our realistic planting opportunities is known then we can develop a realistic target.  |
| Concern for welfare of specific trees/groups of trees/mature trees eg Cedars by Ice Rink | 2 | <b>Addressed</b> - This strategy is a high level strategy to set the strategic direction. Detailed planting plans and management of specific trees/recognising notable trees will form part of next steps.   |
| Use street trees for traffic calming   | 2 | <b>Not addressed</b> – Oxfordshire County Council's emerging Transport Plan will assess how green infrastructure such as our trees, can be used to improve our streets and traffic issue and encourage green travel. This Urban Forest Strategy sets out that the City Council will input into the development of these plans. |
| Encourage wild planting  | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – This strategy acknowledges that natural regeneration – or creating the conditions for natural regeneration - is often preferable to planting schemes.   |
| Ensure strategies are joined up so they have greater impact.                             | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – The strategy sets out how it links with existing strategies and emerging strategies.  |

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| Focus on the hard to reach groups   | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – the engagement strategy part of the next steps will specifically seek to do this.   |
| Ensure top level leadership for the strategy including political representation       | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – The Urban Forest Strategy will need to go through the City Council's adoption process with Cabinet. The strategy has the support of the key relevant political portfolio holders ie Councillor Hayes and Councillor Arshad.   |
| Plant trees in locations people notice  | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – The strategy acknowledges the importance of notable trees – and trees that are notable for particular communities. The next steps of the strategy involve developing detailed planting plans. Planting in public and visible locations will be brought through to the next steps.   |
| Work with business to develop initiatives to incentivise planting                     | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – The strategy specifically identifies the potential for business to help support our urban forest. Engagement plans as next steps will realise these actions.  |
| Maximise plant health eg avoid weedkiller and strimming                               | 1 | <b>Not Addressed</b> – Maximising plant health is a key objective of this strategy. Specific actions with regard to detailed tree management such as avoiding weedkiller or strimming regimes are beyond the scope of this strategy. Good management practices through the use of best practice guidance are promoted through this strategy. |
| Plant with vulnerable people/safety mind eg single people who feel vulnerable at dusk | 1 | <b>Not addressed</b> – The strategy does not specifically address safety or vulnerable people. This point will be taken through to detailed planting planning stages. The strategy seeks to ensure high quality environment for all and this would include making spaces usable and safe.  |
| Right tree, right place principle is paramount  | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – The strategy is set around this principle.  |
| Disease resistant species should be prioritised                                       | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – The strategy sets out the issues around threats to our urban forest and acknowledges the importance of species selection.   |
| Importance for physical and mental health   | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – The importance of planting for physical and mental health is specifically addressed in the strategy.  |
| Plant to make places more attractive  | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – The strategy acknowledges the importance of high quality environments that are attractive.  |
| Replace dead or dying trees straight away   | 1 | <b>Not addressed</b> – the strategy promotes good tree management and best practice guidance.  |
| Other habitats eg grasslands  | 1 | <b>Addressed</b> – The strategy specifically acknowledges that trees are not always  |

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| also sequester carbon. Trees are not always appropriate |  | appropriate and that other habitats also sequester carbon. The strategy includes an infographic that was developed with BBOWT which identifies where trees should and should not be planted. Particular grassland habitats are identified. |
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**Question 4 - After setting this strategic direction for our urban forest, the next steps will be to work together with businesses, institutions and individuals to help to identify suitable places for new tree planting and engaging our communities in the process. Do you have ideas on how we can best achieve this?**

There were 83 responses to this question and are listed below. These ideas will be used in the development of the engagement and planting plans.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local facebook groups and Nextdoor communities advertising Website set up with What Three [Tree] Words incorporated for people to make exact suggestions online for where trees should be planted.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maybe contact known residents' associations as they have contact with numerous individuals within communities and often have already come up with ideas about tree planting locally. For example Iffley Fields Residents' association are currently trying to get a re-wilding/tree planting scheme set up on the Meadow Lane Rec.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage participation in schools to use the opportunity for students to attend/help/learn about planting trees and the climate emergency.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>encourage households to plant appropriate trees (ie without roots that invade drains or undermine foundations) on the front of houses to green up roads. some roads are very sparse and many people have totally concreted/ paved front drive ways, all designed around cars rather than on biodiversity. check out my house 86 Cornwallis Road OX4 3NL with its haven of biodiversity on a tiny patch. brings great benefit to the street. I have tree surgeons regularly to keep it safe, and planted birches to limit root damage.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial support to buy trees, education about looking after them, planting on council land and in schools etc is important. This may also reduce tree vandalism</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with schools and community centres is always a good idea. Also, the University runs an ecosystem restoration network in Oxfordshire which links landowners, ngos, researchers and other bodies to work together. They have a website you can find by looking up <a href="#">Healthy Ecosystem Restoration Oxfordshire</a>.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We need to have representatives who can talk to the businesses, department and local communities that can help in anyway to support the urban forestation. They should go door to door and talk to everyone to support in whatever they can.</li> </ul>  |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>include info on it with letters that go to all residents: eg about council tax or parking information</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education campaigns in schools</li> <li>Wellbeing drives in hospitals for patients and especially staff</li> <li>Community projects and campaigns (exploit Street WhatsApp groups that were formed in Lockdown)</li> <li>Use of brown land</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Someone tasked to coordinate. There's many volunteer groups who would plant trees, and many businesses and institutions with space for planting, but just need someone to communicate and arrange.</li> <li>Adverts in local press might help.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use existing county wide strategies as developed by Wild Oxfordshire to inform decisions.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let people propose locations</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A small temporary reduction in taxes may encourage private businesses to plant more trees. Or a rating system based of the ratio of trees/plants and other environmentally positive solutions the company has implemented. Like solar panels or fitting brise soleil.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advertise that this is going to happen early to communities through different media: social media, local news, posters, town hall meetings, door-to-door conversations, etc. Sometimes, using emails/social media, etc misses out a large proportion of the local community or only targets certain groups.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult the experts,</li> <li>Allow some area for self-seeding and re-wilding,</li> <li>Buy land and re-wild on the edge of cities,</li> <li>Expand existing woodland (Bagley, Shotover etc)</li> <li>plant native trees</li> <li>Plant and re-wild in order to CONNECT existing tree cover and green space as this will maximise biodiversity.</li> <li>Work with local nature groups to benefit from their local knowledge about what will work best (type of planting, species etc).</li> <li>Think also about hedges, not just single trees and include fruit trees</li> <li>work with local schools and youth groups</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make it a campaign or competition - adopt a tree (or three), that kind of thing. Need to identify the right people to talk to within each business as the first contact is really important.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are multiple CAG, volunteering and low carbon organisations that will happily help with this, but would also be useful to engage local schools.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local councils especially Parish Councils and the Local wildlife Societies.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is all very well engaging businesses/the community to plant trees but you must, and don't at the moment seem to have, a</li> </ul>  |

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| <p>careful follow up strategy. Baby trees need to be cared for and frequently aren't. Examples: new trees by bus stops at Cowley centre vandalised. New trees on Blackbird Leys (corner of Sandy Lane West) vandalised.<br/>I would think that a post pandemic Plant a Tree in Memory would prove very popular as funerals and memorials were so restricted.<br/>Maybe tree planting near to care homes with resident participation?</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk abouts with local stakeholders to look at the area, and critically informing everyone of what has been done across the continent to create amazing urban forests and spaces.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact organisations like friends of the earth, community action groups etc</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See answer above - the continued commitment of volunteer groups, such as 'Friends of ' groups, Wildlife Trust groups such as the Wild Oxford groups, and City volunteers such as the one lead by Carl Whitehead will ensure continuity after the funding and one-off efforts of transient schemes such as the one being proposed have passed into political history.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1. Directly engage with CBOs that represent different social groups in the area, including schools, and especially to reach those who are normally excluded from these consultations (from older people, migrants and refugees etc.)<br/>2. When working with business ensure that workers and their representatives are also included<br/>3. Above all this is the ideal opportunity to use citizen assemblies</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How about making this an objective for, for example, a youth council (or similar)?<br/>And starting with a city-wide network of school groups? How<br/>There are many local charities that would relish the opportunity to become part of the solution - perhaps starting with some of the festivals and arts groups? They might well have creative and imaginative ideas about how to energise the process, and stimulate engagement.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facebook. Oxford community has 50k members. Because people use their own names they tend to be more polite. You could start a page specifically on this topic and ask people to comment, or you could just start discussions on existing pages</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'd suggest an area for rapid gains is where land is currently managed but some public access is permitted. For example, Oxford Business Park in East Oxford - greatly increasing tree numbers should be easily achievable whilst having minimal impact on business park users, but definite benefits for the surrounding community. Similarly, other business and retail parks may be the best way to start fast.<br/>The universities, large local employers and (of course) the Council itself should all be able to contribute to an urban forest transformation relatively quickly and economically.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be very clear that the priority is to create self-sustaining, resilient, permanent and biodiverse habitats because our world is in crisis. Yes it helps sequester carbon, but if the strategy is put in economic terms it will fail. Engage local schools, community groups and environmental groups. Distinguish between habitat creation for wildlife, and green spaces as</li> </ul>  |

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| amenities for people. They are not the same thing. DON'T use and poisonous chemicals anywhere and run a campaign to stop people using pesticides or herbicides.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More social events to make awareness about the importance of urban forest and biodiversity</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all new housing developments plan for open, green spaces within all future developments. Make sure any existing green spaces are protected by law. Prevent home owners from destroying their gardens. Use Google Earth to identify areas where planting could begin or be enhanced. Work with local Green Party representatives who will already have much of the information required.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to Dr Samuel Yutong Cai, senior environmental epidemiologist at Oxford University and ensure the strategy delivers all the positives of increased green canopy and biodiversity whilst minimising/removing the negatives.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please take great care not to plant trees in the way of cycling infrastructure. There is a segregated cycle path northbound on the Woodstock Road that is mostly ignored by cyclists because it is constantly interrupted by large trees in the middle of the path. I am not sure these trees are more important than a cycle path, given that they are all surrounded by a very large number of other very large trees. Of course politics is about trade-offs and priorities: in this specific case, *only* because they are surrounded by so many other trees, *and* because of the famously poor provision for cyclists in Oxford (as per National Infrastructure Commission report) I would prioritise the cycle path. If trees need to be located in a transport thoroughfare then perhaps this should be in the middle of a lane used by cars, not the middle of a lane used by cyclists.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a parent of primary school aged children I think schools could be great partners in this. They are looking to expand children's lives, teach them about ecology, mapping, local history, and give them outdoor experiences - this could fit well into all of this.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letters to council residents(or in the news lettet). Post on local social media. Local consultations.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the current community groups, churches, etc who already distribute regular newsletters, and ask them to include an item about planting trees and a means to get in touch about where they would like trees planted.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If we had more cars for communal use, many parking spaces would be freed (I would) and these could be the places to plant trees.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfortunately, I don't have any ideas, but as I live in one of the named 'deprived' areas, viz., Cowley (Temple Cowley), I would be happy to try and help</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A public suggestion forum for under-utilised spaces that could be enhanced. Also make use of the Milestone Design Team who would usually sit in the offices of Oxfordshire County Council. They analyse maps of Oxfordshire in designing highway maintenance and construction schemes, so while they're at it, why not make it part of their jobs to grade any surrounding natural areas for biodiversity / tree - planting potential within 2km of the site? For any areas reaching top marks, have them identify who owns the land, what soil type, what types of plants are there already, etc, so you know who to contact to</li> </ul>   |

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| <p>discuss enhancement opportunities and some basics about what could be done on the land. You could then use this information to begin conversations with the landowners. Land owned by the council could be fast-tracked. We should be ever developing more roadside nature reserves.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact the local resident associations around Oxford.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest starting with council owned land. You could ask schools and businesses if they have any suitable spaces too</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting local businesses to sponsor local tree planting<br/>Getting local neighbourhood groups to have local meetings to encourage people to get involved.<br/>Work with the schools in the area as they can inspire their families too get involved</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planting in exchange for advertising. A 'trail' of tree-friendly private business which people can support</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Release a rough map of the kind of areas available to plant trees, get people to vote where they should go and get people involved in planting trees and teaching them about growing trees and type of trees etc. Also Include teachings about biodiversity that comes from trees.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine satellite data to find roads with particularly low coverage, find suitable areas for new trees on those roads, then propose these plans to residents on the road. Allow them to propose alternative spots for trees.<br/>Use some car parking space to create space for trees.<br/>Plant more trees around the edges of parks</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible (untested)ideas:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Hold a tree festival, to inspire and educate on the qualities and benefits of trees, with trees available for public to take home. Communicate upfront via Facebook, Neighbourhood apps and letters to estates or other ways of highlighting that this is happening?</li> <li>2) On a certain week, issue saplings to participating businesses, so those who attend can take home and plant or distribute via public libraries or Broad Meadow?</li> <li>3) On-line map where people can 'pin' suggested places for trees?</li> <li>4) Consider how to reach those who are off-line, through local shops perhaps or a door to door mailing, depending on cost and effectiveness.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the most deprived areas most people do not have big gardens that can accommodate new trees. In these areas we will need businesses and institutions to find space - including the City Council. Perhaps we can incorporate more street trees into the long-term design of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. Shopping centre and other public and private carparks could also be used.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully engage with communities at a very detailed level. Time consuming and challenging but fully engaging will encourage people to get involved and feel involved. Look at the other initiatives and identify what are the enablers and barriers to success.</li> </ul>   |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most local roads have the capacity to host planters of some description that local residents could take responsibility for planting and even maintenance: trees, vegetables (whatever works to get people engaged).. The loss of one or two parking spaces is no price to pay to make this happen if the city is genuinely committed to reducing car usage. Many driveways have become hard bases. These are other areas where homeowners could be incentivised to return spaces to be planted, e.g. meadow/ wild flower spaces. Business parks should be treated in the same way. Assuming that a post Covid-19 hybrid way of working may become more normal for more people, there are significant gains potentially to be made in rewilding urban spaces and at the same time improving workers wellbeing and mental health</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the universities and Oxford School of Architecture.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it worth looking at which are the places that are being under-used - perhaps business park districts? Places where there's a lot of tarmac that isn't being used? Are new developments providing enough greenery? Can we make more verges with trees on pavements without them?</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The University and more particularly the Colleges have very significant land holdings. The Council is in a position to negotiate with Colleges, for example when they seek planning permission for new student accommodation. Several new student blocks have gone up in the last few years, (eg New College's new Gradel Quadrangles) with no information available about whether they are zero-carbon, have taken sustainability considerations into account, or what planting they are committing to. The University and Colleges are a huge part of the city and shouldn't be allowed to drag their feet on this. Schools are also key - they could be encouraged/supported to plant mixed hedging, have ponds and wild areas, turn small bits of grass over to meadow. Children would love it. Community groups are also valuable. The Parents For Future Oxford group, for example, is very active.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through existing local community networks and collaboration with city-wide campaigns and engagement opportunities as well as financial incentives such as free seeds, trees etc. Involving institutions and schools in the process.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have lobbied for tree planting around Templars Square for years with no avail. Authorities are not joined up. The response to tree planting in the area is that the cost associated with planting trees in the street is too expensive (despite the huge benefits they would bring). Furthermore, the (few) trees secured via recent planning permissions have been inadequate - of a young tree stock with no after care.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial incentives -- not simply for planting trees, as that could lead to letting them die or even cutting down mature trees to plant new ones -- but for increasing the canopy cover on one's land. Or financial penalties for reducing the canopy cover. Trees can be a financial liability: the leaves need to be cleared, and periodically you need a tree surgeon. They may also increase the frequency with which pavements need replacing. So often the financially savvy thing to do is to cut them all down: we need to change that financial equation.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the general public to put forward suitable spaces where they think additional trees would be a benefit.</li> </ul>   |

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| Encourage community groups and individuals to get involved to spread the project as widely as possible.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try local WhatsApp/ googlegroups</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think many people would be keen to volunteer with helping plant these new trees. If planting events are well advertised, I think lots of people would get involved.<br/>Some charities (e.g. The National Forest, Trees for Life) allow you to dedicate trees to your friends/ family etc. You can get a gift certificate or email informing you the number of trees planted, what species they are and the location they have been planted in. If members of the public could do this, I think it could help increase interest in the scheme</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging with local people to help them see the benefits. Involving schools.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with existing partners/professional relationships; whilst seeking out new links too.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tree lined boulevards are very pretty and would make downtown a lot more visually attractive. Would be in favor of taking out wide asphalt roads and planting trees down the middle to create canopy.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and engage with landowners and communities.<br/>Sell the benefits<br/>Show them how it can be done.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I love trees and have pioneered community interactive poetry performance in the environment especially in relation to ancient trees the ginkgo and sequoia. I worked in schools under Southern Arts for many years. I am still capable of working locally, both on site and on ZOOM. I created an artist's book HOW! SEQUOIA abased on my photos of the row of 10 in Hinksey Park, its text described a community performance of these magnificent trees.<br/>For SPACEX Exeter I created ARAUCARIA ARUCANA, a community event for local children and families by the historic Monkey Puzzles in Poltimore Park</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think the University and colleges own a lot of open spaces within the city and there's plenty of scope for tree planting (although this generally wouldn't be in the council's priority area)</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oxford mail, local tv news, Facebook, Twitter, a series of public meetings</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You might want to use what3words to map, share, and navigate in a human-friendly, efficient way to planted trees' locations?</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an online platform for virtual local conservation groups to meet up and discuss.<br/>Develop local surveys to complement the Oxfordshire Tree information survey</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicise widely, and distribute info to all local low carbon groups, and through the bods who are organising the campaign to double tree cover in Oxon and their mailing list. Also through schools.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example is a good way to show others how to improve their areas. So if the council starts taking better care of the streets it</li> </ul>  |

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| <p>may encourage communities to follow.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council can plant trees in drive ways just next to pavements or directly to pavements if there is space. The trees homogenize the city but also provide natural pacifications in roads.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the inclusion of specific planting requirements a condition of planning approval and review plans to ensure appropriate species are being planted. Encourage primary schools to garden/plant seeds. Consider making appropriate saplings available to individuals to plant. Maybe an urban forest award scheme for businesses who plant trees. As well as charging a workplace car parking levy make planting trees a condition of keeping the spaces - there are suitable species for planting in urban settings.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help local community groups (like Low Carbon groups around the city) with their outreach to their community - provide information and materials they can share and facilitate meetings/engagement between those groups and landowners in their area.<br/>Have a webpage/email address/ other forms of communication, where people can easily send the council information about where there can be some planting in their area. As simple as - "there is an empty verge at so and so address near my house that can be planted". The percentage of useful information sent that way might not be very high, but I reckon it will provide quite a bit of knowledge that would take the council much more resources to identify in other ways.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacing trees in existing vacant plots on local streets. Gathorne road being an example</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the model of Ford Motor Company in Bridgend - it put £100K in to the Spirit of Llynfi Woodland, aiming to benefit the health of employees, topping up Welsh Gov funding. I hear that the Mini Plant was even skeptical of natural flood management to protect the railway line it uses, but it may still be worth a concerted effort to see if it can be encouraged to offset the emissions from its operations by tree planting, with the added benefit of huge kudos and health benefits.<br/>Talk to the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment about pooling of the interests of lots of businesses in having a healthy attractive environment to work. Individual businesses may provide tokenistic support for trees. Together they can achieve much more. Perhaps a kind of corporate crowdfunding effort?</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>YES!!! WORK WITH US!!!</b><br/>We in Sandhills Naturehood and our partner groups in Risinghurst and Barton are REALLY ENGAGED and ENERGETIC about local biodiversity. We have been working with Risinghurst and Sandhills Parish Council (PC) for months now to try to propel forward a local tree planting plan. We have carried out street surveys, drawn up indexed maps with proposed tree planting sites, and worked with the PC to try to get these plans put into action. But progress has been painfully slow - as far as we understand, because of beaurocracy, and inability to engage Oxford Direct Services. The PC has really struggled to make any headway, with lack of response from Sam Prior or Andy Lederer. We have been promised a meeting since April, which has yet to happen.<br/>This is one example of the painfully ineffective process of today -- Please work with us, and local equivalentents in every local</li> </ul> |

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| community in Oxford, you will be able to get local plans together -- What we need from you are the resources to coordinate the planning, the budget, and then commissioning the planting and management through and effective tree management organisation.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media is good. Posters on community noticeboards, the press to mention a few. BBOWT and FOLV have the knowledge and should be part of the consultation.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developers such as Cala and Thomas White should be required to fund community tree planting days, providing equipment, expert supervision and appropriately aged saplings. This should only take place at the time of year the young trees are most likely to succeed. Plus guaranteed horticulture services should be provided by developers without increasing already high services charges further, both on their sites and in the local area.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above. Individuals or local communities can play their part. Urban, residential streets need more trees planted along them. Morrell Avenue looks great and is a good example of what could be achieved, although smaller urban trees would need to be planted so they aren't then cut down when encroaching on windows/homes etc.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with local community groups vital.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take advice and engagement from local wildlife and conservation groups, allotment associations, local community hubs. Encouraging people to water street trees and take appropriate steps to care for trees on their street.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• * Get a neighbourhood/ street involved in planting and looking after the new trees. I've read that even dirty dishwater is OK for trees. This could become a social focus point as well - meeting your neighbours after washing-up time pouring the water out by the tree. It's a talking point. And we can unite in our desire to make our street a more human- and wildlife-friendly place.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Perhaps a bench under some of the trees, so that in summer people can sit under a tree, finding fresh and cooler air, getting outdoor time [vitamin D, microbiome, etc].</li> <li>* Involve neighbourhoods in hanging bird nesting boxes in the trees.</li> <li>* Education about the trees in the street and what they do to our health [e.g. a leaflet through the door/a sign by a tree with some of the data e.g. leaf surface, how much water a tree drinks each day, tree's name and what they have been used for in the past [e.g. boat and house building, baskets], a guide to some of the wildlife that lives in them</li> <li>* For children, quest-walks, e.g. 'where is the oak tree/ linden tree etc, with a guide of what the trees look like; try and take a picture of a ... [insect] and say where you found it, with prizes. Get lessons into schools about the trees near it, the biology of trees, how humans benefit from trees, how to look after them.</li> <li>* In safe places, perhaps a swinging rope or a swing hanging from a tree?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The University of Oxford has a Sustainability office and many departments and colleges have Green Impact programs.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents and businesses should be reminded that trees provide much-needed shade that can cool our homes and make it</li> </ul>   |

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| so much more pleasant to walk outside.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repeated from 6, and expanded. This contributor: As regards carbon storage/sequestration, peat (as in Lye Valley and if kept wet) holds far more carbon securely, long-term, than the same area being planted with trees, as these release CO2 on death and decay at the end of their lives. This contributor: open grassland of many sorts also sequesters carbon. Never plant trees on natural or semi-natural grassland sites. 'Plant a tree' is a mantra that is over-used. It is not always the best way of increasing or maintaining biodiversity (the Woodland Trust has made some poor decisions in the past.) If planting on either greenfield or brownfield sites, do a proper assessment of the biodiversity to ensure net gain, not replacement of one ecological community by a commoner and possibly less diverse one.<br/>Hold local meetings to find out how local people use or would like to use sites proposed for mass tree planting. Engage with their expertise to recruit tree or nature wardens for the area and give them a site to report back to that will forward comments to OCC.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes we can plant trees in Begbroke which has the potential of an excellent wildlife corridor.</li> </ul>  |

## Question 5 - If you have space in your garden (front or back) what would encourage you to plant a tree?

There were 108 responses to this question and are listed below. Common themes include providing people with appropriate tree species and maintenance guidance. There is particular interest in fruit trees. These ideas will be taken forward in the next steps when developing our engagement strategies further.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fruit benefit for me and wildlife. Fruit trees are great for biodiversity too.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rental agreement with landlords to encourage them to allow tenants to plant trees.<br/>Guide for public to know what sort of tree is appropriate for the space you have in your garden including how close a tree can be planted to your house and which tree species are best for wildlife and which ones are native to the UK.<br/>Discounts or deals for trees at local garden centres including multiple buys.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nothing - I have too many trees already!<br/>If I didn't have too many, then maybe recognition on a website showing that I had contributed or even a council led tree shop potentially with some sort of guide to choosing and then a running total of how many have been planted?</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I don't need encouragement, but if I did then maybe a free tree and maybe if there could be an option of fruit trees, that would be great and might encourage more cooking from scratch as well - for example Apple pies in the autumn, if you had an apple tree gifted for your garden.</li> </ul>   |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sapling collection points would be good where residents can pick up a tree for free or for a donation with advice on planting and caring for it. The Woodland Trust did this well at Countryfile Live giving away native saplings with a one-page of advice (this could also be online).</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouragement to Landlords to do so as the city is increasingly moving to private rentals rather than ownership.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• see above comment</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our garden has lots of trees and shrubs/ I to was the first thing we planted.<br/>We will always plant any available space with trees.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More trees in front gardens would be great to serve as street trees. A discount for the brown wheelie bin if you have a tree at the front would make it easier for people to look after their tree/keep their yard tidy.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have planted five fruit trees in my back garden. Would like to plant some more in front garden too. However we do have a very large tree just before our front garden. If someone can come and look at our garden and plant some more fruit trees for free that would be so good. We can then look after them ourselves.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if it was a fruit-bearing tree</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My son would LOVE it!!</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on choosing a suitable tree and low cost</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A free tree.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on size n importance.<br/>But individuals can't make the difference that the city can. Nature needs to be joined up. All road verges and central reservations and roundabouts could be planted with trees and hedges.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the impact of the roots on nearby drainpipes</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have already planted some trees</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I already have planted several trees in both front and back garden</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing what tree/large shrub is most suitable for garden size or site. Perhaps a guide on recommended trees/shrubs for small gardens. Information about which ones are most beneficial to the environment and the fauna of our local area. Also details of the companion plants that work well with the tree.<br/>Knowing which trees we are lacking in Oxford, so I plant something we are short of.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes but I rent from a private landlord. This information needs to also be communicated with landlords who live in Oxford and those who do not live in Oxford to enable tenants to take part and not be restricted through tenancy agreements.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more space!</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YES</li> </ul>  |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If I didn't rent and have a tiny unsuitable garden space I'd be on it!<br/>There are lots of people in my situation- give us an opportunity too or we lose interest; not mowing, indowsill growing, counting species we find, there are lots of ways to engage people who can't plant trees trees keep them in the conversation and have a wider positive impact</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have trees already, but no front garden. I would like to see more street trees on terrace streets, perhaps moveable planters between parking spaces.<br/>Insurance companies consider trees a risk so a national strategy about reduction in climate change risk vs falling tree and root problems would be helpful.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allready planted</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be given a tree that is appropriate and guidance on where and how to plant it.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Already have one. When these houses were built in the 1930s they all had a fruit tree. Many of us still have these original trees</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A baby tree and proper tools for maintenance. Also, watering costs money so locked taps at intervals might be an idea. Key holders could be retired volunteers who could co ordinate unlock times for watering.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have planted as many as I can. However what might encourage others is information about low maintenance trees, trees that won't cause issues for their buildings, and where to buy affordable young trees and transport/deliver them.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and support for how to grow/ maintain it</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discount tree sale with advice on how to plant it and care for it ( watering, pruning, location, time of year)</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on size, suitability for soil, care, height, tree options, images of what the look like fully grown, cost</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The size of the tree, the biodiversity that this would encourage</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have a very large oak, and equally large ash and sycamore in the end part of my garden - any more, other than shrubs, would be problematic.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I don't have a garden but if I had I would be encoruaged by :             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the tree coming free</li> <li>2. that I could chose it</li> <li>3. that I could have support in maintaining it</li> </ol> </li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directions on what kind of trees would be more beneficial, ressources on how to plant/take care of trees and what to use for gardening without harming the environment.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I don't have much space left to plant more trees - but would be happy to join in with a city-wide commitment to do so.<br/>If the city came up with a commitment that we should plant one new tree for every child in the city today - would that be</li> </ul>   |

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| <p>enough? This sort of metric would be very easily scaled to each school/community, and you could imagine designing a simple slogan/campaign on this basis?</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing I'm afraid - don't want any trees in my garden as I like light</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater knowledge of the (very) local area e.g. if planting a tree that will require others to cross-pollinate (for fruit perhaps), knowing there are potential matches in range is helpful. More generally, simply encouraging residents to actually plant on their plots is good, especially if providing basic details on which species might work best i.e. what counts as a native tree, how far away from buildings should a sapling go in etc.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I personally have planted several trees but that's not enough on its own - I don't mow the grass, I have a large uncut hedge, and wildflowers. Planting a single tree doesn't help that much. But people may like to plant fruit trees to enjoy the fruit as well as blossom etc. Most people like birds - encourage them by pointing out the value of trees for birds.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consultant of a botanic or of an expert to know more about trees and how to take care</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Someone to manage it as it grows at a reasonable cost (most charge a colossal amount for a simple pruning), especially as I am disabled and unable to manage them myself. Ensure that any trees planted will not destroy the foundations of the house over time - ie pick the right species for the space available.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We already have as many trees as our space allows.<br/>       Ensure people have the best advice on the kind of trees to plant in their area and in their space.<br/>       Offer discounts on a range of the most suitable trees.<br/>       People can't plant too close to their house due to the risk of root damage. However planting at the limits of a front garden is likely to lead to branches overhanging/obstructing footpaths. Not everyone has the tools, ability, skills or inclination to keep a tree in check and tree surgeons are expensive. Make sure all these factors are considered before people plant. it is irresponsible to just say 'plant trees'.<br/>       In many cases, planting shrubs is just as beneficial to wildlife and health and should be actively encouraged in the strategy. Again, a list or discount offer on the most suitable varieties would be a great help. It also allows people to feel good about 'doing their bit' if they can't or don't want to plant a tree.<br/>       Get the Oxford Mail to do an offer on shrubs like they did with bike helmets a while ago.<br/>       Many people, particularly in the deprived areas, may not have spades, etc. or gardening knowledge to plant shrubs or trees. Offer this assistance eg. loan of tools, someone to plant the shrub for you, etc. to low income families, elderly, or really anyone who wants it.<br/>       Ensure new builds include shrubs and hedgehog access in the gardens.<br/>       Make sure new planting doesn't prevent work being done. Some years ago we needed to extend our driveway but were blocked as it was under a tree canopy.</li> </ul> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting rid of the automatic TPO on small unexceptional trees in conservation areas. I should say, I am a fan of trees! However many people we know are cautious about planting trees, because when they grow over a certain size they are automatically covered by a TPO, after which the council insists that any shaping or trimming is done by a specialist tree surgeon. This is very expensive, trimming can't be done by a normal gardener, and any trimming requires a form for permission from the council. In my view this is overkill, and this expense and complication (over pretty small trees!) makes people cautious about planting. I understand the intention of automatic TPOs but the blanket implementation, expense, admin, delay, and inflexibility is huge overkill for trimming or replacement of fairly small trees.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We've already planted loads of fruit trees in our small residential garden over the past 5 years (apple, pear, cherry, plum, and not-so-native quince, lemon, and tangerine). If we hadn't already done that I'd be interested to have been given more advice on how to choose native trees that, as I understand from reading the Master Plan, might have been a better choice from the biodiversity front (if not the dinner table front).<br/>Looking to the future I'd still consider, say, replacing part of our privet hedge with hawthorn to make a more natural hedgerow-style border which needs less clipping and might harbour more biodiversity, and I would appreciate more guidance on whether or not it's a good idea to do this, and how to do it.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I would plant as many as I could</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information about how big different species grow, which ones are good for wildlife.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assurance that help (financial if need be) would be available to care for the tree, so it does no harm the house when grown.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We would like to plant trees along the lane and around our fences to act as a hedge for carbon absorption, pollution and noise mitigation, privacy and calming views, but it would involve digging up concrete, gaining permission/approval from our neighbours and buying and planting the trees</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There already are trees in my backgarden. If there weren't, I'd say just a fairly simple ad campaign to put the idea in my head, with links to guidance on suitable types of tree and a place I can buy the seeds/saplings.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sadly I don't have space. Else I would plant a tree that attracts pollinators.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I already have!</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having one donated with instructions of how to plant/ look after</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A different variety of tree that wasn't too big and brought colour or fruit</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Owning private property (I rent, as do many in oxford)</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not to have to pay too much, and assurance it wouldn't affect the foundations of the house.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A supply of cheap saplings, advice on what to plant for a given space and how to care for the young trees</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I rent so unfortunately it's not my garden to plant in, but if I was offered free seedlings maybe and advice I think that'd help people, and info on how to encourage biodiversity within gardens including not mowing grass as often and having wildflower</li> </ul>  |

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| <p>areas instead of just lawn.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I already planted 8 small fruit trees and eager and willing to do more! Might need some physical help due to health - and where there's a will there's a way!</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would love to plant a tree on the grass verge in front of my house - but it is not my land! I would be pleased to do the work and look after the tree. Perhaps the City Council might have a scheme of granting local residents permission to plant street trees.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I already have trees and no space. Those that don't and might want to will need support in knowing 'where to start' ie who will pay for the tree, who will dig the hole, who will support me in caring for it, what tree should it be, what do I do if it dies?</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surely it would be better to encourage people with garden space to grow hedgerow style plants and shrubs (Hawthorne etc) and appropriate small trees that will attract bees for pollination etc. (Malus and other Apple/ fruit varieties which could be Oxfordshire based heritage varieties?)<br/>There is a lot of evidence to suggest that moss is very effective at capturing carbon, so moss walls etc should also be explored as options for smaller urban spaces.<br/>In terms of encouragement to plant, a sustainably sourced stock which we could purchase at subsidised rates (or even "x" plants per road offered for free as incentives for wider take up amongst neighbours) would be good. Local nurseries supplying stock so that there are no or minimal transport costs would enable further clean air gain</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Screening, shade, edible yield.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I've got almost as many trees as I can fit in my garden front and back - it's a narrow terraced house garden - we have about 5 bigish trees and 15 small ones and loads of shrubs/ivy etc. I think it would be encouraging to be able to adopt a tree for your garden - volunteer to adopt one which you go and choose? Volunteer your front garden to be rewilded and have volunteers come round and plant it - if you're in a nature-deprived area?</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would love to plant a tree! In fact I have several trees in pots that I daren't plant in the ground because they're jay-planted oaks and squirrel-planted horse-chestnuts and will end up massive. If I got hold of a silver birch or something similar, that would be lovely. (If you could give my saplings a home, that would also be wonderful.)</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donated tree's with clear instructions on how to plant. Mini competitions</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a sapling</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm afraid my garden already has all the trees it can hold -- sorry!</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance in choosing the right sort of tree for the space so that it doesn't get too big and a problem</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community event with information on how to plant and care for a tree and perhaps subsidised trees to take home</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If I could own any land in Oxford it would be covered in trees. Making property affordable would be a helpful way to move</li> </ul>   |

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| <p>your strategy forward, as landlords genuinely don't care about such things. Having half of Oxford's properties owned by people that don't live in them means that Oxford residents don't have options for planting trees or planting gardens that support biodiversity and pollinators.</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower cost of medium to large sized saplings.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I overplant with trees anyway, for others you have to explain personal Benefits:<br/>Free tree<br/>Help planting with compost and feed<br/>A garden "buddy" to help maintain the tree/ planting<br/>Environment/ cleaner air/ attracts wildlife/ shade / meeting place</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If instructions for how to plant and care for your tree were very clear. Also having links to where you could purchase your trees from, with local businesses and organisations prioritised.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I do this already.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have planted a number of trees in my garden. Some purely for wildlife, and some for nut and fruit produce as well as wildlife.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing it wouldn't invalidate insurance or damage property.<br/>Making it easy.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alas no more room. We have a fine example of a Whitebeam of the original landscaping of our development in our front planting we have professionally pruned every 3 years to match its twin in an opposite house, this makes a fine vista ad you come down our road, softening the brickwork of our tall houses. The tree is now 40 years old but looks very healthy.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Database of tree types that can be filtered by the type of space, size of tree, etc. in order to see the best options for the location.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So that the roots don't damage the building. Knowing what size the tree might get to and what would thrive in the soil.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a lot of trees in our garden, no room for more. But a bit of guidance on how to go about planting and looking after a tree would encourage me. We planted fruit trees once we had an idea of how to do it.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• n/a - I sadly do not have a garden of my own.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of what sort of tree to plant and how to support it in the early years of growth.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance with planting process for a larger tree</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• yes</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The promise of fruit!</li> </ul>   |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidance on how to look after it, as well as a starter kit of items needed to nurture it in its first year.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A nice guide with information about the best type of trees you can plant would help. For example, examples of trees for each orientation. My front garden is west, so a tree that is deciduous with not strong roots can be a good choice so in winter it allows the sun to come through, but in summer when it is too hot it shades and protects the house. Having also information about how they can shelter from wind and other benefits for wildlife would be nice. A second idea, would be offering not only advice, but a free tree.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the park space is really bad in my area (ox44bt) i use my front garden as park space but i have plants and bushes. Also, i have already fruit trees in my rear garden.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have already planted several but if I hadn't I can imagine that maybe the offer of a free sapling and instructions might have, children can be very persuasive so I think a campaign in local schools would be effective and publicising the benefits trees have to everyone and the possible wildlife that may visit would also encourage people.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back garden is already as full of trees as it is likely to be. But regarding the front garden - help with removing some of the paved-over area, as well as advice on which species of trees would be appropriate there and where exactly (for example - closer to the pavement side, so it provides shade to people walking, or will that obstruct the pavement?)</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help to choose and source one</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice as to the choice of tree and an initiative to provide cost effective community planning.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good advice over tree selection and maintenance. Social pressure to do the right thing.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideas for you             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recommendation of appropriate trees to plant;</li> <li>- Information to all residents about the benefits of planting small trees in gardens;</li> <li>- Incentivisation -eg £5 or £10 off of garden waste annual fee or council tax</li> <li>- Access to discounted tree purchase, perhaps if you are able to negotiate a discount with a preferred supplier.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have enough trees in my back and front garden but I would love an area set aside locally for a community orchard ....I asked for an area around Bullingdon Community Centre/ Girdlestone Road but was told no. I have seen one prosper in York.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can only afford to rent so cannot plant trees in my current garden. Providing affordable housing with properly planted outdoor spaces or at least a garden that has sufficient topsoil for planting over building rubble would help.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We already have!</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's already full of trees.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I live in a wooded area so my focus is on planting for insects/pollinators and increasing biodiversity and wildlife habitat.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• * Know that it won't grow too large [e.g. Leylandiae :(] and will be manageable to keep</li> </ul>   |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>* Not so big it takes sun or light away from the house - in small gardens around 3-bed semis there isn't a lot of space,</li><li>* Flowers/ fragrant flowers</li><li>* Know that it will live - i.e. how to care for it after planting</li><li>* I love having fruit trees.</li></ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unfortunately I don't have a yard.</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I already have a birch &amp; an apple tree</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I already have 7 trees on my property, but we would really like to have trees planted to replace the many trees lost on the verges just outside my property.</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I already have slightly too many trees. Only two of them were of my own planting--hawthorn</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I am planning on planting at least 2 trees in my garden in the autumn.</li></ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Free availability of plants.</li></ul>  |

## Responses received by letter

### Oxford University Estates

The Oxford University Estates Service has responded to the strategy. In summary, the University support the strategy and are committed to helping us to deliver it. The University is keen to work with the City Council to enable the delivery of street trees and overcome issues with underground infrastructure and services. Species selection is also important in urban areas. The University suggest that in areas of low biodiversity value e.g. car parks that on-native climate resistant species are chosen and the priority is on environmental amelioration. In areas of existing or high biodiversity potential that native species are chosen. The University support the objective to consider tree health and in particular the impact of invasive species and diseases. Working together on this Urban Forest Strategy will help to achieve the University's targets for net zero carbon and biodiversity net gain.

### Friends of Lye Valley

The Friends of Lye Valley submitted a response detailing their suggestions for council tree policies, management and the urban forest. A further 3 individuals wrote in endorsing the Friends of Lye Valley response. The response stresses that the right trees, in the right places with the right management is fundamental to ensure their survival. The City Council welcome the well informed detailed comments and will take them into account in the development of detailed planting plans. The Friends of Lye Valley will be invited to be involved in the development of these plans in any case. Their comments have not specifically been incorporated into

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the Urban Forest Strategy as the strategy seeks to set a strategic direction for the city. Detailed tree management and planting plans are beyond the scope of the strategy at this stage.

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## **Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 21 July 2021**

www.oxford.gov.uk



### **Committee members present:**

Councillor Brown (Chair)

Councillor Turner

Councillor Hayes

Councillor Hollingsworth

Councillor Rowley

Councillor Upton

### **Also present:**

Councillor Elizabeth Wade, Liberal Democrat Deputy Group Leader

### **Officers present for all or part of the meeting:**

Caroline Green, Chief Executive (attended via remote link)

Susan Sale, Monitoring Officer and Head of Law & Governance

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy

Adrian Arnold, Head of Planning Services

Rachel Williams, Principal Planner

John Mitchell, Committee and Member Services Officer

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

### **Apologies:**

Councillors Arshad, Aziz, Blackings and Clarkson sent apologies.

## **18. Declarations of Interest**

None.

## **19. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public**

Dr Robinson had submitted a statement on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural England Oxfordshire concerning the report on the Oxfordshire Plan to be considered later on the agenda. Her statement and the response to it given by Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, are attached to these minutes.

## **20. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Board's agenda**

None.

## 21. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

## 22. Items raised by Board Members

None.

## 23. Scrutiny Committee Reports

Cllr Liz Wade, speaking as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, thanked Cllr Hayes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford and Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy, for their contribution to what had been a very full discussion of the report on the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Strategy. It was important, first, to note the Committee's overall clear support for the principle of the Strategy and what it would seek to achieve. As Chair of a new Committee she was keen that it should provide helpful and constructive criticism of Council proposals and that its recommendations should, therefore, provide a fair reflection of the Committee's views. The recommendations made in relation to the EV Strategy flowed, in some cases, from having taken a vote in which the majority of Committee members had abstained.

After some discussion it was agreed that there would be merit in asking the Committee to revisit the report and its recommendations with a view to re-submission of them to the next meeting of Cabinet. While the consultation which the Cabinet report sought to approve might go ahead, the Committee's final recommendations could still add value and be considered before the Strategy was finalised.

## 24. Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 (Part 2) consultation document

The Head of Planning Services had submitted a report to consider the approval of the Oxfordshire Plan consultation document which sets out a range of planning policy options and a series of spatial strategy options for Oxfordshire.

Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing Delivery, introduced the report. The Oxfordshire Plan would be a new strategic planning document which would sit 'between' the National Planning Policy Framework (and the Oxford- Cambridge Arc) and Local Plans. All Oxfordshire's planning authorities and the County Council were being asked to approve the document for public consultation. It was important to note that the Council would be submitting responses to the document in its own capacity as a consultee in due course.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Regulation 18 (Part 2) consultation document for public consultation as attached;
2. **Authorise** the Head of Planning Services to make any necessary editorial corrections and minor amendments to the documents, and to agree the final publication style, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Planning & Housing Delivery subject to agreement with their counterparts in the other four partner Local Planning Authorities; and
3. **Adopt** the updated Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which will become the formal basis for the forthcoming Regulation Part 2 consultation.

## 25. Integrated Performance Report for Q4

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to update Members on the financial outturn for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance & Asset Management, introduced the report. It was very pleasing to note the ability to bring forward proposals for about 200 units of housing as a result of the Growth Deal, something which would make a real contribution to addressing the City's housing need. The report also dealt with the financial outturn of an exceptionally challenging year and a deficit on the general fund of just over £2m. Greater losses had been mitigated to some extent by Government grant but this was not, by and large, expected to continue. The longer term consequences of Covid would affect the Council's income streams for some time to come, such as those for commercial property and car parking. All of this emphasised the need for a fair funding settlement for local government. Despite the challenges, it was also pleasing to note that the Council's savings and efficiency targets had been met. Overall there had been no surprises and the outturn had been much as expected following such a challenging year.

It was confirmed that the Go Ultra Low On Street Charging project was being re-scoped, Phase 1 of the project having been completed, Phase 2 was currently paused. The current focus of the EV team was on the Go Ultra Low Taxi project which was going well.

It was noted that a number of projects had been put on hold as a result of Covid. Bringing them back on stream would have resource implications, not least because of the need, in some cases, to spend grant funding by deadlines, some of which may be soon and close to one another.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the financial outturn and performance of the Council for the year 2020/21 and also the position on risks outstanding as at 31st March 2021;
2. **Agree** the transfer from the COVID emergency reserve of £2.043 million detailed in paragraph 2a;
3. **Agree** the carry forward requests in respect of the HRA of £1.881 million as shown in appendix D;
4. **Agree** the transfer to the HRA Contributions to HRA Reserves to fund future years capital works of £6.476 million detailed in paragraph 2c; and

### **Recommend to Council:**

5. That it approves a revision to the general fund capital budget in 2021/22 of £4,984,000, for the grant payment in relation to Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (OGD) schemes. In addition to give a further approval for a capital budget for 2025/26 of £33,000 to fund the remaining grant balance payable for the schemes all of which will be funded by capital grant income from Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (OGD) detailed in paragraph 26 and in doing so:

- a. Give project approval to accept and distribute grant; enter into funding agreements; and any other necessary agreements or contracts, for the purpose of

delivering more affordable housing in Oxford, through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal programme;

b. Delegates authority to the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Council's Monitoring Officer, to enter into funding and other necessary agreements for the purpose of delivery affordable housing through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal programme, within the identified budget; and

c. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Finance and Asset Management, and Planning and Housing Delivery, to approve any agreements over £500,000 for affordable housing, within this project approval and budget envelope.

## **26. Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Strategy**

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report to seek approval to commission an EV Strategy.

Councillor Tom Hughes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, introduced the report. The report sought agreement to proceed with the commissioning of an EV strategy as part of a contribution to the City's 2040 net zero carbon target.

In response to points made earlier in the meeting he confirmed that Go Ultra Low Taxi charging points would also be available for public use.

The Chair noted that this was matter of ever increasing public interest, not least in respect of the issues for the many parts of the City with terraced housing and no access to off street parking. The relatively high costs of charging via a public charging point as compared with a domestic one was fuelling this debate. It was agreed that communications/responses to questions about this were particularly important pending completion of the strategy.

It would probably be desirable to consider the extent to which charging points installed by other organisations such as the universities might, also, be made available to the public.

The provision of charging points throughout the City raised some interesting challenges. On the one hand they needed to be placed, ideally by the Council, where there was the greatest likelihood of uptake on the other it was important to ensure that those parts of the City where there was less likelihood of immediate uptake were not disenfranchised from what would be an increasingly important development.

Cllr Hayes concluded by noting that neither the Council nor ODS would have capacity to provide all the charging points which would eventually be required but it could, via the strategy, facilitate their installation and on the Council's terms. The strategy would make clear that the introduction of electric vehicles would not provide all the answers and that other means of transport within the City would be encouraged wherever possible.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the commissioning of Oxford City Council's EV Strategy, which will set out the strategic framework for the delivery of EV infrastructure in line with the city's 2040 net zero carbon target; and
2. **Note** the update provided on Oxford City Council's EV Programme

## 27. Appointments to outside bodies

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report to agree appointments to charities, trusts, community associations and other organisations for the 2021/22 Council Year.

The Chair briefly introduced the report which reflected the conclusion of discussions and agreements which had previously taken place .

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** appointments to charities, trusts, community associations and other organisations as shown in Appendices 1A – 1D; and note the appointments to partnerships as detailed in Appendix 1E;
2. **Note** the guidance for appointees as detailed in Appendix 2; and
3. **Delegate** authority to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, and where appropriate with other group leaders, to make any changes to appointments to Outside Bodies as may be required during the course of the Council year 2021/22.

## 28. Minutes

**Cabinet resolved to approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2021 as a true and accurate record.

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

The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) had submitted a report asking Cabinet and 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.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the decision taken as set out in the report and recommend to Council to note the decision.

## 30. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

- 11 August (*please note that this meeting is now cancelled*).
- 15 September
- 13 October
- 10 November
- 15 December

**The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.10 pm**

**Chair .....Date: Wednesday 15 September 2021**

**To:** Cabinet – 15 September 2021  
Council – 04 October 2021

**Report of:** Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)

**Title of Report:** Decisions taken under Parts 9.3(b) of the Constitution

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Summary and recommendations</b> |   |
| <b>Purpose of report:</b>          | Cabinet and Council are asked to note the decision taken by the Head of Paid Service using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution. |
| <b>Recommendation:</b>             | Cabinet is recommended to:  |
| 1.                                 | <b>Note</b> the decision taken as set out in the report and recommend to Council to note the decision.  |

|                   |
|-------------------|
| <b>Appendices</b> |
| None              |

## Introduction and background

1. This report updates Cabinet and Council on a decision taken by the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Council's Constitution.
2. Where urgency powers are used the Constitution requires the Head of Paid Service to report, in writing, as soon as practicable to the body which would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act.

### **9.3 Role of Head of Paid Service**

...

*(b) The Head of Paid Service is authorised to take any urgent action necessary to protect the Council's interests and assets where time is of the essence and it is impracticable to secure authority to act where such authority would otherwise be required.*

*The Head of Paid Service, in so acting, will be guided by budget and the policy framework, will consult the other Statutory Officers before acting and will report, in writing, as soon as practicable to the body which would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act.*

### Decisions taken using urgency powers

3. The following decision has been taken using urgency powers for which Cabinet and Council would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act. Cabinet is responsible for recommending budget allocations and transfers between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account to Council and Council is responsible for agreeing the budget and agreeing transfers between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. Cabinet is asked to note the decision and to recommend to Council to note the decision.
4. This report does not include decisions taken using urgency or emergency powers that have previously been reported to Cabinet or Council.

| ITEM 1  | QL PROGRAMME ADDITIONAL SPEND  |
|---|--|
|   | <p>To commit expenditure of £229,112 to provide additional project resources to recover the QL system implementation from 16 June 2021 to 30 September 2021, and a further £146,260 up to June 2022, when the implementation will be complete and able to deliver the key business benefits to the Council and ODS.</p> <p>75% of the cost will be charged to the Housing Revenue Account given the nature of the system being implemented with the balance being funded from General Fund reserves.</p>   |
| <b>Date of decision:</b>  | 01/07/21   |
| <b>Decision taker</b>   | <p>Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)</p> <p>Decision taken in consultation with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Susan Brown, Leader</li> <li>• Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management</li> <li>• Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services</li> <li>• Paul Leo, Director of Housing</li> <li>• Nigel Kennedy the Head of Financial Services</li> <li>• Susan Sale, Head of Law and Governance</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Was the decision taken under emergency or urgency rules?</b> | <p>Constitution 9.3(b):</p> <p><i>The Head of Paid Service is authorised to take any urgent action necessary to protect the Council's interests and assets where time is of the essence and it is impracticable to secure authority to act where such authority would otherwise be required.</i></p> <p><i>The Head of Paid Service, in so acting, will be guided by budget and the policy framework, will consult the other Statutory Officers before acting and will report, in writing, as soon as practicable to the body which would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act.</i></p> |
| <b>Is this a Key Decision?</b>                                  | No   |
| <b>Reasons for decision</b>                                     | Phase 1 of the QL Housing System went live on 20 May 2021. A number of significant issues arose as a result of its implementation. As a result the programme implementation is in  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>a status of “<b>recovery</b>”. The recovery of this implementation is business critical to both the Council and ODS. A review of the QL Housing System Programme Implementation has been undertaken by the Director of Housing in parallel with putting in place programme interventions to stabilise the programme and deal with immediate issues.</p> <p>As a result of the review, there have been developed a series of planned actions and decisions and the recommendations include bringing in a programme manager with appropriate project recovery expertise and changes to internal governance to improve timely decision making and assurance and risk management without disrupting or detracting from the work underway to progress the project.</p> |
| <b>Alternative options considered:</b> | <p>Given the business critical nature of the system in supporting the housing management, property repairs and finance functions, and the difficulties experience to date, the alternatives considered were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abandon the implementation which would mean not realising the business benefits across the organisation and would increase costs further.</li> <li>• Not bringing in additional specialised resource would delay the implementation further and increase the risk of continuing to fail to implement the system.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Wards significantly affected</b>    | None   |

### Financial issues

5. The financial issues arising from the decision are set out in the published decisions notice and any supporting documents. The detailed breakdown of expenditure is commercially sensitive pending a compensation claim.

### Legal issues

6. The urgency and emergency powers of the Head of Paid Service are set out in Part 9.3 of the Constitution. The responsibilities for budget decisions are set out in Part 18.8 of the Council’s Constitution.

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Report author</b>       | Andrew Brown   |
| Job title                  | Committee and Member Services Manager                            |
| Service area or department | Law and Governance   |
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**Background Papers: None**



**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 15 September 2021  
**Report of:** Head of Corporate Strategy  
**Title of Report:** Decarbonisation Programme update

| <b>Summary and recommendations</b>                |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Purpose of report:</b>                         | To provide an update on the decarbonisation programme and seek approval for the de-scoping of the programme to remain within budget and issue contracts for construction works.   |
| <b>Key decision:</b>                              | Yes   |
| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>                            | Councillor Tom Hayes, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford   |
| <b>Corporate Priority:</b>                        | Zero Carbon Oxford  |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>                          | Council Strategy 2020-24  |
| <b>Recommendations:</b> That Cabinet resolves to: |   |
| 1.  | <b>Approve</b> the de-scoping of the Decarbonisation Programme through the removal of the Ice Rink and Rose Hill Community Centre;  |
| 2.  | <b>Note</b> that the full costs of decarbonisation works will utilise 100% of the Salix grant funding available, so there will no longer be any grant contribution available towards the enabling works, contrary to the earlier report to Cabinet; |
| 3.  | <b>Note</b> that the Head of Corporate Strategy will shortly execute the contract for both enabling and decarbonisation construction work on behalf of the Council, as previously delegated by Cabinet; and   |
| 4.  | <b>Note</b> the update provided on the Decarbonisation Programme and solar farm investment.   |

| <b>Appendices</b> |                                |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Appendix 1        | EXEMPT – Confidential appendix |

## Introduction and background

1. Oxford City Council declared a climate emergency in January 2019. Following the Oxford's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change, the Council set out its commitment to become net zero and its 4<sup>th</sup> Carbon Management Plan (CMP) commits the City Council to zero carbon by 2030.
2. Zero Carbon by 2030 represents a significant step-change in the Council's ambition. It requires a doubling of the previous 5% year on year reduction, which would only get the Council about half of the way to zero carbon by 2030.
3. The majority of Oxford City Council's emissions originate from buildings (73%), with leisure buildings being a major contributor. Four leisure centres, including Leys Pools & Leisure Centre; Hinksey Outdoor Pool; the Oxford Ice Rink; and Ferry Leisure Centre are ranked among the Council's top five highest emitting buildings, with Barton Leisure Centre coming in sixth, behind the Town Hall. Tackling building emissions, particularly from the Council's leisure centres, is therefore a priority for achieving the Council's 2030 target.
4. The CMP also highlights the important role of increased renewable energy generation, including investments in local large scale solar farms, in order to achieve the 2030 zero carbon target.
5. The Council has identified a £2.2m investment gap per year to 2029/30 to achieve its zero carbon target and recognises the important role of external funding in achieving it.
6. In February 2021, Oxford City Council was awarded up to £10.923 million in grant funding under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) by Salix Finance Ltd (a government funded public sector financing body – funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industry Strategy - BEIS) for the decarbonisation of some of the Council's highest emitting sites. This includes two schemes:
  - a. **Scheme 1:** £1,636,736 for the installation of water sourced heat pump at Hinksey outdoor pool.
  - b. **Scheme 2:** £9,286,813 for the installation of Heat pumps at 5 Council centres (Ferry Leisure Centre, Blackbird Leys Pool & Leisure Centre, Barton Leisure Centre, Rosehill Community Centre, and the Oxford Ice Rink) and a loan to the Low Carbon Hub (LCH) for a remote solar farm development at Ray Valley, paid for out of this Scheme 2 Salix grant funding pot.
7. The Council has submitted to Salix, the Government funding agency, the application to extend the delivery date for the Programme from 30 September 2021 to 31 March 2022. Formal confirmation of the extension is expected shortly, which Salix has already supported in a letter to the Council.
8. To comply with the grant funding conditions, the Programme must comply with Salix's ceiling that the cost of carbon emissions saved should not exceed £500 per tonne over the project lifetime. The grant funding is eligible for covering the installation of decarbonisation technologies like heat pumps and renewable energy measures that contribute to carbon emission reductions directly. Under the grant conditions, Salix funding cannot cover any costs above the £500 per tonne of carbon ceiling. Any additional costs beyond this metric would have to be covered by the City Council. The grant can also be used for three classes of non-directly carbon reducing measures: improved energy metering, electrical infrastructure costs (eg

electrical network upgrades due to increased electrical loads from heat pumps) and battery storage technology.

9. The February 2021 Cabinet paper (“Programme Approval and Allocation for Public Sector Decarbonisation Funding”) granted programme approval regarding the development of the decarbonisation proposals, to accept and ratify funding agreements to further reduce the Council’s carbon emissions; and any other necessary agreements or contracts across the prospective sites.
10. Delegated authority was granted to the Transition Director (which has now passed to the Head of Corporate Strategy following an internal restructure), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford; the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism; the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer; and the Council’s Monitoring Officer, to commence expenditure of the £10.923 million grant money. This was to carry out the work to develop proposals for funding and subject to their satisfactory conclusion, enter into funding and other necessary agreements, including pre-construction and construction contracts, for the purpose of development and delivery of decarbonisation projects across the Oxford City Council estate.
11. In July, Council granted approval of a loan to Low Carbon Hub (LCH) of up to £3,385,200 together with the associated capital budget for investment in the Ray Valley Solar (RVS) local renewable energy project, over a 22.5 year period. The investment is part of the Decarbonisation programme and will be fully funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme grant awarded to the Council by Salix. The purpose of the investment is to ensure that, as the installation of heat pumps at the Council’s leisure facilities represent a shift from a gas-powered to an electricity-powered form of heating, all of the electricity required in future would be backed by renewable generation from the solar farm.
12. In July 2021, the Council’s Chief Executive took an urgent decision to instruct consultants and contractors to undertake the enabling works required to facilitate the decarbonisation project; and to allocate a capital budget in the Council’s capital programme of £3.066 million financed by budgeted capital resources set aside to finance works arising from the stock condition surveys, in the February 2021 refresh of the Medium Term Financial Plan project. This was linked to an expectation that a contribution of around £650,000 could be available from underspend within the Decarbonisation grant pot towards the cost of enabling works, which is no longer available.

### **Programme update**

13. Works have been progressing on design and construction plans for the heat pump installations at pace. The Programme is on track for completion by 31 March 2022, though timelines are challenging and some works and equipment (including Air Source Heat Pumps for installation at all sites other than Hinksey) have had to be pre-ordered and are awaiting delivery. At Hinksey Pool, a Water Source Heat Pump is to be installed in the adjacent lake. A planning application for these works will be submitted shortly.
14. In order to stay on the critical path timeframe for accessing all of the decarbonisation grant money, the contractor needs to be under contract as soon as

possible following the 15 September Cabinet decision for the construction works to commence on site in line with the agreed schedule. The Head of Corporate Strategy will shortly execute the contract with Willmott Dixon for both enabling and decarbonisation construction work on behalf of the Council, as previously delegated by Cabinet.

15. The Council's consultants Faithfull & Gould (F&G) and contractors Willmott Dixon have now completed the detailed design both for the installation of decarbonisation measures across the six sites, and the required enabling works to allow the new equipment to be linked to existing plant. In addition, the internal costs incurred by the Council that are chargeable to the grant from Salix have been established.
16. Detailed technical site surveys have established that significant enabling works are required in order to bring the facilities up to date to enable heat pumps to be integrated effectively into the buildings. A budget of £3.066million has previously been agreed for these enabling works drawn from Council funds. Some of the enabling works are to replace near-redundant plant that would anyway require upgrading in the short to medium term.
17. However, now the final costs the programme are available, totalling £17.691 million, including the contractor's and consultant's fees plus contingency, the solar farm investment, the capitalisable internal fees, and the cost of asbestos removal from the plant room at Ferry Leisure Centre, a funding gap of £3.702 million has been identified against the approved funds of £13.989 million (£10.923 million + £3.066 million).

### **Recommended next steps**

18. The Council's external consultant F&G has already undertaken an initial value engineering exercise to test all areas of expenditure and costings. It is clear the budget gap cannot be bridged without de-scoping some areas of the programme. Officers have held discussions with Salix, which has confirmed projects could be removed from the programme or swapped among the two schemes without a clawback in the grant awarded, subject to compliance with the ceiling of £500 per tonne of carbon saved over the project lifetime, and other conditions of the grant awards.
19. Officers have worked with the external consultants and contractors to identify the optimal approach to de-scoping elements of the programme costs to bring costs down to approved budget levels, while also maximising use of the available Salix grant money and achieving the greatest carbon emission reductions.

20. As a result, it is recommended that the Ice Rink and Rose Hill Community Centre are de-scoped from the Programme. Doing this would reduce the programme costs by around £3.860 million bringing it back within budget. This option is recommended for the following reasons:

- a. Rose Hill and the Ice Rink are projected to deliver the lowest carbon emission reduction of the programme (c192tCO<sub>2</sub> or 14.2% of a total of 1,356tCO<sub>2</sub> across all 6 sites within the full programme). Their removal would therefore have the least impact on progress toward meeting the Council's 2030 zero carbon target.
- b. The cost per kg of carbon saved is high for both the Ice Rink and Rose Hill Community Centre. When compared to other viable options, their omission would have the most favourable impact on the overall Salix metric of £500 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> saved, thereby allowing the Council to utilise all of the grant money available up to that ceiling.
- c. Rose Hill is a new installation which will benefit the least from upgrades delivered from the programme.

21. However, the following points should be noted:

- a. The Ice Rink is a significant consumer of electricity and so its removal from the programme, alongside Rose Hill Community Centre, will reduce the amount of renewable electricity required from the Ray Valley solar farm to 'back to back' the programme with green energy. The impact of this is to reduce the size of the grant to be claimed from Salix for the loan to LCH from c£3.1 million to c£2 million. This would result in a reduction of investment of and a loss in long term revenue to the Council of c£696,000 calculated on an NPV basis.
- b. The work to date on the decarbonisation project designs at Rosehill Community Centre and the Ice Rink has cost a total of c£50,000 and can be spread across the remaining programme, claimable under the Salix grant. The designs that have been produced could be used for implementation at a later date supported by a subsequent funding bid.
- c. The unutilised Air Source Heat Pumps can either be stored for use at a later date, or sold.

22. Other options for de-scoping from the programme, for example the removal of Ferry Leisure Centre, failed to reduce costs sufficiently due to the impact of the Salix compliance requirement that grant funding is only available up to a level of £500 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> saved. This is because the decarbonisation works at Ferry have a significant impact on carbon reduction, as do those at Hinksey Outdoor Pool, Leys Pool and Leisure Centre, and Barton Leisure Centre. Removal of Ferry reduces the amount of available Salix grant that can be used by up to around £1.9 million.

23. However, the following points should be noted. Due to the condition of the plant room at Ferry, a significant sum will be required for the enabling work (c£768,000). This is on top of the £250,000 already spent on removing asbestos from its plant room.

## **Impact of works on operation of sites**

24. Our contractors have worked with Fusion Lifestyle, which operates the Council's leisure centres, to identify ways to minimise the closure of sites while enabling and decarbonisation works are undertaken. Subject to final confirmation expected by the time of the Cabinet meeting, workarounds have been identified for the Leys Pool and Leisure Centre and Barton Leisure Centre; and feasibility is being undertaken over whether the Ferry Leisure Centre 'wet side' (swimming pool) could also be kept open while works are ongoing. If the closure of Ferry pool is required, then this is planned from 11 October 2021 to 30 March 2022. The Ferry 'dry side' (gym and sports halls) will remain open. Hinksey Outdoor Pool is anyway due to close through the winter. Works there will take place between 3 October and 18 March.

## **Ray Valley solar farm**

25. Following the July Council approval, the Council has invested £2.3m in the Ray Valley solar farm using a revolving loan facility as an interim measure, while a suitable loan agreement with LCH is drawn up, which allows the use of the Salix grant funding and the annual returns back to the council. LCH is aware that the size of the long-term loan funded by Salix grant is linked to the nature of investment made in decarbonisation measures the Council deploys at its sites. LCH has indicated it will seek other sources of finance if there is a shortfall in the funding the Council is able to make available.

## **Carbon and environmental considerations**

26. The removal of sites from the decarbonisation programme will reduce the annual carbon emissions decrease achievable. Those sites de-scoped will continue to emit damaging CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from site operations for longer and therefore the Council will make slower progress in meeting its zero carbon emissions by 2030 goal. However, the removal of the Ice Rink and Rosehill Community Centre from the programme constitutes the least impact in carbon emission reductions lost (c92tCO<sub>2</sub>/year or c9%) compared to the estimated 1056tCO<sub>2</sub>/year of total direct site carbon emissions reduced through the programme.

## **Financial implications**

27. Latest cost estimates for all aspects of works detailed in paragraph 6 above is £14.329 million including enabling works. The original loan to Low Carbon Hub in respect of Ray Valley Solar Farm based on the reduction of carbon emissions from the other installations is estimated at £3.096 million. Project management costs incurred by the Council are estimated at £266k. Therefore the total cost of the project is estimated at £17.691 million.

28. Salix loan finance has been secured from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in the order of £10.923 million and a capital budget for the estimated cost of enabling works of £3.066 million was agreed under Chief Executives urgent decision powers. Resources therefore total £13.989 million.

29. Overall the latest cost estimates for the project indicate a shortfall of £3.702 million. It should be noted that in securing budget approval for the £3.066m members were advised that up to £650k of this could be financed by the Salix loan so in essence the current estimated project overspend could be revised to £4.352 million.

30. The following points are worthy of note

- Contingency for the enabling and decarbonisation works is estimated at £980k i.e at 8.0% for all 6 projects, is being maintained at the same level for the reduced programme over 4 sites, therefore this increases to 10.4%
- Capitalised internal costs relating to project management are assumed to be equal regardless of de-scoping programme elements, although in reality this may vary to some degree.
- Removing the installation for Ferry would reduce the grant available from Salix by up to around £1.9 million due to the carbon compliance ceiling of £500/tonne of carbon saved. While, in the case of removing the Ice Rink and Rose Hill Community Centre all of the £10.923m grant can be utilised.
- The loan to the Low Carbon Hub (LCH) in respect of the Ray Valley Solar Farm is linked to carbon emission savings and removal of the ice rink, given the emission savings generated would reduce the loan to LCH from £3.1 million to an estimated £2.053 million. Paragraphs 25 above identifies that we have currently advanced LCH £2.3 million from the Council's 'Revolving Loan Fund' as an interim measure pending finalisation of the Salix Loan backed agreement. It should also be noted that the original premise was that the principal of the £3.1 loan would be repayable to the Council over 22.5 years with interest, with subsequently unfettered future usage by the Council. A reduction of the loan of £1.1 million would result in a loss of interest at 1.45% and a loss of principal to the Council.

### **Legal issues**

31. Cabinet is being asked to agree to the de-scoping of the de-carbonisation programme through the removal of the Ice Rink and Rose Hill in order to remain within the approved budget and maximise use of the Salix grant money and associated carbon emission reductions.

32. The previous Cabinet report, dated 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021 which sought initial approval for the programme set out the legal issues summarised as follows:

- The proposed grant offers are from Salix Finance Ltd with funds provided by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). It is anticipated that our standard form of arrangements will be applied to what is essentially electrical engineering works. The investment in renewable energy is likely to be novel and will require specialist external legal advice.
- Proposals to extend existing contracts or to award new contracts for the supply of goods, services and or works should be undertaken in accordance with the council's Constitution, Contract Procedure Rules and the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- The Council is unlikely to have much, or any, ability to negotiate the terms of the grant funding agreement. Officers must ensure that if they draw monies down pursuant to these funding agreements, that they comply with the terms of the agreement and note any risks that the Council may be exposed to in the event of non-compliance.

33. The de-scoping of the programme to remove the Ice Rink and Rose Hill does not change the primary legal implications to be considered. However it should be noted that the removal of a site, or sites, from the programme would be a variation/modification of the programme and the grant funding agreement and that the agreement provides that no significant changes may be made to the project programme without Salix's prior written agreement. Officers will therefore need to seek the written agreement from Salix to vary the programme by removing sites. If such prior written consent is obtained to vary the programme, then the removal of the sites should not trigger Salix's ability to withhold or suspend payment of the grant money provided the Council complies with all obligations in the grant funding agreement.
34. The report outlines the fact that work is ongoing to draft and negotiate a suitable loan agreement between the Council and LCH in respect of the proposal to use Salix grant funding money to loan to LCH for investment in the Ray Valley Solar Farm. External legal providers have been instructed as this is a specialist area of law. It is important that the Council considers its obligations in respect of the Salix grant funding agreement and its ability to pass on those obligations to LCH, or secure an indemnity, to ensure the actions of LCH could not result in unforeseen liability for the Council in respect of the Salix funding. The Council also needs to be satisfied that it has appropriate security for any loan facility granted, which protects the Council's position whilst allowing LCH the flexibility it requires.

### **Level of risk**

35. The programme Risk Register is attached as an appendix.
36. The main purpose of the proposals in this document are to reduce the financial risks within the programme, which is currently expected to go significantly over the approved budget. This is the expected outcome if the de-scoping recommendations are not approved. As referenced in paragraph 14, if the contractor is not appointed by mid-September this will create a programme risk of not completing by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. This would require the Council to seek additional funding to complete the works.
37. There are some provisional sums representing the enabling works that are still at stage 2, therefore, not fully designed. Officers are currently in discussions over the costs of transferring this risk to the contractor, by way of buying this risk.

### **Equalities impact**

38. Whilst there are limited equalities impacts to the decisions proposed within this paper, the decarbonisation programme will extend and secure the future operational life of the Council's leisure facilities. They provide a relatively low cost resource for public benefit for those in particular for example on lower incomes or with disabilities and benefitting from discounted charges, compared to facilities operated by independent commercial providers.

### **Conclusion**

39. The nature of the funding criteria by Salix and the number of variables associated with the decarbonisation works, enabling works, solar farm loan, means the optimal approach to de-scoping the Programme to reduce costs is not straightforward. However, the recommendation of officers and the Council's external consultants

and contractors is to remove both the Ice Rink and Rose Hill from the programme, thereby maximising the use of available grant to pay for both decarbonisation measures and enabling works across the other four sites, and delivering the largest future carbon saving.

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**Background Papers:** None

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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