

# Agenda

## Scrutiny Committee

### Extraordinary Informal Remote Meeting

This is an informal meeting of the members of the Scrutiny Committee to enable remote attendance. It is not being held as a committee meeting under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Wednesday 2 March 2022**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Zoom - Remote meeting**

**For further information** please contact:

Alice Courtney, Committee and Member Services Officer

☎ 01865 529834

✉ DemocraticServices@oxford.gov.uk

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- may register in advance to speak to the committee in accordance with the [committee's rules](#)
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Information about speaking and recording is set out in the agenda and on the [website](#)

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## Committee Membership

Councillor Elizabeth Wade (Chair)

Councillor Nigel Chapman (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Tiago Corais

Councillor Dr Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini

Councillor Paula Dunne

Councillor James Fry

Councillor Linda Smith

Councillor Dr Christopher Snowton

Councillor Marie Tidball

Councillor Imogen Thomas

Councillor Naomi Waite

Councillor Dick Wolff

Apologies and notification of substitutes received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting. Substitutes for the Chair and Vice-chair do not take on these roles.

# Agenda

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<b>2 Declarations of interest</b>	
<b>3 Chair's Announcements</b>	
<b>4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy</b>	7 - 42
<p>The Cabinet will, at its meeting on 16 March 2022, consider a report on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Ian Brooke, Head of Community Services have been invited to present the report and answer questions.</p> <p>The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.</p>	
<b>5 Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy</b>	43 - 106
<p>The Cabinet will, at its meeting on 16 March 2022, consider a report on the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy. Councillor Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless and Becky Walker, Home Improvement Agency Team Manager have been invited to present the report and answer questions.</p> <p>The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.</p>	
<b>6 Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds</b>	107 - 128
<p>The Cabinet will, at its meeting on 16 March 2022, consider a report on the Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds. Councillor Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless and Paul Wilding, System Change Manager – Homelessness Prevention have been invited to present the report and answer questions.</p> <p>The Committee is asked to consider the report and agree any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.</p>	

## **7 Dates of future meetings**

### **Scrutiny Committee**

- 07 March (*Zoom*)
- 05 April (*in-person*)

### **Standing Panels**

Companies: 24 March, 07 April (*both Zoom*)

Housing & Homelessness: 04 April (*Zoom*)

All meetings start at 6.00 pm.

## **Information for those attending**

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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.

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 16 March 2022  
**Report of:** Head of Community Services  
**Title of Report:** Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

## Summary and recommendations

**Purpose of report:** The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy demonstrates how Oxford City Council will continue to meet the [public sector Equality Duty](#) to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between Oxford's citizens.

**Key decision:** Yes

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Shaista Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities

**Corporate Priority:** Support Thriving Communities

**Policy Framework:** Council Strategy 2020-24

## Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:

1. Endorse the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
2. Review the activities in the strategy when new insights or data (such as the census) become available to ensure our work remains evidence led.

## Appendices

Appendix 1	The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
Appendix 2	Risk Register
Appendix 3	Equalities Impact Assessment

## Introduction and background

1. Oxford City Council is committed to building a fairer, greener city in which everyone can thrive. To support flourishing communities, the Council is focused on ensuring our services, investments, and policy-making are designed to address Oxford's social and financial inequalities.

2. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are together a key focus for all our work. EDI is a core part of all our policies and partnerships for our residents, staff and elected members.
3. Our Corporate Strategy sets the four key priorities for the Council, EDI is at the heart of why we undertake this work.
  - ❖ **Priority 1: Enable an inclusive economy**, in which wealth is distributed across our communities and where all residents can share the benefits of growth.
  - ❖ **Priority 2: Deliver more, affordable housing** to address Oxford's housing crisis where existing homes are unaffordable for many and demand for good quality homes outstrips what is available.
  - ❖ **Priority 3: Support thriving communities**, to help ensure everyone is able to play a full part in the life of our city.
  - ❖ **Priority 4: Pursue a zero-carbon Oxford**, acting on the clear message from Oxford's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change to continue to take a lead in reducing emissions and increasing biodiversity.

## Context

4. Oxford is a wealthy city but has stark inequalities. For example, 10 out of 83 neighbourhoods are amongst the 20% most deprived in England, and one is in the most deprived 10%.
5. 22% of adults have no or low educational qualifications, and the 2018 schools census data showed 32% of children did not have English as a first language. One in six residents has a primary language other than English<sup>1</sup>. Oxford is one of the most diverse cities in the UK, with 28% of the population born outside the UK.
6. Based on Indices of Deprivation 2019<sup>2</sup> (after adjusting for housing costs), 29% of children in Oxford live below the poverty line. According to the Indices of Deprivation, child poverty rates have reduced in the most deprived neighbourhoods, but six Oxford neighbourhoods still have child poverty rates over 30%.
7. Men in the most deprived areas live 15 years less on average than those who live in the least deprived areas. The Centre for Cities 2020<sup>3</sup> data cites Oxford as the 2nd most unequal city in the UK, while the Demos-PwC Good Growth for Cities report consistently places Oxford as the number one city in the UK.<sup>4</sup>
8. The effects of the pandemic have not been felt equally across the population. Research has shown that some groups, especially those that already experienced inequality, have suffered the most. The [latest government reporting](#) shows that those from Black and Asian heritage, and those in higher deprivation, suffered significant health inequalities and higher mortality rates. Research from the [Institute of Fiscal Studies in 2021](#) indicated that the pandemic had also caused more income inequality, more inequalities in education and skills, and more intergenerational inequalities.
9. Michael Marmot's report, "[Build Back Fairer: The COVID-19 Review](#)" shows the scale of the challenge we face. The report says "*there is an urgent need to do things differently, to build a society based on the principles of social justice; to*

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/463/first\\_or\\_preferred\\_language](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/463/first_or_preferred_language)

<sup>2</sup> [Indices\\_of\\_Deprivation\\_2019\\_Oxford\\_Report\\_word\\_version\\_v3.pdf](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20131/population/463/first_or_preferred_language) at oxford.gov.uk

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.centreforcities.org/city/oxford/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pwc.co.uk/industries/government-public-sector/good-growth.html>

*reduce inequalities of income and wealth; to build a wellbeing economy that puts the achievement of health and wellbeing, rather than narrow economic goals.”*

## **Our approach**

10. [The Equality Act 2010](#) is the legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. This Act is the prime legislative basis under which this strategy operates. The Act includes the [public sector Equality Duty](#) that requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:
  - ❖ Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
  - ❖ Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
  - ❖ Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
11. Oxford City Council has taken a robust and transparent approach to meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty and has adopted [The Equality Framework for Local Government](#). The framework encourages a focus on local issues and problems, prompts learning from and spreading good practice. All of which is very much in line with the Council’s approach.
12. The framework has four improvement modules, these are:
  - i. Understanding and Working with Communities
  - ii. Leadership and Organisational Commitment
  - iii. Responsive Services and Customer Care
  - iv. Diverse and Engaged Workforce
13. The Council already incorporates these cross-cutting themes into our work, and is committed to further action to put these at the heart of all we do. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy provides the Council’s priorities and actions for each of the four areas of the framework.
14. The Diverse and Engaged Workforce strand incorporates the Workforce Equalities Report that Cabinet agreed in December 2021.

## **Consultation**

15. Much of the Council’s work involves increasing our understanding of communities and inequalities. In the lead up to drafting this strategy, we held 14 focus groups with around 100 people with a range of protected characteristics.
16. The Council has also just finished an in-depth consultation to inform its grants review - this included ten focus group discussions attended by people with lived experience of different protected characteristics, homelessness and intersectionality.
17. Alongside this, three focus groups were undertaken in November 2021 to review the Council’s anti-racism charter.
18. Over the pandemic period, the Council had established locality support teams. This work has helped create a greater understanding and deeper level of trust with people and communities.

19. These community connections, focus groups and our daily conversations with citizens have provided valuable insights for developing the strategy.

### **Governance**

20. The City Council has an equalities steering group chaired by the Executive Director for Communities and People. This is an advisory group with insight into lived experience and council service delivery that will inform our policy-making and service delivery and help strengthen our own approach to equalities within the workplace.
21. To strengthen oversight, accountability, and challenge at the senior level, the Equalities Steering group will present quarterly to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) of service directors and the Leaders Group of Cabinet Members.
22. In addition, the Scrutiny Officer is working on a set of proposals to improve member oversight and challenge relating to equalities issues via the Scrutiny function.

### **Financial Implications**

23. There are no direct financial implications. Our approach is to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into everything we do.

### **Legal Implications**

24. [The Equality Act 2010](#) includes a [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. Compliance with the general equality duty is a legal obligation.
25. A public authority has to demonstrate that it had regard to the impact of its proposed policy on equality.

### **Level of Risk**

26. A full review of risk has been undertaken, which is reflected in Appendix Two.

### **Equalities Impact**

27. Equalities considerations have been continually undertaken, the Equalities Impact Assessment is included as Appendix Three.

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DRAFT

# Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

February 2022

## Foreword

The last few years have been incredibly difficult, although I could not be prouder of how our city has responded to the pandemic. Oxford has shown a truly inspirational community spirit with people working together, with equality, equity and kindness becoming central to Oxford's approach.

Commentators and [researchers](#) have drawn attention to how systemic shocks can exacerbate existing inequalities, impacting poor and marginalised individuals and communities disproportionately during, and for years after, the pandemic. Those who belong to the most disadvantaged sections of society have been the same people most likely to be subject to the sharp end when it comes to the [impacts of the pandemic](#).

Michael Marmot's report, "[Build Back Fairer: The COVID-19 Review](#)", shows the scale of the challenge we face. The report says, *"there is an urgent need to do things differently, to build a society based on the principles of social justice; to reduce inequalities of income and wealth; to build a wellbeing economy that puts the achievement of health and wellbeing, rather than narrow economic goals.*

Perhaps the starkest example is the [social gradient of health](#); Oxford's gap in life expectancy is 15 years between the most and least deprived areas<sup>1</sup>. There is every indication that these inequalities are set to worsen. We cannot tackle these deeply engrained inequalities unless we truly understand the issues driving them and take collective, joined-up action working with residents and our partners.

To develop this strategy, we have used the Local Government Association Equalities Framework, which outlines four areas of focus for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

- ❖ [Understanding and Working with our Communities](#)
- ❖ [Leadership and Organisational Commitment](#)
- ❖ [Responsive Services and Customer Care](#)
- ❖ [Diverse and Engaged Workforce](#)

Oxfordshire County Council is also following this approach to develop their county-wide EDI strategy, providing coherence between the local and county level. We already incorporate these cross-cutting themes into our work, and we are committed to further action to put these at the heart of everything we do.

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<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics (2019)

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: our commitment

We are committed to building a fairer, greener city in which everyone can thrive. To support flourishing communities, we are focused on ensuring our services, investments, and policy-making are designed to address Oxford's social and financial inequalities. We value diversity and seek to find ways to bring communities together. We want to ensure all Oxford's citizens have fair opportunities and a real share in the city's future.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are together a key focus for all our work. This is a core part of all our policies and partnerships for our residents, staff and elected members. We want Oxford City Council to have a workforce that reflects the community it serves and to be seen as an employer of choice that values diversity and the perspectives it brings. We are committed to building our reputation as an organisation that is inclusive to the core and provides relevant and accessible services that recognise the value of every individual. As part of this we recognise the importance of encouraging a sense of belonging, to a place, organisation, community or project, which can be fostered through informal and formal working practices that promote mutual respect and co-operation.

Our corporate strategy sets the four key priorities for the Council to deliver this vision:

- **Foster an inclusive economy**, in which wealth is distributed across our communities and where all residents can share the benefits of growth
- **Deliver more, affordable housing**, to address Oxford's housing crisis where existing homes are unaffordable for many and demand for good quality homes outstrips what is available
- **Support thriving communities**, to help ensure everyone is able to play a full part in the life of our city
- **Pursue a zero carbon Oxford**, acting on the clear message from Oxford's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change to continue to take a lead in reducing emissions and increasing biodiversity

As part of delivering these, we will:

- ensure our staff are skilled and confident in delivering services our residents need and the workforce as a whole better reflects Oxford's diverse population
- implement the Oxford City Council Workforce Equalities Action Plan to boost employee diversity through recruitment and apprenticeships and expand the management opportunities for underrepresented groups such as Black, Asian and women
- implement a new, inclusive Economic Strategy to increase the opportunities for disadvantaged groups to have a fair share in the city's economy
- deliver services, grants, community and leisure facilities, parks and cultural events that help to bring communities together, reduce inequality, and improve health and wellbeing
- support and enable local voluntary and community groups to play a greater role in improving the city and the lives of residents
- use our influence to ensure Oxford's diversity is celebrated, and communities are more connected, which will form part of the Thriving Communities Strategy

To deliver high-quality services for the city, we will also:

- work with our subsidiaries Oxford Direct Services (ODS) and Oxford City Housing Ltd (OCHL) to ensure the essential services they provide prioritise a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion

- continue our commitment to the [Oxford Anti-Racism Charter](#) by encouraging communities, businesses and organisations to take ownership of their own contributions to anti-racism in the city
- ensure that staff employed directly, or on behalf of the city council, are paid at least the Oxford Living Wage, and encourage our suppliers to do the same.

### Developing this Strategy

This strategy has been developed as a cross-cutting theme that runs through all other policies and strategies. We have consulted widely with partners, staff and stakeholders to understand their experiences and issues. We held a number of workshops through 2020 with groups representing protected characteristics, our staff, elected members, and community partners, ensuring that intersectionality<sup>2</sup> was also represented and listened to. In addition, we have involved service teams to ensure the strategy reflects their work and the priorities they deliver.

### Context and legislation

The [Equality Act 2010](#) is the legal framework to protect individuals' rights and advance equality of opportunity for all. This Act provides the prime legislative basis under which this strategy operates.

### Protected characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the term “protected characteristics” to refer to groups that are protected under the Act. Protected characteristics are legally defined as:

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<sup>2</sup> [Intersectionality](#): the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or [intersect](#) especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups [Merriam-Webster]

- Age
- Race
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage/Civil Partnership
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Religion or Belief
- Maternity & Paternity

The Public Sector Equality Duty (created under the Equality Act 2010) came into force on 5 April 2011 and requires public bodies and others carrying out public functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunities and foster good relations between different communities. Compliance with the equality duty enables us to provide services to meet the diverse needs of our users, and improve how we carry out our core business.

#### Gender and ethnicity pay gap

Legislation came into effect in 2017 requiring employers to publish figures on gender pay gap. We use our data on a yearly basis to continually review all areas of the organisation to identify the barriers (and the drivers) for appointing women, particularly at senior levels.

Although not required by law, since 2020, we have included the ethnicity pay gap in our annual reporting and introduced reporting on the disability pay gap in our 2021 publication. We want to go beyond simply our statutory requirements and ensure we truly represent the people we serve.

#### Modern day slavery act

Legislation requires us to prepare a slavery and human trafficking statement each financial year, publish it on our website, and tackle slavery wherever we find it. We recognise that we have a responsibility to ensure that our services and supply chains understand the issue and can transparently demonstrate how they protect against modern-day slavery. In 2022 we published research into modern-day slavery in Oxford, providing new insight into the local issues.

#### Oxford and its citizens: key facts

- Population: 151,584 (ONS 2020 mid-year estimate)
- 33,400 students are enrolled for full-time studies in two universities, the largest proportion of adults in full-time studies of any city in England and Wales
- The third highest ethnic minority population in south-east England
- 26% of residents were born outside of the United Kingdom
- 10 out of 83 neighbourhoods are amongst the 20% most deprived in England
- 22% of adults have no or low educational qualifications
- After housing costs, 1 in 4 children live below the poverty line
- Men in the most deprived areas live 15 years less on average than those who live in the least deprived areas
- Average house prices are 11.4 times the average earnings – the mean house price is £558,216
- An estimated 16% of residences do not have outdoor space, compared to 12% nationally
- Over 4,000 people in Oxford receive Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments

#### Our staff: key facts

We collect data on the diversity of our workforce, which is voluntary and anonymous for them to provide (apart from sex). This data indicates the following make-up of our staff:

- 58.2% of our workforce is female, compared to the city population of 47%
- 14.5% identify as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic<sup>3</sup>, compared to 18% of the city population
- 10.8% have a disability, compared to 6.7% of the city population
- 3.6% of the workforce identifies as non-heterosexual

These statistics reflect the overall workforce, but do not reflect the continued gaps at senior level for women and those identifying as Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnic heritage.

The Council now reports on its annual gender pay gap, ethnicity pay gap and disability pay gap.

### Current challenges and their impact on equality, diversity and inclusion

We face a number of challenges that have influenced our objectives for this strategy. The pandemic has compounded the financial challenges of reduced government funding. We are seeing increasing inflation, rising hardship and financial inequality, a greater focus on racial inequality and its impact on life outcomes and changes in inward and outward migration.

#### Financial

The financial outlook for all local government is challenging, as the grant we receive from central government funding has significantly reduced over recent years. We now also face the impacts of the pandemic on the local economy and Oxford City Council itself, which continue to be extremely challenging. The Council has seen a sharp increase in expenditure to support those in need, together with a second year of reduced revenues from its core income streams.

The total financial impact of the COVID-19 on Oxford City Council over the period 2020-2026 is forecast to be £23 million. To date, the Government has provided around £11 million of financial support to the Council in respect of its day to day service delivery. A further £152 million has been provided by Government to support the provision of additional measures to support residents and businesses impacted by the pandemic.

#### Pandemic

The effects of the pandemic have not been felt equally across all population groups. Research shows that some groups, especially those that already experienced inequality, have suffered the most.

The [latest government reporting](#) shows that those from Black and Asian heritage, and those in higher deprivation, suffered significant health inequalities and higher mortality rates. Research from the [Institute of Fiscal Studies in 2021](#) indicated that the pandemic had also caused more income inequality, more inequalities in education and skills, and more intergenerational inequalities.

### How we are responding to these challenges

#### Workforce

We continue to foster an inclusive and supportive culture, but we have had to adjust rapidly to do things differently in areas such as remote working. We have actively promoted an inclusive and flexible approach through the pandemic, adjusting to individual needs around issues such as health vulnerabilities, mental health, and caring responsibilities. We have embraced the opportunity of

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<sup>3</sup> Black, Asian or other Minority Ethnic is used here as it reflects the data set, we will avoid terms such as minority ethnic that categorise people into large groupings that do not reflect their heritage.

technology to deliver for our workforce and our customers in these circumstances, and will continue to invest in these opportunities.

We have launched the Council's new People Strategy, embodying our ambition to put inclusion and respect at the heart of the Council's culture.

### Community

At the pandemic's start, we moved quickly to establish Locality Hubs to deliver emergency support and information in the main residential areas. These hubs have built new community partnerships and developed our understanding of community needs in the different localities. These teams have had to adapt on a regular basis and balance their work of emergency support with developing longer-term more sustainable solutions for residents. In practice, this has been working more closely with partners and community groups, listening to residents and an increased focus on addressing the causal issues. A new model of service delivery is now being designed that embeds this learning across council teams.

### Black Lives Matter and the Anti-Racism Charter

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the summer of 2020, and the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in Oxford, highlights the impact of structural racism in our city, society and country. BLM have made it clear it is time to commit to having difficult conversations that enable us to become actively anti-racist and not simply against racism.

To demonstrate leadership for the city, the Council worked with communities to develop and launch the [Oxford Anti-Racism Charter](#), which set out what racism is and made commitments to becoming an anti-racist city. We continue our commitment to the Charter and to becoming an anti-racist city. The Charter demonstrates our intent to tackle institutional racism, and we have committed to taking specific actions to be anti-racist. The Charter also exists for other organisations and individuals to sign.

### Deprivation

Oxford is a wealthy city but with stark inequalities. Before the pandemic, [around 12% of the city's neighbourhoods](#) were in the bottom 20% of the whole country. The need for emergency support from the council and community groups has grown over the course of the pandemic, with more people needing emergency help with basics like food, fuel and rent, and more need from schools for youth support services to help children who are struggling in formal education. We continue to fund youth and holiday activities to provide non-formal education, our locality hubs model is evolving to provide longer-lasting support to prevent emergency needs.

### Immigration

Oxford is a world-renowned city and attracts people from around the world for work, education and to establish new lives in the UK. We are proud to welcome and support migrants, and have an active third sector supporting refugees and migrants. There are well-established communities with roots in South Asia, the Caribbean, China, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, East Timor and West Papua. Many of these are now second and third generation communities.

More recently, we have seen migration from areas of conflict or with supported migration schemes, including Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Hong Kong. Since Brexit and the pandemic, there has been some emigration of EU citizens, so these demographics are constantly changing. What all have in common is a need to access council services equitably, for housing, community spaces, transport and employment opportunities. As migrants, they may need extra support to use our services and understand their rights and responsibilities.



## Priority Areas for Action

The Local Government Association has outlined four areas of focus for equality, diversity and inclusion. We already incorporate these cross-cutting themes into our work, and we are committed to further action to put these at the heart of all we do.

This strategy outlines our priorities in delivering each strand of work and the context that each of these operates in. We have outlined actions we are already committed to delivering to demonstrate how we will achieve our priorities. We will produce an Equalities Action Plan for this strategy with measurable targets and commitments which knit together to help create thriving communities.

## Understanding and Working with our Communities

### Context

Our Thriving Communities Strategy will outline some of the key approaches we will use to improve our understanding and engagement with our communities. The Thriving Communities Strategy has a broad scope and uses the headings of *People*, *Place* and *Pride* to show how we will improve outcomes and make the best possible use of resources. The EDI strategy is integral to delivering the *Pride* part of the Thriving Communities Strategy.

Oxford is one of the most diverse cities in the South East, and that brings additional challenges in community engagement and inclusion. A focus on equality, diversity and inclusion is central to our community relationships. It is vital to understand that protected groups may have differing needs and what we can do to meet those, to prevent unconscious discrimination and unfairness.

We have established a multi-faith forum that meets regularly with senior representatives from the Council and faith groups. This is a forum to discuss opportunities, raise concerns, and work in partnership on these matters. We also work with faith groups at grassroots level on a day-to-day basis through our locality teams to understand and support their needs.

It is also important to understand the intersectionality or interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression, and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people, such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation and physical ability.

We also recognise there is stark inequality in Oxford, and we aim to use our policies and services to rebalance that where possible— from providing social housing to youth work, welfare reform, parks and leisure. Our Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is based on research into the community needs for housing, including disability needs, gender, family housing needs and risk of homelessness. We have used this understanding of our communities to ensure our housing strategy meets their needs.

We are also focused on tackling the impacts of child poverty, through our work to support families, our direct work through the Youth Ambition team, through locality hubs and projects like the [Community Impact Zone](#). We recognise that there is an element of child poverty that relates to historic and institutional racial discrimination, and that must be tackled at a political and institutional level to create long-term change.

## Priorities

- **Providing inclusive services:** understanding and addressing barriers to accessing our services, community assets and community engagement
- **Promoting partnership working:** use our relationships to work together and connect different communities so that we can jointly address issues and celebrate strengths; this approach is embedded in our new Community Impact Fund
- **Empowerment:** building community capacity to lead and participate in projects that benefit or affect their communities. In practice, this means doing “with” rather than “to” and, where possible, focusing on what is strong in communities rather than what’s wrong- this approach is often termed [asset-based community development](#) (ABCD). ABCD approaches show that connecting people and creating more resident-to-resident relationships builds interdependence and reliance on each other. Connecting people to their shared interests and enabling them to exchange skills and resources helps communities identify and take action on the most important issues to them.

## Actions

As part of our work in this area, we will:

- Review how we communicate, consult and engage with communities, looking at how this may need to adapt for different localities, diversities, interests and needs. This will include the need to report back to communities on outcomes as well as listening to needs, vulnerabilities and aspirations.
- Facilitate events that promote understanding and help bring communities together, using our community grant funding, partnerships and our elected members to support and promote these activities.
- Work with stakeholders and partners to support access to core service provision for migrant and refugee communities. This includes promoting and enhancing our online welcome pack for migrant communities and international students.
- Empower communities to help themselves, for example, by working with local organisations to support members of the community to become trustees, or become involved in the governance of community assets.
- Support community groups to access spaces and places where they can come together to enjoy common interests and create new friendships. Where groups want a dedicated space, we will offer them advice, but we will not be able to provide separate facilities for different community groups.
- Continue work under our strategic plan to offer development opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people, through the Council’s Youth Ambition programme and our apprenticeship policy.
- Continue to work with partners to tackle racism and hate language, including tackling the root causes, as part of delivering our commitments made in the Oxford Anti-Racism Charter.
- Contribute to wider thriving communities objectives such as addressing youth unemployment through active promotion of apprenticeships, the Rose Hill work hub and Oxford Living Wage.
- Enable people to exhibit and share their stories, cultures and histories in the newly redeveloped Museum of Oxford – the only museum in Oxford dedicated to telling the story of Oxford and its diverse communities.

- Work to find a suitable site for a burial ground so we can meet the future needs of Oxford's diverse and faith-based communities.
- Through our grants, events surgeries and advice, we will support the LGBTQ+ community to access community facilities and create safe spaces for community activities for new and established groups to meet.

## Leadership and Organisational Commitment

### Context

The Council has a key role to play in demonstrating leadership in the city on equality, diversity and inclusion. As an organisation, we are responsible for providing investment and services that tackle inequalities; our councillors are elected to represent Oxford's diverse communities and give them a voice in creating a more equal city.

EDI runs through all the Council's strategies and will be a key part of our business and service plans, and every employee's individual performance plan.

The [Council's Strategy for 2020-2024](#) outlines some of the ways we will use our investment and economic influence to create a more inclusive economy, to tackle inequality and increase the opportunities for disadvantaged groups.

As well as working to tackle barriers to equality, we work with Thames Valley Police and other partners from the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and hate crime and to take legal action against individuals for these offences.

### Priorities

- **Challenging discrimination:** using our voice, our services and our economic influence to challenge prejudice and institutional discrimination
- **Improving service design:** building in a strong equality, diversity and inclusion processes at the onset of policy and service design so that we meet the needs of all residents

### Actions

We will show leadership in how we listen and communicate about diversity, as well as by the actions we take.

- We will continue to use our financial influence to encourage suppliers to meet demanding standards of equality and inclusion. The Council is one of the major institutions in the city, and we spend significant money in the local economy. We already require our suppliers to show they operate to the highest standards in certain areas, such as tackling modern-day slavery. We will look for further opportunities to embed high standards in our supply chain and actively encourage other Oxford employers to do the same.
- Work is underway to review our Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), to ensure new policies and services fully consider the impact on protected groups. We aim to have strong EIAs and a clear process, actively supported by senior management, to make sure EDI issues are always considered at the earliest stage when we change or innovate in what we do.
- As well as using EIAs to develop policies and services, we will monitor the equality outcomes of new or updated policies and services. We will use this monitoring to provide feedback on how those services and policies are delivered and learn and improve how our EIAs promote equality.

- We have already embedded equality, diversity and inclusion requirements into our Community Grants criteria, and we will continue to monitor and prioritise equality outcomes as part of our grants process.
- We set up a Residents Panel in 2019 to help us improve our understanding of the views of residents on issues where we are not running a formal consultation. We will review the size and demographics of our Residents Panel and be prepared to increase the size and membership of the panel if needed.
- We are working on tackling harassment and violence against women and girls in the city centre through the Safer Streets initiative with Thames Valley Police and our partners.
- We will continue to act swiftly to tackle anti-social behaviour, for example removing offensive racist, homophobic and transphobic graffiti from Council buildings and public places within one working day.
- Our Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team treat all hate crime reports as a priority, working with the police and other partners to support victims and tackle the perpetrators.
- To implement the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation which supports our work to be inclusive in meeting the needs of all victims.
- We work with the police to support our communities during and in the aftermath of protests.
- Our Anti-Slavery Coordinator works in partnership across Oxfordshire to combat modern slavery, raise awareness, support victims, and disrupt exploiters.
- Our strategic lead for Domestic Abuse works with partners to support victims of honour-based violence, female genital mutilation and other forms of domestic and sexual abuse.
- We will review how we inform and engage elected councillors on EDI issues, so that they are well informed and can actively engage with residents on these matters. We will support them as leaders in the local community by providing relevant, timely information about actions the Council is taking on EDI matters.
- Engage and empower residents to take action on carbon reduction, support access funding and programmes to cut carbon, and involve them in how we will achieve Zero Carbon Oxford by 2040. We will use our own processes, partnerships, and community relationships to ensure that we cut carbon emissions in Oxford in a way that does not disadvantage low-income households in the city or sacrifice residents' standard of living. We will take opportunities to enhance residents' standard of living, especially those who are most vulnerable and have low-incomes, through our climate action
- Use our programme of capital investment in building and infrastructure to set an example of high standards of inclusive design and planning for public spaces, community buildings and social housing. We will use stakeholder engagement, our Equalities Steering Group, and the public consultation process to listen to concerns around equality, diversity, and inclusion. We will apply and monitor EIAs from the early stages of project development.

## Responsive Services and Customer Care

### Context

The needs of residents are at the heart of everything the Council does, we have set out an ambition to build a world-class city for everyone. Oxford is a very diverse city and has stark inequalities, and it is vital that our services and our staff are able to respond and adapt to the needs of all residents. We are committed to high levels of customer care, and our People Strategy outlines the standards and values we expect our workforce to uphold for each other and for our customers.

## Priorities

- **Ensuring no one is left behind:** focusing extra planning and resources on those most likely to struggle to access our services
- **Focus on crisis prevention:** provide early, joined-up services that support our customers to prevent the worst issues of inequality, including health inequalities, homelessness and debts.
- **Provide modern, accessible services for changing customer needs:** take the opportunities provided by digital technology to support self-service on demand, available at a time and place to suit the customer.

## Actions

To deliver these standards in our services and customer care we will:

- Champion digital inclusion and accessibility as we move towards 'digital by default' services, working with partners to ensure there is access to devices, connectivity and skills development. Where appropriate, we will use Council funding and infrastructure, such as free community centre Wi-Fi, to support residents to get online, so that no one is excluded as we move towards fully digital service delivery.
- Work with customers as we go cashless, to ensure the support is there to complete financial transactions with the Council. We recognise that some people may need more support than others, and we aim to provide information, advice and support to ensure they are not disadvantaged as we make the transition.
- Continue to work with County Council and health colleagues, and other key stakeholders, to understand the impact that shielding and social isolation has had on residents, and the additional needs this has created for those affected. As part of this work, we aim to help create routes for people to be referred for appropriate health or social support so that needs are met.
- Review the accessibility and effectiveness of the relocation of the Council's contact centre into the central library.
- Audit green spaces and community facility access to help us develop how we provide these fairly across the city. The pandemic highlighted how essential these spaces are for creating better outcomes for health, skills and positive social connections in areas of high deprivation. This audit will help us devise our approach for future provision of these spaces to support better outcomes and tackle deprivation.
- Ensure that we understand issues that disproportionately affect specific groups and may lead to homelessness. Early homeless prevention is a key part of our Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, and we will work with the community and partner organisations tackling homelessness to address these issues and prevent homelessness. Learnings will be incorporated into EIAs for future housing policies, procedures and strategies.
- Review and improve how we engage with our social housing tenants and leaseholders. The Government's Social Housing Whitepaper is expected to soon become legislation. The legislation will, amongst other things, require social housing landlords to provide high-quality engagement with their tenants. We are already reviewing and strengthening our

approach to tenant engagement on our housing waiting list and will continue to put inclusion at the heart of this.

- Implement our Service Integration Project involving customer services, Housing, Community Services and Regulatory Services & Community Safety. The focus is on locality working specifically to address customers' needs and provide a preventative approach for vulnerable people to stop them from falling into crisis. We will also provide a reactive response when required, with the aim to create long-term solutions to emergency needs.

## Diverse and Engaged Workforce

### Context:

We have outlined in our People Strategy how we will ensure that diversity and inclusion are prioritised internally. This includes commitments on recruitment, development and retention to ensure our workforce reflects the make-up of the city, and processes, leadership and governance to embed equality, diversity and inclusion within our policy-making and service delivery.

### Priorities:

- **Becoming an inclusive employer:** setting and promoting policies and providing training across the organisation, that foster an inclusive working culture
- **Recruit and retain a diverse workforce:** focus on recruiting, developing and promoting staff from a wider range of backgrounds to truly represent the city, including at senior level
- **Empower staff:** create robust and transparent processes, policies and systems across the Council that improve staff ability to champion diversity and inclusion

### Actions

Among the commitments we have made as part of this are:

- Implement and embed the Council's Equality Action Plan to ensure the Council is regarded as an exemplar of good practice, through our staff Equalities Champions and the Equalities Steering Group
- Cultivate leadership at all levels, so that all staff are able to develop and progress throughout their careers. We have made a clear commitment to a more diverse workforce at management level, with a focus on more managers who are female or from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic heritage.
- Improving our data collection to help us understand barriers and opportunities to recruiting, retaining and developing talented people from diverse backgrounds.
- Empowering employees to create staff networks that represent the interest and experiences of those with protected characteristics.

## Oversight

The four objectives we have outlined follow the Local Government Association's priorities for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. These are cross-cutting themes that underpin all our work and our service strategies. We need clear oversight and processes to ensure we remain on track to deliver our commitments in this strategy.

The City Council has established an Equalities Steering group, chaired by the Executive Director for Communities and People. This is an advisory group that meets monthly to review progress at service level, reflect staff experience of EDI policy and implementation, and champion EDI within service area.

To strengthen oversight, accountability, and challenge at the senior level, the Equalities Steering group will present quarterly to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) of service directors and the Leaders Group of Cabinet Members. CMT and the Leaders Group will have a challenge and advisory role, rather than acting as decision-makers on EDI delivery. Likewise, the Scrutiny function's purpose is to provide independent and cross-party challenge and advice from non-executive members. Scrutiny also has the capacity to undertake deep-dives into specific topics through Review Groups, and Scrutiny will be offered the opportunity to establish a standing Equalities Review Group as part of its annual work programme.

Our review and development of Equality Impact Assessments and their governance will deliver improvements in how we consider and address equality and inclusion across all our services and policies.

## Oversight structure



## Our achievements so far

### Workforce diversity and inclusion

We are working to build a more inclusive culture, and have implemented a programme of activities, including awareness sessions discussing lived experiences, establishing employee networks for protected groups, and development sessions on equalities for the leadership community.

The Council were awarded Disability Confident Employer status (at Level 2) on 23 March 2021 and this will be in place up to the 19 March 2024

### Equality Impact Assessments

We use EIAs to ensure our policies and services do not create unconscious discrimination and to ensure equality principles are designed in from the start.

We are reviewing the process and criteria for these to ensure they are not only adequate for our customers' needs but go beyond that, to deliver on our aspirations of equality for everyone.

### Equality Monitoring

We monitor and report on our progress against the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gap, to inform our recruitment, retention and development approaches.

We use our equality monitoring of staff demographics to review our people Strategy and implementations

### Locality teams

We have created Locality Hubs, enabling frontline, responsive teams reacting to the needs of the most vulnerable people in our communities and creating trusting relationships with communities and individuals we had failed to reach previously.

### Engagement and involvement

We support a range of external partners and activities to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

We promote awareness of diversity, equality and inclusion to our audiences around key opportunities, including Black History Month, LGBT History Month and South Asian Heritage Month.

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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
Outcomes not achieved	The strategy does not achieve its stated aims	T	The work to deliver the outcomes is not prioritised	Communities and employees are not supported. Inequalities continue to get worse.	1/12/2021	IB	4	3	4	3	4	2		Adjust staff objectives to reflect EDI and build this into service plans and appraisals. Ensure robust governance arrangements are implemented.	1/4/22	Open	10	IB
Management of implementation process	Ensuring that implementation resource available	T	Lack of capacity	Delayed actions	1/12/2021	IB	3	4	3	3	3	3		Adjust staff objectives to reflect current prioritisation of implementation	15/12/2021	Open	40	IB
Expectations	Some stakeholders want to see the pace of change speed up beyond our capacity to change	T	Lack of focus on key deliverables.	Lack of buy in to actions	10/1/22	IB	3	3	3	3	3	2		Clear communications and embedding the actions in service plans	1/5/22	Open	20	IB
Consultation	The consultation did not pick up a diverse and inclusive range of views	T	Lack of consideration to how to properly engage with Oxford's diverse communities	Opportunities to improve the strategy are not taken	10/1/22	IB	2	3	2	1	2	2		As detailed in the EIA	1/3/22	Open	30	IB

Environmental risks	Other changes such as implementing climate adaptations do not consider the EDI implications	T	Prioritises not being harmonised before actions are taken	Community tensions with people nor feeling like have been listened too.	15/12/21	IB	3	3	3	3	2	3		Well planned engagement that considers wider implications	30/03/2022	Open	30	IB
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## Form to be used for the Full Equalities Impact Assessment

<b>Service Area:</b> Community Services	<b>Section:</b> Cross-service	<b>Date of Initial assessment:</b> 29.10.2020	<b>Key Person responsible for assessment:</b> Paula Redway	<b>Date assessment commenced:</b> 14.9.2020
<b>Name of Policy/Strategy to be assessed:</b>		Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy		
<b>1. In what area are there concerns that the policy could have a differential impact</b>	<i>Race</i> ✓	<i>Disability</i> ✓	<i>Age</i> ✓	
	<i>Gender reassignment</i> ✓	<i>Religion or Belief</i> ✓	<i>Sexual Orientation</i> ✓	
	<i>Sex</i> ✓	<i>Pregnancy and Maternity</i> ✓	<i>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</i>	
<b>Other strategic/ equalities considerations</b>	<i>Oxford City Council Strategy</i> ✓ <i>Thriving Communities Strategy</i> ✓ <i>Anti-Racism Charter</i> ✓ <i>People Strategy</i> ✓	<i>Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy</i> ✓ <i>Grant Review</i> ✓ <i>Service Integration Plan</i> ✓ <i>Zero Carbon Oxford</i> ✓	<i>Economic Strategy</i> ✓ <i>City Centre Strategy</i> ✓ <i>Asset Management Strategy</i> ✓ <i>Museum of Oxford Transformation</i> ✓ <i>ICT Strategy</i> ✓	
<b>2. Background:</b>  Give the background information to the review and the perceived problems with the review which are the reason for the Impact Assessment.	The purpose of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is to ensure that equality, diversity, inclusion is being developed and monitored as a cross-cutting theme that runs through all key Council policies and service strategies to help reduce inequalities in Oxford. Intrinsicly, the strategy is an ongoing Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) of some of the major current strands of work that underpin the delivery of Oxford City Council's Strategic Plan 2020-24. For each key strand of work mentioned in the other strategic considerations box above, additional consultations/EIAs have been undertaken as part of the development of that work. As they have already been considered by Cabinet or are still in process, the full information relating to those assessments will not be reproduced in this one. However, adopting the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will create a framework that will enable better signposting and connectivity and the mechanism to share cross-Council learning by bringing the different key strands of the Council's work together from an equalities perspective.			

### 3. Methodology and Sources of Data:

The methods used to collect data and what sources of data

This Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken in several stages – firstly as initial focus groups, to help inform the development of key areas of work; secondly, as a linked consultation process which embedded equalities within the 2021 council grant review; thirdly as a series of learning sessions which focussed on different aspects of the issues raised in the focus groups and consultations, and finally via meetings of the Equalities Steering Group which has overseen the drafting of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Impact Assessment.

The initial scoping of the impact assessment was done via the following online focus groups, which were attended by a cross-section of members, officers, equalities ambassadors and community leaders with relevant protected characteristics and lived experience:

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and Race Advisory Group – 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women and Talent Development – 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity and Faith – 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- Age, Mental Health and Shielding – 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- LGBTQIA+ – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- Gender and Talent Development – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- Young People and Mental Health – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020
- Disability, Race and Inclusive Governance – 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020
- Refugee, Asylum seekers – 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020
- Migrant Communities – 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020
- Disability, Access and Talent Development – 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Where relevant (e.g. to include those unable to make it or others identified at the focus groups), follow up sessions were held to ensure the sessions were inclusive of diverse opinions, voices and perspectives.

A wide range of additional available information was also taken into consideration when drafting the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, including:

- Oxford's demographic statistics, including relating to protected characteristics
- Oxford City Council staff demographic statistics relating to protected characteristics (where available)
- Information coming into the Business Intelligence Unit, the Customer Services team and Asana system, including referrals and case studies for support throughout the pandemic as well as information from the Office for National Statistics, Public Health England, Joint Strategic Needs

	<p>Assessment, Institute of Fiscal Studies etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal individual consultations with over 50 diverse staff members across the Council which were held in order to embed equalities within the grant review</li> <li>• Outreach to over 50 third sector organisations, including equalities-focused organisations, Oxford City Council grantees and unsuccessful grant applicants as part of embedding equalities within the grant review</li> <li>• Ten group discussions attended by people with lived experience of different protected characteristics, homelessness and intersectionality, as well as ten open group sessions as part of embedding equalities within the grant review</li> <li>• Public consultation via OCC public consultation portal as part of the grant review with 35 responses</li> </ul> <p>Weekly learning sessions were held to focus on particular aspects of equalities including:</p> <p>Anti-racism; Dyslexia and Neuro-diverse learning; Food Poverty; The Toll of the Pandemic on Children and Young People; Health Impact Assessments; Life Chances; Local Insights and Intelligence; Owned by Oxford – Mapping Community Wealth; Census 2021; a wide range of case studies</p> <p>Learning sessions are attended by locality hub staff and officers from a range of service areas, partners such as social landlords, community groups - alongside speakers. The invite list includes over 120 people who self-select the sessions they attend according to their expertise, area of interest and CPD.</p> <p>The Equalities Steering group has overseen the drafting of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Impact Assessment.</p>
<p><b>4. Consultation</b></p> <p>This section should outline all the consultation that has taken place on the EIA. It should include the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why you carried out the consultation.</li> <li>• Details about how you went about it.</li> <li>• A summary of the replies you received from people you</li> </ul>	<p>The focus groups and consultations were carried out to inform the development of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, but consultees also inputted into the consultation plan itself. As a result, more consultations were held than were initially planned as consultees made suggestions for additional people and organisations to be consulted.</p> <p>Details of how each element of the consultation was delivered are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Focus Groups</b> The focus groups detailed above were led by senior officers with relevant characteristics and lived experience of the equality discussion topic. In addition, the focus groups were attended by an appropriate cross-section of members, officers, equalities ambassadors and community leaders.</li> </ul>

- consulted.
- An assessment of your proposed policy (or policy options) in the light of the responses you received.
- A statement of what you plan to do next

- Analysis of data**

Undertaken as a desktop exercise linking in with Sally Hicks, Data Analyst and Mark Chandler, Performance and Resources Manager, to access information held by/accessible to OCC (e.g. referrals to Customer and Community Services) as well as publicly available census demographic information, Office for National Statistics data, data from Local Insight and referral case studies etc.

**Here is the summary table of the key equalities related points raised during consultation responses/inputs and the mitigating actions which have been embedded in the strategy as a result:**

Equalities Impact	Strategic Plan – Mitigating Actions
<p>People with protected characteristics have been disproportionately affected by the <b>pandemic</b></p>	<p><b>Thriving Communities Strategy/Economic Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver services, grants, community and leisure facilities, parks and cultural events that help reduce inequality, increase cohesion and improve health and wellbeing across Oxford’s communities</li> <li>Foster an inclusive economy, in which wealth is distributed across our communities and where all residents can share the benefits of growth</li> <li>Ensure that staff employed directly or on behalf of the city council are paid at least the Oxford Living Wage, and encourage our suppliers to do the same</li> <li>Continue work under our strategic plan to offer development opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people, through the Council’s Youth Ambition programme and our apprenticeship policy.</li> <li>Continue to fund youth and holiday activities</li> </ul>

		<p>to provide non-formal education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to increase digital connectivity and skills in the city</li> </ul>
	<p>Reported <b>hate crime</b> incidents are rising in Oxford – people are being attacked for their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and gender. There is a <b>lack of safe spaces</b> for communities to meet in the city and there used to be more e.g. the LGBTQIA+ community centre at the Northgate Hall which closed about 15 years ago</p>	<p><b>Thriving Communities Strategy/Grant Review/Asset Management Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with TVP and other partners to understand and address the root causes</li> <li>• Work with partners to identify available venues which could become shared safe spaces</li> <li>• Support communities to access funding to create safe meeting spaces</li> <li>• Create and promote inclusive events to enable communities to get to know each other</li> </ul>
	<p>People with protected characteristics can find it <b>difficult to understand about and access Council services</b> – including disabled people and migrant communities who don't have English as a first language</p>	<p><b>Thriving Communities Strategy/Economic Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the Service Integration Plan and move to working in a locality based model</li> <li>• Improve service design: build in strong equality, diversity and inclusion processes at an early stage of policy and service design so that we meet the needs of all residents</li> <li>• Commission and provide grant funding to help raise awareness of access issues and support communities to access buildings and services including using translation tools where needed</li> <li>• Review how we communicate and engage with communities, looking at how this may need to adapt for different localities, diversities, interests and needs. This will</li> </ul>

		<p>include the need to report back to communities on outcomes as well as listening to needs, vulnerabilities and aspirations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redevelop OCC website and promote its access tools more widely</li> <li>• Work with stakeholders and partners to support access to core service provision for migrant communities. This includes promoting and enhancing our online welcome pack for migrant communities and international students.</li> <li>• Work with, support and enable local voluntary and community groups to take a greater role in improving the city and the lives of residents</li> <li>• Ensure our staff are skilled and confident in delivering services our residents want</li> <li>• Work with our subsidiaries ODS and OCHL to ensure the essential services they provide for us prioritise a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Institutional racism and sexism</b> makes it harder for People of Colour and Women to <b>get a job and be promoted</b></p>	<p><b>Anti-Racism Charter/People Strategy/Economic Strategy/Thriving Communities Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue our commitment to the Oxford Anti-Racism Charter by encouraging communities, businesses and organisations to take ownership of their own contributions to anti-racism in the city.</li> <li>• Continue to work with partners to challenge discrimination, tackle racism and hate</li> </ul>

language, including addressing the root causes

- Implement the Oxford City Council Workforce Equalities Action Plan to boost employee diversity through recruitment and apprenticeships and expand the management opportunities for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and women so our workforce as a whole better reflects Oxford's diverse population
- Improve our data collection to help us understand barriers and opportunities to recruiting, retaining and developing talented people from diverse backgrounds.
- Continue to include the ethnicity and disability pay gap in our annual reporting and implement actions to close these gaps
- Empower employees to create staff networks that represent the interest and experiences of those with protected characteristics.
- Promote flexible working arrangements
- Provide apprenticeships, coaching and mentoring and secondment opportunities
- Staff training and development around equalities issues including un/conscious bias and challenging different forms of discrimination
- Implement a new inclusive Economic Strategy to increase the opportunities for disadvantaged groups to have a fair share in the city's economy

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use our influence to ensure Oxford's diversity is celebrated and communities are more cohesive</li> </ul>
	<p>Some groups are unaware there is <b>grant funding</b> available – application and monitoring processes have been a barrier to access to grant funding for some groups, including those for whom English isn't their first language</p>	<p><b>Grant Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote funding calls more widely targeting underrepresented groups</li> <li>• Run regular funding surgeries – moving around the locality areas – to help promote and support</li> <li>• Actively promote the grants programme and its benefits at diverse events in the city e.g. Cowley Road Carnival, Pride etc.</li> <li>• Identify community based equalities champions to help promote</li> <li>• Streamline paperwork for application and monitoring</li> <li>• Use plain English and avoid jargon</li> <li>• Allow applications and monitoring information to be made in different ways including different languages and different formats e.g. video submissions</li> <li>• Develop online grant application and management system with support prompts</li> <li>• Provide more coaching and support for CVS including equalities led groups to build capacity/skills via funding surgeries and learning sessions</li> </ul>
	<p>While there is a lot of diversity in the city, people live and work in <b>siloed communities</b> which are not mixing – the <b>town and gown</b> divide still exists and if you scratch beneath the surface there are tensions between different groups</p>	<p><b>Thriving Communities Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver services, grants, community and leisure facilities, parks and cultural events that help reduce inequality and increase intercultural understanding and cohesion across Oxford's communities</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote partnership working: use our relationships to work together and connect different communities, so that we can jointly address issues and celebrate strengths</li> <li>• Help to build community capacity to lead and participate in projects that benefit or affect their communities</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Housing is unaffordable</b> for most people in the city</p>	<p><b>Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver more, affordable housing, to address Oxford's housing crisis where existing homes are unaffordable for many and demand for good quality homes outstrips what is available</li> <li>• Ensure our Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy continues to meet community needs for housing for specific groups, including disability needs, family housing needs and those at risk of homelessness.</li> </ul>
	<p>Some communities are disproportionately affected by <b>air pollution</b> in the environment</p>	<p><b>Zero Carbon Oxford</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue a zero carbon Oxford, acting on the clear message from Oxford's Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change to continue to take a lead in reducing emissions and increasing biodiversity</li> </ul>
<p>The next step is for the Strategy to be considered by the Corporate Management Team.</p>		

<p><b>5. Assessment of Impact:</b> Provide details of the assessment of the policy on the six primary equality strands. There may have been other groups or individuals that you considered. Please also consider whether the policy, strategy or spending decisions could have an impact on safeguarding and / or the welfare of children and vulnerable adults</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td><b>Race</b></td> <td><b>Disability</b></td> <td><b>Age</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Positive impact</td> <td>Positive impact</td> <td>Positive impact</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Gender reassignment</b></td> <td><b>Religion or Belief</b></td> <td><b>Sexual Orientation</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Positive impact</td> <td>Positive impact</td> <td>Positive impact</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Sex</b></td> <td><b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b></td> <td><b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Positive impact</td> <td>Positive impact</td> <td>Neutral</td> </tr> </table> <p>The actions and mitigations detailed above have been designed to have a positive aspect for those most in need including those with protected characteristics and people with a range of intersectional identities who have been significantly impacted by the pandemic.</p>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Disability</b>	<b>Age</b>	Positive impact	Positive impact	Positive impact	<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<b>Religion or Belief</b>	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	Positive impact	Positive impact	Positive impact	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>	<b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b>	Positive impact	Positive impact	Neutral
<b>Race</b>	<b>Disability</b>	<b>Age</b>																	
Positive impact	Positive impact	Positive impact																	
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Positive impact	Positive impact	Positive impact																	
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b>	<b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b>																	
Positive impact	Positive impact	Neutral																	
<p><b>6. Consideration of Measures:</b></p> <p>This section should explain in detail all the consideration of alternative approaches/ mitigation of adverse impact of the policy</p>	<p>Delivering the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will intrinsically mitigate the equalities issues raised through focus groups and consultation. Work is underway to review our approach to Equality Impact Assessments, ensuring that new policies and services involve and consider the impact on protected groups at the earliest pre-draft stages. Moreover, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy recommends a continuous approach to equalities, including a governance framework for regularly monitoring and assessing the impact of strategy delivery from an equalities perspective.</p>																		
<p><b>6a. Monitoring Arrangements:</b></p> <p>Outline systems which will be put in place to monitor for adverse impact in the future and this should include all relevant timetables. In addition it could include a summary and assessment of your monitoring, making clear</p>	<p>The City Council has an equalities steering group chaired by the Executive Director for Communities and People. This is an advisory group with insight into lived experience and council service delivery that will inform our policy-making and service delivery and help strengthen our own approach to equalities within the workplace.</p> <p>To strengthen oversight, accountability, and challenge at the senior level, the Equalities Steering group will present quarterly to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) of service directors and the Leaders Group of Cabinet Members</p>																		

whether you found any evidence of discrimination.					
<b>7. Date reported and signed off by Corporate Management Team:</b>	January 2022				
<b>8. Conclusions:</b>  What are your conclusions drawn from the results in terms of the policy impact	The conclusion is to adopt and deliver the strategy in order to help to close inequality gaps across the city and mitigate the impact of Covid on Oxford's diverse communities.				
<b>9. Are there implications for the Service Plans?</b>	YES – the actions embedded in service plans	<b>10. Date the Service Plans will be updated</b>	Ongoing		
<b>13. Date reported to Scrutiny and Executive Board:</b>	Feb 2022	<b>14. Date reported to CMT:</b>	January 2022	<b>12. The date the report on EqIA will be published</b>	March 2022

Signed (completing officer) P. Redway

Signed (Lead Officer) I.Brooke

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 16 March 2022  
**Report of:** Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety  
**Title of Report:** Update of Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy

www.oxford.gov.uk



<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present an updated Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security, and Housing the Homeless.
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Foster an inclusive economy, Deliver more affordable housing, Support thriving communities & Pursue a zero carbon Oxford
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Strategy 2020-24
<b>Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:</b>	
1. <b>Approve</b> the proposed Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy attached at Appendix 2.	
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Current Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy 2020 – Coronavirus
Appendix 2	Proposed - Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy 2022
Appendix 3	Risk register
Appendix 4	Equalities Impact Assessment

## Introduction and background

1. The Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy was introduced on 24th January 2018, after being agreed by the then City Executive Board in January 2018. The policy is made under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 which gives the general power to introduce policies for assisting individuals with renewals, repairs and adaptations in their homes through grants or loans.

2. The main funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) now comes from pooled budget arrangements between top tier local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) via the Better Care Fund (BCF). The County Council holds the budget and provides DFG funding to each district council. As funding is now received from the BCF, the policy reflects the BCF's aims of achieving better health and wellbeing outcomes and reducing avoidable admissions to hospital agenda.
3. The Council's Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy has been held up nationally as an example of good practice as shown by the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) winning the Foundations Adaptation service of the year in December 2020. Other district councils, including those in Oxfordshire, are using Oxford City Council's Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) policy as a template to develop similar policies in their areas.
4. The Council's national mandatory DFG programme has been considerably expanded from £220m in 2015/16 to £505m in 2020/21. Oxford City Council's DFG Budget allocation from the government has increased from £501,000 in 2015/16 to £1,421,433 in 2021/22.
5. Minor changes were made to the policy by executive decision in January 2019 and in response to Covid-19 emergency minor changes were made in March 2020 to the policy under executive decision to increase the maximum Safe & Secure Grant limit from £1,000 to £2,000. This enabled a wider scope of safety works to be carried out to help support hospital discharge and also reduce falls leading to hospital admission which has been very successful.
6. The policy is delivered by the Council through its HIA who are also contracted by Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to deliver additional services that enable people to remain in their home. A new three plus two year HIA contract with Oxfordshire County Council is due to start on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

### **Proposed Changes to Policy**

7. The proposed policy is attached as Appendix 2 and the main changes that are highlighted in the draft are detailed below.

#### **Adapted Homes Grant**

8. Increase the maximum amount of the Adapted Homes Grant from £8,000 to £10,000. Many HIA's around the country who introduced this grant after Oxford City Council now use this amount, including the councils in Oxfordshire. The proposed increase will benefit our residents and improve consistency in the county.

#### **Disabled Facility Grants – Top up Grant**

9. This is a new grant. The cost of extensions and major works have increased significantly and many of these are now well above the £30,000 DFG limit set by the government. Many councils including the other districts in the county offer a top-up grant of an additional £30,000 for those with the greatest need. Currently the maximum assistance is £10,000 via a Discretionary DFG so the new Top up Grant will significantly increase the assistance available for applicants where the works exceed the government's £30,000 limit. The financial impact will be limited as the number of extensions undertaken is small because lower cost interventions are always offered if they meet the need.

### **Discretionary DFG**

10. Currently the Discretionary DFG is subject to the client having a “nil contribution” from the mandatory DFG prescribed test of resources, but it will be made eligible to all applicants in need of adaptations for palliative care. The Discretionary DFG will no longer be required for recipients of the new Top up Grant as they are benefitting from the additional £30,000.

### **Relocation Grant**

11. Currently this assistance is limited to owner occupiers and the proposal is to extend this assistance to help disabled tenants (who are not Oxford City Council tenants) to re-locate to more suitable premises.

### **Essential Repair Assistance**

12. The funding for this grant is provided by the Council and the maximum award is £5,000. The proposal is to amend the conditions to allow one quote for the works and remove the 10 year residency limit for repayment so that every grant is repayable on the sale of the property to improve the recycling of Council funds.

### **Other implications**

13. The works carried out under this policy often result in property improvements which contribute to the carbon reduction agenda.

### **Financial implications**

14. By approving the policy all the additional spend will be funded using BCF money so there will be no direct cost to the Council.

### **Legal issues**

15. As set out in the Policy the Council has a duty to approve applications made under section 23(1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 that satisfy the requirements of that Act. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) provides the Council with discretionary powers to provide assistance in any form for the purpose of improving living conditions. This is an opportunity for the Council.
16. No legal issues have been identified from the proposed amendments to the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy. As the policy states any exceptional cases, which fall outside the criteria laid down in the policy, can be referred to the Head of Service for approval.

### **Level of risk**

17. A risk register is attached as Appendix 3.

### **Equalities impact**

18. An Equalities Impact assessment (EIA) has been completed and attached as Appendix 4. The impacts are positive as the policy directly relates to assisting vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community.

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**Background Papers:** None



# OXFORD CITY HOME

IMPROVEMENT AGENCY



## HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)  
(England and Wales) Order 2002

March 2020



## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Council aims to be as helpful to potential applicants for financial assistance as resources will allow. It is happy to give guidance and advice to Older, Disabled and vulnerable clients regardless of whether they are eligible for financial assistance. At times of heavy demand it will be obliged to prioritise the workload and it may have to operate waiting lists.

1.2. The Council is duty bound to approve applications made under section 23(1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 that satisfy the requirements of that Act, for example mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

1.3 In 2002 the government brought in the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 which provide freedom and opportunities for the Local Authority to address housing issues. In 2008-9 the government extended the scope of the RRO to include use of the DFG money. This enables the authorities to use specific DFG funding for wider purposes. The Council has discretionary powers under “the Order” to provide assistance in any form for the purpose of improving living conditions.

1.4 DFG funds are not permitted to be used for Local Authority owned properties, so this policy does not apply to Oxford City Council tenants.



1.5 In 2016-17, the Better Care Fund was increased to a mandated minimum of £3.9 billion to be deployed locally on health and social care through pooled budget arrangements between local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). Part of the fund is the £394 million allocation for the Disabled Facilities Grant, which is paid directly from the Government to local authorities. The Better Care Fund (BCF) brings together money from a number of health and social care budgets in order to find better ways of delivering health and care services, and make a person's health pathway easier to navigate. It is a crucial part of delivering the aims of the Care Act, especially on the prevention agenda and reducing hospital discharge delays.

1.6 The assistance provided must allow for at least the same level of assistance as that offered by the existing Mandatory DFG. Crucially the assistance available from Oxford City Council under this policy enables the provision of more flexible, wide ranging financial assistance, to better meet some of these needs.

1.7 This policy will remain in force until such time as it is reviewed and amended. It is intended that there will be a management review of this new policy no later than the end of the 2020/21 financial year so that demand any further funding changes in 2020/21 can be assessed and the policy amended accordingly to account for this.

1.8 All our advice leaflets and marketing information has been refreshed to reflect the new policy. We will do a proactive awareness raising campaign as part of the implementation of the new policy.



## **2. Summary of Types of Assistance**

2.1 In brief, assistance will be provided for the following purposes, details of which are provided later in this document:-

### **Disabled Facility Grant Funding**

- Disabled Facility Grants – Mandatory Grant
- The Adapted Homes Grant
- Relocation Assistance
- Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants
- Safe and Secure Grant
- Oxfordshire County Council – Lift Service and Maintenance Contract

### **Discretionary Housing Assistance Grants**

2.2 The following forms of assistance are discretionary grants and therefore such assistance only remains available while funds permit. Funding may be withdrawn with immediate effect for grants yet to be approved.

- Essential Repairs Assistance
- Flexible Home Improvement Loans
- Empty Homes Loans
- Small Repairs Scheme
- Property MOT - free for those qualifying for financial assistance.
- Residential House Boats -measures to meet minimum safety standards under the Boat Safety Scheme - subject to test of financial resources.
- Mobile Homes - essential repairs - subject to a test of financial resources.

### 3. Disabled Facilities Grants

3.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to administer mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to provide aids and adaptations to enable disabled residents to live independently within their own homes.

3.2 The eligibility requirements, scope of works, and the general requirements governing mandatory DFGs are prescribed and the Council is unable to deviate from these requirements.

3.3 Both carers will be allowed to apply for Disabled Facilities Grants for Adaptations for disabled children who have formal joint custody arrangements, confirmed by the Occupational Therapist referral.

3.4 The Council is required to administer Disabled Facilities Grants to all eligible applicants irrespective of their tenure, and the Council aims to work collaboratively with housing associations to fund aids and adaptations within social housing wherever possible to share the cost between the Council and the housing association that owns the property being adapted



## 4. Adapted Homes Grant

4.1 The Adapted Homes Grant is intended to help Oxford City residents to adapt their current home. The maximum grant available under this scheme is £8,000 (including any fees and VAT).

4.2 The Oxford City Adapted Homes Grant is similar to the eligibility criteria for the national Disabled Facilities Grant scheme with some exceptions, which are intended to make this assistance easier to approve and more flexible.

4.3 The Oxford City Adapted Homes Grant will be only be available whilst funds permit as it is a discretionary grant. Funding may be withdrawn with immediate effect, however in such instances Mandatory DFG will continue to be available.

### Who can apply for an Adapted Homes grant?

4.4 Those persons eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant or Minor Works Grant are also eligible for an Adapted Homes Grant including any person who is, or is applying on behalf of someone who is:

- registered or registerable as disabled \*

\* registerable - the person is eligible under the definition of disabled as defined under section 6(1) of the Equality Act

4.5 A person over the age of 18 is eligible to apply for an Adapted Homes Grant under the same criteria as a Disabled Facilities Grant, this can be for themselves or on behalf of the disabled person if they:

- own their own home as a freeholder or leaseholder (with at least 5 years left to run),
- are a tenant or life tenant,
- or have a license to occupy a park home on a licensed site and live in the Oxford City.

## What other criteria is there?

4.6 Only one application a year per person can be made for an Adapted Homes Grant.

4.7 The person applying for the grant will normally need to confirm that the disabled person (this could be themselves or somebody that they are applying for *intends* to live at the property subject to the Oxford City Adapted Homes Grant for the next five years, as their main residence.

4.8 If the property is jointly owned, the applicant will need to get the written consent from any joint owners (who do not live at the property as their main residence), that they confirm the eligible works can be completed to the property.

4.9 If the applicant is a tenant, the applicant will need to obtain the written consent of the property owner agreeing that the eligible works can be completed to the property.



## **Test of Financial Resources**

4.10 Any grant eligible works paid under this grant will not be subject to a 'means test' of the financial resources of the disabled occupant. Therefore in such cases the disabled occupant will be entitled to receive a full grant to cover the cost of the eligible works up to £8,000 (including any fees and VAT).

4.11 Unless otherwise stated in this document all other aspects of the provision of Disabled Facilities Grant under the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and associated regulations and guidance shall apply including the list of eligible works.

## **What works are eligible?**

4.12 In considering the eligible works Oxford City consult a suitably qualified professional which includes an Occupational Therapist.

4.13 The cost of the eligible works shall be determined so as to provide 'best value' and maybe decided by an appropriate schedule of rates, a 'mini tender' process or in exceptional circumstances, a single quotation for the eligible works.

4.14 Minor Works up to £1,000 are referred by Social Services, and undertaken by Oxford Direct Services adaptation team. For works that exceed the £1,000 limit the Adapted homes grant can be used to top-up funding for these works. In this case the existing Direct Services single quote will be used to expedite these urgent works.

4.15 The eligible works shall be 'necessary and appropriate' to meet the needs of the disabled occupant and it must be 'reasonable and practicable' to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling.

4.16 Regard shall be had to the associated guidance and good practice in determining these factors.

4.17 The maximum grant payable for eligible works is £8,000, including the cost of any associated 'preliminary and ancillary charges' associated with the eligible works.

## 5. Relocation Grant

5.1 The Oxford City Relocation Grant can provide financial assistance to help disabled persons move to a more appropriate home.

5.2 An applicant may also apply for assistance for expenses incurred in moving to a more appropriate home outside of the local housing authority area where they live, which maybe within or outside of Oxford City.

### Eligibility

5.3 To qualify for this type of assistance the applicant must be:

- a person who would otherwise qualify for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, were it possible to carry out the works; and
- whose contribution towards the cost of the works would, using the test of resources prescribed by the Government for determining mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, be less than £5,000; and
- is an owner-occupier whose principal or only residence is within the City of Oxford.

5.4 To qualify, the Council must be satisfied that either:

- (a) it is not practicable to carry out works that would be considered “necessary”, “appropriate” and “reasonable” under section 24 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, or
- (b) The ‘new’ property shall in the opinion of the Oxford City HIA provide a long term, sustainable home for the person for whose benefit the works are required so that either an adaptation is not necessary or the new adaptation is significantly smaller than the original DFG request. The total cost incurred in the eligible relocation expenses at the ‘new’ property should not be greater than the cost of adapting the applicant’s current home.
- (c) the works cannot be carried out without the permission of a third party and that permission has not been forthcoming.

5.5 The Council will not provide this type of assistance retrospectively. The Council will only consider an application for this type of assistance where it has notified the applicant in writing that one of the three criteria listed above apply.

5.6 In exceptional circumstances, the Council will consider providing assistance to enable a private tenant to move to more suitable accommodation.

## **Eligible Costs**

5.7 The Council will pay any of the following reasonable costs subject to satisfactory evidence that the expenditure has been incurred:-

- (a) Stamp duty;
- (b) Mortgage arrangement fees;
- (c) Estate agents' fees;
- (d) Furniture removal costs;
- (e) Utility connection costs;
- (f) Conveyancing costs and/or;
- (g) Any other costs that are deemed by the Council to be essential to effect the move;

5.8 This is subject to a maximum total level of assistance of £15,000 per applicant.

## **Application**

5.9 An application shall be made in a format prescribed by the Council. Application Forms are available on request.

## **Conditions**

5.10 A person who receives relocation assistance shall not be entitled to claim similar assistance for a period of 10 years. However, the provision of this type of assistance does not remove the right of any person to apply for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant at any time.

## **Payment**

5.11 A single payment will be made to the applicant upon completion of the move and upon receipt of satisfactory copies of any receipts, demands or other evidence of payment.

## 6. Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants

6.1 The Council will consider applications for discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants in exceptional cases. These grants may be applied for either on their own or in addition to a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

6.2 These grants will be subject to the client having a “nil contribution” from the mandatory DFG prescribed test of resources and will be subject of a maximum of £10,000 each year.

6.3 Assistance is limited to properties within the City of Oxford and applications will be considered for:

- Helping to pay towards a mandatory DFGs which has exceeded the £30,000 limit.
- Adapting or providing a room for the use of a housebound person with a disability for the purpose of receiving specialised care or medical treatment, which on expert medical or other advice, is best delivered at home.
- The provision of a safe play area for a child, with disabilities, under the age of 10 at the date of application for a grant.
- Essential repair of adaptations fitted under a DFG in order to keep a disabled person safe after the warranty period.
- Essential repairs/works to the client’s property in order to either enable a DFG to take place or to enable hospital discharge.
- Other works to provide a solution for vulnerable and disabled applicant’s needs. This would be subject to authorisation by the Head of Service.
- Where applicants have a contribution to make according to the outcome of the prescribed test of resources, they may provide written evidence to the Council, from an Independent Financial Advisor of their inability to raise sufficient funds to cover their own contribution. In these circumstances the City Council will consider approving discretionary grant aid if that is the only option for enabling the agreed works to proceed. The City Council may seek further advice before determining the application.
- The maximum grant is £10,000. The grant may include the cost of the eligible works plus an agency fee which is charged at the current rate (a minimum £10 agency fee applies).

## 7. Safe and Secure Grant

7.1 The Safe and Secure Grant is designed to enable home owners and tenants\* to quickly access financial assistance to carry out a wide range of minor adaptations and small repairs to reduce risks and accidents around the home, promote independent living and assist with hospital discharge or prevent hospital admission.

7.2 This is a discretionary grant and therefore such assistance only remains available while funds permit. Funding maybe withdrawn with immediate effect for grants yet to be approved.

### Who can apply for a Safe and Secure Grant

7.3 A person is eligible to apply for a Safe and Secure Grant if they are over 18 years old, live in the local authority area of Oxford City and:

- The applicant must be registered as disabled (or able to be registered) or over 60 years of age.
- own their own home as a freeholder or leaseholder (with at least 5 years left to run),
- are a tenant\* or life tenant,
- or have a license to occupy a park home on a licensed site and;

**\*this grant assistance will not be provided for tenanted properties where the eligible works are the normal, legal responsibility of the landlord.**

7.4 At the Oxford City HIA discretion, a grant will be considered for the reasonable cost of the work necessary to:

- carry out minor works to enable independent living
- works to prevent falls in and around the home
- reduce hazards or risks that are likely to cause serious harm or injury
- works to enable hospital discharge or prevent hospital admission.
- examples of eligible works may include:
  - water supply, drainage and heating issues
  - electrical and gas safety
  - small adaptations to support for Dementia
  - repairs or modifications to stairs, floors and steps
  - safety and security repairs
  - adaptations to enable independence and safety

### **Amount of Assistance**

7.5 The maximum grant is £2,000. The grant may include the cost of the eligible works plus an agency fee which is charged at the current rate (a minimum £10 agency fee applies).



## **What conditions are attached to the grant?**

7.6 For simple works carried out by the Oxford City Council Handyperson, no quote is required. The Handyperson will complete the works on-site with the client.

7.7 For most other Safe & Secure jobs no quote is required. The work will be undertaken by Oxford Direct Services to expedite works.

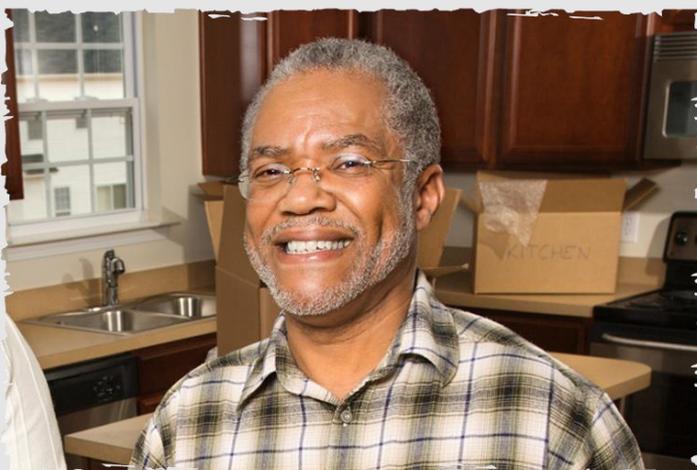
7.8 For all other specialist works one quotation from an Oxford City HIA contractor shall be submitted for the cost of the eligible approved works. No works shall be carried out without formal grant approval.

7.9 Once all the above paperwork is received or obtained by the Oxford City HIA service to their satisfaction, then the application will be considered complete.

7.10 Once an application is considered complete, the Oxford City HIA service will in eligible cases approve a grant in accordance with any agreed response time.

7.11 The grant will only be paid upon the successful completion of the works to the satisfaction of the Oxford City HIA service and upon receipt of suitable invoice(s).

7.12 Grant monies will only normally be paid directly to the contractor who performed the eligible works.



## 8. Oxfordshire County Council – Lift Service and Maintenance Contract

Historically there are some lifts under a service and maintenance contract with Oxfordshire County Council.

Children's lifts fitted under a mandatory DFG are also added to this list once the warranty has expired.

8.1 The assistance below will only apply to lifts on Oxfordshire County Council's service and maintenance contract within Oxford City.

8.2 Funding will be made available for an annual service and inspection visit for those lifts on the list with an approved OCHIA contractor.

8.3 Small repairs to lifts on the list also will be funded. If the lift becomes uneconomic to repair it will be referred back to Oxfordshire County Council to re-assess the client to make sure it still meets their needs.

8.4 Once a suitable referral is received from an OT the replacement lift can be considered under Mandatory DFG.

8.5 Repairs can still be considered to keep the old lift functional until a new one can be sourced.

8.6 The grant may include the cost of the eligible works plus an agency fee which is charged at the current rate (a minimum £10 agency fee applies).



## 9. Essential Repairs Assistance (ERA)

### Eligibility

9.1 Applications will be considered where the applicant(s):

- Are over 18 years of age;
- These grants will be subject to the client having a “nil contribution” from the mandatory DFG prescribed test of resources and will be subject of a maximum of £5,000 per application.
- Occupies the property, within the City of Oxford, as their sole or principal residence in the United Kingdom.
- Has repairing liability in law; and
- Other than in exceptional circumstances, has lived in his/her home for a minimum of three years.

9.2 If an applicant meets these criteria, then under any of the following circumstances financial assistance may be available.

- (a) Where a risk to the security of the occupier exists e.g. insecure windows or doors.
- (b) Where a breakdown of the primary source of heating or hot water has arisen or where it is so defective that a breakdown is inevitable.
- (c) Where a major defect exists that puts the health and safety of the occupier at an unacceptable level of risk e.g. an unsafe gas or electrical system.
- (d) Where there is a significant risk to public safety e.g. from an unsafe chimney or loose roof coverings.
- (e) Where internal works that pose an immediate risk to the occupier, their carer or other visitors to the property exist e.g. rotten flooring or a dangerous staircase.
- (f) Where a major structural element is so defective that significant further damage to the structure of the property or an adjoining property, will arise if remedial action is not taken e.g. a badly leaking roof or leaking gutters or downspouts.
- (g) Where there is a serious risk to health that is directly attributed to the repairs or adaptations required. In some cases medical evidence of need may be required e.g. from a GP or Hospital Consultant.
- (h) Where a notice requiring repair would otherwise be served or where a higher level of enforcement action would be necessary e.g. making a Closing Order and re-housing the occupier.
- (i) Where properties have a low Standard Assessment Procedure Rating (SAP 60 or below), grant assistance to meet the Decent Homes Standards will be available.

## Amount of Assistance

9.3 A maximum of £5,000, per property, is payable to execute repairs in any three year period where the works fall within the above list. The grant may include the cost of the eligible works plus an agency fee which is charged at the current rate (a minimum £10 agency fee applies).

### **TARGET STANDARD OF REPAIR**

The target standard of repair to be achieved is one which will remedy the defect and which will remove the associated health risks. Renewal of a failed element will take place when this is the most cost effective remedy. For example, a leaking roof may require either repairs or renewal of one or more roof slopes; or the whole roof may need to be stripped and re-laid. If the roof is generally sound and is judged to have at least 10 years further life, it will be repaired. Replacement windows will have to meet the Building Regulation standards and other standards, e.g. in conservation areas or if the property is a Listed Building.

## Conditions

9.4 All Financial Assistance over £1,000 is subject to the following conditions:

- Sale or transfer of a property within a 10 year period from the date of completion of any works will result in the money being repayable in full.
- Any financial assistance paid will be based on a specification for works that has been either provided by, or approved by, the Council. Specifications that are not approved by the Council will not be accepted. Quotations based on unapproved specifications will not be acceptable.
- The contract for any works undertaken is between the applicant and the contractor
- In general, at least two quotations are required for works that will cost over £1,000, unless prior agreement has been given by the Council (or its agent), the case is one of emergency, or the work is of a specialist nature not normally carried out by building contractors. All quotations must be itemised (to assist with settlement of any variation in cost or dispute that may subsequently arise), be on proper letter heading and be dated.

## 10. Flexible Home Improvement Loans (FHIL)

10.1 Oxford City Council is part of a consortium of 17 local authorities who have been awarded funding from the South East Regional Housing Board for a not-for-profit Flexible Home Improvement Loan Scheme. The local authorities have created Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited, which is a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee and wholly owned by local authorities across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey.

10.2 The eligibility requirements, scope of works, and the general requirements governing FHIL's are prescribed and the Council is unable to deviate from these requirements.

### Eligibility

10.3 To qualify for this type of assistance the applicant must be an owner-occupier aged 60 or over, and living in the City of Oxford. In the case of joint owners, each must be at least 60 years of age.

### Eligible works

10.4 We will consider improvements that will make the home safer, warmer, healthier or more comfortable for the occupants. Examples of work that may be acceptable include essential repairs and maintenance, central heating or improvements to heating, replacement doors and windows, home security and the installation of adaptations such as level access showers.



## **Amount of Assistance**

10.5 The minimum amount of assistance is £1,000 and the maximum is based on the property value.

## **Conditions**

10.6 Loans are subject to conditions which are set by FHIL and agreed by the client in writing.

- The loan will be secured by a charge on the property.
- The interest rate is fixed for the term of the loan.
- During the term of the loan the recipient can choose to make regular monthly payments, occasional payments or no payments at all. The repayment arrangements can be varied at any time by the loan recipient.
- The loan plus outstanding interest must be repaid if the home is sold, or if the owners cease to occupy it.

## **Fees and charges**

10.7 There will be the following fees and charges associated with the loan:

- There will be a fee of £30 for the loan documentation and legal charge, plus a fee to the land registry, which will be quoted at the time of the application.
- There is an annual charge of £15 to cover the cost of loan administration and statements.
- If Oxford City council HIA team manage the works on behalf of the client an agency fee will be charged at the current rate.
- Any fees incurred by the applicant may be added to the loan.

## **11. Empty Homes Loans**

### **How does the scheme work?**

11.1 Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited offer Empty Homes Loans. Empty Homes Loans may be regarded as 5 year, flexible, bridging finance secured by a first charge or, in some circumstances, a second charge on the property.

11.2 After the work has been completed you may let the property or use it as your own residence. During the term of the loan you can choose to make regular monthly payments, occasional payments or no payments at all. Furthermore, you are free to vary the arrangement at any time.

11.3 The loan, plus outstanding interest, must be repaid on the fifth anniversary of making the loan, or if the property is sold, whichever occurs first. The borrower will normally need to remortgage, or sell, the property to repay the loan. Interest will be charged at 2% above Bank of England rate, subject to minimum and maximum rates (please contact us for a quotation). Your account will also be debited with an annual charge of £15 to cover the cost of loan administration and statements.

11.4 The loan may be repaid, in whole or part, at any time before the end of the five years, without penalty. When the loan is completely repaid there is a flat fee of £50.00 for cancellation of our registered charge

### **Who is eligible?**

11.5 Empty Homes Loans are available to owners of empty properties and anybody wishing to purchase an empty property.

11.6 Applications are processed on a non-status basis, although a credit check is carried out. A very poor credit history may result in the application being declined and bankruptcy will automatically prevent us from making a loan.

### **Are there any setting-up costs?**

11.7 There will be a fee for loan documentation and registration of the legal charge. The fee will be added to the loan and is currently £80.00 for loans up to £100,000. In certain circumstances the Council may need to obtain a valuation of the property to confirm the equity is sufficient to cover the loan. This is unlikely to be needed in the majority of cases.

11.8 If you decide to engage a solicitor to act for you, they will almost certainly charge for their service. Any fees incurred may, if you wish, be added to the loan.

## 12. Small Repairs Scheme

### Handyperson Services

12.1 A handyperson service provides a range of practical support services for older and disabled people with the aim of helping them maintain independent living. Oxford City Council currently provides a chargeable Handyperson Service for a wide range of jobs which can include:

- Small building repairs
- Minor adaptations
- Odd jobs such as putting up curtains, shelves, replacing light bulbs.
- General home safety checks and remedial actions
- Falls and accident prevention checks and remedial actions such as repairing floor coverings
- Security checks – installing locks, chains and spyholes
- Fitting handrails and fitting “keysafes”
- Installing smoke detectors (including special smoke alarms for the deaf)

12.2 This list is not exhaustive but generally work should be considered as ‘small repairs’ that can be completed quickly.

### Who can use the scheme?

- Disabled people over 18 years old.
- Older vulnerable people (over 55 years of age). Priority will be given to those households and individuals who are disabled or in receipt of income support or other means tested benefits.
- Homeowners and private tenants (but not for works that are the responsibility of the landlord).
- Residents of Oxford City.

### Charging

12.3 The costs are based on an hourly charge (this is currently £20 per hour) plus the cost of materials. Costs will vary from job to job and free quotations are given.

## **13. Property MOT**

13.1 Home owners who are eligible for ERA or the Small Repairs Scheme can contact the Council to request a 'Property MOT'. This will take the form of an assessment covering the major elements and identifying both existing and anticipated repairs/replacements and any other significant shortcomings within the dwelling. The 'Property MOT' will help owners to prioritise works; have a better understanding of the condition of their homes and, for those who are able, to investigate loan options. Having a better understanding of the overall condition of their property will allow owners to consider the total cost of any works and evaluate their property and options.

## **14. House Boats**

14.1 Financial assistance is available to qualifying households (Based on ERA criteria) to cover essential repairs required to meet the minimum standards required by Canal & River trust under the Boat Safety Scheme and appropriate energy efficiency measures.

14.2 A maximum of £5,000, in any three year period is payable.

## **15. Mobile Homes**

15.1 Financial Assistance is available to qualifying households (based on ERA criteria) to cover essential repairs and appropriate energy efficiency measures.

15.2 It should be noted that both residential houseboats and mobile homes have a limited life and that an assessment of the anticipated future life of the structure will be undertaken before grant aid is approved. A minimum anticipated future life of 4 years is required. Owners of structures with a shorter anticipated life will receive assistance to carry out temporary or emergency repairs sufficient to enable other housing options to be explored.

15.3 A maximum of £5,000 in any three year period is payable.

## 16. Paying for Staff

16.1 Some local authorities have engaged in-house Occupational Therapists where extended waiting lists occur and covered the costs using the Better Care Fund (BCF) funding. Oxford City Council may use BCF funding to engage an Occupational Therapists or other similar support posts in order to help meet the directives of the BCF funding. This will be referred and approved by the Head of Service

## 17. Administration

### How to Apply for Assistance

17.1 Assistance will be provided through the Councils' Home Improvement Agency (HIA). Enquiries can be made in person at St Aldates, by telephone (01865 252887), in writing (HIA Team, St Aldate's Chambers, 109 St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1DS, by e-mail, [hia@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:hia@oxford.gov.uk) or via the Council's Website ([www.oxford.gov.uk/hia](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/hia)).

17.2 A preliminary enquiry system will allow enquiries to be routed quickly to the most appropriate form of assistance. Enquirers will be advised wherever delays are likely, including the likely length and the reason for a delay.

17.3 The preliminary enquiry system will help to ensure that higher risk cases are dealt with first if delays are likely. For low priority cases a waiting list will be kept.



## Grant Conditions

17.4 All works for which discretionary grants and assistance are awarded must be completed within 6 months, or such longer period of time that has been agreed in writing by the Council. No retrospective applications will be considered.

17.5 All works must be completed in accordance with a specification of works agreed by the council. The agreed works must be carried out to a satisfactory standard of workmanship.

17.6 The payment of any form of financial assistance will be subject to bona fide invoices being provided by the approved contractor or in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the casework officer, an alternative contractor. For example if the original contractor is unable to carry out the works.

17.7 The Council may give a qualified financial assistance approval in certain circumstances. For example, approval may be given for a scheme of works with payment not being guaranteed until the following financial year. This will allow some payments to be made for preliminary or ancillary fees. For example fees for drawings and legal costs.

17.8 Any Essential Repairs Assistance totalling over £1,000 will be repayable on the sale or transfer of a property within a 10 year period commencing with the completion of the works.

17.9 The HIA agency fee at date of publication was 15%, however this is reviewed annually. The current rate can be checked on our website;  
<https://www.oxford.gov.uk>

17.10 The HIA Handyperson rate at date of publication was £20/hr, however this is reviewed annually. The current rate can be checked on our website;  
<https://www.oxford.gov.uk>

## **18. Applications outside of the Policy**

18.1 The Council will consider applications for assistance that are exceptional or fall outside of the policy. In order to make such an application the service below should be contacted in the first instance:

Home Improvement Agency,  
Oxford City Council  
St Aldate's Chambers,  
109 St Aldate's,  
Oxford  
OX1 1DS  
Tel: 01865 252887  
hia@oxford.gov.uk

18.2 Applications should preferably be made in writing, however in some instances you may wish to seek verbal advice in the first instance.

18.3 Exceptional cases, which fall outside the criteria laid down in the policy, will be approved or referred to the Head of Service.

## **19. Policy Implementation**

19.1 This policy shall come into effect on 11th March 2020. The policy shall subsist until the City Council approves any amendments or a successor policy is approved.

19.2 It is intended that the policy will be reviewed annually and any proposed changes will be evaluated and implemented as soon as practically possible, if adopted.

19.3 Circumstances that might necessitate an earlier review might include changes in the available financial resources or changes to the Councils' wider corporate strategies.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

Oxford City Council  
Home Improvement Agency  
St Aldate's Chambers  
109 St Aldate's  
Oxford, OX1 1DS

**Direct Line:** 01865 252788

**Email:** [hia@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:hia@oxford.gov.uk)

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

If you need this in large print or another  
format please call 01865 252788

March 2020



# HOME

OXFORD CITY

## IMPROVEMENT AGENCY



### HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)  
(England and Wales) Order 2002

March 2022



## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Council aims to be as helpful to potential applicants for financial assistance as resources will allow. It is happy to give guidance and advice to older, disabled and vulnerable clients regardless of whether they are eligible for financial assistance. At times of heavy demand it will be obliged to prioritise the workload and it may have to operate waiting lists.

1.2. The Council is duty bound to approve applications made under section 23(1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 that satisfy the requirements of that Act, for example mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

1.3 In 2002 the government brought in the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 which provide freedom and opportunities for the Local Authority to address housing issues. In 2008-9 the government extended the scope of the RRO to include use of the DFG money. This enables the authorities to use specific DFG funding for wider purposes. The Council has discretionary powers under “the Order” to provide assistance in any form for the purpose of improving living conditions.

1.4 DFG funds are not permitted to be used for Local Authority owned properties, so this policy does not apply to Oxford City Council tenants.



1.5 In 2016-17, the Better Care Fund was increased to a mandated minimum of £3.9 billion to be deployed locally on health and social care through pooled budget arrangements between local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). Part of the fund is the £394 million allocation for the Disabled Facilities Grant, which is paid directly from the Government to local authorities. The Better Care Fund (BCF) brings together money from a number of health and social care budgets in order to find better ways of delivering health and care services, and make a person's health pathway easier to navigate. It is a crucial part of delivering the aims of the Care Act, especially on the prevention agenda and reducing hospital discharge delays.

1.6 The assistance provided must allow for at least the same level of assistance as that offered by the existing Mandatory DFG. Crucially the assistance available from Oxford City Council under this policy enables the provision of more flexible, wide ranging financial assistance, to better meet some of these needs.

1.7 This policy will remain in force until such time as it is reviewed and amended. It is intended that there will be a management review of this new policy no later than the end of the 2022/23 financial year so that demand any further funding changes in 2022/23 can be assessed and the policy amended accordingly to account for this.

1.8 All our advice leaflets and marketing information were refreshed to reflect the new policy. We will do a proactive awareness raising campaign as part of the implementation of the new policy.



## 2. Summary of Types of Assistance

2.1 In brief, assistance will be provided for the following purposes, details of which are provided later in this document:-

### Disabled Facility Grant Funding

- Disabled Facility Grants – Mandatory Grant
- The Adapted Homes Grant
- Disabled Facility Grants – Top-up Grant
- Relocation Assistance
- Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants
- Safe and Secure Grant
- Oxfordshire County Council – Lift Service and Maintenance Contract

### Discretionary Housing Assistance Grants

2.2 The following forms of assistance are discretionary grants and therefore such assistance only remains available while funds permit. Funding may be withdrawn with immediate effect for grants yet to be approved.

- Essential Repairs Assistance
- Flexible Home Improvement Loans
- Empty Homes Loans
- Small Repairs Scheme
- Property MOT - free for those qualifying for financial assistance.
- Residential House Boats -measures to meet minimum safety standards under the Boat Safety Scheme - subject to test of financial resources.
- Mobile Homes - essential repairs - subject to a test of financial resources.

### 3. Disabled Facilities Grants

3.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to administer mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to provide aids and adaptations to enable disabled residents to live independently within their own homes.

3.2 The eligibility requirements, scope of works, and the general requirements governing mandatory DFGs are prescribed in law and the Council is unable to deviate from these requirements.

3.3 Both carers will be allowed to apply for Disabled Facilities Grants for adaptations for disabled children who have formal joint custody arrangements when confirmed by the Occupational Therapist referral.

3.4 The Council is required to administer Disabled Facilities Grants to all eligible applicants irrespective of their tenure, and the Council aims to work collaboratively with housing associations to fund aids and adaptations within social housing wherever possible to share the cost between the Council and the housing association that owns the property being adapted.



## 4. Adapted Homes Grant

4.1 The Adapted Homes Grant is intended to help Oxford City residents to adapt their current home. The maximum grant available under this scheme is £10,000 (including any fees and VAT).

4.2 The Oxford City Adapted Homes Grant is similar to the eligibility criteria for the national Disabled Facilities Grant scheme with some exceptions, which are intended to make this assistance easier to approve and more flexible.

4.3 The Oxford City Adapted Homes Grant will only be available whilst funds permit as it is a discretionary grant. Funding may be withdrawn with immediate effect, however in such instances Mandatory DFG will continue to be available.

### Who can apply for an Adapted Homes grant?

4.4 Those persons eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant or Minor Works Grant are also eligible for an Adapted Homes Grant, including any person who is, or is applying on behalf of someone who is:

- registered or registerable as disabled \*

\* registerable - the person is eligible under the definition of disabled as defined under section 6(1) of the Equality Act

4.5 A person over the age of 18 is eligible to apply for an Adapted Homes Grant under the same criteria as a Disabled Facilities Grant. This can be for themselves or on behalf of the disabled person if they:

- own their own home as a freeholder or leaseholder (with at least 5 years left to run),
- are a tenant or life tenant,
- or have a license to occupy a park home on a licensed site and live in the City.

## What other criteria is there?

4.6 Only one application a year per person can be made for an Adapted Homes Grant.

4.7 The person applying for the grant will normally need to confirm that the disabled person (this could be themselves or somebody that they are applying for, *intends* to live at the property subject to the Oxford City Adapted Homes Grant for the next five years, as their main residence.

4.8 If the property is jointly owned, written consent will need to be obtained from any joint owners (who do not live at the property as their main residence), to confirm the eligible works can be completed to the property.

4.9 If the applicant is a tenant, the written consent of the property owner will need to be obtained agreeing that the eligible works can be completed to the property.



## Test of Financial Resources

4.10 Any eligible works paid under this grant will not be subject to a 'means test' of the financial resources of the disabled occupant. Therefore in such cases the disabled occupant will be entitled to receive a full grant to cover the cost of the eligible works up to £10,000 (including any fees and VAT).

4.11 Unless otherwise stated in this document all other aspects of the provision of Disabled Facilities Grant under the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and associated regulations and guidance shall apply including the list of eligible works.

## What works are eligible?

4.12 In considering the eligible works Oxford City consult a suitably qualified professional which includes an Occupational Therapist.

4.13 The cost of the eligible works shall be determined so as to provide 'best value' and may be decided by an appropriate schedule of rates, a 'mini tender' process or in exceptional circumstances, a single quotation for the eligible works.

4.14 Minor Works up to £1,000 are referred by Social Services, and undertaken by Oxford Direct Services' adaptations team. For works that exceed the £1,000 limit the Adapted Homes Grant can be used to top-up funding for these works. In this case the existing Direct Services single quote will be used to expedite these urgent works.

4.15 The eligible works shall be 'necessary and appropriate' to meet the needs of the disabled occupant and it must be 'reasonable and practicable' to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling.

4.16 Regard shall be had to the associated guidance and good practice in determining these factors.

4.17 The maximum grant payable for eligible works is £10,000, including the cost of any associated 'preliminary and ancillary charges' associated with the eligible works.

## 5. Disabled Facility Grants – Top up Grant

5.1 The Council will consider one-off applications for a Disabled Facilities Grant – Top up grant in exceptional cases in addition to a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and will be subject to a maximum of £30,000.

5.2 The grant will be subject to the same restrictions and conditions as the mandatory DFG and will be available to applicants who have paid their assessed contribution from the DFG prescribed test of resources\*

\* If the assessed DFG contribution is over £30,000 no top up grant will be paid.

5.3 Assistance is limited to properties within the City of Oxford and the eligible works shall be 'necessary and appropriate' to meet the needs of the disabled occupant and it must be 'reasonable and practicable' to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling.

5.4 It is intended that this grant supports those facing the greatest need, who are unable to secure funding from other sources to help pay for works costing in excess of the £30,000 maximum DFG.

5.5 These grants will be available to all eligible applicants irrespective of their tenure (apart from Council Tenants), however, the Council aims to work collaboratively with housing associations to fund aids and adaptations within social housing wherever possible to share the cost between the Council and the housing association that owns the property being adapted.

5.6 This Grant will be only be available whilst funds permit as it is a discretionary grant and may be withdrawn by the Head of Service with immediate effect, however in such instances Mandatory DFG will continue to be available.

5.7 The maximum top-up grant is £30,000. The grant may include the cost of the eligible works plus an agency fee which is charged at the current rate.

## 6. Relocation Grant

6.1 The Oxford City Relocation Grant can provide financial assistance to help disabled persons move to a more appropriate home.

6.2 An applicant may also apply for assistance for expenses incurred in moving to a more appropriate home outside of the local housing authority area where they live, which maybe within or outside of Oxford City.

### Eligibility

6.3 To qualify for this type of assistance the applicant must be:

- a person who would otherwise qualify for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, were it is possible to carry out the works; and be
- a person whose contribution towards the cost of the works would be less than £5,000 using the test of resources prescribed by the Government for determining mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants; and
- be a person currently residing within the City of Oxford.

6.4 To qualify, the Council must be satisfied that either:

- (a) it is not practicable to carry out works that would be considered “necessary”, “appropriate” and “reasonable” under section 24 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, or
- (b) the ‘new’ property shall in the opinion of the Oxford City HIA provide a long term, sustainable home for the person for whose benefit the works are required so that either an adaptation is not necessary or the new adaptation is significantly smaller than the original DFG request. The total cost incurred in the eligible relocation expenses at the ‘new’ property should not be greater than the cost of adapting the applicant’s current home.
- (c) the works cannot be carried out without the permission of a third party and that permission has not been forthcoming.

6.5 The Council will not provide this type of assistance retrospectively. The Council will only consider an application for this type of assistance where it has notified the applicant in writing that one of the three criteria listed above apply.

### Eligible Costs

6.7 The Council will pay any of the following reasonable costs subject to satisfactory evidence that the expenditure has been incurred:-

- (a) Stamp duty (Owner Occupier only) ;
- (b) Mortgage arrangement fees (Owner Occupier only);
- (c) Estate agents’ fees (Owner Occupier only);
- (d) Conveyancing costs (Owner Occupier only)

- (e) Furniture removal costs;
- (f) Utility connection costs and/or;
- (g) Any other costs that are deemed by the Council to be essential to effect the move;

6.8 This is subject to a maximum total level of assistance of £15,000 per applicant.

### **Application**

6.9 An application shall be made in a format prescribed by the Council. Application Forms are available on request.

### **Conditions**

6.10 A person who receives relocation assistance shall not be entitled to claim similar assistance for a period of 10 years. However, the provision of this type of assistance does not remove the right of any person to apply for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant at any time.

### **Payment**

6.11 A single payment will be made to the applicant upon completion of the move and upon receipt of satisfactory copies of any receipts, demands or other evidence of payment.

## 7. Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants

7.1 The Council will consider applications for discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants in exceptional cases. These grants may be applied for either on their own or in addition to a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

7.2 These grants will be subject to the client having a “nil contribution”\* from the mandatory DFG prescribed test of resources and will be subject to a maximum of £10,000 each year.

\* An exception will be made for Palliative Care cases

7.3 The Discretionary DFG cannot be used to help pay towards a mandatory DFG which has exceeded the £30,000 limit. There is a DFG – Top up Grant specifically for this purpose.

7.4 Assistance is limited to properties within the City of Oxford and applications will be considered for:

- a. Adapting or providing a room for the use of a housebound person with a disability for the purpose of receiving specialised care or medical treatment, which on expert medical or other advice, is best delivered at home.
- b. The provision of a safe play area for a child, with disabilities, under the age of 10 at the date of application for a grant.
- c. Essential repair of adaptations fitted under a DFG in order to keep a disabled person safe after the warranty period.
- d. Essential repairs/works to the client’s property in order to either enable a DFG to take place or to enable hospital discharge.
- e. Other works to provide a solution for vulnerable and disabled applicant’s needs. This would be subject to authorisation by the Head of Service.
- f. Where applicants have a contribution to make according to the outcome of the prescribed test of resources, they may provide written evidence to the Council, from an Independent Financial Advisor of their inability to raise sufficient funds to cover their own contribution. In these circumstances the City Council will consider approving discretionary grant aid if that is the only option for enabling the agreed works to proceed. The City Council may seek further advice before determining the application.
- g. The maximum grant is £10,000. The grant may include the cost of the eligible works plus an agency fee which is charged at the current rate (a minimum £10 agency fee applies).

## 8. Safe and Secure Grant

8.1 The Safe and Secure Grant is designed to enable home owners and tenants\* to quickly access financial assistance to carry out a wide range of minor adaptations and small repairs to reduce risks and accidents around the home, promote independent living and assist with hospital discharge or prevent hospital admission.

8.2 This is a discretionary grant and therefore such assistance only remains available while funds permit. Funding may be withdrawn with immediate effect for grants yet to be approved.

### Who can apply for a Safe and Secure Grant

8.3 A person is eligible to apply for a Safe and Secure Grant if they are over 18 years old, live in the local authority area of Oxford City and:

- The applicant must be registered as disabled (or able to be registered) or over 60 years of age.
- own their own home as a freeholder or leaseholder (with at least 5 years left to run),
- or are a tenant\*
- or have a license to occupy a park home on a licensed site.

**\*this grant assistance will not be provided for tenanted properties where the eligible works are the normal, legal responsibility of the landlord.**

8.4 At the Oxford City HIA discretion, a grant will be considered for the reasonable cost of the work necessary to:

- carry out minor works to enable independent living
- works to prevent falls in and around the home
- reduce hazards or risks that are likely to cause serious harm or injury
- works to enable hospital discharge or prevent hospital admission.
- examples of eligible works may include:
  - water supply, drainage and heating issues
  - electrical and gas safety
  - small adaptations to support those with Dementia
  - **Standalone Assistive Technology devices (not supplied by Social Services/Health)**
  - repairs or modifications to stairs, floors and steps
  - safety and security repairs
  - adaptations to enable independence and safety

### Amount of Assistance

8.5 The maximum grant is £2,000. The grant may include the cost of the eligible works plus an agency fee which is charged at the current rate (a minimum £10 agency fee applies).



## **What conditions are attached to the grant?**

8.6 For simple works carried out by the Oxford City Council Handyperson, no quote is required. The Handyperson will complete the works on-site with the client.

8.7 For most other Safe & Secure jobs no quote is required. The work will be undertaken by Oxford Direct Services to expedite works.

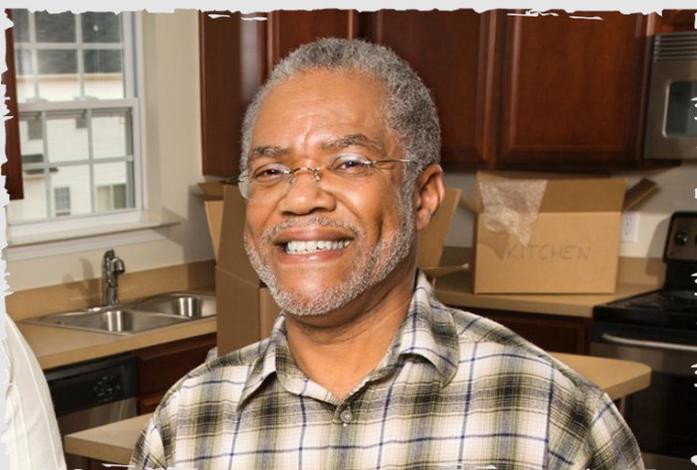
8.8 For all other specialist works one quotation from an Oxford City HIA contractor shall be submitted for the cost of the eligible approved works. No works shall be carried out without formal grant approval.

8.9 Once all the above paperwork is received or obtained by the Oxford City HIA service to their satisfaction, then the application will be considered complete.

8.10 Once an application is considered complete, the Oxford City HIA service will in eligible cases approve a grant in accordance with any agreed response time.

8.11 The grant will only be paid upon the successful completion of the works to the satisfaction of the Oxford City HIA service and upon receipt of suitable invoice(s).

8.12 Grant monies will only normally be paid directly to the contractor who performed the eligible works.



## 9. Oxfordshire County Council – Lift Service and Maintenance Contract

Historically there are some lifts under a service and maintenance contract with Oxfordshire County Council.

Children's lifts fitted under a mandatory DFG are also added to this list once the warranty has expired.

9.1 The assistance below will only apply to lifts on Oxfordshire County Council's service and maintenance contract within Oxford City.

9.2 Funding will be made available for an annual service and inspection visit for those lifts on the list with an approved OCHIA contractor.

9.3 Small repairs to lifts on the list also will be funded. If the lift becomes uneconomic to repair it will be referred back to Oxfordshire County Council to re-assess the client to make sure it still meets their needs.

9.4 Once a suitable referral is received from an OT the replacement lift can be considered under a Mandatory DFG.

9.5 Repairs can still be considered to keep the old lift functional until a new one can be sourced.

9.6 The grant may include the cost of the eligible works plus an agency fee which is charged at the current rate (a minimum £10 agency fee applies).



## 10. Essential Repairs Assistance (ERG)

The Essential Repairs Assistance will only be available whilst funds permit as it is a discretionary **loan** with limited funding. Funding may be withdrawn with immediate effect.

### Eligibility

10.1 Applications will be considered where the applicant(s):

- \* Are over 18 years of age;
- \* Has a “nil contribution” from the mandatory DFG prescribed test of resources
- \* Occupies the property, within the City of Oxford, as their sole or principal residence in the United Kingdom.
- \* Has repairing liability in law; and
- \* Other than in exceptional circumstances, has lived in their home for a minimum of three years.

10.2 If an applicant meets these criteria, then under any of the following circumstances financial assistance may be available.

- (a) Where a risk to the security of the occupier exists e.g. insecure windows or doors.
- (b) Where a breakdown of the primary source of heating or hot water has arisen or where it is so defective that a breakdown is inevitable.
- (c) Where a major defect exists that puts the health and safety of the occupier at an unacceptable level of risk e.g. an unsafe gas or electrical system.
- (d) Where there is a significant risk to public safety e.g. from an unsafe chimney or loose roof coverings.
- (e) Where internal works that pose an immediate risk to the occupier, their carer or other visitors to the property exist e.g. rotten flooring or a dangerous staircase.
- (f) Where a major structural element is so defective that significant further damage to the structure of the property or an adjoining property, will arise if remedial action is not taken e.g. a badly leaking roof or leaking gutters or downspouts.
- (g) Where there is a serious risk to health that is directly attributed to the repairs or adaptations required.
- (h) Where a notice requiring repair would otherwise be served or where a higher level of enforcement action would be necessary e.g. making a Closing Order and re-housing the occupier.
- (i) Where properties have a low Standard Assessment Procedure Rating (SAP 60 or below), grant assistance to meet the Decent Homes Standards will be available.

## Amount of Assistance

10.3 A maximum of £5,000 per property is payable to execute repairs in any three year period where the works fall within the above list. The loan may include the cost of the eligible works plus an agency fee which is charged at the current rate (a minimum £10 agency fee applies).

## Conditions

10.4 All Financial Assistance over £1,000 is subject to the following conditions:

- \* A property charge will be lodged to ensure that on the sale or transfer of a property, the charge will result in the loan being repayable in full.
- \* Any financial assistance paid will be based on a specification for works that has been either provided by, or approved by, the Council. Specifications that are not approved by the Council will not be accepted. Quotations based on unapproved specifications will not be acceptable.
- \* The contract for any works undertaken is between the applicant and the contractor.
- For most ERG jobs the work will be undertaken by Oxford Direct Services (ODS) to expedite works.
- If the client wishes to use another contractor at least two quotations (including ODS) are required.

## 11. Flexible Home Improvement Loans (FHIL)

11.1 Oxford City Council is part of a consortium of 13 local authorities who were awarded funding from the South East Regional Housing Board for a not-for-profit Flexible Home Improvement Loan Scheme. The local authorities have created Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited, which is a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee and wholly owned by local authorities across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey.

11.2 The eligibility requirements, scope of works, and the general requirements governing FHIL's are prescribed and the Council is unable to deviate from these requirements.

### Eligibility

11.3 To qualify for this type of assistance the applicant must be an owner-occupier aged 60 or over, and living in the City of Oxford. In the case of joint owners, each must be at least 60 years of age.

### Eligible works

11.4 We will consider improvements that will make the home safer, warmer, healthier or more comfortable for the occupants. Examples of work that may be acceptable include essential repairs and maintenance, central heating or improvements to heating, replacement doors and windows, home security and the installation of adaptations such as level access showers.



## Amount of Assistance

11.5 The minimum amount of assistance is £1,000 and the maximum is based on the property value.

## Conditions

11.6 Loans are subject to conditions which are set by FHIL and agreed by the client in writing.

- The loan will be secured by a charge on the property.
- The interest rate is fixed for the term of the loan.
- During the term of the loan the recipient can choose to make regular monthly payments, occasional payments or no payments at all. The repayment arrangements can be varied at any time by the loan recipient.
- The loan plus outstanding interest must be repaid if the home is sold, or if the owners cease to occupy it.

## Fees and charges

11.7 There will be the following fees and charges associated with the loan:

- There will be a one-off fee of £80 for the loan documentation, legal charge and land registry, which will be quoted at the time of the application.
- There is an annual charge of £15 to cover the cost of loan administration and statements.
- If Oxford City council HIA team manage the works on behalf of the client an agency fee will be charged at the current rate.
- Any fees incurred by the applicant may be added to the loan.

## **12. Empty Homes Loans**

### **How does the scheme work?**

12.1 Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited offer Empty Homes Loans. Empty Homes Loans may be regarded as 5 year, flexible, bridging finance secured by a first charge or, in some circumstances, a second charge on the property.

12.2 After the work has been completed you may let the property or use it as your own residence. During the term of the loan you can choose to make regular monthly payments, occasional payments or no payments at all. Furthermore, you are free to vary the arrangement at any time.

12.3 The loan, plus outstanding interest, must be repaid on the fifth anniversary of making the loan, or if the property is sold, whichever occurs first. The borrower will normally need to re-mortgage, or sell, the property to repay the loan. Interest will be charged at 2% above Bank of England rate, subject to minimum and maximum rates (please contact us for a quotation). Your account will also be debited with an annual charge of £15 to cover the cost of loan administration and statements.

12.4 The loan may be repaid, in whole or part, at any time before the end of the five years, without penalty. When the loan is completely repaid there is a flat fee of £50 for cancellation of our registered charge

### **Who is eligible?**

12.5 Empty Homes Loans are available to owners of empty properties and anybody wishing to purchase an empty property.

12.6 Applications are processed on a non-status basis, although a credit check is carried out. A very poor credit history may result in the application being declined and bankruptcy will automatically prevent us from making a loan.

### **Are there any setting-up costs?**

12.7 There will be a fee for loan documentation and registration of the legal charge. The fee will be added to the loan and is currently £80 for loans up to £100,000. In certain circumstances the Council may need to obtain a valuation of the property to confirm the equity is sufficient to cover the loan. This is unlikely to be needed in the majority of cases.

12.8 If you decide to engage a solicitor to act for you, they will almost certainly charge for their service. Any fees incurred may, if you wish, be added to the loan.

## 13. Small Repairs Scheme

### Handyperson Services

13.1 A handyperson service provides a range of practical support services for older and disabled people with the aim of helping them maintain independent living. Oxford City Council currently provides a chargeable Handyperson Service for a wide range of jobs which can include:

- Small building repairs
- Minor adaptations
- Odd jobs such as putting up curtains, shelves, replacing light bulbs.
- General home safety checks and remedial actions
- Falls and accident prevention checks and remedial actions such as repairing floor coverings
- Security checks – installing locks, chains and spyholes
- Fitting handrails and fitting “keysafes”
- Installing smoke and carbon dioxide detectors

13.2 This list is not exhaustive but generally work should be considered as ‘small repairs’ that can be completed quickly and in less than 3 hours.

### Who can use the scheme?

- Disabled people over 18 years old.
- Older vulnerable people (over 55 years of age). Priority will be given to those households and individuals who are disabled or in receipt of income support or other means tested benefits.
- Homeowners and private tenants (but not for works that are the responsibility of the landlord).
- Residents of Oxford City.

### Charging

13.3 The costs are based on an hourly charge (this is currently £20 per hour) plus the cost of materials. Costs will vary from job to job and free quotations are given.

## 14. Property MOT

14.1 Home owners who are eligible for an ERG or the Small Repairs Scheme can contact the Council to request a 'Property MOT'. This will take the form of an assessment covering the major elements and identifying both existing and anticipated repairs/replacements and any other significant shortcomings within the dwelling. The 'Property MOT' will help owners to prioritise works; have a better understanding of the condition of their homes and, for those who are able, to investigate loan options. Having a better understanding of the overall condition of their property will allow owners to consider the total cost of any works and evaluate their property and options.

## 15. House Boats

15.1 Financial assistance is available to qualifying households (Based on ERG criteria) to cover essential repairs required to meet the minimum standards required by Canal & River trust under the Boat Safety Scheme and appropriate energy efficiency measures.

15.2 A maximum of £5,000, in any three year period is payable.

## 16. Mobile Homes

16.1 Financial Assistance is available to qualifying households (based on ERG criteria) to cover essential repairs and appropriate energy efficiency measures.

16.2 It should be noted that both residential houseboats and mobile homes have a limited life and that an assessment of the anticipated future life of the structure will be undertaken before grant aid is approved. A minimum anticipated future life of 4 years is required. Owners of structures with a shorter anticipated life will receive assistance to carry out temporary or emergency repairs sufficient to enable other housing options to be explored.

16.3 A maximum of £5,000 in any three year period is payable.

## 17. Paying for Staff

17.1 Some local authorities have engaged in-house Occupational Therapists where extended waiting lists occur and covered the costs using the Better Care Fund (BCF) funding. Oxford City Council may use BCF funding to engage an Occupational Therapist or other similar support posts in order to help meet the directives of the BCF funding. This will be referred to and approved by the Head of Service.

## 18. Administration

### How to Apply for Assistance

18.1 Assistance will be provided through the Councils' Home Improvement Agency (HIA). Enquiries can be made by telephone (01865 252788), in writing (HIA Team, St Aldate's Chambers, 109 St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1DS, by e-mail, [hia@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:hia@oxford.gov.uk) or via the Council's Website ([www.oxford.gov.uk/hia](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/hia)).

18.2 A preliminary enquiry system will allow enquiries to be routed quickly to the most appropriate form of assistance. Enquirers will be advised wherever delays are likely, including the likely length and the reason for a delay.

18.3 The preliminary enquiry system will help to ensure that higher risk cases are dealt with first if delays are likely. For low priority cases a waiting list will be kept if required.



## Grant Conditions

18.4 All works for which discretionary grants and assistance are awarded must be completed within 6 months, or such longer period of time that has been agreed in writing by the Council. No retrospective applications will be considered.

18.5 All works must be completed in accordance with a specification of works agreed by the council. The agreed works must be carried out to a satisfactory standard of workmanship.

18.6 The payment of any form of financial assistance will be subject to bona fide invoices being provided by the approved contractor or in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the casework officer, an alternative contractor. For example, if the original contractor is unable to carry out the works.

18.7 The Council may give a qualified financial assistance approval in certain circumstances. For example, approval may be given for a scheme of works with payment not being guaranteed until the following financial year. This will allow some payments to be made for preliminary or ancillary fees. For example fees for drawings and legal costs.

18.8 Any Essential Repairs Grant totalling over £1,000 will be repayable on the sale or transfer of a property commencing with the completion of the works.

18.9 The HIA agency fee at date of publication was 15%, however this is reviewed annually. The current rate can be checked on our website; <https://www.oxford.gov.uk>

18.10 The HIA Handyperson rate at date of publication was £20/hr, however this is reviewed annually. The current rate can be checked on our website; <https://www.oxford.gov.uk>

## 19. Applications outside of the Policy

19.1 The Council will consider applications for assistance that are exceptional or fall outside of the policy. In order to make such an application the service below should be contacted in the first instance:

Home Improvement Agency,  
Oxford City Council  
St Aldate's Chambers,  
109 St Aldate's,  
Oxford  
OX1 1DS  
Tel: 01865 252788  
hia@oxford.gov.uk

19.2 Applications should preferably be made in writing, however in some instances you may wish to seek verbal advice in the first instance.

19.3 Exceptional cases, which fall outside the criteria laid down in the policy, will be referred to the Head of Service for approval.

## 20. Policy Implementation

20.1 This policy shall come into effect on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The policy shall remain in effect until the City Council approves any amendments or a successor policy is approved.

20.2 It is intended that the policy will be reviewed annually and any proposed changes will be evaluated and implemented as soon as practically possible, if adopted.

20.3 Circumstances that might necessitate an earlier review might include changes in the available financial resources or changes to the Councils' wider corporate strategies.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

Oxford City Council  
Home Improvement Agency  
St Aldate's Chambers  
109 St Aldate's  
Oxford, OX1 1DS

**Direct Line:** 01865 252788

**Email:** [hia@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:hia@oxford.gov.uk)

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

If you need this in large print or another  
format please call 01865 252788

March 2022

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Appendix 3: Risk Register

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
Decline in income	Not spending BCF funds	Threat	Not amending the existing policy to reflect current needs	Required spending levels not achieved so that external funding may be reduced.	05/01/22	BW	4	4	2	2	2	2	Current policy in place	Keep BCF and County Council informed on progress. Implement amended policy.	16/06/22			
Reduced funding	Not spending BCF funds	Threat	Funding reduced	Oxford City still has a statutory duty to approve DFG and may have to review budget provision for funding DFG works.	05/01/22	BW	4	4	2	2	2	2	Current policy in place	Implement amended policy. Review budget provision for DFG works	16/06/22			
Waiting Lists	Capacity of contractors to undertake additional works	Threat	Lack of suitably qualified contractors	Waiting lists and back-up of workload.	05/01/22	BW	2	2	2	2	2	2	Subject to availability of local contractors	Work with procurement to increase Frameworks for contractors.	16/06/22			

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## Initial Equalities Impact Assessment screening form – Appendix 4

*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?

None of the groups will be disadvantaged.  
 The updated policy will have a positive impact on age, disability, race and gender.  
 The updated policy will improve housing conditions, especially those which have a direct health and safety impact on occupiers.  
 It will target financially vulnerable occupiers; disabled people, single parent families and pensioners those more likely to be in receipt of benefits.  
 The policy continues to target assistance towards disabled persons, especially with regard to Disabled Facilities Grants and loans. General housing improvement may be more desirable where there is vulnerability, and the policy recognises this.

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

No adverse impacts were identified. Only positive impacts.

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

Consultation for the original policy was extensive and included all groups affected by the policy, which was all vulnerable residents of Oxford City and key stakeholders such as the County Council. The proposed amendments are considered minor and the main policy aims and objectives are unaffected. As such there is no need to consult again.

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

No adverse impacts were identified. Only positive impacts.

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 Policy will create workstreams that will be reported upon annually at a service and corporate level.

Lead officer responsible for signing off the EqIA: Becky Walker

Role: HIA Manager

Date: 05/01/2022

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 16 March 2022  
**Report of:** Executive Director for Communities and People  
**Title of Report:** Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Grant 2022/23

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To approve the preventing homelessness grant allocations for 2022/23
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Thriving Communities
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Housing & Homelessness Strategy 2018-21 (extended)
<b>Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Approve</b> the allocation of Homelessness Prevention funds to commission homelessness services in 2022/23 as outlined in paragraphs 27 to 28 and in Appendix 2 of the report.</li> <li>2. <b>Delegate</b> to the Executive Director for Communities and People in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless the discretion to revise the intended programme within the overall budget if required.</li> <li>3. <b>Delegate</b> authority to the Executive Director for Communities and People to grant of a 10 year lease on Floyds Row to St Mungo's with a 5 year rent review, and to note that the Council will provide grant funding to St Mungo's if there are any costs arising having taken into account income collected.</li> </ol>	

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Review of allocated homelessness funds 2021/22
Appendix 2	Proposed allocation of homelessness funds 2022/23
Appendix 3	Risk Register

## **Introduction and background**

1. This report presents an overview of how the funding allocated in 2021/22 has been spent and makes recommendations for the allocation of funding in 2022/23 to provide services for rough sleepers and single homeless people in Oxford. Countywide commissioning arrangements have changed significantly for 2022/23 and onwards, which sees a greater proportion of funding allocated to a new countywide service.
2. The report also provides an update on developments this year which have again been dominated by the response to Covid19. Organisations which we fund, as well as those we do not fund, have continued to work tirelessly and in partnership to keep people experiencing homelessness as safe as possible.

## **Context and key developments 2021/22**

3. At the start of the year, the government advised local authorities to end the temporary accommodation of people who would otherwise be rough sleeping, known as the “Everyone In” initiative. This had been launched in March 2020 to ensure emergency housing was provided for vulnerable homeless people, including those living in shared hostel spaces, and those with no recourse to public funds. In Oxford, this included people sleeping on the streets and those in Floyds Row, the sit up (assessment) service at O’Hanlon House and the church-run Oxford Winter Night Shelter.
4. In April 2021 there were 126 spaces of “Everyone In” accommodation in use across three sites, Canterbury House (76 spaces), Oxford YHA (42 Spaces) and Tower House Hotel (8 spaces). These sites were managed by St Mungo’s on behalf of the City Council. Tower House hotel was vacated in April 2021. Work then started to exit Canterbury House. This was led by St Mungo’s but required support from across the homelessness system to help people find accommodation in either privately rented housing, appropriate supported accommodation, or in a few cases, social tenancies. Colleagues in the other Oxfordshire District Councils also assisted with this work as a number of residents had connections to other parts of the county.
5. The provision at Canterbury House came to a successful end in August 2021, with everyone leaving with an offer of accommodation, or support to find accommodation. Where people accepted these offers, but hadn’t secured accommodation by the time Canterbury House closed, a short term hotel placement was made to ensure there was no need for people to return to rough sleeping.
6. The planned exit from Oxford YHA began after the exit from Canterbury House. This site had been used to accommodate people with higher levels of need and so accommodation options for residents here were more limited as in most cases, some form of supported accommodation was required. The exit was initially planned for November 2021 but an extension on the use of the building was obtained until the end of February 2022. At the end of November 14 residents remained in Oxford YHA.
7. The “Everyone In” initiative saw 355 people accommodated with 284 moving on successfully to more settled accommodation. In this period the number of people experiencing rough sleeping has been between a quarter and a third lower than pre-pandemic levels.
8. In the Spring of 2021, rough sleeping numbers had reduced to single figures in some weeks. Since then, they have increased again to around 30, but over this period the number of people in “Everyone In” accommodation has reduced from 126 to 14. The

Council's official street count was conducted in November 2021 which found 24 people rough sleeping. This was an increase on the previous year when 19 were recorded, but is a significant reduction from 43 which was recorded in November 2019.

### **Floyds Row**

9. Since the start of the pandemic, Floyds Row has not been able to be used for accommodation as it had communal sleeping arrangements. The pre-pandemic model had 40 accommodation spaces, with an additional provision of 16 over winter. Plans are in place to return to using Floyds Row on a limited basis. It is possible to accommodate 16 people in a Covid secure manner. It is intended to return to Floyds Row in February 2022, shortly before the lease ends on Oxford YHA. This provision will help to minimise the time people need to spend rough sleeping, and allow plans to resolve their homelessness to be developed in a place of warmth and safety.
10. Prior to the start of the pandemic, work had commenced on granting a lease to St Mungo's on Floyds Row. This was put on hold as resources had to be deployed on meeting the challenge of "Everyone In". As part of the plans to return to Floyds Row, and now all building works have been completed, the lease to St Mungo's also needs to be completed in furtherance of the resolutions made to Cabinet on 3 October 2019 in respect of this matter.
11. If the council was letting Floyds Row as office space it could expect a rent in the region of £230,000 per annum based on a 10 year lease with a rent review in year 5. However significant internal work would be required to convert the building back to this use. The cost of these works is unlikely to be less than £300,000. In a commercial letting it is likely the Landlord would carry out the works rather than offer the tenant a rent free period to do the works. Taking these costs into account, the council could expect a net income of £180,000 for the first five years, and so the rent will be set at this level. After this point an open market rent review would be conducted to set the rental value for the next five year period.
12. The pre-pandemic model for Floyds Row assumed a £196,000 income from Housing Benefit to cover the cost of the lease. Limiting occupation to 16, as outlined in paragraph 9 above, will reduce the expected income to £78,400. As such Cabinet is asked to note that payment of a grant will be made to St Mungo's of up to £180,000 per annum to cover the shortfall between the income and lease cost in each year of the lease agreement, where required. For 22/23 this will be £101,600 if occupancy cannot be increased during the year. Increasing occupancy is dependent on the ability to return to communal sleeping arrangements which will be determined by the path of the Covid pandemic. In practice the grant will take the form of a financial transfer from Housing Needs to Property Services, with the funding coming from the Homelessness reserve for 22/23. In each subsequent year an income projection will need to be made for Floyds Row, and appropriate budgetary provision made if required.

### **Continuation of joint commissioning arrangements**

13. Since 2017, the City Council, together with the Oxfordshire District Councils, Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, have had a pooled budget for the commissioning of supported accommodation for single homeless people. The arrangement was established to mitigate the impact of reductions in Oxfordshire County Council's budget and to maintain the supply of supported accommodation for single homeless people in the county. This collaboration has served to maintain a supply of jointly commissioned bed spaces as part of the Adult Homeless

Pathway, which is complemented by the City and District Councils' commissioning of their own supply of supported accommodation. The current year is the final year of the existing contracts for these services.

14. An extended pooled approach is to be undertaken from 2022/23. A much greater range of services have been commissioned jointly, and these services will be run by an alliance of providers as a single entity. The new service has been commissioned for five years with the option of extending for a further three years. To support the closer partnership working, the City Council's Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness manager worked jointly with county colleagues on the recommissioning of services.
15. The value of the services commissioned under these arrangements has increased from £846,000 to £3,800,000. The annual contribution from the City Council is increasing from £219,030 to £1,911,399. Of this amount, £968,580 will come from the Council's base budget, with the remaining £942,819 from the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities' Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding programme. There is a risk to services due to be funded in this way, if Government funding is not forthcoming, but this has been the case for each year of the RSI programme. Approval to enter into these new arrangements was obtained from Cabinet on 16 June 2021, and amended in December 2021.
16. This new service will help to deliver many of the aims of the new countywide homelessness strategy. This strategy was reported to Cabinet in the report referenced in the previous paragraph. It seeks to integrate work on homelessness, by bringing Housing, Health, Criminal Justice and Social Care together to tackle the issue. The strategy has been developed with the ambition to ensure no-one needs to sleep rough and to significantly reduce homelessness from the levels experienced in recent times. The new strategy will focus on prevention to identify opportunities for early intervention across the whole system and facilitate rapid action where the risk of homelessness is identified. This will include close working with other systems (e.g. Health, Criminal Justice), to identify people at risk of homelessness as early as possible. It is envisaged that all parts of the system will take joint responsibility for avoiding homelessness and ending rough sleeping. To facilitate this approach a new countywide Homelessness Directors Group was established in November 2021 comprising senior managers from these partnership organisations.
17. Over the lifetime of the new service, the provision of accommodation will be transformed. The services currently commissioned are a Pathway model. People are allocated into accommodation which provides a certain type of support for a fixed period of time. Different types of accommodation provide different levels of support. When someone's support needs reduce they move into accommodation which caters for people with lower needs. Eventually they are able to move into independent accommodation, although this can be a challenge due to a lack of affordable accommodation. Almost all of the supported accommodation in the current pathway is shared accommodation. Many people thrive in these settings, but we also know that many do not.

The new service will change the mix of accommodation with more units being provided as self-contained social tenancies. Support will be provided in accordance with an individual's changing needs. At different times these needs may reduce, but may also increase. The nature of the tenancy means there is no need to try and secure a move on into independent living. As such the new service is not a Pathway model, and will not be referred to in this manner. Work is underway to secure a commitment from social landlords across the county (including the City Council) to provide 50 social units a year

to the new service. It is anticipated that a charter committing organisations to this will be signed by the end of this financial year.

### **Ensuring sufficient provision to meet Oxford City's needs**

18. One of the changes in the new countywide service is that all beds will be available to anyone from Oxfordshire. In the current pooled arrangements, each District Council is allocated a specific number of beds. There are 106 jointly commissioned spaces of which the City Council is allocated 79. In 21/22 the City Council has commissioned 151 of its own beds, which means 231 beds are available to the city.
19. The new countywide service will manage 236 beds. In addition, the City Council will still directly commission 98 further spaces, meaning there is potentially access to 334 beds. The different access arrangements means these numbers are not directly comparable between the two years.
20. The projects commissioned by the City Council have not been included in the new countywide service due either to ongoing contract commitments, or they are projects whose funding was confirmed after the deadline for committing funding to the countywide pool.
21. Demand for supported accommodation remains high, particularly since the exit from "Everyone In" accommodation. Weekly meetings are held with accommodation providers to agree how to allocate void spaces.

### **Further funding opportunities**

22. The City Council has made several successful bids for DLUHC funding, both by itself, and jointly with District and County Council partners. A countywide bid into the RS14 fund secured £2 million for the current year. A further bid into this fund is being constructed at the time of writing with a response expected in April 2022.
23. Two successful bids were made to the government's Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) this year. In the first round £1.3m in revenue and capital funding was obtained to extend the Housing First programme. In the second round: £2.5m was secured to buy homes to let at Local Housing Allowance rates to people moving on from temporary accommodation, supported housing and those who are rough sleeping. With match funding from the Council and social impact investment company Resonance, this has created a £6.5m pot to buy one-bed flats and shared houses to accommodate 47 people, along with a support service until the end of March 2024.
24. In December, DLUHC provided an additional £335,592 under a new Protect and Vaccinate scheme. This is to ensure people who are rough sleeping can get accommodated through winter, and be supported to get vaccinated against Covid. At the time of writing work was underway to deploy this funding, with 27 people accommodated by the start of February.

### **Use of Homelessness Prevention Grant in 2021/22**

25. Last year's report by the Head of Housing Services on the allocation of homelessness prevention funds indicated that a total of £1,614,684 had been allocated for the delivery of services and support for rough sleepers and single homeless people in 2021/22. There have been a number of developments over the year which have affected actual spending and resource allocation, which are summarised below and set out in detail in

Appendix 1. This results in a small underspend figure of £199,915 which will be utilised to cover the costs of the Floyds Row service.

a) Acacia expansion

A total of £134,453 was allocated towards the development of the Acacia Project, a housing-led service for homeless people with multiple and complex needs. The intention has been to increase provision from 6 to 10 units, but only 1 additional unit has been delivered. At the start of the year, Response took over the project by themselves. Previously it had been delivered jointly with Homeless Oxfordshire. This has given less time to focus on bringing new units in, as they have had to implement a new support service. This has resulted in a forecast underspend of £49,453

b) Mayday complex needs beds

At the end of 2020/21 Mayday advised that the organisation was ceasing to provide housing support as part of a change in their organisational model. This year the contract has been delivered by Connection Support who were able to provide an additional three bedroom property for this service, at an additional cost of £19,500. The cost was met from the contingency provision.

c) Tenant Ready Course

The ongoing pandemic has made it more difficult to deliver this course which was conceived as a face to face format of study. A digital version has now been developed by Connection Support which should support additional uptake. However there is a forecast underspend of £8,000 for the current year.

d) Day Services

Previous day service provision at O'Hanlon House was brought to an end at the end of 2019/20. This had been planned and was not due to the pandemic. "Everyone In" has meant that the majority of rough sleepers have been accommodated for most of the period since then meaning that there is a reduced need for day services. Oxford Winter Night Shelters (OWNS) have opened their own day services project, called The Living Room this year. This, together with the established day service provision from The Porch and The Gatehouse has been sufficient to meet current needs. It is anticipated that day services will also be provided from Floyds Row in 2022/23 which will include provision of showers, laundry facilities and access to a range of support services. For 2021/22 there is an £61,164 underspend for this item.

e) Contingency

A significant contingency provision of £135,798 was made due to the uncertainty caused by the pandemic. However we received an unexpected top-up of £500,000 from DLUHC in our RSI4 funding which has helped to fund support for people new to rough sleeping, and also those exiting Everyone In accommodation. In addition to the complex needs support referenced at point b) above, the contingency was used to fund a new Alliance Manager (£30,000) for the countywide homelessness service, so that post could be recruited prior to the new service commencing. £5,000 was used to establish a Women's Hub to provide advice and support to women on a broad range of issues. This results in £81,298 of the contingency provision being unspent. Expenditure of the contingency provision has been agreed in line with the delegation made by Cabinet in last year's report.

## Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds 2022/23

26. The Council's budget for 2021/22 allocated £4.177 million towards homelessness and prevention services. Within this is a provision of £1,095,533 for spend in the area of rough sleeping and single homelessness. A further commissioning budget is also available from the Council's own voluntary sector grants budget within Community Services of £442,279. Additionally £316,868 is contributed from funding provided by DLUHC's Next Steps Accommodation Programme (provided to support people's transition from the street into accommodation). This provides £1,854,680 to spend in 2022/23. A previously agreed saving of £81,000 has been taken from this budget. The savings are identified in the following paragraph.
27. The proposed allocations for 2022/23 are shown in Table 1 below, with more details on the areas of commissioning at Appendix 2. In summary, it is proposed to maintain spending across all service areas, at similar levels to the 2021/22 allocations apart from the following exceptions:
- Pooled budget – As outlined in paragraphs 13-18 above most supported accommodation will be included in the pooled budget from next year. This will see the city contribution from this budget increase from £219,030 to £968,580, which includes the City Council's annual contribution of £410,000 for the delivery of Floyds' Row;
  - Acacia – At the start of the year it was planned to move the Acacia project into the new countywide service. However Response, have taken over the delivery of support in this project from Homeless Oxfordshire so it would not be desirable to put this group of vulnerable residents through another change in their support. The Preventing Homelessness Grants budget allows for the project to be retained by the City Council, whilst continuing to meet our funding obligation to the pooled budget in respect of Acacia. This funding will support the start of the transition to the new housing model in the countywide service, enabling the Alliance to take on new Housing First properties before having to exit existing accommodation. This will ensure there is no reduction in current numbers of units in the countywide service. The Housing First model is one used in Acacia, so ensures the funding is still being used for the purpose for which it was intended;
  - Day services- Funding has been reduced in this area due to the reduced demand as outlined in paragraph 26, and contributes to savings required from this budget. We will explore the potential for delivering these services from Floyds Row in 22/23;
  - Welfare Reform team – Funding has been reduced in line with previously agreed savings;
  - Contingency – This area has reduced significantly and reflects the clear plans in place for services as we emerge from the pandemic. The reduction in this area contributes to savings required from this budget;
  - OxThink – There are plans to significantly improve the way in which information is recorded and shared in respect of rough sleeping and homelessness services, requiring a significant upgrade of this system. A significant increase in the budget of £5,000 is required which is expected to be included in the bid into DLUHC's RSI 22-25 funding programme;
  - Women's Hub, Greater Change and Additional Complex beds – These are new services as described in paragraph 26 above;

- The following services will continue to receive funding next year but will receive funding from the Homelessness Prevention Grant as they are preventative in nature:
  - Tenancy Ready Scheme - £16,000
  - Target Hardening/Sanctuary Scheme - £30,000
  - Access to leisure services - £5,000
  - Elmore Tenancy Sustainment - £35,630

Table 1. – Expenditure on Homelessness Prevention 2021-22 and 2022-23

Service	Current Provider/Supplier	Cabinet Report Allocation 21/22	Proposed Allocation 22/23
Matilda House	A2Dominion	£266,000	£266,000
Housing First	Homeless Oxfordshire (countywide service from 1/4/2022)	£47,850	£0
Acacia	Response	£47,850	£95,700
Project 41	Homeless Oxfordshire (countywide service from 1/4/2022)	£150,000	£0
Complex beds	Connection Support (countywide service from 1/4/2022)	£39,272	£0
Additional complex beds	Connection Support	£0	£19,500
OCC Contribution to pooled budget (including Floyds Row)	JMG/County	£219,030	£968,580
Severe Weather Beds	Various - HO, St Mungo's, The Porch,SH	£30,000	£30,000
Rough Sleeping & Street activity service	Thames Valley Police	£30,000	£30,000
City Centre Ambassadors	Oxford City Council	£17,500	£17,500
Tenancy Sustainment Officer	Elmore Community Services (Flexible Homelessness Grant from 1/4/22)	£35,630	£0
Tenant Ready Scheme	Connection Support (FHG from 1/4/22)	£16,000	£0
Welfare Reform Outreach Team	Oxford City Council	£42,379	£0
O'Hanlon House Day Centre	Homeless Oxfordshire	£61,164	£41,164
Gatehouse Café	Gatehouse	£5,580	£5,580
The Porch Day Centre	The Porch	£55,000	£55,000
ETE Workers	Aspire Oxford	£77,623	£77,623
Single Homelessness Team	Oxford City Council	£211,405	£215,533
OxTHINK	Real Systems	£5,000	£0
Target Hardening/Sanctuary Scheme	Oxford City Council (FHG from 1/4/22)	£30,000	£0
Access to Leisure Services	OCC (FHG from 1/4/22)	£5,000	£0
Women's Hub	Aspire/Gatehouse	£0	£7,500
Greater Change	Greater Change	£0	£25,000
Contingency	OCC team	£135,798	£0
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>£1,854,680</b>

28. The proposed allocations will continue to maintain a wide range of services and support for single homeless people in Oxford. However, the following developments may mean that it will be necessary to make some revisions to this programme at the end of the current financial year or early in 2022/23:

a) DLUHC's Rough Sleeping Initiative 22-25 fund

A joint countywide bid for further funding from MHCLG is currently being prepared with a submission date of 25 February 2022. The proposal includes requests to continue funding for a range of projects and initiatives including the following:

- Women's unit
- Pre-recovery unit
- Engagement and Assessment of rough sleepers

Following discussions with DLUHC officials, officers are optimistic that these elements of the bid, will be successful. If they are not, some services may need to be discontinued and/or there may be a need to re-prioritise the 2022/23 allocation.

b) Continuing impact of pandemic

Recent Covid outbreaks at O'Hanlon House, Matilda House and Oxford YHA have been very challenging for providers to manage. It is still unclear when Floyds Row will be able to be occupied in line with the pre-pandemic model. Again in this event a reprioritising of allocations may be required.

29. For the above reasons, it is requested that Cabinet delegates to the Executive Director for Communities and People, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, the discretion to revise the intended programme within the overall budget.

### **Financial implications**

30. The council will spend £1.855m of its base budget on preventing homelessness in 2022-23 which is shown in table 1 above. Overall the council continues to be successful in grant applications to DLUHC for homelessness spend but the one off annual funding has made it difficult to plan. The new Rough Sleeping Initiative programme from DLUHC will provide three years of funding which is very welcome. This will help to ease the uncertainty around future funding of homelessness.

### **Performance monitoring**

31. In distributing this budget, the Council will ensure that there are clear outcomes and targets in each organisation's service specification which are reported on quarterly. Officers will schedule quarterly, 6-monthly or annual performance monitoring meetings with all services to ensure that outcomes and targets are achieved and issues are addressed in a timely and professional manner.

### **Legal issues**

32. All services funded from Preventing Homelessness Grant should have legal agreements in place setting out the service provider's obligations for services as well as consequences for not fulfilling these obligations.

33. The procurement, commissioning and award of contracts for the provision of services should be undertaken in compliance with the Council's contract rules contained in part 19 of its Constitution.

**Level of risk**

34. The Risk Register is attached as Appendix 3.

**Equalities impact**

35. All services in receipt of funding are subject to monitoring which includes equality and diversity.

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**Background Papers:**

None

## Appendix 1 – Review of allocated homelessness prevention funds 2021/22

Service areas	Provider	Allocation 2020/21	Forecast to year end	Purpose
<b>Supported accommodation</b>		<b>£886,605</b>	<b>£837,152</b>	
Contribution Oxfordshire Pooled Budget for the Adult Homeless Pathway	Oxfordshire AHP / Oxfordshire CC commissioner	£219,030	£219,030	Provision of supported housing.
Housing First	Homeless Oxfordshire	£47,850	£47,850	Funding for 1 FTE Support Worker & 0.5 FTE Peer Support Worker for this specialist housing project. Offers an alternative supported housing model aimed at getting entrenched rough sleepers permanently off the streets.
Acacia existing x 5	Response	£134,453	£85,000	Funding was allocated to increase the Acacia provision from 5 to 10 units of specialist supported housing for people with complex needs. However only 7 units are in place at the time of writing. The Acacia Project builds on the Housing First model and has developed as a result of recognition by housing and mental health service commissioners that there is an increasing number of people who “fall between the gaps” of mental health services and homelessness services, and getting ineffective support from either or both due to their needs.

Project 41	Homeless Oxfordshire	£150,000	£150,000	Funding for 41 units of supported accommodation for rough sleepers and single homeless people with a connection to the City of Oxford. Provision for medium to low support needs with a focus on support to enable residents to move on to and sustain independent accommodation.
Matilda House	A2Dominion	£266,000	£266,000	Funding for 22 units of supported accommodation for people with complex needs and 15 units move on accommodation.
Complex Needs Accommodation (10 units)	Mayday Trust/Connection Support	£39,272	£39,272	Funding for 10 units of supported accommodation for people with complex needs, in dispersed locations.
Severe Weather Beds - various	Various including Homeless Oxfordshire, St Mungo's, Aspire, A2Dominion	£30,000	£30,000	Funding to provide additional emergency bed spaces in periods of severe weather for all rough sleepers who need them.
<b>Street Engagement</b>		<b>£47,500</b>	<b>£47,500</b>	
Rough Sleeping & Street activity service - TVP	Thames Valley Police	£30,000	£30,000	Funding for TVP City Centre Unit to provide targeted support to reduce rough sleeping through outreach, enforcement, tackling begging and anti-social behaviour. TVP City Centre Unit has a dedicated police constable for the purpose of this work.

City Centre Ambassadors	Oxford City Council	£17,500	£17,500	This funding supports the work of our Community Response Team. They assist people with enquiries, liaise with businesses to keep the city centre clean and litter free, and work closely with the police to spot and deter anti-social behaviour. They engage with homeless people, referring them into the appropriate support services.
<b>Preventing homelessness</b>		<b>£94,009</b>	<b>£86,009</b>	
Tenancy Sustainment Officer - Elmore	Elmore Community Services	£35,630	£35,630	Funding for 1 FTE specialist sustainment officer to support residents in Oxford City Council accommodation to maintain their tenancies.
Welfare Reform Outreach Team	Oxford City Council	£42,379	£42,379	Funding contribution towards the work of a team focussing on the impact of welfare reform across the City.
Tenant Ready Course	Connections	£16,000	£8,000	Funding to provide courses to help people develop a range of skills that will enable them to become tenancy ready. Connections are able to deliver this course digitally as well as face to face, enabling it to be delivered during periods of lockdown.
<b>Positive activities &amp; help to get into work</b>		<b>£199,367</b>	<b>£138,203</b>	
Day Services	To be confirmed	£61,164	£0	Funding for provision of day services – showers and laundry facilities as well as breakfast and lunch and any other activities taking place – for individuals rough sleeping in the City and working with outreach services to access suitable accommodation.

				Covid has meant that these services have not been provided this year. However most rough sleepers have been accommodated for the majority of the year with access to support services.
Gatehouse Café	Gatehouse	£5,580	£5,580	Core funding for the Gatehouse café, to support and engage people sleeping rough to access accommodation and specialist support.
The Porch Day Centre	The Porch	£55,000	£55,000	Core funding for The Porch (formerly known as Steppin' Stone) daycentre to support rough sleepers and those vulnerably housed through a range of activities, training and education and where appropriate sign post clients to more appropriate services.
Aspire	Aspire Oxford	£77,623	£77,623	Funding for 2 FTE Education, Training and Employment workers to provide training and employment opportunities for homeless and/or vulnerably housed individuals in the City. Aspire is a social enterprise working towards becoming self-sufficient.
<b>Other</b>		<b>£387,203</b>	<b>£305,905</b>	
Single Homelessness Team (current arrangements)	Oxford City Council	£211,405	£211,405	Funding contribution towards the Council's Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Team.
Target Hardening/ Sanctuary Scheme	Oxford City Council	£30,000	£30,000	Housing support for people who have experienced domestic abuse.
OxTHINK (formerly Oxford CHAIN)	Real Systems	£5,000	£5,000	Core funding to maintain web-based database management system that collates data and provides monitoring reports on rough sleeping.

Access to leisure services	Fusion	£5,000	£5,000	To support former rough sleepers to access the Council's leisure facilities free of charge. As leisure centres have been unavailable for the majority of the year, there has been no take up of this provision.
Contingency	To be confirmed	£135,798	£54,500	This expenditure includes the following: Contribution to the cost of an Alliance Manager for the new Countywide Homelessness' Service - £30,000 Cost of support for an additional 3 bed property in the Connections contract – £19,500 Setting up the Women's Hub- £5,000
<b>Total allocated/committed</b>		<b>£1,614,684</b>	<b>£1,414,769</b>	

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## Appendix 2 – Proposed allocation of homelessness prevention funds 2022/23

Service areas	Provider	Proposed Allocation 2022/23	Purpose
<b>Supported accommodation</b>		<b>£1,379,780</b>	
Contribution to Oxfordshire Pooled Budget for the Countywide Homelessness Service (CHS)	Oxfordshire CHS / Oxfordshire CC commissioner	£968,580	Provision of supported housing within the Countywide Homelessness Service
Acacia existing x 5	Response	£95,700	Funding for specialist supported housing for people with complex needs. The Acacia Project builds on the Housing First model and has developed as a result of recognition by housing and mental health service commissioners that there is an increasing number of people who “fall between the gaps” of mental health services and homelessness services, and getting ineffective support from either or both due to their needs.
Matilda House	A2Dominion	£266,000	Funding for 22 units of supported accommodation for people with complex needs and 15 units move on accommodation. An additional £41,000 has been awarded this year to support more complex clients in the move on units, as there is more demand for this provision.
Additional complex beds	Connection Support	£19,500	Funding to support an additional three bedroom property sourced in 2021/22

Severe Weather Beds - various	Various providers	£30,000	Funding to provide additional emergency bed spaces in periods of severe weather for all rough sleepers who need them.
<b>Street Engagement</b>		<b>£47,500</b>	
Rough Sleeping & Street activity service - TVP	Thames Valley Police	£30,000	Funding for TVP City Centre Unit to provide targeted support to reduce rough sleeping through outreach, enforcement, tackling begging and anti-social behaviour. TVP City Centre Unit has a dedicated police constable for the purpose of this work.
City Centre Ambassadors	Oxford City Council	£17,500	The City Centre Ambassadors provide a visible presence within Oxford City Centre. They assist people with enquiries, liaise with businesses to keep the city centre clean and litter free, and work closely with the police to spot and deter anti-social behaviour. They engage with homeless people, referring them into the appropriate support services.
<b>Positive activities &amp; help to get into work</b>		<b>£186,867</b>	
Day Services	To be confirmed	£41,164	Funding for provision of day services – showers and laundry facilities as well as breakfast and lunch and any other activities taking place – for individuals rough sleeping in the City and working with outreach services to access suitable accommodation.
Women's Hub	Aspire/The Gatehouse	£7,500	New service to provide advice and support for women on a broad range of issues, not just on homelessness, but with a focus on supporting women who may be homeless, at risk of homelessness, or recovering from homelessness.

Gatehouse Café	Gatehouse	£5,580	Core funding for the Gatehouse café, to support and engage people sleeping rough to access accommodation and specialist support.
The Porch Day Centre	The Porch	£55,000	Core funding for The Porch daycentre to support rough sleepers and those vulnerably housed through a range of activities, training and education and where appropriate sign post clients to more appropriate services.
Aspire	Aspire Oxford	£77,623	Funding for 2 FTE Education, Training and Employment workers to provide training and employment opportunities for homeless and/or vulnerably housed individuals in the City. Aspire is a social enterprise working towards becoming self-sufficient.
<b>Other</b>		<b>£240,533</b>	
Single Homelessness Team (current arrangements)	Oxford City Council	£215, 533	Funding contribution towards the Council's Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Team.
Greater Change	Greater Change	£25,000	Greater Change provide funding to support interventions to help people experiencing homelessness find settled accommodation and to also help prevent homelessness. Our funding is match on a £ for £ basis.
<b>Total allocated/committed</b>		<b>£1,854,680</b>	

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Appendix 3: 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
Delivery of Service	Commissioned services don't deliver expected outcomes	Opp	Inadequate monitoring or inappropriate service measures applied	Potential increase in rough sleeping	10/1/22	Paul Wilding	3	2	3	1	3	1		Service measures agreed in partnership with providers. Robust monitoring regime put in place and regularly reviewed	1/4/22	In Progress	50	Amie Rickatson
127	Changing circumstances during the year require different services to be delivered.	threat	Always a risk, but particularly so with Covid restricting the way many services can be delivered.	Increase in rough sleeping, Increase in Covid cases in homeless population	10/1/22	Paul Wilding	4	3	4	3	3	2		Power delegated to vary services. Working in partnership with service providers encourages flexibility on their part.	1/4/22	In Progress	10	Amie Rickatson
Increase in rough sleeping	An increase in rough sleeping puts pressure on services funded by this grant	threat	The end of an embargo on evictions, furlough scheme and increase in cost of living is likely to lead to an increase in rough sleeping.	Services unable to meet demand	10/1/22	Paul Wilding	3	3	3	3	2	2		Ensure prevention work is funded, not just support for rough sleepers. Adopting a system wide approach to managing homelessness.	1/4/22	In Progress	50	Amie Rickatson
Severe Weather Emergency Protocol	SWEP will be difficult to deliver in 22/23 if self contained rooms are still required	threat	The potential ongoing need to manage Covid19 effectively and the closure of Oxford YHA.	Rough sleepers may be unable to access emergency provision in spells of cold weather	10/1/22	Paul Wilding	4	3	3	2	2	2		Work with the Alliance and partners to find locations for next winter during this spring and summer.	1/10/22	Not started	0	Brendan Lewis

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