

Agenda

Cabinet

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Wednesday 15 November 2023**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Long Room - Oxford Town Hall**

For further information please contact:

Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer, Committee Services Officer

☎ 01865 252367

✉ DemocraticServices@oxford.gov.uk

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

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

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

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

View or subscribe to updates for agendas, reports and minutes at mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk.

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

Cabinet Members

Councillor Susan Brown	Leader, Inclusive Economy and Partnerships
Councillor Ed Turner	Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management
Councillor Nigel Chapman	Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies
Councillor Jemima Hunt	Cabinet Member for Culture and Events
Councillor Mark Lygo	Cabinet Member for Safer Communities
Councillor Chewe Munkonge	Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks
Councillor Anna Railton	Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Councillor Ajaz Rehman	Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities
Councillor Linda Smith	Cabinet Member for Housing
Councillor Louise Upton	Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities

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

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

Agenda

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

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

	Pages
1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Declarations of Interest	
3 Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public	
4 Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda	
5 Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues	
6 Items raised by Cabinet Members	
7 Scrutiny Reports	
<p>The Scrutiny Committee met on 6 November 2023. The following reports are expected and will be published as a supplement, together with any other recommendations from that meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grant Allocations to Community and Voluntary Organisations 2024/25• FutureFit Oxford(shire) Project Grant Funding Bid• Central (City & University) Conservation Area Appraisal	
8 Appropriation of Land at Bertie Place to a Planning Purpose	11 - 42
<p>Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Housing (Councillor Linda Smith), Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management (Councillor Ed Turner)</p> <p>The Executive Director (Development) has submitted a report to seek approval to appropriate land (change the statutory basis on which it is held by the Council from one function to another) currently held for public open space purposes at Bertie Place Recreation Ground. This</p>	

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

relates to the appropriation of Site A to a planning purpose for the objective of building affordable housing.

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Note** that following the statutory public notification process of the Council's intention to appropriate the Land to planning purposes, three written representations were received in response to the public notice;
2. **Approve** the appropriation of land in the Council's ownership at Bertie Place Recreation Ground Site A (see Image 1 for plan) ("the Land"), to planning purposes, so as to facilitate its future development for new housing (per planning application number 23/00988/FUL) in accordance with section 122 and further, thereby, rely on section 203-205 Housing and Planning Act 2016 to permit the development of the Land to proceed; and
3. **Recommend to Council** to approve the appropriation of the Land from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subject to planning permission for planning application 23/00988/FUL being granted.

9 **Central (City & University) Conservation Area Appraisal**

43 - 46

Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities (Councillor Louise Upton)

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Services has submitted a report to seek approval for, and adoption of, the Central (City & University) Conservation Area Appraisal, enabling the document to be used to inform the decision-making process for Development Management and to form an evidence base to inform Planning Policy.

Please note that Appendices 1 – 3 will be published as a separate supplement.

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Adopt** the Central (City & University) Conservation Area Appraisal; and
2. **Endorse** the adopted Conservation Area Appraisal for use in informing development management decisions and as part of the evidence base for planning policy decisions.

10 **Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2024/25**

47 - 130

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

Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture

The Head of Community Services has submitted a report to (i) demonstrate the impact of Oxford Community Impact Fund; and (ii) agree the criteria/weighting for assessing the 2024/25 Oxford Community Impact fund grants.

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Note** the implementation of the Oxford Community Impact Fund agreed by Cabinet on 15 December 2021 as part of the strategic grants review;
2. **Note** the social value and economic impact of the fund; and
3. **Agree** that the criteria and weighting for assessing Oxford Community Impact Fund grant applications in 2024/2025 are as set out in paragraph 5 of this report with the additional requirement for applicants to comply with the safeguarding arrangements specified by the Council. Cabinet agrees such safeguarding requirements are to be determined by the Safeguarding Coordinator in consultation with the Head of Community Services.

11 **FutureFit Oxford(shire) Project Grant Funding Bid for Retrofit**

131 - 138

Lead Member: Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice (Councillor Anna Railton)

The Head of Corporate Strategy has submitted a report to seek project approval for Oxford City Council's involvement in the FutureFit Oxford(shire) Project (FOx Project), and delegated authority for the facilitation and delivery of the project.

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Grant project approval** for the FOx project to proceed, including approval of Oxford City Council's role as overall project lead;
2. **Recommend to Council** to establish a revenue budget for £1.56 million funded by a government grant to enable the necessary resources to be employed and the work undertaken;
3. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / Section 151 Officer and the Head of Law and Governance to enter into a grant agreement with Innovate UK for the sum of £1.56 million as well as any related agreements, contracts and transactions to facilitate the project and its delivery in terms of accepting grant offer letters, partnership agreements, retrofit seed funding payments,

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

subcontracting and subscriptions;

4. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice, to deliver the grant funded consortium project, and to comply with Innovate UK's project monitoring and grant payment processes (and project change processes, if required); and
5. **Note** that this is a multi-partner collaborative project with a total value of £5.28m. A decision from the funder to award the bid and at time of writing a decision from the funder on whether the bid has been successful has not been received (expected to be on 8th November).

12 **Commercial Property Lettings**

139 - 142

Lead Member: Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management (Councillor Ed Turner)

The Executive Director (Development) has submitted a report to seek authority to let 16-17 Turl Street, 24-26 George Street, 33-35 George Street and Cadogan House, Wheatley to provide a rental income to the Council.

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / S.151 Officer, the Head of Law and Governance and the Deputy Leader (Statutory) Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management to agree final terms, negotiate the form of documents and then enter into leases and any ancillary documents required for the letting of 16-17 Turl Street, 24-26 George Street, 33-35 George Street and Cadogan House, Wheatley subject to the requirements of S.123 Local Government Act 1972 being met.

13 **Minutes**

143 - 150

Recommendation: That Cabinet resolves to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2023 as a true and accurate record.

14 **Dates of Future Meetings**

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

13 December 2023

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

24 January 2024

7 February 2024

13 March 2024

17 April 2024

All meetings start at 6.00pm.

Matters Exempt from Publication

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

Cabinet may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Part Two – matters exempt from publication

15 Commercial Property Lettings - Appendix 1

151 - 154

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

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

Information for those attending

Recording and reporting on meetings held in public

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

The Council asks those recording the meeting:

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

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

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

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". The matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

Members' Code – Other Registrable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing** of one of your Other Registrable Interests*** then you must declare an

interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code – Non Registrable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which ***directly relates*** to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests, then you must declare the interest.

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

“Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.”

Otherwise, you may stay in the room, take part in the discussion and vote.

*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

** Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

*** Other Registrable Interests: a) any unpaid directorships b) any Body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority c) any Body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Councillors speaking at meetings

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

Councillors speaking on Neighbourhood issues (10 minutes in total)

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

Items raised by Cabinet members

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

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 November 2023
Report of: Executive Director (Development)
Title of Report: Appropriation of Land at Bertie Place to a Planning Purpose

Summary and Recommendations	
Purpose of report:	This report seeks approval to appropriate land (change the statutory basis on which it is held by the Council from one function to another) currently held for public open space purposes at Bertie Place Recreation Ground. This paper relates to the appropriation of Site A to a planning purpose for the objective of building affordable housing.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
Corporate Priority:	More Affordable Housing and Meeting Housing Needs
Policy Framework:	Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2023 to 2028
Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note that following the statutory public notification process of the Council's intention to appropriate the Land to planning purposes, three written representations were received in response to the public notice; 2. Approve the appropriation of land in the Council's ownership at Bertie Place Recreation Ground Site A (see Image 1 for plan) ("the Land"), to planning purposes, so as to facilitate its future development for new housing (per planning application number 23/00988/FUL) in accordance with section 122 and further, thereby, rely on section 203-205 Housing and Planning Act 2016 to permit the development of the Land to proceed; and 3. Recommend to Council to approve the appropriation of the Land from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subject to planning permission for planning application 23/00988/FUL being granted. 	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Equalities Impact Assessment

Introduction and background

1. The Council continues to develop a supply programme to deliver more affordable housing through multiple work streams, including the delivery of homes through the Council's housing company – OCHL; direct delivery by the Council; joint ventures; regeneration schemes; acquisitions; and enabling activity with Registered Providers, community-led housing groups, and other partners. The Council seeks to deliver over 1,600 affordable tenure homes across the next four years (to March 2027), with at least 850 of those at the most affordable Social Rent level.
2. OCHL continue to deliver an extensive programme of development schemes in accordance with the OCHL business plan.

Scheme information

3. This report relates to one development in the programme, Bertie Place. Bertie Place (Bertie Place Recreation Ground and Land Behind Wytham Street) is located within the Hinksey Park ward.
4. The scheme remains subject to planning consent. A planning application for the site was submitted in May 2023 (23/00988/FUL). It is anticipated that the application will go to Planning Committee in December 2023. This report is separate to the planning process and the overview provided is for the information only.
5. The current proposal is for a 100% affordable housing development of 31 homes (22 for Social Rent and 9 for Shared Ownership).
6. The image below details the extent of land to be appropriated at Bertie Place. The area for appropriation comprises Site A only.



Image 1: Red line drawing of *Site A*.

7. Site B is currently scrub land and the scheme is predicated on minor works and improved public access to Site B.
8. For more information on the schemes background refer to the [Council's August Cabinet report on project approvals and intent to appropriate land at Bertie Place](#).
9. Additional scheme information relating to the financial appraisal is provided in the (commercially sensitive) [appendix to the August report](#).

Appropriations

10. Appropriation means changing how the Council holds the land. The Council holds land for the statutory purposes for which it was acquired or following acquisition, appropriated. Appropriation is the process by which land held by the Council pursuant to one statutory function is transferred to another statutory function.
11. It is important to note that appropriation covers only land owned by Oxford City Council.
12. The Land is held by the Council as a pleasure ground under section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875 – this status as a pleasure ground amounts to a public trust over the Land preventing its use for other purposes. Appropriation of the Land to a planning purpose under section 122 of the 1972 Act (see previous paragraph) will have the effect of discharging this public trust.
13. It should be noted that there may be other trusts over the land which will need to be dealt with appropriately in due course.

14. The August report notes that two separate “appropriations” are required for this development.
15. First, the land at Site A must be appropriated to planning purposes and the purpose of building affordable housing. This was subject to Cabinet agreeing to the commencement of the appropriation process, planning permission being granted and the conclusion of the consultation exercise.
16. In August 2023 Cabinet agreed to commence the appropriation process of open space land at Site A, Bertie Place as set out in the report, noting the intent to take a further report to a later Cabinet.
17. Second, if the proposed appropriation process has been approved and completed and should planning permission be granted, the land must be appropriated (i.e. transferred) from the General Fund (“GF”) to the Housing Revenue Account (“HRA”) under a separate legal mechanism.
18. This report deals with the appropriation of Site A to a planning purpose to build affordable housing.
19. Should planning consent not be obtained, revised schemes may be considered by OCHL.
20. The Council holds land for the statutory purposes for which it was acquired or following acquisition appropriated. Section 122 Local Government Act 1972 governs the process of appropriation. The Council may appropriate (transfer) land held from one function to another if it believes that it is no longer required to be held for the function it is presently held for and the purpose for which it is to be held in future is a purpose it could have acquired the land if it did not already own it.
21. Section 122 provides that before appropriating any land which is public open space the council must give notice of its intention to do so and consider any objections made to the proposed appropriation. Comments will be given due consideration and a summary report to be submitted to Council. The notice must be given in a local newspaper over a period of two consecutive weeks.
22. If the Planning Permission is granted, this would allow the Council to rely on section 203-205 Housing and Planning Act 2016 to override any restrictions on the use or development of Land (private rights of way or other restrictions) in return for payment of compensation to affected landowners.
23. Following the grant of planning permission, the Land would be developed as part of the Bertie Place development.
24. Subject to the determination of the planning application by the planning committee the intention is that the land which holds the children’s play area and MUGA be appropriated back to the GF from the HRA following the development period. Further approval will be required following completion of the works to undertake the

transfer of that part of the Site (covering open space, the play area and the MUGA) not used for housing.

Intention to appropriate the Land

25. Following Cabinet's decision in August to advertise the Council's intention to appropriate open space land, this report seeks approval to appropriate the Land.
26. As per the provisions of Section 122(2A) a notice was published in the Oxford Times for two consecutive weeks from 21 September to 6 October. A plan showing the location of the area proposed to be appropriated was available for inspection during work hours at the Oxford City Council offices (The Town Hall) during this time.
27. This notice included contact details for the Head of Law and Governance and the Council's postal address to receive comments from members of the public. The Council allowed comments to be received from 21st September to 6th October.
28. All objections were requested in writing before 5pm on 6 October 2023. A summary of objections received, along with responses to address these, is detailed below.

Objections and stakeholder engagement

29. In determining whether to appropriate land that is held for public open space purposes the Council has a duty to properly consider any representations received following publication of the public notice and the outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment.
30. In further determining whether to appropriate land to planning purposes so as to override rights affecting its development, good practice suggests that Council's should weigh in the balance the reasons of securing the development of the land against the impact the loss or private rights may have on those affected recognising that compensation is payable where such right can be demonstrated to exist.
31. Three letters of objection were received during (or immediately after) the notice period. The specific objections detailed in the letters and the Council responses to these points are set out below.

Objection to the public notice seeking clarity on the on the specific section of the Local Government Act 1975 in use for the appropriation.

32. In response to this objection the Council would like to make it clear that the basis for the appropriation of the land to a planning purpose is under s.122 of the Local Government Act 1972. Section 123 does not apply as the Council is not proposing to dispose of the land.

Objection on the basis that the site is still required under its current purpose and is not surplus to requirements.

33. The National Planning Policy Framework is cited in one objection.

34. The Bertie Place Recreation Ground has been identified for development in successive Local Plan documents for over 18 years, all of which have followed a process of consultation and public engagement prior to them being adopted.
35. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is not relevant for the determination of the appropriation process. It is the Local Planning Authority who will need to have regard for NPPF when it determines the planning application. Cabinet does not need to take into account NPPF when it makes its decision.

Objection based on community access for 85 years. Access is important for the health and wellbeing of community and provides a safe space for young people to gather and play. This is viewed as the only community amenity is also used by the Rivermead Park development and visitors to the adjacent campsite.

36. Access to green space, a MUGA and a children's play area will be retained with residents and wider public (including visitors to the campsite and residents of Rivermead Park) able to access these facilities.
37. Other recreation facilities including parks with play areas are available within walking distance. Hinksey Park has a wide range of recreation facilities including play equipment, sporting facilities and, further, access to Dean's Ham Meadow. This is a 16-minute walk from Bertie Place.
38. Fox Crescent Park is a play area a 7-minute walk from Bertie Place.
39. In relation to the Rivermead Park development, there are many housing developments which are constructed without an on-site play area.

Objection on the basis that the amount of land the Council is seeking to appropriate exceeds 250 square yards, as per section 122 of the Act.

40. With reference to section 122(2)(a), the restriction based on exceeding 250 square yards only applies if the land consists of common land. Site A does not constitute common land and as such, the procedure under section 122(2A) applies and not the procedure under section 122(2).
41. Furthermore, Site B is an area of green space equivalent in size to Bertie Place A and will be improved and made more accessible. Subject to approval, it is intended that areas relating to the play area and MUGA will be appropriated back to the General Fund following the development.

Objection to a difference in size between the appropriation notice and the Local Plan.

42. The site area specified on the Local Plan policy SP32 is 0.66 hectares (Plot A) (equivalent to 6600 square metres). The notice of appropriation states 7777.7 square metres are to be appropriated. The area for appropriation is shown clearly on the plan attached to the notice.

43. The discrepancy noted is accounted for by the inclusion of a 10m 'no-build' buffer zone from the watercourse. The buffer zone is included in the appropriation notice as landscaping works are proposed to the edge of the watercourse. Also included in some of the existing highway at the end of Bertie Place for some changes.

Objection to the use of the term “regeneration” in relation to the development. This was referenced in two of letters.

44. The Council views the use of the term as appropriate for the combined works of delivering new affordable housing, re-provision of a play area and a MUGA, and improved access to and development of green space.

Objection that there is confusion between Oxford City Council and the ‘Development Company’ OX Place and no clear body to which to address concerns regarding the development. This includes at consultation events.

45. Objections to the development are dealt with as part of the formal planning process and managed by Oxford City Local Planning Authority. This takes into account all objections to the development. The development has been subject to both a pre-application consultation and a statutory consultation.

46. All consultation events run in relation to the proposed development at Bertie Place have been coordinated by OX Place.

47. It is acknowledged that OX Place is a Council wholly owned company but both OX Place and Oxford City Council are separate legal entities with different roles and responsibilities in respect of this development. OX Place, as the developer and the applicant, is responsible for managing the pre-application process and submitting the planning application. Any complaints regarding the pre-application process should be directed to OX Place. Objections made to OX Place will be responded to by them directly.

48. Objections to the planning application are dealt with by the Local Planning Authority.

Objection to noise nuisance from MUGA

49. Objections relating to the re-provided facilities will be taken into account as part of the planning process.

50. The MUGA is designed to help minimise noise.

Objection to size of MUGA

51. Objections relating to the re-provided facilities will be taken into account as part of the planning process.

52. A new MUGA is provided part of the development however it is noted that there is a reduction in the size of the MUGA.

Objection to loss of play equipment, reduction in size of play area and potential change in age group for which the park caters. Currently the park caters to a wide range of children's ages but there is concern that this will be reduced to only children aged five years and under.

53. Objections relating to the re-provided facilities will be taken into account as part of the planning process.

54. Proposals for the play area remain indicative at this stage and will be tested through the planning process; however, the intention of the Council is to re-provide a play area which caters to a range of age groups. It is intended to further engage the community on how the play area is set out and used.

Objection to risks to children of moving about on slippery grass sloping down to the water course.

55. There is currently a wire fence separating the open space and the waterway. A replacement fence will remain along the watercourse. There will be no change to this and therefore no increased risk.

Objection to the loss of space for 'free play' by 80 per cent. The recreation ground will not be replaced by equivalent or better provision in a suitable location.

56. Objections relating to the recreation ground will be taken into account as part of the planning process.

57. In response to concerns regarding the loss of green space at Bertie Place Site A, it is intended that improved accessibility into and around Site B will address this issue.

58. The landscaping at Bertie Place Site B will provide a green space connected to the area via an accessible footbridge which leads to a nature path. The path will be designed to accommodate walking and wheeling activities, including the use of wheelchairs, pushchairs, bicycles and scooters.

Other recent objections

59. It is noted that representation was made at the August Cabinet meeting by Kaddy Beck, on behalf of the Save Bertie Park Campaign through submitting a statement and questions relating to the scheme. Her statement, and the response given to it by Councillor Susan Brown, Leader, are attached to the minutes of that meeting which are available on the Council's website.

60. At Cabinet the Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead highlighted that proposals for the play area remained indicative at this stage and would be tested through the planning process; however, the current intention of the Council is to re-provide a play area which catered to a range of age groups. It intended to further engage the community with regard to how the play area was set out and used.

61. In addition to responding to the objections noted above the Council has carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment to determine whether there are any groups likely to be negatively affected by the appropriation process, namely, the loss of public open space at the Bertie Place site.
62. A representation was made by Martin Hackett at a meeting of the Council on 2 October 2023. Details of the representation and response from Councillor Louise Upton can be found in the full minutes available at the Council website.
63. Councillor Upton noted that any planning application in relation to the site will need to set out how it accords with the policies within the Local Plan, and full consideration will be given to this through the planning process.

Rationale for appropriation

64. Officers believe that the positive benefits of developing the Land as an affordable housing scheme along with the provision of a new play area, MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) and improved access to an alternative green space outweigh any negative impacts across both sites. In reaching this conclusion officers have considered the following including:
- a. all representations either opposing or supporting the intended appropriation have been received in response to public notices;
 - b. the new play area and access to green space will mitigate the loss of the Land as public open space;
 - c. an Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken which indicates that there are no adverse disproportionate long-term impacts.
65. To progress the Bertie Place development, officers are of the view that the appropriation of council-owned land in this area will facilitate the development of the Land and will contribute to the achievement of further economic and social wellbeing of the area, namely in the delivery of affordable housing.

Financial implications

66. There were costs associated with publishing the notice of intention.

Legal issues

67. The activities, as set out in this report, relate to activity for the purpose of developing homes as affordable housing. This is within the Council's statutory powers. The general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Authorities (Land) Act 1963 enable the Council to develop land it already owns. The Council has power to appropriate land from one purpose to another under section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972.
68. Bertie Place is currently used as recreation ground and was designated as open space. It is the view of the Council that it should be appropriated to a planning purpose as there may be third party rights that need to be overridden to enable the development to proceed. The beneficiaries of any rights that are overridden as a result of the appropriation will be entitled to compensation.

69. Without overriding of third-party rights, the beneficiaries of those rights could potentially seek an injunction preventing the development from going ahead. Exercising the appropriation powers will override all third-party rights over the Land. These rights may include such things as rights of way that are unrecorded, and that OCC may have no knowledge of. It will also include any infringements of rights to light that may occur if the new development overshadows neighbouring properties.
70. Compensation is payable to landowners whose private rights of way or light are interfered with or overridden to the extent to which the value of their properties are reduced by no longer being able exercise any rights of way that are affected.
71. The activities, as set out in this report, relate to activity for the purpose of developing homes as affordable housing. This is within the Council's statutory powers. The general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011 and the Local Authorities (Land) Act 1963 enable the Council to develop land it already owns.
72. Any procurement of goods and services for the purpose of developing homes must be carried out in accordance with the Council's constitution and procurement procedures, complying with The Public Contracts Regulations 2015, including ensuring that best value is achieved.
73. It is likely that footpaths and rights of way will be temporarily suspended to allow for the development to proceed. This also includes the possibility of a temporary road stopping order to accommodate the utility connections. The Council will go through all necessary consultation processes to secure all appropriate permissions.

Equalities impact

74. Given the nature of the exercise of the powers proposed by the Council it is necessary for the Council to have regard to its public sector equality duty in reaching a final decision to appropriate the Land to planning purposes.
75. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is an appendix to this paper.
76. Any adverse impacts to the community in undertaking this activity have been considered with mitigating actions undertaken or planned wherever possible. These should be balanced with the impact of improving provision for persons in housing need, through the delivery of more affordable and accessible housing to better meet client needs.

Carbon and Environmental considerations

77. There are no carbon or environmental considerations in relation to the appropriation.

Report author	Dave Scholes
Job title	Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead
Service area or department	Housing Services
Telephone	01865 252636
e-mail	dscholes@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers:

1. 9th August 2023 Cabinet report: Bertie Place affordable housing scheme – project approvals and land appropriation
2. Planning application for erection of 31 affordable residential dwellings, with associated public open space, multi-use games area, childrens play area, access and landscaping – 23/00988/FUL

This page is intentionally left blank



Appendix 1

Form to be used for the Full Equalities Impact Assessment

Service Area: Affordable Housing Supply Section:	Date of Initial assessment: 09.10.23	Key Person responsible for assessment: D. Scholes	Date assessment commenced: 09.10.23
Name of Policy to be assessed:	Site appropriation at Bertie Place (Site A) from recreation ground to a planning purpose		
1. In what area are there concerns that the policy could have a differential impact	Race	Disability	Age
	Gender reassignment	Religion or Belief	Sexual Orientation
	Sex	Pregnancy and Maternity	Marriage & Civil Partnership
Other strategic/ equalities considerations	Safeguarding/ Welfare of Children and vulnerable adults	Mental Wellbeing/ Community Resilience	

<p>2. Background:</p> <p>Give the background information to the policy and the perceived problems with the policy which are the reason for the Impact Assessment.</p>	<p>Project summary</p> <p>The report is in relation to the appropriation of land to facilitate an affordable housing development at Site A Bertie Place. The development is dependent on the land being appropriated to a planning purpose.</p> <p>A planning application for the site was submitted in May 2023 (23/00988/FUL) but the scheme remains subject to planning consent. A decision is anticipated in December 2023.</p> <p>The whole site comprises two areas; Site A and Site B. The appropriation applies only to Site A which is a recreational open space containing a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) and children’s play area. The Land is held by the Council as a pleasure ground under section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875. Site B is an area of scrub land which will be developed as a nature trail as part of the scheme.</p> <p>Items for consideration</p> <p>The immediate effects of the appropriation will be two-fold:</p> <p>First it will allow Site A to be appropriated to a planning purpose which will, subject to planning permission, allow the land to be developed to accommodate an affordable housing development along with re-provision of the MUGA and a children’s play area.</p> <p>Second, private rights of access to this land will cease to be capable of being enforced.</p> <p>The loss of public recreational space has the potential to impact all parts of the local community, but more so for those using the space for exercise and younger residents using the space for informal play and gathering spaces. However, mitigations have been put in place to address this.</p> <p>Given the potential impact on residents and the known value that is placed on access to open space in terms of providing mental wellbeing benefits this EqIA is necessary to consider the potential impact based on the information available and consider in the socio-economic context in Hinksey Park ward.</p> <p>Development details</p> <p>The appropriation will enable, subject to planning permission, the development which comprises:</p> <p>Site A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 affordable homes of which 22 are social rent tenure and 9 are for shared ownership.
--	--

- At social rent tenure there are 11 x 1-bed/2-person flats; 1 x 2-bed/3-person flat and 10 x 3-bed/5-person houses. 1 x 1bed/2person unit will be at accessible standard M4(3) which is a wheelchair user dwelling. The ground floor of all dwellings comply with M4(2).
- 9 x 2-bed/4-person houses will be available for shared ownership
- A MUGA and children's play area will be re-sited (currently also on Site A)

Site B

- Improved access to Site B through a new accessible footbridge leading to a nature path

The plans fulfil the land use requirements set out in the Local Plan the land being appropriated is currently public open space (and play facilities) and as such is it necessary to consider whether there are any access and usage impacts as a result of the appropriation, and whether there is likely to be a disproportionate negative impact on the community as a result of this change.

Programme of development

The development remains subject to planning consent. Current milestones indicate that the scheme will go to Planning Committee in December 2023 with a physical start on site in April 2024 and practical completion in November 2025.

Drivers of change

The site in question has been allocated in successive Local Plan's for 18 years. The Local Plan was subjected to a full range of assessments, including an Equalities Impact Assessment. The loss of the sites in question is justified to provide much needed affordable housing, contributing to the delivery of the [Council's Corporate Strategy 2020-2024](#) and the [Housing, homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2023-2028](#).

Along with 31 affordable homes the scheme will provide access to a green space and re-provide the MUGA and play area.

What will happen if the change is not implemented?

Not implementing the change will mean the council will be unable to deliver the 31 new affordable homes, and the other planned activities across the site and be unable to fulfil the Local Plan policy.

The relevant Corporate priorities in relation to the development of Bertie Place and are:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver more affordable housing: Intervention is needed 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: Oxford’s diverse communities should be equipped, supported and enabled to tackle inequality and ensure everyone is able to play a full part in the life of our city.
<p>3. Methodology and Sources of Data:</p> <p>The methods used to collect data and what sources of data</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Engagement with the community has taken place through various methodologies. This includes two community events run by OX Place (including one aimed directly at young people), an online space introducing the scheme and calling for views and ongoing communication with ward Members. 2) The formal (statutory) consultation period through the planning process. This applies both to the successive Local Plans and the specific planning application for this development. 3) Notice of intention to Appropriate was published in the Oxford Times over a two-week period. 4) Housing Needs data from 5) A Local Insight profile for Hinksey Park Ward (2023)
<p>4. Consultation</p> <p>This section should outline all the consultation that has taken place on the EQIA. It should include the following.</p>	<p>Consultation on the wider development scheme has been undertaken consistently since 2019. This has been through pre-application discussion, public exhibition, leaflet drops and targeted youth consultation. In line with OCC’s SCI best practice, the following consultations were undertaken:</p> <p>The following consultation activities were undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8th October 2019 - Representative from OX Place attended South Oxfordshire Community Forum. • 19th November 2019 - Letter with updated information sent to all local residents. • 10th March 2020 – Representative from OX Place attended South Oxfordshire Community Forum. • January 2022 – Post card with updated information sent to all local residents. • 9th Oct 2022 – FAQ document addressing common concerns published.

<p>Why you carried out the consultation. Details about how you went about it. A summary of the replies you received from people you consulted.</p> <p>An assessment of your proposed policy (or policy options) in the light of the responses you received.</p> <p>A statement of what you plan to do next</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Nov 2022 – 18th Nov 2022: Drop-in Community Event. • 17th Feb 2023 – 24th Feb 2023: Youth Consultation including on-line presence seeking views on play facilities • 17th February 2023 – A Youth Consultation event at the park • 21 September 2023 – Public notice of intention to appropriate published in Oxford Times for two weeks <p>A full summary of all engagement events, along with analysis of comments received and the incorporation based on comments received are detailed in the Land at Bertie Place Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>At the event on 1 November 2022 112 comments were collected for consideration. They display a good level of support, with condition, for the development. In terms of the key issues these included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of green space/play area • Flooding • Loss of trees • Connection of Bertie Place A & B • Car free housing • Noise <p>The youth consultation was arranged during half-term week with Youth Ambition representatives who are specialists at youth work. 29 respondents shared their views on the play equipment.</p> <p>In addition to the activities listed above residents and members of the public have been able to submit comments and objections on the scheme through the formal planning process.</p> <p>Throughout the process residents have also been able to liaise with their local ward Member.</p>
--	--

Members of the public and statutory organisations have been invited to comment on the planning application for the site, currently being considered by the Local Planning Authority, (planning application number 23/00988/FUL). Comments most relevant to subject of this EqIA are as follows:

Consultations have been undertaken both to ascertain and guide drafting and development of consecutive local plans and in relation to the specific planning application relating to the Bertie Place development.

In terms of the former the process requires.... The current Local Plan 2036 states "Planning permission will be granted for residential development (Plot A). The minimum number of homes to be delivered is 30." An alternative of a new school was also identified as an option but Oxfordshire County Council do not require the site for a school

Below provides a summary of key concerns identified in the Statement of Community Involvement and any design changes or mitigating factors in response.

Concerns/comments	Mitigation
<p>Loss of green space "There will be less space to play at present if kids are playing on the MUGA, you can play on the grass."</p>	<p>There will be a loss of open green space on Site A. The landscaping at Bertie Place B will provide a green space equivalent in size to Bertie Place A, connected to the area via an accessible footbridge which leads to a nature path. The path will be designed to accommodate walking and wheeling activities, including the use of wheelchairs, pushchairs, bicycles and scooters. The local community will therefore benefit from an increased area of accessible open space as well as a brand new MUGA and children's playground. The opening up of Bertie Place B would provide great benefit to the local community, as an attractive area of open space.</p>

	<p>Reduction of play equipment “The proposed play and green areas are smaller and will accommodate fewer children;”</p>	<p>These concerns are recognised as legitimate and there is a reduction in area of 10.7%. The community has been consulted on the plans for the new play area and MUGA design. If permission were to be granted for the scheme, the applicant would continue to engage with the local community before finalising the details of the proposals.</p>
	<p>Reduction in size of MUGA</p>	<p>There is a reduction in the size of the MUGA of 25.5%. The current design provides the best option for re-providing the MUGA. It is acknowledged that this will be a smaller size but still offers the facilities to local people.</p>
	<p>An area of significant concern for local residents is the potential for increased flooding</p>	<p>To respond to this concern, a FAQ document was published on the 9th October 2022. It explains in detail the measures taken to ensure that the development of the site will not increase the flood risk to neighbouring areas and sets out the infrastructure plans which will manage flood waters in the future. Flood risk will be taken into account during the planning process.</p>
	<p>Car free housing</p>	<p>The scheme has been designed as car free in response to adopted Council planning policy M3. This has had the benefit of enabling more soft landscaping to be added to the development and it will create a safer environment for children to play.</p>

	<p>Noise levels particularly in relation to the proximity of the MUGA to the new homes</p>	<p>The application is accompanied by a Noise Assessment which concludes that the new development will not have a detrimental impact on the existing environment. In relation to the MUGA it accords with Sport England Guidelines and is located at an acceptable distance from residential dwellings. The MUGA has been set down at a lower level to help reduce any impact from noisy play. The MUGA has also been designed to minimise noise with the proposed boundary fencing chosen to help limit banging and crashing sounds. The MUGA will not be lit at night which will help limit use of the area to daylight hours again helping to ensure that noise from this area is controlled.</p>
<p>5. Assessment of Impact: Provide details of the assessment of the policy on the six primary equality strands. There may have been other</p>	<p>With specific regard to the appropriation of Site A, a notice of the intention to appropriate land was published in the Oxford Times for 2 weeks from 21st September to 6th October 2023. Comments were invited during this time. Three comments on the appropriation itself were received. Comments have been collated and responded to in turn in the 15 November 2023 Cabinet paper.</p> <p>The land subject to appropriation and subsequent proposed development for housing at Bertie Place is detailed in Policy SP32: Bertie Place Recreation Ground and Land Behind Wytham Street. Plot A is a public recreation ground and Plot B is overgrown land formerly used for landfill. Plot B is suitable only for a replacement recreation ground.</p> <p>The park and play area is listed on the Council list of Play areas and recreation grounds. The MUGA is listed on the Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sports Strategy 2012-2026. As per the Local Plan planning permission is dependent on the recreation ground, including a replacement of the MUGA,</p>	

<p>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>	<p>being replaced. The play area is not referenced in the Local Plan. A re-provision of the MUGA and play equipment is detailed as part of the request for planning.</p> <p>The land is also used by dog walkers, people exercising and those using the facilities at the nearby campsite. Current park users will continue to be able to use the park and access the proposed nature walk on Site B.</p> <p>Currently there is pedestrian access from Bertie Place to Wytham Street and this will be retained.</p> <p>The Local Plan is informed by the Oxford City Council Green Infrastructure Study (July 2022). Bertie Park is referenced as a small site which has a high number of functions due to the facilities available. The re-provided play area and MUGA will continue to allow a high level of function and improved access and a nature trail at Site B will potentially increase the use of this area, particularly the planned accessibility for wheeling activities which will improve access for those using wheelchairs, pushchairs and bikes/scooters.</p> <p>The Green Infrastructure Study notes that there is increasing evidence to show that access to high quality open space and Green Infrastructure plays an important part in people's health and wellbeing. The report notes that whilst this is true for the whole population, disadvantaged communities appear to accrue an even greater health benefit from living in a greener environment.</p> <p>The value of green infrastructure has also been keenly recognised during the COVID 19 pandemic where access to green space has played a key role in people's well-being: alongside a wider appreciation of nature.</p> <p>Public Health England's report <i>Improving Access to Greenspace (2020)</i>, outlines 3 main barriers to accessing green space. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical barriers: proximity, physical obstacles, transport, and lack of facilities. • Social and cultural barriers: social experiences, cultural experiences, and different values. • Perceptions, awareness, self-efficacy, and interest: perception of safety, lack of awareness, low confidence, time constraints, and lack of interest. <p>It is intended that there will be no additional barriers to accessing the facilities on the site.</p>
---	---

Creating a new nature trail with accessible green space along with safe areas to play and socialise will address some of these issues and offer an inclusive space for all users.

Residents also have other recreation facilities including parks with play areas available within a close distance. Hinksey Park has a wide range of recreation facilities including play equipment, sporting facilities and, further, access to Dean's Ham Meadow. This is a 16-minute walk from Bertie Place. Fox Crescent Park is a play area a 7-minute walk from Bertie Place.

Improvements to green infrastructure/replacement open space

There will be a period of disruption when the construction takes place, however, the new development will offer the following benefits:

- Quality play equipment and a new MUGA
- Improved access to green space with a new pedestrian bridge and level nature trail
- A 10 per cent increase in biodiversity – via retained urban trees; introduced shrub, a variety of native and non-native tree species, modified grassland, hedgerow; and enhanced habitats of heathland and scrub

Impact on public facilities and access

It is noted that there are no public toilets currently on the site (and there are no public toilets planned within the development) so there is no reduction in public facilities.

There is one bench on the site and there is a bench proposed as part of the play area.

There are no disabled parking bays currently identified. As part of the new development there will be one disabled parking bay for visitors to the scheme (along with another non-disabled space and two car-club spaces).

There is now a statutory duty on local authorities to consider Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 ('Section 507B'). Section 507B requires local authorities to, so far as reasonably practicable,

secure access for all qualifying young people to a sufficient quantity of 'youth services'. To this end it is noted that access to a MUGA and play area will remain. Bertie Place is not a site for formal youth work and there are no formal recreation services/facilities/outreach offered from the site. Should voluntary sector organisations use Bertie Place for these purposes then Oxford City Council could offer support to groups to help assess any impact of the re-provision.

There will be no changes to public access following construction.

Demographics

[A Local Insight profile for Hinksey Park Ward](#) area was published in 2023 by the Oxford City Council and District Data Service. This study includes a population profile, including the level of deprivation in the area, local services and the community insight.

There are 5,524 people living in Hinksey Park Ward with 83 per cent stating they are 'satisfied with their neighbourhood'. This is higher than average across England (79.3 per cent).

Summary statistics

- 10 per cent of households have no qualifications compared with 22 per cent across England
- 43 per cent of people aged 16-74 are in full-time employment compared with 39 per cent across England
- 52 per cent of households are not deprived in any dimension compared with an England average of 042.5 per cent
- 0.8 per cent of households suffer multiple deprivation compared with an England average of 0.5 per cent
- 38 per cent of households have no car compared to 26 per cent across England
- The crime rate is lower than the average across England

Table 1: Key stats on protected characteristics where the impact is likely to be neutral

Protected Group	Data Analysis (Hinksey Park ward)
-----------------	-----------------------------------

Ethnicity	<p>White British: 63.3%, England Av: 79.8%) Non-White: 19% (England Av 14.6%) White non-British: 17.7% England Av: 5.7%) Mixed: 3.8%, England Av: 2.3%) Asian: 11.1%, England Av: 7.8%) Black: 2.9%, England Av: 3.5% Other ethnic Group: 1.2%, England Av: 1% Households with multiple ethnicities: 22.3%, England Av: 8.9%)</p> <p>Born in England: 65.6%, England Av. 83.5%</p> <p>Born outside the UK: 30.3%, England Av: 13.8%</p> <p>All people in household have English as main language: 78.9%, England av: 83.5%</p> <p>No adults but some children have English as main language: 0.9%, England av: 0.8%</p> <p>No household members have English as main language: 9.1%, England av: 4.4%</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>No specific data is available for Hinksey Park. Data for Oxford shows, 16 and over): -Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth (88.8%) (Lower than Oxfordshire and England) - Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given (0.6%)</p>
Religion/Belief	<p>Christian- 43.3%, England average 59.4% Buddhist- 1.2% (England average 0.5%) Hindu- 1.1%, England average 1.5% Jewish – 0.8%, compared to 0.5% England average Muslim- 5.2%, compared to 5% England average Sikh- 0.4%, compared to 0.8% in England Other- 0.6%, compared to 0.4% in England</p>

	No religion- 38.4% compared to 24.7% in England
Sexual Orientation	No specific data is available for Hinksey Park. Data for Oxford shows, (for 16 and over): 80.4% = Straight or Heterosexual (Oxfordshire = 88.4%) Bisexual= 3.6% (higher than Oxfordshire and England)
Pregnancy and Maternity	No data available locally for this. Birth rate data available at Oxfordshire level.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Married couple family 24.1.0%, England average is 33.2% Cohabiting households 9.4%, England average is 0.6%

Table 2: Key stats on protected characteristics where the impact is likely to be negative

Protected Group	Data Analysis (Hinksey Park Ward)	Analysis/ insights/ impact considerations	Mitigation
Disability	Attendance Allowance claimants (paid to people over the aged of 65 who are severely disabled. Physically or mentally and need a great deal of help) - claimants is 10.4%, compared to 12.5% in England Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (helps with some of the extra costs caused by long-term disability, ill-health, terminal ill-health)- 3.4%, compared to 6.0% in England	Impact: negative (immediate) Lower than average number of residents with disabilities and or long term/terminal ill-health.	In the longer term the redevelopment is likely to have a positive impact re age and disability – creating more inclusive and accessible access to green space: A new accessible footbridge to Site B and a quality footpath for the nature trail are proposed facilitating pedestrian and wheelchair movement.

	Age	<p>17.8% are aged 0-15; lower than the England average of 19.2%</p> <p>67.5% are aged 16-64, compared to the England average of 62.4%</p> <p>14.9% aged 65+, compared to 18.4% England average.</p> <p>70.4% of pensioner households have a pension living alone, compared to 59.3% in England.</p> <p>Lone parent families with dependent children: 22.2%, compared to England average of 24.5%</p> <p>For reference Image 1 (below) displays the population breakdown by age and gender.</p>	<p>Impact: negative (immediate)</p> <p>Broadly average population, but clear lots of young suggesting lots of families live in the area. Average number of lone parent households.</p> <p>Considerably higher number of pensioner households living alone.</p> <p>Impact on children who may use the space to play and have a kickabout and adults and elderly who may use the space for walking, dog walking etc.</p> <p>Child development/Life</p>	<p>Facilities currently available in the park will be re-provided in Site A and equivalent access to green space will be provided on Site B.</p> <p>The new facilities will still provide space for play, have trees/planting and provide space for walking and recreation.</p> <p>New access to Site B will enhance accessibility. The design includes a new nature trail.</p> <p>There will, of course, be an impact during the period of construction.</p>

		<p>chances/opportunities are severely reduced by families in difficult circumstances Isolation - due to lack of income, reduced mobility links increases limited access to information/resources, less social interaction with neighbours, single older people living alone.</p>	
<p>Sex (M/F) Census 2021</p>	<p>50.9% male, 49.1% female</p>	<p>Gender is balanced.</p> <p>Impact: Neutral</p>	

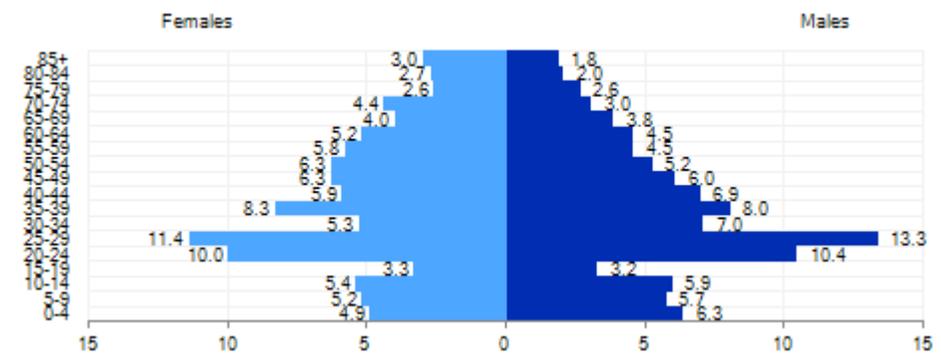


Image 1: % of total population in each age and gender band

Housing tenure and affordability

47.4% of homes are owner-occupied against an England average of 64.1%. Of these 1.3% are shared ownership properties against the England average of 0.8%. 17.8% of households live in social rented homes almost in line with an England average of 17.7%.

The average house price to August 2020 is £401,360 where the England average is £304,430. The Lower Quartile house price ('affordable housing') is £125,321 against an England average of £39,328. The total ratio of years to earnings in Hinksey Ward is 6.89 compared to the England average of 3.57 years and the total ratio of years of earnings for a house is 8.3 against an England average of 5.5 (Source: ONS House Price Statistics for Small Areas Oct 16-17; ONS earnings data 2015/16).

There is therefore significant need for affordable housing in the area.

Date taken from [Local Insight profile for Hinksey Park Ward](#)

Housing Need

Housing need remains high within Oxford City. Live application figures show a total of 3,216 applications on the Housing Registers (general, homeless and the transfer register). Of these applications 1,558 are in the highest priority bandings (1-3).

Within Bands 1-3 the need for 1-beds represents 30 per cent of applicants with 465 applications. The need for 3-bed homes is currently 32 per cent of all applications (494). 22 of the units provided are at social rent tenure which is the Council's preferred tenure. Social rented housing is vital to provide homes for those in particular housing need and the Local Plan continues to prioritise this (Local Plan 2036).

One flat will be accessible for a wheelchair user. Currently 420 applicants are requiring a home with some level of accessibility. This includes 205 applicants requiring level access into and throughout the property.

	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Race Neutral</td> <td>Disability Neutral</td> <td>Age Neutral</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gender reassignment Neutral</td> <td>Religion or Belief Neutral</td> <td>Sexual Orientation Neutral</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sex Neutral</td> <td>Pregnancy and Maternity Neutral</td> <td>Marriage & Civil Partnership Neutral</td> </tr> </table>	Race Neutral	Disability Neutral	Age Neutral	Gender reassignment Neutral	Religion or Belief Neutral	Sexual Orientation Neutral	Sex Neutral	Pregnancy and Maternity Neutral	Marriage & Civil Partnership Neutral
Race Neutral	Disability Neutral	Age Neutral								
Gender reassignment Neutral	Religion or Belief Neutral	Sexual Orientation Neutral								
Sex Neutral	Pregnancy and Maternity Neutral	Marriage & Civil Partnership Neutral								
	<p>While the changes to current provision will impact on certain demographics, most notably young people and older people or those living locally who are less mobile, this is mitigated by the access to a new area of level-access green space and the increased provision for local families (10 x 3-bed homes at social rent) and single people (11 x 1-bed homes at social rent).</p> <p>This is an initial assessment and it will develop over time as the project moves forward.</p> <p>The user brief that the professional team will take forward includes all of the consultation to take into consideration. Beyond the formal planning process, continued consultation with the community will take place with regard to the best options for new play equipment.</p> <p>There will also need to be a plan drawn up and communicated to support residents during the construction process including how to mitigate disruption to residents.</p>									
<p>6. Consideration of Measures:</p> <p>This section should explain in detail all the</p>	<p>We have involved the community at each stage of the project and will continue to do so. This is particularly relevant when finalising designs for the play area.</p> <p>The key mitigations are as follows:</p>									

<p>consideration of alternative approaches/mitigation of adverse impact of the policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to focus on providing the most suitable facilities in the new development that make up for the loss of space. Create a safe space to meet and play and provide usable access to greenspace. • Delivery of affordable housing for local residents. • Provide ongoing updates on the progress of the development and addressing concerns on an ongoing basis. <p>The alternative would be to not develop Bertie Place, which would impact the ability to deliver 31 homes across the scheme as affordable homes. Not delivering the units would negatively impact on households in housing need including vulnerable single people and families.</p>
<p>6a. Monitoring Arrangements:</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 whether you found any</p>	<p>There is no ongoing monitoring planned. Residents are able to engage with the Council either directly or through their elected representatives.</p> <p>This EqIA will be shared with those designing the new open space as part of the wider redevelopment.</p> <p>The new open space and play facilities will be monitored in line with the usage of other parks the Council monitors on a routine basis. Any further policy reviews in relation to parks will be subject to further equalities assessments.</p>

evidence of discrimination.					
7. Date reported and signed off by City Executive Board:	15 November 2023 Cabinet				
8. Conclusions: What are your conclusions drawn from the results in terms of the policy impact	<p>That this is a positive development that will provide much needed affordable housing to residents of Oxford City whilst re-providing play and recreation facilities for residents and visitors alike.</p> <p>This will continue to evolve during the next stages of the project with key input and involvement from the community.</p> <p>Whilst this change is likely to affect those who are currently using the space, the goal is to find a balance between the need for affordable housing development and the preservation or replacement of residents' access to open space and current play facilities. The mitigating actions and the alternative green spaces and parks available near-by suggest that the appropriation will not have a disproportionately negative impact on the protected characterises. It is vital that the impact is monitored through effective communication with the community throughout and after the development and that another EQIA is completed to better understand if the mitigations put forward have been sufficient in respect of the rights and well-being of the community.</p>				
9. Are there implications for	NO	10. Date the Service Plans will be updated		11. Date copy sent to	

the Service Plans?				Equalities Lead Officer	
.13. Date reported to Scrutiny and Executive Board:		14. Date reported to Cabinet:		12. The date the report on EqlA will be published	

Signed (completing officer)

Megan McFarlane (initial assessment)

Signed (Lead Officer)

Dave Scholes

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 November 2023
Report of: Head of Planning and Regulatory Services
Title of Report: Central (City & University) Conservation Area Appraisal Adoption

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	That Cabinet considers and formally adopts the Central (City & University) Conservation Area Appraisal, enabling the document to be used to inform the decision making process for Development Management and to form an evidence base to inform Planning Policy.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities
Corporate Priority:	Enable an inclusive economy; Pursue a zero carbon Oxford; Support thriving communities; Deliver more affordable housing.
Policy Framework:	National Planning Policy Framework, Section 16 Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036, Policies DH1-DH7

Recommendations:	That Cabinet resolves to:
1.	Adopt the Central (City & University) Conservation Area Appraisal; and
2.	Endorse the adopted Conservation Area Appraisal for use in informing development management decisions and as part of the evidence base for planning policy decisions.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Central (City & University) Conservation Area Appraisal
Appendix 2	Statement of Community Engagement
Appendix 3	Risk Register

Introduction and background

1. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that areas of special architectural or historic interest, within which it is desirable to preserve the character or appearance of the area, should be designated as conservation areas.
2. The Central (City and University) Conservation Area (CCAA) covers the historic core and centre of Oxford. The conservation area was designated in 1971. It is perhaps one of the most important conservation areas nationally because of its extraordinarily rich buildings and history in a concentrated space. It comprises outstanding architecture and townscape and is one of the masterpieces of European architectural heritage. Its history, its architecture, its townscape and its landscapes combine harmoniously, and frequently spectacularly to convey a strong sense of the specific nature of the city.
3. Guidance from Historic England recommends that designated conservation areas should undergo a formal character appraisal to justify their original designation, to define their significance and values, and to inform decisions regarding future change.
4. Although the architecture and history of this area has been studied extensively for many decades, there hasn't been an assessment of the conservation area by the City Council as Local Planning Authority since it was designated.
5. The overall purpose of the appraisal is to help manage change in the conservation area positively, not prevent it. The function of the appraisal is to assess and articulate the special interest of the conservation area and any threats or opportunities for enhancement. This will inform the process of formulating policies and guidelines and aid making rational and consistent planning decisions within it.
6. The appraisal project has taken a significant time to complete because of the complex nature and size of the area. It has been prepared following Historic England guidance.

Approach of the CCAA

7. The appraisal comprises a main overview of the heritage significance of the whole area, as well as management guidance and design advice. This overview has been informed by and extends to include nine Character Zone statements which provide the detailed analysis of the conservation area.
8. The Appraisal is required to include Management Guidance, and this sets out the identified threats, issues and opportunities for conserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area. The Design Advice section seeks to guide applicants and developers who are undertaking new buildings and alterations within the conservation area.
9. The nine Character Zone chapters comprise a more detailed analysis and explanation of the characteristics of each different areas within the conservation area. These areas have been categorised by a common character which could include the predominant age, for example, medieval core, or predominant use and type of architecture, such as College Architecture.
10. This whole appraisal is supported by historic and layered mapping which highlight key features of interest such as listed buildings, building lines and the city's fortifications, for example.

11. The appraisal will be used as a tool to assess and manage the significance and character of the conservation area. It will help inform planning decisions, ensuring so far as possible that any proposed developments within the conservation area are sympathetic to its character. The appraisal will also serve as a reference for property owners, architects and developers providing contextual information and guidance on appropriate design principles within the area.

Consultation

12. The preparation of this Conservation Area Appraisal involved engagement with residents' associations, members of the public, ward councillors, local institutions including the University of Oxford and Colleges and key stakeholders. Both in-person and online meetings and workshops were undertaken, weekend drop-in sessions were held at the Town Hall and each online consultation was publicised and promoted through the local media, physical posters and social media. Key stakeholders received direct communication by email or letter.

13. The appraisal has undergone public consultation three times; once in October 2018, again in May 2019 when the boundary of the conservation area was extended to include the Western Fringe and the University Science Area, and finally in March 2022 with the addition of a Management Plan and Design Advice section. The feedback has generally been positive but where further issues or suggestions have been raised, we have, where appropriate sought to take these on board and the documents have been amended accordingly.

14. A summary of the public comments received, and the response to these comments is attached as Appendix 2.

Financial implications

15. No financial implications are anticipated. The appraisal provides valuable information for residents and businesses in the area, and for potential developers for whom it will help inform their proposals. It will provide benefits and efficiencies for officers of the Planning Department when considering listed building consent and planning applications in the area. The costs of producing the CCAA have been covered by the existing budget.

Legal issues

16. Section 69 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a general duty on Local Planning Authorities to review existing Conservation Areas, and Section 71 places a general duty on them from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their areas which are Conservation Areas, taking account of views expressed.

17. There is no statutory requirement for consultation before a conservation Area Appraisal is adopted, but Historic England advice and best practice guidance is extra statutory consultation should take place.

18. The Appraisal will become part of the evidence base for planning policies and will represent a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Level of risk

- 19. There is not considered to be any material risk involved in adopting the appraisal.
- 20. The risk register is attached at Appendix 3.

Equalities impact

- 21. Consultation was carried out on three drafts of the conservation area appraisal. The consultation met the requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning and had due regard to meeting the needs prescribed in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The consultation was structured in order to avoid differentiation between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

- 22. Historic environments and buildings are inherently carbon efficient due to their construction methods, materials and design principles that prioritise natural ventilation, daylight and thermal mass.
- 23. The Design Advice chapter has a section on Sustainability and Climate Change and provides advice about designing new buildings and altering existing ones to adapt to our changing climate as well as how to reduce carbon emissions and taking a whole building approach to understand how each building can target improvements to maximise gains and minimise harm.

Report author	Clare Golden
Job title	Urban Design and Heritage Team Leader
Service area or department	Planning Services
Telephone	01865 252220
e-mail	cgolden@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 November 2023
Report of: Head of Community Services
Title of Report: Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2024/25

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	1) To demonstrate the impact of Oxford Community Impact Fund 2) To agree the criteria/weighting for assessing the 2024/25 Oxford Community Impact fund grants
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Rehman, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Thriving Communities Strategy

Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Note the implementation of the Oxford Community Impact Fund agreed by Cabinet on 15 December 2021 as part of the strategic grants review;
2.	Note the social value and economic impact of the fund;
3.	Agree that the criteria and weighting for assessing Oxford Community Impact Fund grant applications in 2024/2025 are as set out in paragraph 5 of this report with the additional requirement for applicants to comply with the safeguarding arrangements specified by the Council. Cabinet agrees such safeguarding requirements are to be determined by the Safeguarding Coordinator in consultation with the Head of Community Services.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxford Community Impact Fund Grant Allocations to Community Groups 1 April 2022-31 March 2023
Appendix 2	Charts indicating the communities of identity, geography and interest that funded projects reached 1 April 2022-31 March 2023
Appendix 3	Meaningful measurement - stories demonstrating impact

Appendix 4	Funding leverage as reported in the grant monitoring form for Big Ideas grants 2022/23
Appendix 5	Examples of how the funding criteria were met and delivered
Appendix 6	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 7	Risk Assessment

Introduction and background

1. Oxford Community Impact Fund provides funding to community groups, organisations and individuals to deliver programmes for wider community benefit.
2. The fund aims to help deliver the following key interconnected pillars, in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy 2020-24: Support thriving communities; Enable an inclusive economy; Pursue a zero-carbon Oxford; Deliver more, affordable housing
3. Oxford Community Impact Fund started in April 2022 and comprises four strands:
 - Commissioning essential services – £943K per year – rough sleeping and single homelessness commissioning (£442K); domestic abuse (£53K) and advice services (£448K). The rough sleeping and single homelessness commissioning budget sits within the housing budgets.
 - Supporting peppercorn rent arrangements – £150K per year
 - Big Ideas grants – £338K per year (one round every 3 years with grant agreements in place for three years – currently until 31 March 2025); and
 - Small and Medium Grants – £84K per year (three rounds each year – round 1 £24K, round 2 £44K and round 3 £16K)
4. An additional grant – Big Ideas Transition (£56K) was set up due to the availability of additional funds following year-end adjustments and was used to give one-year transition funding to unsuccessful Big Ideas applicants who had relevant projects.
5. The criteria by which Big Ideas and Small and Medium grants are assessed link to the Corporate Strategy and are as follows:
 - Equalities, diversity and inclusion – 15% (compulsory)
 - Environmental sustainability and zero Carbon Oxford – 15% (compulsory)
 - Partnership working and cross-sector support – 10%
 - Health and wellbeing – 10%
 - Attracting other funding (leverage) – 10%
 - Innovation – 10%
 - Inclusive economy – 10%
 - Balance of reach (communities of geography, identity and by activity type) – 20%
6. Following the grant review in 2021, the grant application process has been simplified and advice sessions are run regularly throughout the year to support organisations and individuals to make applications. The availability of funding has also been promoted widely. As a result, there has been a significant increase in applications with over 20% of grants being awarded to new applicants.
7. Grants are initially scored by the officers with an understanding of the area of work to be funded. The scores are then checked for consistency of approach by the grants team who add a balance score based on the overall impact of the work and

the likelihood of funding being available from alternative sources. The grants team then recommend funding amounts based on the budget available, overall scores and the applicants' response to the question 'Please let the panel know which elements of your project you would be able to deliver if you receive 10 - 20% of your request'.

8. These recommendations are then approved by Cabinet for grant commitments for more than one year: Big Ideas, rent grants and commissioned services. Small and Medium grant recommendations (up to £5K per application round per year) are sent to the Head of Community Services for approval, in consultation with the Executive Director and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities.
9. See Table 1 below for the split and Appendix 1 for the list of grantees:

Grant	No. of projects funded	Budget	Funds disbursed £
Big Ideas	36	£338,000	£338,000
Small and Medium Grants R 1	24	£24,000	£22,750
Small and Medium Grants R 2	48	£44,000	£44,000
Small and Medium Grants R 3	22	£16,000	£17,250
Big Ideas Transition	28	£56,500	£56,500
Total	158	£478,500	£478,500

Table 1

10. Oxford City Council facilitates applicants in receipt of Big Ideas funding to meet three times a year as the 'Big Ideas Network' to enable shared learning and evaluation, project collaboration and the pooling of resources.
11. Feedback is sought and acted upon throughout the application process. Feedback from applicants has been predominantly concerned about the decline in the availability of external funding and the impact this will have on delivery. In order to help mitigate this, officers are piloting a Match My Project scheme to help secure additional funding for grantees. Match My Project enables community groups/ grantees to advertise their projects on a website, which businesses can then choose to support.
12. Grants reporting is guided by the criteria used to assess grant applications.

Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion

13. Increasing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is a key priority for Oxford City Council and underpins its Thriving Communities Strategy. Therefore, demonstrating how the funded activities have helped to reduce inequalities and increase diversity, inclusion and access in the city is one of the mandatory grant reporting requirements.
14. This criterion, along with engagement with the Big Ideas Network and grant advice support sessions, has enabled organisations to get to know, collaborate with and support a more diverse range of marginalised communities in Oxford. This has, in turn, led to organisations adapting their services to reduce barriers and better meet community needs e.g. helping those who might otherwise be left behind to develop their skills, confidence and social connections – see Appendix 5 for examples.

15. Grantees were asked to provide information regarding the demographics of their board/staff/volunteer teams and their response to the cost of living crisis in a voluntary capacity as part of project monitoring for grants awarded in 2022-23. This will be obligatory for grants awarded in 2023-24. All who responded were assisting people most affected by the cost of living crisis and have recruited or are in the process of recruiting a more diverse team and/or board. For example, Justice in Motion recruited four new trustees reflecting the diversity of the city and My Life My Choice have reserved two positions on their board of trustees for people who are facing racism. Fusion Arts have two new salaried staff and interns from diverse backgrounds.

Environmental sustainability and zero carbon Oxford

16. In January 2019, Oxford declared a climate emergency, and in autumn 2019 became the first UK city to hold a Citizens Assembly on Climate Change. As such, it is also mandatory for Oxford Community Impact Fund's grantees to report on the environmental impact of proposed activities, mitigation measures to offset this impact and, where applicable, plans to increase biodiversity and contribute towards a zero-carbon Oxford.

17. This criterion has encouraged increased awareness of environmental sustainability within the funded organisations and communities they serve and led to many undertaking further training and internal policy development in this area.

18. The organisations have played their part in reducing waste, with most focussing on reuse, repurposing and recycling.

19. Grantees have also made a conscious effort to reduce energy usage and carbon emissions e.g. by replacing lighting and boilers and turning devices off when not in use, replacing print with digital solutions and encouraging everyone to use public transport, bicycles or to walk wherever possible. They have also stopped using single use plastic and instead are using items that are biodegradable or that can be washed and reused.

Leverage and match funding (attracting additional funding)

20. Oxford Community Impact Fund provides seed funding to enable grantees to generate, raise and earn additional income to pay for the full cost of delivery.

21. Oxford City Council also supports organisations to access additional external funding through tailored individual funding advice sessions.

22. In 2022/23, Oxford Community Impact Big Ideas Funding represented 2% of the £12,183,196 overall delivery costs for Big Ideas programmes – see table 2 below. The remaining 98% was paid for by earned income from hires, ticket sales and service charges (£5,071,624); trusts and foundations (£2,841,494); other public sector/national lottery funding (£2,423,657) as well as donations and sponsorship (£1,542,222):

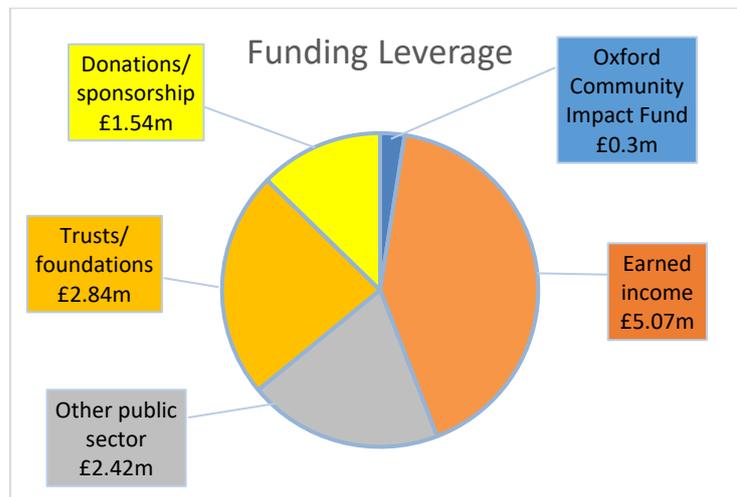


Table 2

23. The seed funding to Big Ideas grantees helped them to raise/generate significant additional money which they used to help pay for fundraising, programme and staffing costs so they could provide preventative support to people who would otherwise be likely to need more statutory services at a greater cost in the future.
24. However, accessing funding is very competitive and the availability of funding is declining whilst needs are continuing to rise. The ability to maintain and increase levels of seed funding is critical to the future delivery of preventative programmes in the city, however this is challenging in the current financial climate.

Partnership working and cross-sector support

25. Demonstrating partnership working is one of the voluntary criteria in the Oxford Community Impact Fund. This criterion, along with engagement with the Big Ideas network, has led to a wider range of different types partnerships developing including more cross-sector working and support of grassroots organisations. This has, in turn, led to wider strategic thinking, better reach and delivery and reduced costs e.g. via sharing knowledge, skills and resources, – see Appendix 5 for some examples.
26. The introductions created through the different strands of the grants awarded have also encouraged collaboration between the grantees. For instance, Aspire Oxford is contracted to deliver English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes to Asylum Welcome clients as part of the UK Resettlement Programme funded by Oxford City Council; Sanctuary Hosting are now sharing space with Asylum Welcome and also source bicycles from the latter's 'Sanctuary Wheels Bike' project for its clients; Asylum welcome also collaborated with Syrian Sisters for fundraising activities to support those affected by the earthquake in Syria.

Health and wellbeing

27. In the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Oxford Community Impact Fund includes a voluntary criterion to support organisations whose activities are beneficial to the physical and/or mental wellbeing of Oxford's residents.
28. The fund has supported several programmes to support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of a wide range of people including young people, older people,

people with disabilities, older single men, vulnerable people, and parents, who are more susceptible to feelings of depression and isolation – see Appendix 5 for some examples.

29. The fund has also supported activities like dance and sports, including swimming, bicycle riding, skating, walks and football, which have increased physical fitness as well as providing connections and interactions between participants.
30. Overall, the programmes funded by Oxford Community Impact Fund have helped to develop and foster a sense of community between residents through their attendance at regular activities. This has led to a greater sense of belonging, improved confidence/self-esteem and decreased instances of loneliness.

Innovation

31. The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it changes in ways of working and while activities such as online workshops, zoom and Teams meetings have become 'business as usual', the Community Impact Fund continues to encourage funded organisations to continue to test new ideas and processes, piloting new technologies and/or service delivery that could result in better quality, social benefit, value-for-money and community reach.
32. Funding has supported a range of innovative ideas that can be tested, adapted and replicated by others. See Appendix 5 for examples.

Inclusive economy

33. Oxford Community Impact Fund included an inclusive economy criterion as a lever to increase opportunities for disadvantaged communities/groups to have a fairer share in the city's wealth economy. This has helped encourage paying the Oxford Living Wage to become a norm in most organisations. Initiatives such as offering apprenticeships/internships and work experience; sharing space, skills or equipment; contracting locally and supporting independent businesses are some of the activities the funding supports.
34. Most of the organisations use local suppliers and contractors for services wherever possible therefore are a source of income for local businesses and vendors too.
35. In addition, several organisations are working with volunteers/freelancers, providing opportunities for professional growth and development. Providing training and capacity building and support services to migrants/asylum seekers and parents helps with employability as they look to integrate in the wider Oxford community. Students also receive mentorship through internships and work experience/placement opportunities.
36. With most organisations offering subsidised tickets for events/training or meeting spaces through measures such as 'pay what you can', this has encouraged greater participation by those people who could not previously afford it.

Meaningful Measurement of the impact of the Oxford Community Impact Fund

37. Three grantees confirmed close to the end of the financial year that they were unable to spend their grants by the 31 March 2023 deadline. This enabled an opportunity to commission the Old Fire Station to collect and analyse stories from grantee participants to dig under the numerical data and measure some of the impacts of the funding more meaningfully. The stories are compiled in Appendix 3.

38. This method was innovative as it trailed a different way of evaluating that hadn't been used to assess the impact of grant funding previously. It aimed to help the Big Ideas network of grantees, as well as Oxford City Council, to better understand what change is happening for the people we work with and to gather insights that we can all learn from.
39. The stories were collected by trained story collectors, who guided 1-2-1 conversations with individuals (the storytellers) about their experience, and what being involved with the organisation or project had meant for them personally. These conversations were audio recorded, transcribed, and then edited into shorter stories which aim to faithfully reflect the storyteller's insights, while keeping their 'voice' in the storytelling it in their own words.
40. As part of the next phase of the process, the Old Fire Station facilitated an in-person discussion session on 6 September 2023 at the Old Fire Station. This session brought Big Ideas partners together to discuss the stories and what we can collectively learn from them. It was also an opportunity to reflect on our experience of using a different approach to impact measurement.
41. The discussion was rich and wide-ranging but the following key insights emerged:
- a) Although the outputs of the organisations were highly diverse – e.g. arts, self-advocacy, family support work – their outcomes were often strikingly similar.
 - b) The organisations described in the stories cultivate trusting, mutually respectful, non-judgemental relationships with service users. They create 'safe spaces' in which people (who have often had negative experiences of mainstream institutions such as schools, hospitals, family, local authorities) are able to feel secure in their identity and feel that their voice is being heard.
 - c) Service users in the community and voluntary sector have often chosen to access support, rather than feeling as though an intervention has been imposed on them, as can be the case in the statutory sector.
 - d) This environment of mutual trust and respect is the 'magic' that drives transformation. It leads to a growing sense of confidence and agency, both on the part of service users and staff and volunteers working in such organisations. These two factors (staff/volunteer vocation and service user agency) make for a potent combination in which people can surprise themselves, rediscover things that matter to them, and rebuild confidence. They create an adaptable person-centred environment that feels more humane, in which people can 'feel loved', but also rediscover things that they love to do. Several stories showed that people who have been helped in this way become motivated to give back – using their experience to help others.
 - e) Many of the small community organisations described in the stories helped people with complex needs to navigate or access larger service providers. However, because of its longer-term, relationship-based work, the voluntary sector is able to work preventatively in a way that is harder for busy statutory services to achieve: *Basically, we befriend them, we get to know them and their family life and the dynamics. How it is where they're from, their cultures, all those things. Then we attend the meetings to hear what the different agencies are saying. We try and hear what they hear, then tell them what we understand by it. Because sometimes nobody's hearing anyone, you know. (Story 13)*
 - f) This work requires consistency, because a high staff or volunteer turnover prevents relationships from forming. However, funding is often short-term and

project-specific, which makes building stable relationships more difficult. Furthermore, funding shortfalls in statutory services mean that demand for community and voluntary organisations is increasing, placing further strain on the sector.

- g) Storytellers found the process of telling their story to be empowering and validating. It amplified the voices of people who might not otherwise be heard and became a powerful advocacy tool for fundraising. Building this kind of evaluation into more services could therefore help to support their mission rather than being considered an additional task that redirects capacity away from core delivery.
- h) The discussion group wondered whether voluntary and community groups could be more formally joined up with statutory services, for example through regular meetings or other methods of contact. Locality based working could offer a conduit for this. The notion of cross-sectoral collaborations on Storytelling evaluation as part of a more deeply embedded Storytelling approach in the city and Council was very popular.

Criteria and weighting for assessing the 2024/25 grant allocations

- 42. Since the funding criteria was agreed in the Cabinet meeting on 15 December 2021, the cost of living crisis has added significant additional pressure on communities.
- 43. Of the overall budget of £1,515,000, £943K (62%) is already allocated to commissioning critical support for those most in need via advice centres, domestic abuse services and rough sleeping and single homelessness pathways.
- 44. Where relevant, some small and medium grant applicants are building food and other support into their projects (e.g. free lunches for participants)
- 45. Given the funding contracts already in place, criteria changes would come into effect for the £84K small and medium grants (6% of the overall funding).
- 46. There is also more emphasis being placed on ensuring Safeguarding processes are in place. The following has been drafted as a possible checklist for grantees:

Commitment to Oxfordshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements including the requirements set out by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board, and their associated legal frameworks	
Safeguarding governance and structure within service organisation, including policy leads	
Safeguarding prevention and Early Help	
Employment of staff in line with safer recruitment practices and DBS requirements	
Escalation processes	
A staff allegations policy	
Appropriate level of safeguarding training dependent on employee's role	
Reporting and recording of safeguarding concerns	
A whistleblowing policy for staff to report concerns about other members of staff or sub-contractors.	
Advice on information sharing and the associated legal frameworks	
Monitoring and review of safeguarding policy and procedures	

Table 3

47. In light of the above, options for amending criteria for assessing 2024-25 grants include:

- a. Maintaining the criteria as they are
- b. Giving higher scores to projects which directly address the cost of living crisis
- c. Giving higher scores to organisations who demonstrate how their organisation is being developed more intrinsically to meet the agreed criteria
- d. Maintaining the criteria as they are but only give grants to organisations who are able to confirm they have the full safeguarding arrangements in place as per the checklist, when finalised

Options appraisal

48. The pros and cons of the options are:

a. Maintaining the criteria as they are

Pros:

- Applicants have recently got used to working to the new criteria following a full scale review – maintaining them as they are will help people feel confident to apply
- The criteria are currently delivering a wide range of benefits as demonstrated in appendix 2

Cons:

- The opportunity to encourage organisational development may be missed

b. Giving higher scores to projects which directly address the cost of living crisis

Pros:

- The projects will help support those most affected by the cost of living crisis

Cons:

- The scope of projects would be reduced therefore reducing the opportunity for people to benefit from projects which could help them avoid getting into a crisis situation in the first place

c. Giving higher scores to organisations who demonstrate how their organisation is being developed more intrinsically to meet the agreed criteria

Pros:

- Organisations will be encouraged to create more sustainable and longer lasting impact

Cons:

- This could penalise smaller, often more diverse/grass roots organisations, who don't have the budgets or capacity available for more intrinsic organisational development

d. Maintaining the criteria as they are but only give grants to organisations who are able to confirm they have the full safeguarding arrangements in place as per the checklist, when finalised

Pros:

- This will help to ensure Safeguarding is in place for all funded activities

Cons:

This could penalise smaller, often more diverse/grass roots organisations, who don't have the budgets or capacity available to develop all the policies on the checklist

Recommendation:

49. Given the pros and cons of the options above, the recommendation is option d) which is not to change the main criteria and weightings but to add an obligation on successful applicants to meet safeguarding requirements stipulated by the Council

Financial implications

50. A commitment has already been made to three years of funding for Commissioned Services and Big Ideas grants with signed grant agreements being in place for this. The annual amount allocated for small and medium grants is £84k.

Legal issues

51. Under Part 4.5(26) of the Constitution Cabinet is empowered to give grants and thus determine the criteria for grant awards.

52. The giving of certain grants is subject to the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the Council should establish prior to making grants whether this act applies to any funding it proposes to give.

Level of risk

53. Please see the risk assessment at Appendix 7.

Equalities impact

54. Please see the Equalities Impact assessment at Appendix 6.

Report author	Paula Redway
Job title	Culture and Community Development Manager
Service area or department	Community Services
Telephone	01865 252780
e-mail	predway@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Appendix 1 - List of Oxford Community Impact Fund Big Ideas and Small and Medium Grant Funded Organisations 2022/23

Big Ideas grants 2022/23 to 2024/25 – combined total annual funding of £338K for 3 years

- **African Families in the UK (AFiUK)** - To develop and establish a cross cultural parenting hub for families of African and other ethnic minority families in the UK to deliver cross cultural parenting programmes. www.afiuk.org
- **Ark-T Centre** - To run monthly Community Hub Days with intergenerational programming activity for 0-100 year olds and community focus groups to feedback on local services and how to improve them. www.ark-t.org
- **The Old Fire Station** - To contribute towards the development of a new programme of creative workshops (including a new Creative Engagement and Learning post) and explore how to develop the project's digital capacity. oldfirestation.org.uk
- **Aspire Oxfordshire** - To help expand the social impact of Aspire's Enterprise Development Programme (EDP) in Oxford City to benefit many more residents, and to continue providing self-employment advice for vulnerable adults and expand towards areas of greater deprivation through 'pop-up hubs' in community venues. www.aspireoxfordshire.org
- **Asylum Welcome** - To engage, support and work with refugee community organisations across the city. www.asylum-welcome.org
- **Barton Community Association** - To expand the work already being done by the Association and expand the volunteer base who will, in turn, provide activities and events for the benefit of all the residents. www.bartoncommunityassociation.com
- **Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground (BLAP)** - To run an after school programme to enable the children to have fun, enjoy being children and in the process discover how much better it is to listen, to reflect and to build bridges rather than to be destructive in their relationships. blap.org.uk
- **Cowley Road Works** - To build bridges between communities facing divides and narrow the gap between pockets of disadvantage and privilege in Oxford. www.cowleyroadworks.org
- **Donnington Doorstep Family Centre** - To provide opportunities for families with children under 5 to access activities that focus on development and growth through play and family support through peer networks and connection. www.donnington-doorstep.org.uk
- **Elmore Community Services** - To support women affected by domestic abuse by providing seamless and bespoke support to people seeking to overcome barriers to accessing services. elmorecommunityservices.org.uk
- **EMBS Community College** - To work with other youth organisations to provide youth activities for vulnerable young people to counteract the challenges faced post lockdown. www.embs.ac.uk
- **Film Oxford** - To deliver targeted creative activities to those from most marginalised communities through the iCreative, BFI Academy and Shadowlight platforms to help them develop skills, build confidence, offer new pathways, create a sense of place and improve health and well-being. www.filmoxford.org/

- **Fusion Arts** - To support, create, facilitate and develop arts and educational opportunities across Oxford's diverse communities to bring about social and climate justice, reduce isolation and increase community cohesion. <https://fusion-arts.org/>
- **Good Food Oxfordshire** - To evaluate the Community Wealth Building pilot of OX4 Food Crew as a vehicle to reduce social and economic inequality and build a roadmap for food-based and other services and enterprises. goodfoodoxford.org/
- **Home-Start Oxford** - To support volunteers to conduct home-visit support for parents with babies and children under five homestartoxford.org.uk
- **Justice in Motion** - To deliver community engagement work, including setting up a new Youth Panel and developing creative residency programmes for schools, colleges and youth organisations. www.justiceinmotion.co.uk
- **Leys Community Development Initiative (Leys CDI)** - To develop and deliver projects to benefit the community of the Leys including the Youth Project and the over 50s Clockhouse Project to improve mental and physical health, and reduce isolation in young people and older people. <https://leyscdi.co.uk/>
- **Makespace Oxford CIC** - To help fund a Community Development Coordinator to support purpose-led organisations and individuals delivering positive impact to their communities to occupy underused spaces in the city at an affordable rent. <https://makespaceoxford.org/>
- **Mandala Theatre Company** - To use the power of performance to change young lives, build communities and foster social justice working with young people from ethnically diverse and White working-class backgrounds, including care experienced, care leavers and young people seeking asylum and refugees. www.mandalatheatre.co.uk
- **My Life My Choice (MLMC)** - To provide social activities, training and skills development, volunteering, paid work and leadership roles for people with learning disabilities in Oxford www.mylifemychoice.org.uk/
- **OVADA** - To support the delivery of artistic activities in Oxford by using approaches that are cross disciplinary, collaborative, exciting, experimental, thoughtful, inclusive, innovative and socially engaging. www.ovada.org.uk/
- **Oxford Contemporary Music (OCM)** - To deliver a programme of live music events, learning and community cultural interaction that addresses the inequalities in access to cultural, creative and learning experiences in Oxford. www.ocmevents.org/
- **Oxford Hub** - To develop a pilot peer-to-peer programme, Parent Power, and increase its reach and impact in the city. www.oxfordhub.org/
- **Oxford Pride Group Ltd** - To deliver a Pride event in Oxford which will include a number of community stalls offering information and advice relevant to the LGBTIQ+ community www.oxford-pride.org.uk/
- **Oxford Youth Enterprise Ltd (Name It Youth Project)** - To continue and expand current youth work engagement programmes - detached work, open access provision and mentoring/training project
- **Oxfordshire Science Festival (IF Oxford)** - To deliver an annual science and ideas Festival that brings together hundreds of contributors with thousands of audience members through a huge range of projects, events and long-term activities. <https://if-oxford.com/>

- **Parasol Project** - To run a Community Volunteering Project and empower young people of all abilities to make a positive local difference by delivering an inclusive training, mentoring and placement programme in Northway and beyond. www.parasolproject.org/
- **Pegasus Theatre Trust** - To provide subsidised free access across all shows, classes and cultural activities for young people and their families for whom socio-economic factors are a barrier to taking part. <https://pegasustheatre.org.uk/>
- **Refugee Resource** - To support refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants with a wide range of issues. www.refugeeresource.org.uk/
- **Sanctuary Hosting** - To provide temporary accommodation for refugees, asylum seekers or other vulnerable migrants at risk of homelessness in the homes of volunteer hosts. <https://sanctuaryhosting.org/>
- **Tandem Oxford** - To explore/develop a Tandem Collective membership scheme and develop the Tandem participatory network through outreach work as part of their existing projects. www.tandembefriending.org.uk/
- **The Oxford Playhouse Trust** - To co-create immersive theatre with young people and community groups from across Oxford www.oxfordplayhouse.com/
- **The Story Museum** - To enable children and families to celebrate all forms of stories and provide opportunities for creative practitioners to reach a wider audience www.storymuseum.org.uk/
- **Wood Farm Youth Centre** - To support sessional staff and volunteers as they engage with BAME young people, young people who have special needs and developing partnership work with other agencies. www.facebook.com/events/titup-hall-drive-oxford-ox3-8-united-kingdom/wood-farm-youth-club/129068804479198/
- **Young Women's Music Project** - To provide free regular workshops, gigs, socials, talks and music skills courses alongside mentoring opportunities, in partnership with trained freelance practitioners to young women, non-binary and trans people. www.ywmp.org.uk/

Big Ideas Transition 2022/23 – combined total funding of £56K for one transition year only

- **Age UK Oxfordshire** - To build capacity in our digital support service in Oxford City, to address digital exclusion in the older population, focussed in areas of the City where inequalities are most pronounced. www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire/
- **Archway Foundation** - To support core costs including staff time, and associated telephone, IT and office costs. www.archwayfoundation.org.uk/
- **Autism Family Support Oxfordshire** - To work with and inspire autistic children and young people and their families, and support them to reach their educational, emotional and socio-economic needs and potential. www.afso.org.uk/
- **Cotteslowe Community Association** - To support provision of 6 weeks of activities in the summer school holidays for children in the age range 0-16. www.cotteslowecommunity.org.uk/

- **Florence Park Festival (FloFest)** - To support costs of the festival day - the infrastructure to create the Festival platform and to pay artists who perform, free activities and projects. www.flofest.uk/
- **Future Challenges** - To support ICT training and support, incentive costs to offer internet connection/ wifi/broadband to vulnerable 45 identified older people who are not online/can't afford broadband
- **Hope Vineyard Church Oxford (Small Steps Project)** - The project stocks donations of clothes and equipment for babies and children to help families who may struggle to afford these items, including giving 'Baby Baskets' to Oxford mums-to-be. Funds will be used to pay for staff and marketing costs, and website hosting. <https://hopeoxford.org/>
- **In-Spire Sounds** - Provides an affordable space for aspiring musicians and community activities while also providing youth work facilities to marginalised groups. www.inspiresounds.co.uk/
- **Iraqi Women Art and War (IWAW) Museum** - Empowers Iraqi and other women, who are the victims of war and trauma caused through conflict, by using art and creative workshops for self-expression, recording their stories of survival, and creating opportunities to share these experiences with the public. www.iwaw19.com/
- **Oxford Festival of the Arts** - Oxford Festival of the Arts is a festival across art forms, creating engagement projects, celebrating artistic excellence, whilst embracing the community as a whole. www.mcsoxford.org/
- **North Wall Trust** - Connects artists and audiences from Oxford to make, share and access art, support artists through residencies and mentorship, and encourage young people and communities to create and participate in the programme. www.thenorthwall.com
- **One-Eighty** - To support vulnerable children and young people transitioning from primary to secondary school, with their mental health, their thinking, their behaviour and emotions, in order to improve their well-being. <https://one-eighty.org.uk/>
- **Open Door** - To run a drop-in service for asylum seekers and refugees, offering a safe space at a convenient central hub to socialise, receive a free healthy hot meal and access to other agencies and sources of help, including health and housing. www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk/content/oxford-open-doors
- **Oxford International Links** - To create opportunities for events and programmes for people in Oxford and the 8 twin cities. www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20139/oxford_international_links
- **Oxford North Africa Community (ONAC)** - Support and caters for the needs of the North African Community as well as other communities in Oxford through programmes including health support, cultural, educational and social activities. <https://m.facebook.com/Oxford-north-Africans-111625903899862/>
- **Oxford Opera Trust** - To encourage and give opportunity to the local talent of next generation singers, musicians, creatives to be involved in the opera
- **Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra Trust** - The project aim was to use trained musicians to enable every young person in Oxford to access music and wherever possible participate in music-making. <https://oxfordphil.com/>

- **Oxfordshire Chinese Community and Advice Centre (OCCAC)** - To provide independent quality advice and services for the Chinese community in Oxford, enabling them to gain equal access to public resources, improve their quality of life and integrate into society. www.occac.org.uk/
- **Oxfordshire Mind** - To promote good mental health through high quality services and campaigning for positive change through therapy, benefits advice, a confidential and free information line, courses, physical activity, volunteering and peer-support groups. www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk/
- **Peep** - To support parents to make the most of everyday learning opportunities at home and in the community through interventions including the Peep Learning Together Programme, delivering frontline services in Oxfordshire and practitioner training & support. www.peeple.org.uk/
- **People, Place and Participation Ltd (Flo's the Place in the Park)** - A community hub that generates and distributes community wealth through local employment and social enterprise, tackles social and environmental inequality, and supporting families with local services. <https://doit.life/>
- **Restore** - To provide innovative therapeutic recovery programmes and coaching support to people with mental ill-health, whilst working with the whole community to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. www.restore.org.uk/
- **SAFE! Support for Young People Affected by Crime** - Runs a Blueprint Project - a multi-strand diversionary and creative arts project benefitting young men at risk of exploitation or criminal behaviour in Oxford City, where they are empowered, giving them a voice and helping them and those around them to build protective communities where they can feel safe. www.safeproject.org.uk/
- **South Oxford Adventure Playground (SOAP)** - To provide free, open access sessions after-school, in school holidays, and a weekly youth club, focusing on physically active outdoor play and activities. <https://soapoxford.org.uk/>
- **South Oxford Community Association (SOCA)** - Provides reasonably priced facilities for recreation and social welfare at the South Oxford Community Centre to benefit local residents through education and outreach activities. <https://southoxford.org/>
- **Syrian Community Oxford (SYRCOX)** - Works with disadvantaged vulnerable members of the community and inspire them to engage in community work. <https://syrcox.org/>
- **Syrian Family Development in Oxford and Oxfordshire** - To support the Syrian community by hosting Eid festivals and providing Arabic education for children. www.facebook.com/SyrianBrothersandSisters/
- **Yellow Submarine Holidays** - Runs a 3 day programme working with people with learning disabilities and autism, delivering social activities, social enterprise and workplace training to develop confidence and independence. <http://www.yellowsubmarine.org.uk/>

Small and Medium grants Round 1 2022/23 – total combined funding of £24K to be spent by 31 March 2023

- **Action For Carers Oxfordshire** - Work with unpaid carers, who traditionally lack equity of access and agency within Oxford's Cultural Sector, to become Creative Carer Ambassadors and take a leadership role in making local creative activity more accessible for carers across the city. www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/
- **AT The Bus** - AT The Bus provides in-school art as therapy to support the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people in Oxford, focusing on resilience and transformation. www.atthebus.org.uk/
- **Barton Community Association** - Will build a permanent free-standing metal and wood art wall on the recreation ground behind Underhill Circus, Barton, for local children and young people of all genders, faiths, abilities and cultural backgrounds to paint on. www.bartoncommunityassociation.com/
- **Court Place Farm Allotments** - The farm will provide improved access for targeted (5-15 years and 65+ years) communities to grow vegetables, fruits and flowers sustainably. <https://cpfallotments.wordpress.com/>
- **Diana Bell, artist member of Oxford Bonn Link** - The project is an art and poetry exhibition with artists from Bonn and Oxford.
- **Dovecote Voluntary Parent Committee** - The project aims to deliver engaging, safe, good quality, afterschool club, stay and play sessions, holiday schemes breaking down barriers to enable vulnerable children to access opportunities and experiences that encourage and support their development of social skills, confidence, self-esteem, communication, sense of belonging and much more. www.dovecoteproject.com/about-us/
- **Fabula Arts** - To use the creative arts to allow primary school-aged children from Oxford to explore the natural world, using The Lost Words as a stimulus and Wytham Woods as a venue. www.fabulaarts.co.uk/
- **Folk Arts Oxford** - To encourage participation in the folk arts, bring enjoyable and accessible cultural events to the town, engage passers-by, and provide paid work for musicians and technical staff, opportunities for musicians to develop their performance practice, and volunteering opportunities for interested members of the public. www.folk-arts-oxford.co.uk/
- **Grandpont Nursery School Association** - To provide stay and play sessions for families to promote family wellbeing through being outdoors in fresh air and in a safe, green space. www.grandpontnurseryschool.co.uk/website
- **Headington Action** - To hold a festival themed 'Connected Communities' aimed at reducing social isolation. www.headingtonaction.org/
- **Low Carbon Oxford North (Communities for Zero Carbon Oxford)** - To hold green open home expos, eco-renovation fairs and talks to demonstrate how to cut energy costs. <https://lcon.org.uk/>
- **Nicola Ashton (Duende!)** - To hold workshops with girls with English as second language to empower the girls and encourage them to celebrate who they are, how they fit both within their cultural community and the wider community, and to build their confidence in order to move towards a positive future.

- **Oxford Diocesan Council for Social Work (PACT)** - The programme runs a domestic abuse recovery programme using therapeutic techniques to support vulnerable parents and children (5-11 years) who are experiencing trauma due to being victims of domestic abuse.
- **Oxford Hindu Temple and Community Centre Project** - To organise gatherings to promote cultural respect & helps towards changing perspectives by Celebrating Diversity through Unity in Oxfordshire and is totally inclusive. www.oxfordhindutemple.org/
- **Oxford Mutual Aid** - The project will fund the services of an e-trike driver from Pedal and Post for two days per week for 25 weeks in order to carry out food parcel deliveries, food surplus collections and food (re)distribution to local community groups, larders, fridges etc. <https://oxfordmutualaid.org/>
- **Oxfordshire Asian Women's Voice** - To hold weekly meetings to provide the women with opportunity to socialise with other ladies who are not members of their family. <https://www.facebook.com/oxfordshireasianwomensvoice/>
- **Oxfordshire Play Association (OPA)** - Organises series of Play and Activity days at multiple venues across Oxfordshire in line with the ethos of National Playday, the celebration of the Child's Right to Play. www.oxonplay.org.uk/
- **Rose Hill Youth Football Club** - To promote cultural activities between Bonn and Oxford children to allow local community children to benefit from collaborations such as school exchanges, artistic projects, sports tournaments, and social get-togethers. www.rosehillyouthfc.com/
- **Syrian Sisters** - To work in partnership with the Asian Women's Group, The North African Community Group and Flo's the Place in the Park to build stronger connections and relationships in the community during Ramadan. <https://www.facebook.com/SyrianSisters>
- **The Dot Collective** - To bring professional theatre productions to the care centres and people caring for/living with dementia at no cost, to reduce isolation and loneliness of older people and those living with dementia. www.thedotcollective.com/
- **The Oxford Jewish Congregation (OJC)** - To hold interfaith meetings including a wide range of cultural and educational activities www.ojc-online.org/
- **Windrush Commonwealth Service Oxford** - To promote the contributions of the Windrush Generation and the citizens of the Windrush era through events, theatrical plays and filmed documentaries and health care, wellbeing sessions for the affected communities. www.windrushcommonwealthservice-oxford.co.uk/
- **Wolvercote Young People's Club** - To provide an inclusive and nurturing space where high-quality youth work sessions targeting young women to increase self-esteem by looking at topics such as body confidence, social media, mental health, relationships, drugs and alcohol, and sexual health. www.wypc.org.uk/
- **Wood Farm Parent & Toddler Group** - Hold sessions with parents and children.

Small and Medium Round 2 2022/23 – total combined funding of £44K to be spent by 31 March 2023

- **Barton Community Association** - To build a permanent free-standing metal and wood art wall on the recreation ground behind Underhill Circus, Barton, for local children and young people of all genders, faiths, abilities and cultural backgrounds to paint on. www.bartoncommunityassociation.com/
- **Be Free Young Carers** - Planned for respite trips for young carers during the school holidays. www.befreeyc.org.uk/
- **Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground (BLAP)** - Funding is to cover utility costs incurred while running the after school programme. www.blap.org.uk/
- **Bullington Community Association** - To cover design and set up of new website, and purchase of equipment.
- **Cotteslowe Community Association** - Grant will cover design and set up of new website, and purchase of equipment. www.register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/304278
- **Damascus Rose Kitchen (DRK)** - To provide essential support to upskill to cooks become experienced kitchen managers through catering courses www.damascusrosekitchen.org/
- **Dovecote Voluntary Parent Committee** - To secure delivery of stay and play sessions per week for babies and toddlers accompanied by parents. www.dovecoteproject.com/about-us/
- **East Timorese** - To support holding meetings, events, social activities and wellbeing outings, including team building and football tournament, and social skills activity for children. https://m.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064551232094&eav=Afa1mjh-9PSw36iP6onM_ZeSV7vPxnMHI000_sDcp_LuIXSfoO607pDFfKhezE5jqnE&paipv=0&rdr
- **EMBS Community College Ltd** - To support running youth club sessions on a weekly basis to 15–19-year-olds, drawn largely from East Oxford. www.embs.ac.uk/
- **Euton Daley** - The grant will contribute towards audience development and the on-line (zoom) conversations with guests/invited speakers. www.eutondaley.com/
- **Fusion Arts Centre in partnership with Green Arts Oxfordshire Network** - To support build a website to provide the infrastructure for the first half of the Carbon Literacy Training (CLT) course- which is self-directed learning, staffing, accreditation and certification so that these first 4 sessions can be free. www.fusion-arts.org/
- **Headington Community Association** - To support making a mural which will reflect the current and historical community and the local environment in celebration of its diversity and biodiversity. www.headingtoncommunitycentre.com/
- **Homeless People and the Oxford Churches (Gatehouse)** - To support the Lived Experience Advisory Forum (LEAF) designed to embed the voice of lived experience into Oxfordshire's homelessness sector, to foster the practice of co-production, and to aid personal development of members to help them reach their full potential. www.oxfordgatehouse.org/

- **Iranian Community Network** - To support running English & Digital courses as well as one2one advisory sessions which started in January 2022. www.icn-uk.org/
- **Jacari** - To support cover the core costs of running the tuition programme for children who use English as an additional language in the 2022/23 academic year. www.jacari.org/
- **Justice in Motion** - To support deliver a youth arts festival and residency programme which will be staged at Wolvercote Youth Club. www.justiceinmotion.co.uk/
- **Leys Community Development Initiative (Leys CDI)** - To support the running costs for the Clockhouse Over 50s Project which is supporting older people in Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys, to pay for activities such as Yoga, Zumba, Tai Chi, singing and crafts as well as a proportion allocated to pay the salary of the Project Worker. www.leyscdi.co.uk/
- **Marston Community Gardening** - To support distribution of food, gardening equipment to individuals, schools and organisations, and recruit more people as gardeners/ bike couriers to grow/distribute crops to individuals and partner organisations. <https://marstoncommunitygardening.wordpress.com/>
- **MyVision Oxfordshire (Oxfordshire Association for the Blind)** - Grant funding will support the information and advice project through providing information through the telephone helpline to support those diagnosed with sight loss. www.myvision.org.uk/
- **Northway Together CIC** - To support running weekly Community Support Café at Northway Community Centre for residents to access food prepared and served by local volunteers, build community, share skills and experiences, signposting to specialist services and organisations, and drop-in art and wellbeing activities.
- **Orchestra of St John's** - To support weekly serenading performances for patients and NHS staff at the Warneford and Littlemore hospital sites specialising in Psychiatric Care, Adult Mental Illness and Learning Disabilities. www.osj.org.uk/
- **OVADA (Oxfordshire Visual Arts Development Agency)** - To support OVADA collaborate with Oxfordshire Great Big Green Week, and programme free/ low - cost creative workshops for communities based in Oxford, to create awareness of the climate crisis, foster a connection with and value for the natural environment, equip participants with a variety of tools that will support more sustainable arts practice and broadly, more sustainable living. www.ovada.org.uk/
- **Oxford Community Action (OCA)** - To provide a holiday project for 6 weeks for 150 young people, to spend time outside of their homes and meeting new people and engaging with the community and the cultures. www.oxfordcommunityaction.org/
- **Oxford Lieder** - To support to deliver two SongPath events and associated workshops with three local branches of mental health charity, Oxfordshire Mind. www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/
- **Oxford Mutual Aid** - To strengthen OMA's case-management and signposting capabilities through up-skilling via training (for both volunteers and staff), administrative support (data collection around referrals, setting up and taking meetings with third party organisations, maintaining case-

management database) and cultivation / nurturing of relationships with referring organisations. www.oxfordmutualaid.org/

- **Oxford People's Theatre** - The grant will support skills-based taster workshops, weekly rehearsals and production. www.oxfordpeoplestheatre.com/
- **Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra** - The grant will be allocated to FUNomusica Family Concert, and an in-person Family Concert to raise awareness of environmental sustainability and the climate crisis, alongside music and dance activities for children to enjoy. www.oxfordphil.com/
- **Oxford Preservation Trust** - Funding will support the costs of organising Oxford Open Doors 2022. www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk/
- **Oxford Pride Group Ltd** - Funding will support holding swimming sessions at the Hinksey pool. www.oxford-pride.org.uk/
- **Oxfordshire Asian Women's Voice** - To support provision of petrol expenses for members and volunteers to attend sessions to give childcare, lead workshops, escort members to doctor/hospital appointments and deliver food boxes, utilities and office equipment. www.facebook.com/oxfordshireasianwomensvoice/
- **Oxfordshire Chinese Community and Advice Centre (OCCAC)** - New Year celebration - The grant will support running of Chinese New Year celebration, at Oxford Town Hall in January 2023. www.occac.org.uk/
- **Oxfordshire Chinese Community and Advice Centre (OCCAC)** - Trilingual Project Co-ordinator/Community Advice Worker - Grant funding will support salary cost for part-time Trilingual Project Co-ordinator/ Community Advice Worker who will provide bilingual information/advice to enable non-English-speaking/vulnerable users access services/welfare benefits and host bilingual talks/workshops to help Chinese access services and promote wellbeing. www.occac.org.uk/
- **Oxfordshire Nepalese Society** - Funding will support booking meeting room at Rose Hill Community Centre for meetings to support members who lost family members during Covid-19 and those that have health Issues. www.oxfordnepalese.org/
- **Oxfordshire Youth** - Grant funds will support core funds to support Oxfordshire Youth projects. www.oxfordshireyouth.org/
- **Photo Oxford** - Funds will support sharing resources and insights, to help people develop skills and a sense of belonging through the medium of photography. www.photooxford.org/
- **Populate Cooperative** - To support building an independent community and business hub that can connect, and support independent business, freelancers, creative workers, and community groups to deliver workshops, meet ups and creative markets. www.populate.org.uk/
- **Pro Dance Oxford** - Funds will support a four month pilot scheme, to establish a regular programme of workshops and classes designed for professional dance artists. www.prodanceoxford.wixsite.com/prodanceoxford
- **QED Comedy Lab** - Will combine the grant funding with other funding to rent a space from the Council in the city centre to create a permanent, inclusive space for comedy events. www.qedcomedylab.co.uk/
- **ReadEasy Oxford Group** - To train more reading coaches and acquire the additional resources needed to support an additional 14 adults learn to read. www.readeasy.org.uk/groups/oxford/

- **SeeSaw** - This grant will be used to fund two new Volunteer Support Workers (VSWs) based in Oxford City, providing grief support to bereaved children and young people. www.seesaw.org.uk/
- **South Oxford Community Association** - Funding will be used to promote, develop and subsidise places for existing and new creative sessions and to provide additional human & material resources for workshops for school holidays & new planned events. www.southoxford.org/
- **St Mary's Church Barton** - Funds will support utilities during weekly meetings. www.stmarysbarton.com/
- **Syrian Community Oxford** - To support Emergency Food Parcel which was established to support the community in helping local residents with food parcel delivery and signposting them to other service providers. www.syrcox.org/
- **Syrian Sisters** - Fund will support weekly meetings provide a space for people to meet others for creative craft activities and group exercises, exchange experiences, and be signposted to other relevant services.
- **The Oxford Playhouse Trust** - Grant fund will be used for specific improvements both front house and backstage which will improve access for disabled people. www.oxfordplayhouse.com/
- **The Porch** - To provide vocational training to enable clients become job ready, provide food, specialist support and advocacy to vulnerable people at risk of eviction and work with housing providers to support rough sleepers who have not been housed. www.theporch.org.uk/
- **The South Oxford Adventure Playground (CIO)** - The project was to hold summer play scheme- 27 days of fun-filled, child-led, open access, outdoor play and activities in the heart of Oxford for 7-15 year olds. www.soapoxford.org.uk/
- **Yellow Submarine Holidays** - Funds will support cost for staff to work 1:1 with highly socially isolated 11-25 year olds to help them integrate or re-integrate socially. www.yellowsubmarine.org.uk/

Small and Medium Round 3 2022/23 – total combined funding of £16K to be spent by 31 March 2023

- **AT The Bus** - AT The Bus provides in-school art as therapy to support the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people in Oxford, focusing on resilience and transformation. www.atthebus.org.uk/
- **Body Politic** - To support working with partners and student-led groups to develop, test and share digital consent workshop resources, to accompany a Spring tour and address the rising statistics of sexual harassment in schools. <https://bodypoliticdance.com/>
- **Counselling Carers CIC** - To support subsidising counselling sessions for carers who would otherwise not be able to afford to access psychological help in their caring role. <https://counsellingcarers.org/>
- **EMBS Community college Ltd** - To support meet the Pre-entry ESOL language/Social Cohesion needs of recently arrived Ukrainians, keen to make fast progress/gain employment/contribute to Oxford life/economy. <http://www.embs.ac.uk/>

- **Mandala Theatre Company** - Mandala will tour Oxford schools, colleges & PRU's with Q&A's & creative workshops with a focus on suicide among young people. <https://www.mandalatheatre.co.uk/home>
- **Modern Art Oxford** (Museum of Modern Art Ltd) - To support Boundary Encounters, a summer programme celebrating the transformative impact of shared creative learning and participatory projects, as experienced by the city's diverse communities. <https://www.modernartoxford.org.uk/>
- **Nigerian Community Oxfordshire** - To support running several courses including Nigerian languages courses, revision courses and Nigerian women empowerment activities including keep fit classes.
- **Orchestra of St John's** - and Littlemore hospital sites specialising in Psychiatric Care, Adult Mental Illness and Learning Disabilities. www.osj.org.uk/
- **Oxford Community Churches** (Edge Housing) - Funds will support improving access to affordable accommodation for highly marginalised people that are homeless, recently homeless or vulnerably housed, by housing them and supporting to move into private rental homes. <https://oxford.occ.org.uk/edge-housing>
- **Oxford Young Steps** - To support hiring of indoor hall where different young people meet for indoor games such as basketball, table tennis which is also an avenue to discuss about issues anyone facing and try to resolve it with each other's help and work as team. <https://www.oxfordyoungsteps.net/>
- **Oxfordshire Asian Women's Voice** - To support weekly meetings to provide the women with opportunity to socialise with other ladies who are not members of their family. <https://www.facebook.com/oxfordshireasianwomensvoice/>
- **Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre (OSARCC)** - To support with volunteer costs and deliver comprehensive training to volunteers to develop understanding of sexual violence and its impacts, the related psychological, physical and emotional issues, law and reporting, listening skills and self-care. <https://www.osarcc.org.uk/>
- **OXS RAD Ltd** - Funding will support operational costs for OXS RAD Ltd. <https://www.oxsrاد.org/>
- **Parasol Project CIO (Parasol Project)** - To run a new project "Northway Stay & Play" for 0-4 year olds and their parents/carers as there is currently not any stay and play or baby and toddler group in the Northway area. <https://www.parasolproject.org/>
- **Photography Oxford** - Funds will support sharing resources and insights, to help people develop skills and a sense of belonging through the medium of photography. www.photooxford.org/
- **Tandem** - To support administration costs for Tandem. www.tandembefriending.org.uk
- **The Low Carbon Hub CIC** - To support in provision of three volunteer energy champions from Low Carbon West Oxford, Rose Hill & Iffley Low Carbon and Low Carbon Oxford North with an energy advice stall starter kit to provide energy advice in their communities. www.lowcarbonhub.org
- **The Oxford Playhouse Trust** - To support 'Social Thursdays' programme which provides opportunity for individuals to engage with the performing arts <https://www.oxfordplayhouse.com/>

- **Wolvercote Young People's Club** - To support General Youth Work sessions during winter, to support young people in Wolvercote and Cutteslowe. www.wypc.org.uk/
- **Yellow Submarine Holidays (Yellow Submarine)** - To support evening social clubs and activity days to build friendships and peer to peer support, to counter feelings of lack of self-worth, loneliness and isolation. www.yellowsubmarine.org.uk/

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 2: Charts indicating the reach of Big Ideas funded projects by communities of identity, geography and activity type 2022-23

Chart 1: Communities of Identity - Demographic focus

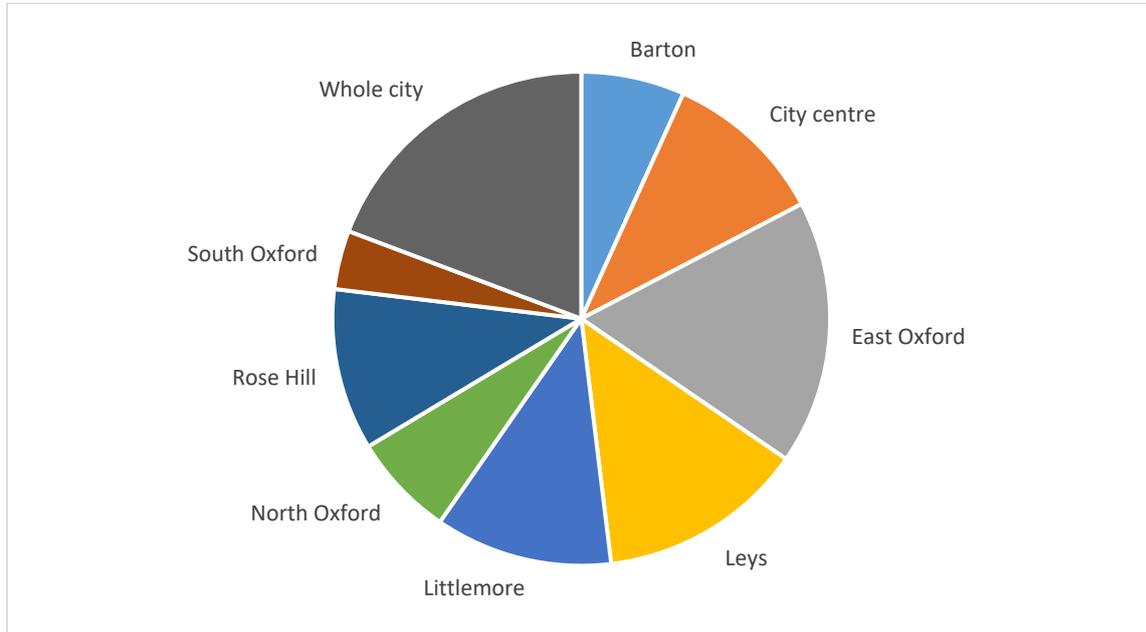


Chart 2: Communities of Geography

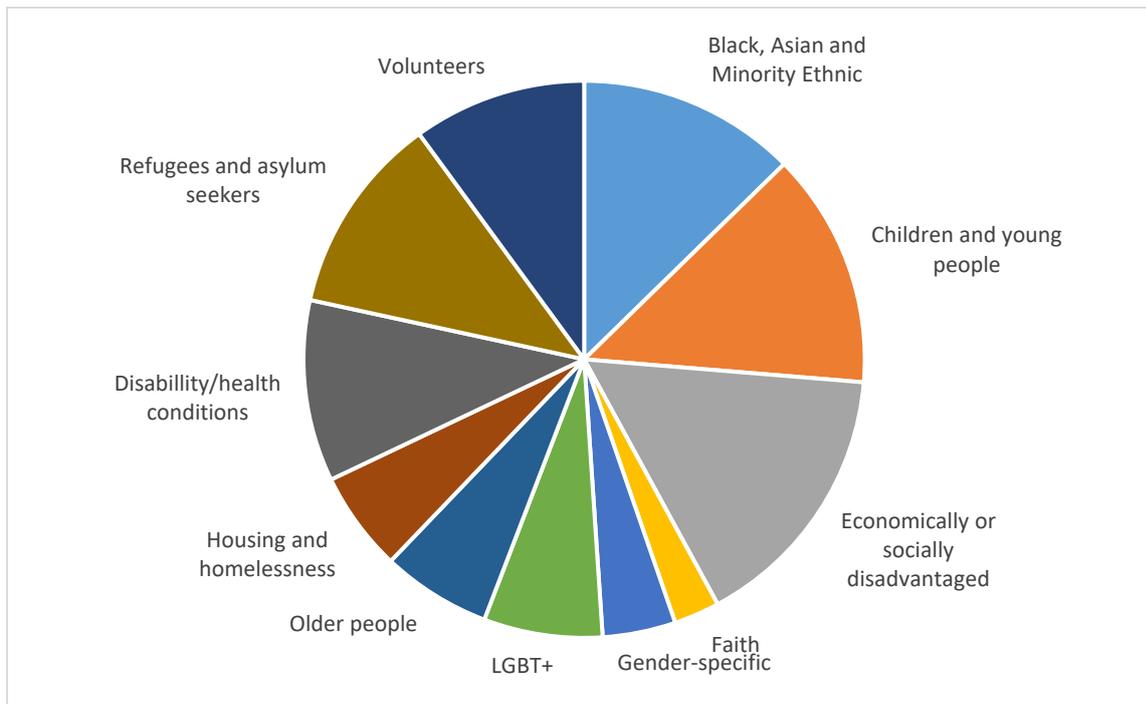
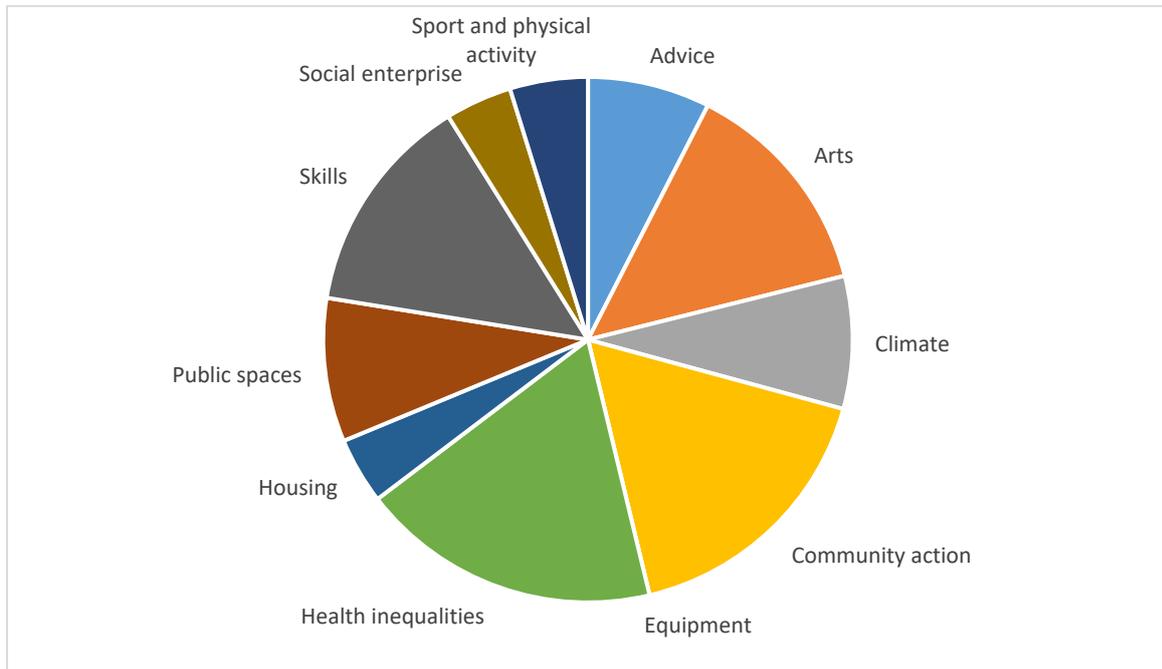


Chart 3: Communities of Interest – activity types



Appendix 3: Meaningful Measurement – Stories Demonstrating Impact

In Spring 2023, the Big Ideas network of grantees receiving funding from Oxford Community Impact Fund agreed that the Old Fire Station would lead a pilot Storytelling evaluation to investigate the impact of the funding. This aimed to help the network better understand what change is happening for the people we work with at a micro-level, to gather more meaningful measurement insights that we can all learn from, and to trial a different way of evaluating.

Storytelling is an evaluation methodology developed by the Old Fire Station and inspired by Most Significant Change. It involves collecting stories from participants about their involvement in a project, and then bringing people together to discuss these stories and what can be learned from them.

Six partners came forward to take part in the project - African Families in the UK, Ark-T, Home-Start Oxford, Justice in Motion, My Life My Choice, and The Story Museum. Partners Elmore Community Services, Old Fire Station and Oxford Hub also contributed existing stories from wider Storytelling projects. These stories aim to collectively reflect a breadth of identities, focuses and perspectives from across the city.

The stories were collected by trained story collectors, who guided 1-2-1 conversations with individuals (the storytellers) about their experience, and what being involved with the organisation or project had meant for them personally. These conversations were audio recorded, transcribed, and then edited by Phil Brennan, Rowan Padmore and Sofia Smith-Laing into shorter stories which aim to faithfully reflect the storyteller's insights, while keeping their 'voice' in the story – telling it in their own words.

As part of the next phase of the process, the Old Fire Station facilitated an in-person Discussion Session on 6 September, 10-12.30 at the Old Fire Station. This session brought Big Ideas partners together to discuss the stories and what we can collectively learn from them. It was also an opportunity to reflect on our experience of using a different approach to impact measurement. The notes from the session helped to inform the writing of the Grant Allocations to Community & Voluntary Organisations 2024/25 Cabinet Report.

The stories

Justice in Motion

Story 1: A Very Modern Famous Dancing Group p.2
Story 2: I Ran Away With The Circus! p.5

My Life My Choice

Story 3: Live What We Do p.6
Story 4: A Positive Influence p.9

Oxford Hub – Parent Power

Story 5: The Doors Open So Much Wider p.11
Story 6: Speaking My English p.13

The Story Museum

Story 7: Finding Confidence	p.14
Story 8: The Exploding Bookshelf	p.15

Ark-T

Story 9: If This Was A School, I'd Come To It	p.17
Story 10: I Want To Live Here	p.19

Elmore Community Services

Story 11: When To Push And When Not To	p.22
Story 12: Keep On Going	p.24

African Families in the UK

Story 13: So You Can Fly	p.26
Story 14: Negotiation, Conversation, Dialogue	p.28

Home-Start Oxford

Story 15: Okay Not To Be Okay	p.30
Story 16: The Choppy Seas Of Parenthood	p.32

Old Fire Station

Story 17: It Put A Glow in Me	p.36
Story 18: Waking Up And It's Spring	p.38

Justice in Motion

Justice in Motion is a professional physical theatre company that is passionate about art and social justice. It tells stories about people who are victims of social injustice using a mixture of dance, theatre, parkour, aerial acrobatics, film, and music.

The following two stories were told by one of Justice in Motion's performers and a participant in a project called *RESISdANCE*, a flash-mob style performance at Oxford Railway Station by women refugees from the war in Ukraine.

Story 1: A Very Modern Famous Dancing Group

It's not a story with a happy end. It's a very, very sad one. My mum died on the same date, at the same time, as the war began. My world was broken, I lost everything.

I travelled though ten countries attending rallies for Ukraine before I came here. But after a year of war, people started to be a bit tired, and just to sing the anthem. It's not enough and nobody will see it, nobody will write about it, nobody will talk about it, so we needed to do something different.

It was the end of January, exactly one month before the anniversary of the start of the war. The closer the anniversary was, the worse I felt because I didn't know how I would survive this day.

It was the anniversary of my mum's death and I'm not at her grave, and I'm not at home, and I'm not with my relatives. I'm an orphan now and there was nobody here who could support me, and it was the anniversary of the war. I felt guilty because I'm in a peaceful country and some people are dying every single day in Ukraine. So, my moral condition was awful, I was just in a total moral disaster.

I visited an event on business in the Westgate Library to find new connections, network and maybe in the future start my own business here. Anja, the artistic director of Justice in Motion, was one of the speakers and she started to present her project not with words, not with description, but with a video about modern slavery and how they are helping people with dancing. When she finished, I was crying because all the people in the venue were crying. I decided, 'Oh my God, it's what I need!'

I came to her and asked, 'Listen, I am from Ukraine, I am refugee, and in one month we will have an anniversary of the war and what you described, it's so close, and I would like to be a part of everything you create. Please help me.' And she said, 'Oh no, we have so many different projects, it's only one month, it's impossible.' And then I told her, 'But listen, I don't want something boring, I want something creative', and then I say, 'Maybe on railway station?'. Anja stops and gives me her business card, it was Friday late evening, and she asked me to call on Monday. And we met and started to co-create.

The trigger word was 'railway station' because several months earlier Anja had been given a prophecy that she would be doing a flashmob in a train station, which she had written down in her notes. From then we found a lot of similarities between us, and knew we wanted to do this together. And so it started. I don't know, it's magic. Maybe vibes. Maybe God.

When the war began, people had maybe five or ten minutes to pack, and they had this opportunity to take something that is important. But you are so disrupted from inside that you don't understand what to do. Then later you open your backpack and 'Oh my God, I have taken no warm clothes, food, or toothbrush, but I have two dresses!' Every one of us has different stories but they are all connected with backpacks, with fleeing, with border control, with railway stations and with moving further and further. And of course resistance, otherwise we would not survive.

I started to collect people for our first workshop. Ukrainian participants were on my side because I'm leading the Ukrainian community here in Oxford. It was impossible to describe when new participants asked me, 'What is the project about? What will we do?' because it was sort of political, supportive, active, sometimes reflective. I could not find any one word to describe it, because it doesn't exist.

It was hard to all be together at the same time, in the same place, but some tried to change their shifts or to re-organise their times at school with children just to be there. Every rehearsal was four or five hours because we needed to warm up, to talk to them. We met and then talked, cried and brought our memorable things, and again cried. We cried so much, you could not imagine. Everything we discussed, they tried to recreate in movement, so we didn't dance some strange dance, we danced our emotions, we danced our feelings.

We were complicated clients to work with because every night we were worrying about all these missile attacks and all these bombs. You could plan to have a very efficient and very useful day tomorrow, but at night, something shit happens and then no connection with your husband, no internet, no mobile, no anything. Nothing at all. And you have no strength, even just to wake up, just to wash your face, not even to go somewhere to dance. We are all traumatised. Some people have lost their husbands, some people have lost everything.

The majority of refugees are women. I call them girls, but we are all different ages and from different places. But we have got the same troubles and the same problems here. Find a school for your child, find a job, learn the language, find a sponsor, get a national Insurance number or a GP. And I think that this project helped all of us to hold off emptiness. We have some kind of plan because we have a rehearsal on Wednesday at 7pm, and then on Sunday, and then we started to ask, 'What is next? Where could we give another performance?' and instead of refugees, we were like a very modern, famous, dancing group!

On the day of the first performance, we arrived very, very early to the railway station. It was the 24th of February, the mood was low as Russia were bombing us, but this was the reason to get up and put on our blue and yellow costumes. It was quite crowded with Monday morning workers, and we were also like people who were going to work, because we had backpacks on. People are running or calling or looking for tickets and then suddenly, somewhere one girl started to sing, then another two girls sing with her, then more and more and more, and then triangles of twelve girls sing. From the very beginning, it's very natural, nobody could understand that we are from some community, the only thing is we wear yellow and blue, our national flag colours, but we don't have similar costumes, it's just blue jeans and yellow t-shirts or something.

So many people stopped, frozen. I think that this suddenness, or this moment of unexpectedness, plays a very important role, because if we were just singing our national anthem nobody would be so impressed or so shocked. The key idea is to disrupt, not to shock, because we should show something that is important, but positive. And we decided to show all these key things, women, railway station, children, backpacks, emotions, feelings. So, it's thirty seconds of song, and then our individual performance of our figures, whatever each of us feels, and then our general dance, where we are doing the same thing, at the same time and on the same stage. That's the flashmob.

You have so many negative emotions and everything is inside you, and then when you dance it was the maximum level of nervousness because it was the first ever time. A real performance after only ten rehearsals. And people start to applaud, and you start to smile, to cry, to hug, to love each other, it's like a maximum level of feeling. People on the railway station were crying. They cried. Afterwards we were crying, we were hugging.

I feel so thankful to Anja that she helped me, to support these girls, because I couldn't do nothing by myself because I was alone, and she created for us a meaning to live, meaning to wake up, meaning to exist.

I think this project is a very good example for my children because they see that I don't give up, I do something, and I have recreated and restarted my life. You want to be useful. You want to be a small, particular part of something big. And it worked.

Story 2: I Ran Away With The Circus!

Growing up I had these traditional ideas of what an artist was and I definitely didn't see myself as someone involved in the performing arts. But now through all these years with Justice in Motion I'm getting more comfortable with that label of 'artist.'

I got involved with Justice in Motion in 2018. My background is in parkour, I've been doing it for about 18 years. My friend was involved in a parkour community and they were having an event to show this new equipment they'd developed, so I went along. I didn't know that Anja, the Artistic Director of Justice in Motion, would be there. So when we started doing theatre exercises I was a bit unsure - I hadn't done any drama since secondary school!

Yet I had a really fun day. Anja told us all about Justice in Motion and the vision for their new show On Edge. It would be about modern day slavery and trafficking and Anja explained that she was looking for parkour athletes to get involved. Initially I thought 'Oh, this sounds really interesting, but it's not for me because I don't do theatre.' Besides, I was working full time for a digital marketing company and so I had my job to think of. But for weeks I kept reflecting on it and eventually I got in touch with Anja and said 'I'm up for it. Let's see how it goes.'

When we were making On Edge I used my holiday allowance to go off and rehearse. My work generously offered me a sabbatical and I immersed myself into the world of Justice in Motion. Because of my experience with digital marketing, Anja and I discussed the possibility of me taking on the social media for the company, and exploring how we could use it as a tool to tell the parkour world about this amazing show. So that summer I was a performer and social media manager.

After my sabbatical it was really clear to me that I wanted to pursue the performing arts. I eventually left my job to become one of the core team members of Justice in Motion - I ran away with the circus! I am now the Marketing Manager but I also work with the company as a performer and workshop facilitator. My family and friends have been very supportive and happy to see me moving into the performing arts. They knew that the corporate world wasn't where I wanted to be. It's been amazing having them come along to see the shows but also for them to see the changes in me.

One of the biggest changes is that I'm growing in confidence hugely. I used to be terrified of public speaking and now it's something that I'm a lot more confident with. I think that's largely down to performing in front of people. Anja's belief in my potential as a performer had a big impact. I remember when she asked me how I would feel about playing the perpetrator in On Edge, I got a really knotted stomach thinking about how there'll be more attention on me and more acting involved. Playing a villain and having to be aggressive aren't things that come very naturally to me. Besides, at school, my understanding of acting was you're pretending to be a character and I didn't feel like I could do that convincingly. I had to work on being confident as the character and getting comfortable with acting intimidating.

It was a real learning curve for me but with the practical training, and the help and support from Anja, Chris the director and the other performers, I could access something real within me in order to authentically portray this character. Each time I took on these new elements of the role, I felt my comfort zone expanding, my own emotional boundaries were widening and I was getting more comfortable with expressing myself. Acting has also helped me to be more empathetic. So now when I meet people out in the world I can be less judgmental than I was before. I'm more open and accepting of someone's lived experiences.

One of the biggest things that's come out of this journey is that I feel a lot more empowered. For years I've had this sense of wanting to do something meaningful and now I feel more confident in taking my place in the world, putting ideas into action and working to make a difference. I want to give back in a positive way. Especially as I recognise that I'm in a huge place of privilege. For example I was able to take a sabbatical in order to be in On Edge. I know that other people in the industry don't have those kinds of opportunities. So I have to make sure I give back. As a facilitator, I go into schools or community centres to deliver workshops in theatre and parkour. By teaching skills and providing opportunities we are opening doors for young people to feel like they could pursue a career in the arts.

After all this time with Justice in Motion and seeing the positive changes I've gone through, I am now a firm believer in the power of the performing arts. I'm a living case study of what can happen when you help people open up.

[My Life My Choice](#)

My Life My Choice (MLMC) is a self-advocacy organisation run by and for people with learning disabilities in Oxfordshire. Their services include training and consultancy in disability awareness with experts by experience, a range of buddy programmes for people with learning disabilities to access travel and culture, and a nightclub run by and for people with learning disabilities.

The following two stories were told by a gig buddy volunteer, and a MLMC member and trustee.

Story 3: Live What We Do

I joined My Life My Choice around 2008 after I had a breakdown. I had gone back to my full-time job and couldn't cope. I wanted to be someone who worked with people with learning disabilities and I heard about MLMC. I went along and met Michael Edwards, who started the charity, his nickname is the Godfather! I went to their AGM and put my name forward to become a trustee. I got accepted straight away and was one until 2009. After that, Jackie came along. We are married but she was my girlfriend at the time, and she became a trustee too. We went on our first campaign about benefit cuts together. Since I started here the charity has been growing and growing.

When I first started there were about 285 members and now we have over 700! Before I thought I was the only one with deafness and a bit of speech impediment but after I travelled to all the groups, I saw the different needs of people and how lonely we can get. I know I'm not the only one now and I do my best to try and help everybody if I can.

We're like one big massive family, we all work together and we try to include everybody. It doesn't matter if you're any ethnic minority, LGBT+, religious or not at all, if you have a learning disability or not. It doesn't matter if they're deaf or use sign language, we will somehow get around it. People are always welcome. We don't discriminate. When I first started we just had four or five different groups, now we've got loads more all over Oxfordshire. We are only getting stronger and doing more. We do lots of training. I've been to big meetings with the NHS, Thames Valley Police, and whatnot. Now I'm doing Travel Buddy which is where we train people to use public transport. MLMC members with experience of the buses in the city support other people with learning disabilities on how to use them. I've been doing it for quite a while now and at the moment I'm trying to teach myself how to be better at train travel. I go to church too, I'm trying to teach them how to work with people with disabilities. I'm hoping to do this project, if we get the funding, to go round to all the schools and teach kids and teenagers about people with learning disabilities because we always get looked at. I want to try and make a better world for people like us and for adults and professionals to understand whatever disability we've got.

We also do fun stuff! In 2009 a guy up in Oxford from London said about having a nightclub for people with disabilities. I said I'd like to help out because I used to be a DJ and know about nightclubbing. I like playing the old stuff, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, party stuff. So we set this club night up, it's called Stingray. Sadly one of our members passed away a long time ago and when we were setting up the club Michael said 'Why don't you call it Stingray after him?' Me and a colleague went out to look for places all over Oxford to find somewhere accessible. We found one and were there for a few years. When we lost that venue we had to do it all again. I set the team up, I had to get the right people to do the right job. We have our own security, our own front of house people taking the money in, our own DJ, who are all members. The staff at the venue are there to help us a little bit but mostly they're just there watching.

One time we went to Spain, me and a few others, to do the Camino walk and raise awareness for people with learning disabilities who were dying unnecessarily. Me and my wife have been to Germany as part of the European disabled fund. We also won an award from the Queen and we went to Buckingham Palace garden. I've been to 10 Downing Street too when David Cameron was there. One of our members turned to David and said, 'I've got a question. I'm hearing you're going to cut all our disability benefits and you're gonna let us struggle. Can you and your government step in our shoes and think how we're going to live?' After that David Cameron walked out. Everybody in the room just stood up and clapped for our guy. I always challenge the government. My wife and I are struggling now with the benefits going down, it's just so hard. Through lockdown we had a lot of people struggling and the government and the councils never helped us. I can't read or write or anything like that so getting a job is hard. What I do for MLMC is like a proper job. Sometimes we get paid, sometimes we don't. But some people don't think it's proper, they think we're scroungers. They should step in our shoes and live the way we do.

Before My Life My Choice it was hard because people wouldn't listen to me. Now I'm stronger – not big-headed but more powerful and know my own self. I know it's my voice and I'm in charge, not staff. I listen to other members and try to encourage them to speak up about their problems. I've had the big money job off and on, there are four of us in charge of the finance. It's a lot of responsibility. We meet and talk about what money's coming in, hiring staff, any issues we have. The different self-advocacy groups decide what they'd like the charity to focus on, 'We want to do a campaign about picking up litter,' or a thing on hate crime or health or something. It feeds back to the office and if we say yes, and we get the funding, they do it. If we can't decide, we let the trustees decide. I've also been there when we've sacked people, I was on the interview panel with hiring new staff. Sometimes it's very hard, you go home and think 'What a day!' But we all work together, we have a little banter and a laugh. That team feeling.

I'm not being big-headed, I think there's a lot more we can do. In lockdown I had to go to hospital, and there was a young girl with autism who was getting very frustrated because they didn't allow her parents in. I spoke to the nurse and asked 'Would you like any help?' She said 'How could you help me? You can't help me.' But I said I could settle the girl down and try and communicate with her. And I did, I got her settled down, explained why she was panicking, and it was really good. They said 'Thank you, sir. I'm sorry, I thought you couldn't do it.' I told this senior nurse to look up My Life My Choice. So my idea, because of that hospital experience, is to set up a new scheme called hospital buddy. If a disabled young lad won't go to the doctors or to the dentist or optician or somewhere like that, and his family are working, we could get one of our volunteers to take him to the appointment. We can explain the medical jargon and maybe give young people some confidence. I think we called over 200 members and out of 200 members I had 150 interested to try and get the funding to do the scheme. It's a process, we work with the trustees and staff, we plan what we're going to do and how we're going to do it, and if we've got the resources, then we go forward step by step. And in the time I've been here, we've not had much failing.

Lots of charities went bust in lockdown. We thought we would, that would have been so bad. I don't know where I'd be without MLMC. I'd be going crazy or be in a hospital or something. My mum, my dad, my nan all passed away so this is like my family. I had a few ups and downs after I lost them, I couldn't go out and get a proper job. It's scary, to be honest. If they hadn't been there, I wouldn't be here today. Now I'm just looking forward to our 25th birthday party and looking towards the future. What I'd love to do now is make more relationships out there in the community and to have professionals and the government and the schools work with us. What I'd love them to do is not discriminate against us. One of our member's dreams is to try and take My Life My Choice further, to Australia, America, everywhere. To get a big bond with other people, other organisations. For all the disabled community and different charities all over the world come and join us, and make it friendly, and stand up for the power of people with disabilities.

Story 4: A Positive Influence

My awareness of My Life My Choice, started during Covid. I saw a tweet looking for phone buddies - connecting people via phone calls, with people with learning difficulties. I normally do quite a lot of volunteering in my day-to-day life and most of that had stopped because of Covid. I was probably scratching that itch of liking to do things for other people.

I'm a really big believer in volunteering and when I had young kids, I think it was a massive mental health benefit, to be away from my kids. Part of it as well, is to make sure that I'm not just in my slightly lazy echo chamber. So, I got involved with the phone buddy system. It's quite a rigorous process to make sure that you get matched well because you're dealing with vulnerable adults. So, I was like, which DBS do you want? I've got about seven.

I was matched with my buddy, Abul. And I used to call him once a week, sometimes twice, and just have a chat, and see how he was. It was hard, we weren't doing very much at the time, but we kind of learned a bit about each other. Still now when I hear his answer phone message, I just immediately smile. Even though at times it's been demanding, you can't see Abul, or talk to him without smiling. Whenever I call him and I get the answer phone message, I've always got a big grin on my face, because he's just a very sunny person. So, it's really nice.

The programme 'Gig Buddies' is about matching people up to go to gigs and do stuff. Once we were able to meet again, we were able to transition from telephone buddy to gig buddy. We don't actually go to gigs; we tend to go and have coffee once a month. It was really nice the first time I met Abul, because I had no real frame of reference of what he looked like. I'm not even sure whether I knew he's in a wheelchair because we'd only spoken on the phone, but I think I knew how old he was. He has a carer with him all the time, so we have kind of become a bit of a trio, but I try to make sure that my focus is always on Abul.

One of the things I really like about him is he always asks how are you? He really genuinely wants to know what I've been doing, what my kids have been doing. He's a very curious sort of person and always cares about what you've been up to. And he's funny. You can sort of take the mickey a bit and do a little bit of gentle prodding, and he'll do the same back. I'm definitely not his only friend, he's got a girlfriend, he's got friends. He's always very popular because he's a very chatty, a very well-liked person.

He's got very particular ways of doing things and he's got a very strong personality. He loves dates and diaries, so half of our meeting will be arranging the next one. And he likes technology, so we'll talk about what new phone he's getting. He doesn't like being late for things, so if we were going straight from coffee to the walking group he'd get quite agitated. He's possibly a little bit more relaxed now than he was. Generally, I think he's one of those constants where he stays at his lovely level of Abul-ness, and the chaos of the outside world doesn't affect him. Maybe I'm making an assumption there actually, but he's quite level I would say.

My Life My Choice is about people living their fullest life. And for all of us, the social side is really important. A really great thing is it's completely service user led. They help other people with learning difficulties, to do the things and find the things that they enjoy. I think to do them with a friendship group is what gives life meaning. You don't want to patronise people and go, that's the limit of your life. You want it to be a limitless life.

They have a really good walking club, so I sometimes join him on that, and we go Christmas shopping together. I've really enjoyed the Christmas shopping. We've done that the last two years and I think that's where we've had the most fun. Sitting in a coffee shop is lovely... but it's often noisy and busy, and it can be a bit intense. Whereas if we're going and doing something, I found the conversations sometimes a bit easier. I think he quite likes me someone doing stuff with him, and he always seems like he enjoys our chats and our meetups and things. I don't want to put words into his mouth about what he gets out of it, but those are the things that I sense.

We've definitely found it harder to meet up after I started the new job and was working more. It's been harder to find time and he will change appointments, which when I'm really busy means that often I'm struggling to meet with him. But it's always lovely to see him. I don't want it to get to the point where it feels like a burden, which it doesn't at all, because I really enjoy it.

I was really pleased my boys came to an event yesterday. I spoke to them, and I said, you know, there are going to be lots and lots of people there with learning difficulties, and they didn't bat an eyelid. I really like them to see, this is my friend, he's a different ethnicity from me, he's in a wheelchair, he's got learning difficulties, and we can have a relationship. And that's what I think is really, really important, that I'm friends with someone who's had a really different life experience from me, and yet we can find things to connect on.

I think he's helped me challenge myself or understand myself a little bit better. And he's definitely taught me patience, because you have to be quite patient. Patience isn't my strong point; Abul and my kids are working on that with me. They're a tag team of trying to get me to be more patient. I think it gives you a much broader perspective on life, thinking about things and considering another person's mindset, you don't have to always get it right, you just have to be curious about seeing it from someone else's perspective. And that's something that doesn't come naturally to me in life. Seeing it from his point of view, and seeing the challenges that he faces, but also the way that he faces the majority of them with very, very good grace. Systemic things like decisions that are made, or people's thoughtlessness of where they've parked, or how they're walking, do frustrate me. But you see a lot of kindness towards him as well. We go to the coffee shop, and he has to have things a certain temperature, and he has a straw, and some of the staff just bend over backwards to make sure that he's got everything he needs. So that's really nice to see.

My slight concern is that because I can express myself in a wider way than Abul, my voice is the one that's heard and not his, as it's hard for him to actually tell his story. I love sitting here with biscuits and talking about me but, there's inequality, just because of our ability, our eloquence or how we can express ourselves.

I suppose the concern is that I put words in his mouth. But he goes, yeah, it's good. And it's good means a lot to him, but it's hard to get more depth than that. I would like his point of view. I don't want to make assumptions or kind of put words into his mouth.

I think something I've definitely learned, and need to improve on as well, is to be an ally with people with learning difficulties. And about how we put forward information and services that cater for them. Most of the time, I just see a lot of kindness from people, especially in the service industry. But still at times you think, why on earth are you behaving like that to someone who's obviously got learning difficulties? There's still a way to go, but what reassures me is that the majority of people are really very thoughtful and kind towards Abul.

It makes my life richer. It makes it more complicated as well, but it definitely makes it richer. I come away from a meeting or a phone call with him feeling better about the world. He's a very sunny person. He's a positive influence on my life. It's fun as well. I'd wholeheartedly recommend.

Oxford Hub – Parent Power

Oxford Hub works to build a more equal, resilient, and connected Oxford. It runs volunteering programmes and collaborative projects that support people to thrive, participate in their community, and tackle inequality. Parent Power is an initiative led by local parent advocates working directly with families who are keen to lead change in their own lives.

The following two stories were told by two parent advocates.

Story 5: The Doors Open So Much Wider

I started in March, last year. Originally I wanted to do a counselling course. Previous to that, I wasn't working, but I had been involved in Cowley Road Carnival. Dolcie, who helped with the Carnival, said she would help me find the funding and stuff to do it. She had spoken to Emma from Oxford Hub, because she thought she would have been able to help me in some sort of way. Me and Emma spoke. We went for a walk, like an interview. And then it kind of just turned into me working for Oxford Hub. And now I'm glad that I chose Oxford Hub instead of going to the course straightaway. It's got so many avenues, so many people to meet. I really enjoy it.

In the Autumn it was more about helping parents. Getting kids into activities, counselling for parents, appointments to fix houses, electricity, gas, getting grants and loans for them. Because a lot of parents don't know that there's funding out there for them. A lot of people struggle and some people have a lot of pride, so they don't really like to ask for help.

It's not always easy work. It's not all, phone call, oh, pay this bill, do a payment plan, do do do, no. Some things are more extreme. For example, one of the parents had really, really, really bad leaks from her bathroom. Basically whatever goes into the toilet goes down the walls, and it was leaking through the rest of the house.

Before we were in contact, she had taken up the route of getting a lawyer to sort out the problem because the Council wasn't helping. When me and her spoke, I had to get all the information from the lawyer, from her, and then speak to the Housing Association. Before that, the Housing Association said that they would start work after 90 days. Bearing in mind, this lady has four kids - she had no gas in the property, no electric, because obviously the water's going through the walls. So we met together and then we made some phone calls. And then I got the work started within the week. If I didn't do that, the work on the house would have started sometime this year, which wouldn't have been nice for the kids to have no hot water, no heating, rotten damp and everything over Christmas. I wouldn't like no child to live like that. So, I just put a stern voice on, and made sure it got started before Christmas.

I like to help people and I like to see results, and I can say I got a result from that. And I'm just really happy, mainly for the kids, that they've got a comfortable house. I don't say I'm proud of myself, because to me, it's just something normal to do. Everyone else is like, 'Oh, my God, that's really good, dududududu.' Whereas I don't see it as something extra. I just saw it as, 'that's my job to do, just do it.'

There's more of an emotional side to it than being overwhelmed with paperwork, or phone calls or anything like that. And it's probably more within myself. Because if there's an issue, I'd like to get it sorted straightaway. It's more, 'Oh, my God, I really want to get this done.' I don't like things to drag on, because then it makes me start thinking about it and I start stressing about it. So I'd rather just get it done: 'Right. That's that out of the way. Next!'

Growing up, I taught dancing from a really young age with no experience. I started when I was thirteen up until twenty-five. And so that helped me with group talking, and being around younger kids and experiencing their lives, which then carried forward into now being a parent advocate. I know how to manage kids and that helped a lot with the summer school run by Oxford Hub. Most mornings, we would be out the front waiting for the parents to bring the kids. The parents would always want to have a little chat. They used to say to me, 'I don't know how you're doing this.' They saw a lot of, I don't want to call them naughty kids, because that's not really fair, but challenging kids, I would say. The challenging kids from the schools that their kids go to. So they were very surprised that we were running the summer school for them all. Whereas I preferred it like that. Like, it's better when things don't run too smoothly, and you don't get too comfortable. It was nice. It was really rewarding.

It's quite weird, because before Oxford Hub I helped people anyway. I've always helped people - all my friends have always come to me about certain situations. Whereas now, the doors open so much wider. I can definitely see the difference between me being able to phone up and say 'Hi, I'm from Oxford Hub, blah, blah, blah, blah.' Instead of doing it just as a friend when I have no title - people don't really listen to you.

But then on the other hand, it's really weird - I've noticed a lot of people feel threatened when I say I'm a parent advocate. They don't really understand the title, and they don't really know what angle I'm coming from. I've had people question me about it as well. So it comes with negatives, and it comes with the positives, but I see it all as a positive, because it shows me that they are threatened by the role because I am literally empowering parents to have a voice. Now I can phone anywhere and anyone and I can speak on people's behalf. Being a parent advocate, I can get a whole lot more done. It's important to me, because it changes people's lives for the better. Sky's the limit.

The things that have changed for me the most are my confidence and being taken out of my comfort zone. I mean, I don't think anyone likes being taken out of their comfort zone. But it's good. Like, Sarah from Oxford Hub will just be like, 'Come and join me in this meeting.' I'll be sat there, like 'oh, my God, I don't think I should be in this meeting.' But it's nice that she's just 'Come on. You can do it.' I like that. At the time I might not like it, but you get pushed. You're not just at one level, I really like that.

I'm learning a lot as well. I'm learning the steps of social services, housing, schools. I mean, I helped one of the parents' kids change schools, whereas I've never done that before. Before I never had to do meetings and paperwork and stuff like that. I'm still learning the technology side of it, emails and stuff, which sometimes at home, I have to say to my ten-year-old daughter, 'Can you help me?' So yeah, I'm just really enjoying it.

Before I started, I didn't even know about Parent Power. I didn't know Oxford Hub either. So now that I'm here, I'm trying to spread the word a whole lot more. Hopefully it stays around for a very long time. It is very much needed.

Story 6: Speaking My English

I'm from Ethiopia. Back home I studied pharmacy. When I first came to Oxford my hope was to continue my career. But things are difficult. I have to go through certain courses to be in a pharmacist team, like a one-year course. But for that you need money. I have two kids, five and seven, a boy and a girl. I have been here in Oxford for about two years. My husband is working here, so we are following him. He has been here almost eight years. I came here and I suppose I was struggling to navigate through the systems. Adapting to the new environment and the language was a big struggling, as sometimes I didn't know where to look for things, or where to go. Those things are very challenging for me at the moment as a first timer. You need someone to feel like a friend.

I used to worry too much like, what if someone didn't understand my way? What if they didn't understand me? So I prefer not to talk. I had that fear. Going out, doing stuff, moving things. I was applying for different kinds of jobs, and I didn't get any acceptance. I was losing hope. Then after six months Covid came. We were isolated completely. I don't know no one because all my friends are back home and I have no time to socialise with anyone. And sometimes I don't know how to get help.

Then finally this job with Oxford Hub came in. One day, through a parent, they made an announcement for a parent advocate. I had no idea what parent advocacy is. But I researched and found out it's supporting others. It's like helping people's lives. And I'm very passionate about helping others. I said to myself, why don't I apply for this? Before that I have no experience or any idea what a parent advocate is, but I just applied for it. That's how I got introduced to the Oxford Hub. As soon as I found Oxford Hub, I feel like I found a second family.

From Oxford Hub I get support like Fellow English. That helps me develop my confidence in speaking English. I used to think my English is very weak, but after I went through the Fellow English starter course, I noticed that my English isn't that bad. The only thing that I need is confidence to go out and challenge myself. So Fellow English really helps me. We have a group with three or four people, I go there and see how people talk. The teacher will give us a chance to speak. Seeing different people talking, that gave me the confidence to speak my English.

Speaking the English language is very important to progress and to get other opportunities. Now I do a food bank with school, and we are currently organising English classes for other parents. On Wednesday, often I collect the foods from the Oxford Hub food bank. They will go to the school there. In the morning on the Thursday, after our drop offs, anyone can come. In six months or a year, I like to see myself like communicating with people, meeting new people, knowing other people. There might be someone who is maybe struggling like me who might need very little help, but that help will boost their everything. And after that they will be able to think: 'I can do everything.'

The Story Museum

The Story Museum celebrates stories in all forms and explores their enduring power to teach and delight. It engages people of all ages using exhibitions, performances, events, workshops, clubs, and skills-building courses. Activities at The Story Museum are designed to encourage parents, carers, and children to spend time together enjoying stories in different ways.

The following two stories were told by a young person who participated in a 'Minecraft Museum' project, designing virtual museum galleries in the gaming platform, Minecraft, and an employee on the Story Museum's apprentice scheme.

Story 7: Finding Confidence

When I was younger, I was quite like... almost immature. So I struggled in social groups. And then I became a little bit withdrawn, especially with the whole pandemic situation. But since starting my apprenticeship at The Story Museum, my confidence in my interpersonal skills and my practical skills has grown. And my self-belief in difficult situations. Confidence has been an issue for me for a while, but I didn't really realise that until recently.

I found out about The Story Museum online through Oxford Apprenticeships. I sort of bypassed it and didn't really think that would be that suitable for me, but my parents thought it was, so I applied. I had to send through a CV and fill out an application. And then we had a big interview day. They were looking for all sorts of different jobs, so apprenticeships and interns and full-time staff. I've been there just under a year now, and I do front of house, customer service.

It's on the weekend. I start around nine o'clock, maybe 10 o'clock, if I'm lucky! And I finish around five o'clock or six o'clock. I'm being pushed all the time. I'm always doing new things, which the people that are running my apprenticeship are quite good at finding, new things that they think will challenge us. Occasionally, we do evening events, which is a different kind of experience, because it's mainly tailored to adults. I show people to their seats, a bit of ushering, or sometimes I'm pouring drinks behind a bar.

We have one day a week studying at home. And then about once a month, we have a catch-up meeting with a tutor. I've always got access to that tutor, so if anything happens I can get in touch with them. The day at home is probably my least favourite part, because I can end up too much in my head. But it's very helpful, I learn a lot.

Before the apprenticeship I was dishwashing at pubs, more on my own. I wasn't really learning anything. I wouldn't want to go back to that. I'd want something that's more tailored to my personality or my hobbies. I quite enjoy animals for example. So of all the jobs I've had, The Story Museum has been the most positive experience.

I'm working with lots of good and supportive people, and I like working with people rather than by myself. I find that in groups I can bounce off other people, rather than being all in my head. And the people that I've met here are lovely. We're friends. I almost value that over the money that I earn and the things that I've learnt. I feel valued as a person and a worker. I've been offered a place to stay on. I'm happy with that. That makes me feel good.

Story 8: The Exploding Bookshelf

The Story Museum project happened when I was in year seven. I'm in year eight now. It was open to any Minecraft fans, builders and that. Minecraft is a computer game where you can build anything you want. You survive, really, in this massive infinite world. It's randomly made, like they have different biomes and stuff. You start with a completely flat world, and you just build up from there. I've been playing six or seven years. There's lots of different stuff you can build. There's infinite ways you can do it. So The Story Museum called out for people who had been playing the game for ages. The way it was specifically meant for us, really, sort of drew me to it. Couple of my mates did it, and other people from older years. I'm at Wheatley Park, it's a big secondary school. It's all right. School's a mixed bag.

The Story Museum was a whole new experience. They have different scenes from books taken out and recreated into rooms. They gave us tours around it during the project. Like we had little 20-minute breaks where they'd take us around, see the Narnia room, or the Snowman room, and then we'd go back to planning and building and that. Really interesting. They also have histories of different stories and stuff in there.

It was the Minecraft thing that got me there but I like that it's a museum, I'm sort of into museums. I've been to Natural History a couple times, and I went to the Ashmolean with my Grandad. I like a good museum, particularly on a rainy day. After we finished the project, they gave us dream tickets, free tickets to go around the museum again. I took my sister, she's ten. You see something different every time you go round.

For the first couple of weeks they'd have a member of the team come down to Wheatley to pick us up. Then after a couple weeks, we just had to go ourselves. They gave us these U1 passes, and we'd all get the U1. And then we'd enter the museum and we'd go in this party room, where they had PCs set up. There'd be some snacks on the table, and then you'd just sort of get started building the Minecraft world. Once a week, 4:00pm until 6:00pm, over a few months.

We started with planning what stories we were gonna do, to make a kind of virtual Story Museum in Minecraft. Some of the books I knew, but some I was learning about for the first time. We were given paper and we'd have to draw out what we would build. And then we'd gather the blocks, and try and recreate what we drew. We split in four groups, and we'd all work on different parts. I worked on two worlds. The Art of Being Normal, where there's this abandoned swimming pool where they have a party. And I also did Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, so we worked on a massive house with a secret tunnel. There were four other people in my group. They were quite nice, they were funny as well. A couple of them I knew, but there were maybe two people from other schools. It was quite nice to get to know them and work with them as well. It was a mix in genders and ages. It was sort of a bit awkward at first, but then, as we did it more, it just became a thing, we'd all know each other's preferences and that. At the end it felt a little bit sad to say goodbye to the people that weren't in my school. But it felt good when we finished, like, yeah, we achieved it.

Towards the middle bit there were moments where we were like 'Oh, what are we going to do?' because some people quit. We thought we wouldn't finish. So we had to split up a bunch of groups to get it done. Building takes a long time. After that I haven't played Minecraft in a while, probably needed a break! But we got finished. Also we had help from a big developing team behind Minecraft, they took it and edited it and that, and they gave us access to things we couldn't access before. Like talkable characters, NPCs and stuff, so there'd be people in the world. They were really nice, and the museum people, too. They made sure they got the most out of us with the building.

The bits that really stand out were the session where we brought it all together, towards the finishing end. It sort of just came all together, it looked really awesome. And then recently was the first time we were presenting it to the public. So we'd have people from the public come in and they got to play it. It was really incredible to see that people were actually playing our creation and enjoying it. There's different portals to different stories. And you go through them and you get to learn about the story. You can go online, too, because it's virtual, so you can access it from anywhere. So you go through the enchanted library. That's one of the worlds, there are lots. In Theseus and the Minotaur, you have this massive maze you'd have to go through to find the minotaur. There's Alice in Wonderland where you jump down the rabbit hole. And further on there's an 'Eat me' and a 'Drink me'.

There's The Secret Garden, with the manor. The manor was massive. And it looked really nice from the outside as well. Then in the Jekyll and Hyde house, there's a bit where you find a secret lever and you click it and the bookshelf would blow up. And it reveals a secret tunnel that goes to this lab.

It was cool experiencing things like the gaming industry technology. Maybe in the future I'd like to do it again, if I could. We learned things about Minecraft I didn't know before, like how developing big games works, and developing teams. You play the game but you don't necessarily think about what's behind the game. All the setting up and the thought process.

I think it helped my confidence, like the independence of coming in on the bus with people that I didn't necessarily know. They sold tickets online for the reveal, which were free tickets and hardly anybody turned up, which was a shame. But I sort of sourced a family in the museum, in the café, just went and asked if they wanted to come up and join in. And when we showed the project to all these people I felt quite proud of myself that I'd sort of helped make it. Just the fact it was being presented to the public really. Awestruck me, I want to say. I made the exploding bookshelf function, so that was pretty nice to see. I saw a couple people find it, and they were sort of amazed. It was nice going around and hearing nice comments about what we made. Just seeing the kids' smiles, really. It's boosted my confidence a lot. I'm doing stuff that I wouldn't have done. Year seven camp, I wouldn't have done before. You go on this camping trip for a couple days, just on the outskirts of Oxfordshire. It was really fun. I put myself forward for another one in September, it's a bushcraft one. Gutting fish and no showers! There would have been a time where I wouldn't have done that, so I think the confidence is the biggest thing.

Ark-T

Ark-T is a community arts charity in Cowley. It uses the power of creativity and community to tackle inequality and transform lives. It seeks to make stronger, healthier communities in which people living in poverty and disadvantage can achieve their full potential and make a difference. Ark-T's provision includes a range of creative and community groups for people of all ages, in term time and holidays, focusing on social and emotional wellbeing.

The following two stories were told by a young person who attends several creative sessions at Ark-T, and a longstanding staff member.

Story 9: If This Was A School, I'd Come To It

I think I started at Ark-T in 2021 and I've just been coming here constantly because I liked it, and I found it fun, and it was nice to make some new friends.

When I first came, I went to Breakfast Club, and I was quite new and shy. I noticed all the Ark-T people were lovely, they were really kind. They could see I was nervous, so they were a bit slow with me and the kids were talking, and they included me, which was really nice. We all had lots of laughs and fun creating stuff.

And then it was summer camps, and we went out on some lovely trips. I got along with everyone really well on the camps. People are less judgmental, they're less rude, they're more kind.

In school, when I get picked to speak, my heart freezes, I go even quieter, and then the teacher sends me out the classroom. I've got to be comfortable to speak. I get more confident here because I have more choices, and the way people speak to me, if I'm not ready, they understand. When you first come here, people are gonna be a bit nervous to speak, then once you start speaking, you can never stop.

What happens in theatre making is you make a play, basically. You make your own character, you decide the play, you name it, you set the scene. You're not recreating someone else's play; you're making your own. You make your own mind up, and then you give all the information to the Ark-T people, they'll take it in, and then they might edit it a bit. And then you might go through and edit some bits, or suggest can we do this with this? Or maybe swap some scenes around. And then they'll get some costumes out for you to try on, and you make your character. You could make anything, even half donkey half unicorn! I was a talking dog once!

We even made one called The Abandoned Child. We all made it together, and usually most people don't want to have the leading role, it's usually me and one other person, so we shared it. I was half demon, half human. Like I grew up as a human, figured out I had powers, started using them and then realised my aunt was a demon. And at Flo Fest, I was Little Red Riding Hood. The audience loved it. And it was filmed by Ark-T. It was so much fun. We were all laughing. Everyone had a smile on their face.

School's more challenging than here, you gotta be careful. Here is a lovely place to go. When you're speaking, they don't make you put your hand up, they ask you to wait patiently. They don't say you have to, they ask you, 'Would you like to play games with us, and then do the work?' They make it more entertaining. At Ark-T you can wear whatever clothes you want, whatever makes you feel comfortable. You're more free than in school.

At school I've got to be careful, I've got to focus. I cannot say I'm too energetic, because I will get told off and shouted at, which is not a nice thing to feel. It makes you feel upset sometimes. You feel like some people don't understand you. They're like, 'Oh well, you shouldn't be like that. You're in control of your own emotions.' But sometimes you can't hold it in and that's what they don't understand.

At Ark-T if you tell them you're going to be a bit upset and angry because some kid has been trying to fight you, or your dog passed away, or something bad has happened, they'll be like 'Okay, if you need a five minute break or something like that, come and tell us and we'll get you a space set up.' You're not allowed to make fun of anyone here. You've got to be nice. They say, 'Think about what you're saying, you could be hurting other people.' Then we say sorry, and sometimes we just get the little sorry feeling. You feel a bit guilty.

If you have a problem in school, you can always come and speak to Ark-T about it. Let's say someone kept trying to threaten you in school, but you found it hard to speak to a teacher because you didn't really trust them, you can come and tell Ark-T and they'll talk to you about it. They might say, 'It's a serious safeguarding problem, I'm gonna have to call up your school and talk to them about it' or give you advice like, 'Go home and tell your parents' and it's really comforting. Instead of just saying, 'Oh well, you should have done this' they're like, 'Well you can do this, or we can help you by doing this.' They give amazing advice.

They don't put others before you. They don't compare you. They're more friendly and kind and not so strict. You can come in here and be a bit silly, have fun, but you can't be too dangerous. It's more of a comfort space, you're not pressured by teachers, you don't have people on your back every second like in school. It's more, 'Be relaxed, have fun, do some drawing.' It's more of a school, but a lot better.

I've become so much more confident, speaking up for myself and speaking up to people being rude to me. I'm more understanding of teachers now. I go to teachers who understand me the most and I say, 'I've learned what I've learned from Ark-T, and I know that you understand me more than most teachers, and you understand how I am, and how my emotions and my anxiety work.'

Some people say, 'It's for people who have problems or need special help.' No, it's for anyone. You could be the meanest person in school, come here, and the next thing you know you could be nice. You can learn so much here, let's say if you're dealing with depression, they will help you out. It will turn you from being sad to being happy and joyful. You feel like you belong somewhere.

I've learned that some people stay, some people leave, but you can't help that. I might not be able to come to this summer camp, but hopefully I am, if I'm not busy. I've learnt you always have someone to speak to here. It's like, 'You can come here, speak to us, and we'll help you with a solution.'

It's helped coming here. You have more options and I like it better here. If this was a school, I'd come to it. Ark-T's amazing and I advise people to come here.

Story 10: I Want To Live Here

Ark-T is a charity that supports anybody, but mostly young people, with their mental well-being by using creativity. It was set up originally by a man called James Grote. He really recognised the value of art being accessible to anybody. I met him because I had a friend who worked with young boys with autism, and he asked if I'd come and do an art workshop, because I love to make. I didn't really know much about autism, but I thought 'Alright, well, we'll just see how it goes.' That's pretty much been my philosophy in working, although I may be aware there may be certain labels that are used, I'll just meet people where they're at.

So, I made some giant flowers and vines in the workshop that were exhibited, and James invited me into his little office and asked me to talk about myself and then said, 'I'd like to offer you a studio space.' At the time it was one of the tiniest sheds you could get, and I was like 'I've got no money' and he went 'Oh no, basically do some labour in return.' I often work on my own and so being in a space, it was like

my tribe, people who believe the same as me and really seem to care about stuff and talk about things like empathy and compassion and all those things. I feel so privileged because I love my job.

I trained to be a primary school teacher and did four years of training and full teaching practices and realised I love working with children and I don't like school! I just felt like I'm not able to be the kind of human being I am essentially, or teacher that I want to be. I think we live in this world where we have two parallels running, we tell children all the time how to behave, and then as adults don't follow those rules ourselves. What sort of examples do they see around them of adults in the world?

The big philosophy at Ark-T is to encourage young people to feel empowered, so a lot of my work is kind of encouraging leadership. What happens when you give kids leadership? They take over. I'll make a session plan, but I never know quite where it's gonna go or what conversations we're gonna have, and there's an awful lot of talking we do in our groups, and a lot of laughing. It's a bit of a joke with the young people that every time I write my session plan, it goes out the window.

My attitude to my work has always included the therapeutic side, and it's felt like that's what Ark-T has been evolving as a charity more and more. We've gone through difficult times, because like every charity we've really suffered with Covid and I'm so grateful that we've managed to survive, because we are so necessary. The young people that I engage with on a regular basis have got so much going on for them. The adult world knows that young people are really struggling, and yet we don't really seem to prioritise it. Big organisations like CAMHS, which is children and adolescent mental health work, are just completely overrun. So, the experience for a lot of young people is they're just on waiting lists and then they'll get a referral, maybe, somewhere down the line.

What is therapeutic and what is helpful? It can be so intangible. It can be just being really decent with a kid who's spilt paint. Not blowing your top but doing handprints on the floor because the floor was covered in paint anyway. That's the joy of the work I do. I think play for everybody is essential, probably adults need it more than anyone. There's so much healing we can give each other just by listening to each other, just by bothering to be with each other. Just being fun.

I made a thing called an 'emotionometer', and it's got all these little faces. It starts at 'furious' over here and ends up 'joyful' over there, and 'sadness' is somewhere in between. I'm not an art teacher although I love doing art. I'm more interested in the conversations we have, in getting them to recognise what they feel, because I think for a lot of people, both young and old, you don't know what you feel or you're feeling so many emotions, you're numbed out. You're not happy, sad, or angry, there aren't just three emotions. One of my main drivers is encouraging emotional literacy because I think if you've got that, you start learning that it's okay for people to be different.

There's a lot of warmth and a lot of trust and a lot of love here at Ark-T. I guess, essentially, because they know I like them. I'm trained to be a teacher and I've got a huge amount of respect for the profession, but there are definitely some people who shouldn't be teaching, and definitely their attitudes are more around power and control.

I think it's our culture in this country. We have a class system and we've got this kind of pecking order mentality in our head, and even when we don't think we have, it somehow lurks there, it sort of pervades, so I think we really have to throw that off. Only respect people who deserve it!

There's so much stuff coming at young people all the time, to make them feel bad about themselves. I think it's harder with social media. Bullying seems to come up a lot as an issue and of course, if you're scared, you're not going to be learning, are you? You need to feel okay, at the very least. Our school system really doesn't serve everyone. It's so unfair, this notion of 'Sit down, shut up.' It's so archaic, and it just doesn't work.

If I had to kind of go 'Right, I'm gonna fix the education system', it would be around personal issues first. I think all the academic stuff can wait right now, because it isn't going to mean anything if we don't have a society where people are decent to each other. That's why I feel so happy and privileged right now, because I feel that I'm able to not compromise myself and be challenged and have really stimulating conversations at Ark-T.

I'd like to see more conversations around healthy relationships, more modelling of healthy relationships. More conversations about emotions. Less desire to control other people in any shape or form, how they present, who they love, all of that stuff. A lot of the young people are definitely part of the LGBTQ+ community, so we have a lot of conversations around that. One of the things that I cherish about them is their openness within the space of Ark-T, where they talk with each other, and there's a lot of solidarity and a lot of support they give each other. And the educative stuff that occurs as a result like 'I'm not gay, but I like that person. They seem to be talking sense', and any prejudice stuff that they've been taught just melts away.

I'm blown away with quite how amazing they are, and how smart they are, and what they know. And they keep coming back, even at exam time, saying 'This is a downtime space, this is where I get a bit of nurturance.'

I absolutely love my job. One of the young people said yesterday 'I want to live here.' I'm very lucky.

Elmore Community Services

Elmore Community Services works with people with complex needs who do not easily fit the remit of other agencies. Such needs may relate to mental health, substance misuse, homelessness, offending, exploitation and trafficking, or learning and communication difficulties. Elmore work across Oxfordshire to provide practical help, emotional support, advocacy, and outreach.

The following two stories were told by two of Elmore's service users.

Story 11: When To Push And When Not To

So where do I start from? Maybe year eight of school. I started having a lot of panic attacks, and got to the point where going out of the house was very difficult, very anxiety-provoking. At some point, I started seeing the support people they had in place at school. But they soon realised that wasn't enough. So I got referred to CAMHS, in maybe 2012 or so. I went through a lot of workers there, probably four or five different workers until I was eighteen. They kind of changed quite a lot with the CAMHS. I'd have one worker for a few months or so, and then it would change to another person. There was one person who I was making quite a bit of progress with, he was helping me go outside a bit and do some cooking, buying food and stuff. But then he stopped that line of work. So he dropped out and I lost that support.

Doing anything was difficult. Going outside at all was difficult. I wouldn't go outside, no interaction with anybody, no hobbies, just sitting inside, my eating wasn't good. Obviously, a lot of general health things wasn't really that good. And I didn't really have a set doctor or anything, so we had to sort all that out. Every time we would go to the GP, it was a different person. So to try medications and stuff, it was a bit difficult. You know, to build up trust with a new person there, because they usually just throw things in your face without thinking about it.

That stops once you get to eighteen, the service at CAMHS. So then I got referred to the Elmore team. Then we were put on a waiting list, which was pretty long. I didn't start seeing Maron until I was maybe nineteen, or twenty. We would mostly just sit inside at first, to lead up to going outside more, and creating goals and steps. To sort of really feel the impact of those meetings and work, it took quite a while. It was a lot of slow progress. I'm now twenty-four, almost twenty-five. So four or five years of slow progress. A lot of small steps and small goals. It wasn't jumping into things quickly.

Basically, it takes me about three to six months to make a decision. Previously, I could not go out even into the backyard without panicking. When I was eighteen, my mum applied for Personal Independence Payments (PIP), but they rejected it. She said I shouldn't bother because of her experience with them, but once I was connected to Elmore, we ended up applying – after a lot of deadlock over the interview, trying to make me come to Reading, and Elmore explaining that wouldn't work, they sent someone to my home. At that time I could only say 'Yes', 'No', or 'I don't know.' The assessor was shocked at my state, and he said he was thankful Elmore could reach isolated people.

I remember, we talked about medication for a long time, we probably talked about it for a year before we went to the doctor and got anything. For a long time I wouldn't see a GP, since my old one died when I was thirteen or fourteen. I wouldn't take anything in pill form after I got ill one day as a kid after taking tablet medication. But eventually we worked out that there was medication I could take in liquid form. It was a long time before I started taking it, but that liquid diazepam then helped me start going out to an evening course.

We just did a lot of small things, like going sometimes outside for the meeting, or going in the car, and driving down somewhere to sit and talk. Lately when Maron's come, we go walk because of Covid, we'll walk down to the park and just talk on a bench for a bit. At the start, I wouldn't do that. If we had gone back five years, and he had come and said, 'Can we go for a walk outside?', I would have said no. So that's something that now we do. I feel comfortable doing that.

It's been very helpful. Because Maron didn't push me. Or maybe he kind of knew when to push and when not to push. He understood that side of me, whereas some people in the past that I've worked with would maybe push you when they shouldn't. It's also helped things between me and my mum. My mum's the only person I have, but we have trust issues. When I have attacks, she has to leave work and be at home. Working to address this between us, for Maron, it was like walking on a thread. Now we'd both say that our relationship has improved a lot. I have honest conversations with my mum.

Since we started working together, I did a year at college, in carpentry. It was only beginner-level, but it was a big step. But then that was just before all the Coronavirus stuff. I made all that progress, and then went into the massive lockdown. So now it feels like a lot of regression, if that makes sense, because I kind of got stopped in my tracks. When lockdown started, it was kind of like going back how I used to be as a person, being forced to stay inside all the time. But this time, it was not by choice. You kind of had to do it. So that was very triggering.

I've worked on getting back to where I was prior to lockdown. It's a lot of small steps again. This time around it is a bit different mentally, though. Before, it was more anxiety that was stopping me. This time, it's kind of more feeling down and depressed. Because I made all that progress. And it wasn't me that took it away, it was outside things. I don't have as much anxiety as when I first started. There are places where I'm comfortable now, I've built up to going outside around here. That's not very anxiety-provoking, but if it was a new situation, say if I did have to go to college again, or a job, that would probably be a big trigger.

But before the lockdowns, we did work towards a lot. I was going to college, I was taking meds. Then it got to the point where I stopped taking them, and then the Coronavirus stuff, then the lockdowns. I would say I had an eating disorder before, when I weighed the lowest I was maybe six stone, seven or eight pounds. That was around the time I started with Elmore. And we had worked on that. So my eating habits were good. Then during the lockdown, I lost quite a bit of weight again. I think going to the gym introduced good eating habits, it would make me want to eat and eat good foods. So having that taken away, led to the diet spinning out. I couldn't really get into a consistent pattern at home. We couldn't really make much progress. During the lockdowns we would have probably a phone meeting once a week for fifteen, twenty minutes. But it's not really the same over the phone.

The lockdowns were just a bit of a headache really – you have progressed and then it gets kind of taken away. Then it gets kind of tiring to keep doing the same thing again. But I'm getting too comfortable. I need to kind of push towards other stuff. I've been working on making sure I eat enough, I'm back at the gym now a few times a week. That is probably one of the biggest mental health things for me. That definitely helps with a lot of stuff. Losing that in the lockdowns was a big trigger.

Now I have a driving license, and I'm thinking of applying for a job as a driver. I'm going to the gym on a regular basis, even though I've taken many steps backwards, because of Covid and lockdowns. But I can use the techniques that we've worked on. We're trying to figure out what next, we're back setting goals, hoping there are no other lockdowns. What I've learned from anxiety is, even if you don't want to face it, that is the best way.

Story 12: Keep On Going

I was an in-care child from the age of sixteen till I was twenty-five. At that time, I already knew what I wanted to do with my life. I was already on the right track. Social Services helped support me with college and pursuing my goals, so they wanted me to continue that, but also felt that I needed support along the way. Obviously when Social Services leave you that can be very daunting, and stressful, for a person that's been in care most of their life. That's why I initially got involved with Elmore, about three years ago now.

Before I met Elmore, I had a bit of a difficult situation where I was living, I had a nightmare neighbour next door. I worked at the hospital for two years then moved to the doctor's surgery when Covid first started, and because doctor's appointments weren't face to face anymore, I was getting quite a lot of abuse off patients. And then because I had that problem with my neighbour as well, I was going to work with abuse, and I was coming home and getting abuse. So, it was just really daunting, and it really affected my mental health, which is what Elmore supported me with. Elmore helped me go to the MP and stuff because my housing association were useless. They stood by me and argued that I needed to be moved, and I eventually got given Band Two. They helped me to take myself away and move, and just decide what I want to do next.

After I moved, I started to work on my self-esteem, and my confidence, and study as well. Elmore helped me to go to training courses, like 'Managing Anxiety', and they supported me when I had to go to hospital and things like that. When I had problems with my job, they talked to me about it. They helped me feel confident and that I was making the right decision to step away, and to reflect on my problems and make myself feel better. I don't know what would have happened if I didn't take myself away from that.

With anxiety and depression, you can spiral out of control and listen to the negative voice, and people like me don't have many friends, or we don't go out. But Elmore, you can phone them up and say, oh, you know, 'I feel like this,' and, and they will call you. When I'm crying or when I feel like I'm going to self-harm or something. Just to have somebody at the end of the phone talking me through what it is and why. And making me feel it's okay, it's not me. It makes me feel like I'm not so alone.

I'm just taking this time to get back on my feet. I've studied quite a lot. I've done five years of education after school. Doing the courses that I did - Child Care, Health and Social Care, Social Science, Awareness of Mental Health Problems... really made me very aware how I had been treated wasn't normal, and how you should be treated, and how other people should be treated, and respected.

I've learned a lot about boundaries. It's so hard. I didn't used to put boundaries in with my sister, but I've started to lately. Which is quite good. But it's taken me a lot. I learned about boundaries in college but it's different putting them in place. Trace has really helped me with that. And she's congratulated me when I've done it. And I hadn't even known that I've done it. She's like, 'You've just put in a boundary,' and I'm like, 'What?!'.

It made me realise that I don't need my family. I can do without, and I'm not on my own. And it made me see who positive and negative people are, even friends, relationships. And just how to cope with certain aspects of life. Like, who to turn to when you need counselling, and stuff. That really made me realise that I want to help other people as well, because I want to be a mental health worker. That's my dream.

I would say Elmore supported me to be a better person and achieve the things that I want to achieve. I think I would have struggled greatly if I didn't have somebody to talk to and to point me in the right direction of things that I need and push me in a positive way. I would have struggled a lot more to reach my goals and my achievements, if I didn't have that support.

When you suffer with mental health conditions, to have somebody there that understands and makes you feel like you're not alone in it, and that it's understandable why you've made decisions that you have, I think that it does help to move you forwards. I don't know where I'd be if Elmore didn't take me on and support me. It means a lot that they are still here for me today. And I think I'll always think of Trace and the support she gave me you know, even ten years down the line.

I just completed my last college course, which was Awareness of Mental Health Problems. I passed that. And then I did a course on domestic abuse. So, I'm a Domestic Abuse Champion. And I'm working. I'm doing some volunteering currently at The Porch, which is helping people that are homeless. Giving them a meal, and clean clothes, and letting them use the computer, to like work, or just talk to them about things. Which because I ran away from home when I was sixteen, and I got put in a hostel, I kind of understand. So that's nice because people feel like they can talk to me because I've been through it.

I'm going to do the Porch for a while I reckon, and then I might go to Turning Point. I'm gonna do that for a bit. And then, mid-New Year I want to probably get a part time job, but at the minute I'm gonna volunteer until I find the right setting for me. And then hopefully, they've got a job where I'm comfortable, where I enjoy.

I want to make a difference. I think that where you've overcome in the past, you can overcome again, and it will make you stronger. Don't put up with your family or your friends or your partner, treating you in a way that you shouldn't be treated. Find the right people for advice on how to get out of that situation.

Just because you're going through it right now, doesn't mean it's gonna go on forever. It's okay to take time for yourself and to figure out what you want to do with your life. There's nothing wrong with that, you're not failing because you're doing that, you're trying to become a better person. And it's okay to feel down on some days and struggle and not want to get up or get dressed, but you know, always look for a better day. I guess that's what I would say to myself if I was younger – 'Keep on going'...

African Families in the UK

African Families in the UK (AFiUK) supports African and other ethnic minority families where the parents were born overseas and their children were born in the UK. This often creates a clash of cultural identities within families as well as between families and UK institutions. AFiUK's services include women's groups, parenting courses, children's activities, facilitating dialogue between families and public services, and training in cultural awareness for public service providers.

The following two stories were told by one of AFiUK's parent advocates, and a parent accessing support from AFiUK.

Story 13: So You Can Fly

I first heard about African Families in the UK in 2018 after I stopped working, once I had my younger children. I had become a stay-at-home mum and childminder. Another childminder brought me to this group at the community centre. And it was so nice to get a chance to sit around with other ladies, all immigrants. We'd talk and laugh. You know, you stop thinking of yourself as a mum, you're just being girls. It was time just for me. We did lots of courses. Exercises, or courses that were more serious, we had one to do with the law, getting to know your rights. Then slowly but surely, I realised that some of the ladies came from a very traumatic background, and needed a little extra support. So I started to volunteer to try and help. Because I was very privileged, I had no trauma I was carrying with me. Then my youngest went to school, and Jacqui at AFiUK was like, 'I could do with someone to help with admin.' I started on just two days a week. And next it was, 'You can also be a parent advocate.' And that's how I found myself more and more immersed.

At AFiUK, they see something in me that I don't see. They keep saying they see a leader in me, and after you've been told that many times, you start thinking, 'I need to find this leader in me as well!' The way AFiUK is run is, 'We want to develop you so you can fly.' It's all about empowering. And so because of that culture, when I am supporting any family, my idea is not for them to be dependent on me, it's to empower them, to give them the tools so they can do it as well. Just like I'm learning, I want them to learn and fly.

We have to go through the whole safeguarding training, because the families trust us. We have to be their safe space. We also do training in domestic abuse, so that you can pick up the signs. They did a course last year on mental first aid. We get all these skills so that whilst we are working with these families, we might not have all the answers, but we've got a bit of knowledge to point them where they need to go. Most of the ladies who are parent advocates have got lived experience, so they have that empathy. And we are always learning from each other. I enjoy it. When you start writing reports, you're like, 'Okay, this is serious.' But the rest of the time you're just befriending somebody, showing them there's this community, there's people who care, people who believe in you.

Sometimes we get a self-referral, somebody will just come and say, 'I need help, I'm in this situation,' with family law, or social services. And sometimes it's a referral from social services, they realise that maybe the problem in a family is a cultural issue, as opposed to them being neglectful to their children.

Basically, we befriend them, we get to know them and their family life and the dynamics. How it is where they're from, their cultures, all those things. Then we attend the meetings to hear what the different agencies are saying. We try and hear what they hear, then tell them what we understand by it. Because sometimes nobody's hearing anyone, you know. Social services know the UK law, and that's what they're following. And these people are coming from their culture.

We have this course called BOMA Cross-Cultural Parenting, which runs over 10 weeks. Success with a parent comes when they start reflecting on how they're dealing with their children. We don't want them to lose their culture. Our cultures are rich, they're what makes us who we are. I'm a Kenyan, and from a particular tribe. There's some things I want my children to learn. But I also have to remember they're growing up in a different culture, and think how to bring the two together in a positive way. The way I was brought up is not 100% the way I am going to bring up my children. Everybody has to find their own way, at the end of it. But the most important bit is to know the laws in this country. The idea is at some point to get a short course going for the social workers, too, so that they are aware.

We start the course by writing a list of all the things we want for our children. And then we have a list of all the things that frighten us, what might happen to the children. Like black boys, we fear them being looked at in a certain way, you know. Our fears are so controlling, and so we bring children up just looking at the fears, forgetting about everything else. And so for the parent, when they start reflecting on that, they start seeing, 'Okay, I shouted at my son because he came home at 7.30. But it's because I'm afraid for him.' I didn't grow up in a very traditional household, but there are still things I struggled with here. As children, we didn't talk where there were grownups around. You could sit there quietly and listen. But it's very different here. Children talk all the time, they come and interrupt. They're in this culture where they almost see themselves as equals. I think there's a middle point. In my house we strive to make them aware of what's going on when there's two grownups talking: we're actually having a conversation. Can we finish our conversation, and then you can bring in yours? Teaching them how to be respectful and patient without being told, 'You cannot talk in front of grownups.' But if it was back home, it'd be like, 'Out! Now!' Or I'll just give you The Eyes, and you'll know you're not supposed to be in this room.

Another important thing is coming-of-age ceremonies. Our boys go through circumcision around 14. Traditionally, all the villagers would strip you naked, put clay all over you. And then you'd run around the village to the river, where you'd find the traditional doctor who circumcised you. You'd be taken somewhere else to heal for two weeks, only amongst men. Most people here just get their children circumcised as babies. And then maybe they'll do a celebration when they're older. But my husband wanted to do the real thing. So my son and his friend here, who's also Kenyan, we took them to a doctor in London. Then they were taken to an uncle's house to heal. And we as the mums were not allowed to communicate with them. Oh, it was so difficult! But the dads would go with food and spend time with them and talk to them about the changes coming. And it was really good. I don't know whether it's just me imagining but I felt there was a big change in my son. Just a bit more responsible, a bit more helpful in the house. I think hearing all these men telling him, 'You're moving to the next stage in your life, you're going towards being a man,' he took that in.

And then last summer, we went to Kenya, because doing it properly meant my brother had to give my son a cow. It was good for him to see the larger family, how much they love him, how much they're proud of him. And they recognise that he's one of them.

One of the fears that's a driving force for a lot of families is that our children will not know their culture. But the question is, is it a good cultural experience? If we talk about the cultures where they practice FGM, why do they do that? So it's educating the families on the history of some of these things. And asking, how is it benefiting my child? We have been brought up in a culture where you don't ask why. So asking that question at all, it's a new concept. Sometimes families get very defensive, which is understandable. But we've planted the seed, and they will go and think about it, and see whether it's necessary.

The idea is also to expose them to all the positive things going on in Oxford, all the different things they can get the children involved with. Homework club, coding, storytelling, we're also working with the university exposing them to different aspects of science. We want them to know you can flourish in this county. You will find lots of people just keep themselves to themselves, hiding away, just raising their children to the minimum standard. We want to show them the sky's the limit. Just because maybe you live here in the Leys, the perception of what people in the Leys are doesn't have to be your reality. You can fly! And it's the same thing with being an immigrant. You can still fly.

Story 14: Negotiation, Conversation, Dialogue

I moved to Oxford in March 2021. It was still Covid. That was a hard time. It was hard to meet people. We've been coming to the UK for vacation in Central London. Living is a whole different thing from coming for vacation. The reason we decided to move to Oxford was actually my son. From 2019, he was in the UK as a boarding student, he was 9 years old at that time. Every three weeks, they allowed them to go home for a weekend and they call it Exeat. So I was always flying in and out, every three weeks. Then I had an experience flying with British Airways, there was so much turbulence, I was so afraid that the plane will crash that day. The turbulence was so much. Everybody was shouting, running. We eventually landed, but I told my husband, 'This UK, I'm not coming again. But this boy is too young for this separation.' So my husband thought the next best option is for me to come for my master's degree so that we can be here together. I just finished my master's degree at the university.

I got to know African Families in the UK when I was reported. We went to church one Sunday morning, near my neighbourhood. My 6-year-old daughter had my phone. So while the service was going on, she was snapping pictures with my phone, she snapped so many pictures of people, actually over a hundred pictures. After the church service I took the phone from her and she started screaming and shouting and crying. And I used my finger in her face, saying 'Stop crying, why are you making noise?' Then the next day, Monday morning, my vicar called me and said that he was told that I beat my child in the church. I'm like, 'No, I didn't beat her, I just took the phone from her, and she was shouting and screaming.' But he said he was informed that I beat her, so he has to report me to the social worker.

So they reported me, and then the social worker told us that there's a woman called Jacqui, she runs this organisation called African Families in the UK, which offers guidance for parents who have moved here. We had a different approach on how to deal with kids at home. Back home, your child can do something wrong and you spank your child. But here, you spank your child, you get into trouble. Jacqui took us on a course called Cross-Cultural Parenting. It was quite informative. I wish I knew Jacqui earlier. Before I met Jacqui I felt like my world had come to an end. Because I was being made to feel like I'm not parenting my children well enough. I felt like I should just kill myself because the social worker made me to feel incapable, I felt like I should die. Because I know how much I'm working hard to take care of my kids, and for somebody to make me feel like I'm not doing enough... it made me feel so bad. The social worker frustrated my life. So when we had the parenting course with Jacqui, it was a big relief for me and for us, we now had clarity and understanding of what it takes to parent in the new environment we found ourselves in.

They were also visiting the house, sometimes they'd call the children. They'd meet them in school to ask them, 'How has your mum been doing?' I've never beaten them. So they're not in any form of abuse. It was so hard for me, I don't know anybody here. No relations, no friends, no family members. I was absolutely on my own with my kids. And I know nothing about the law, I know nothing about anything. And it's not something that you take lightly. Someone coming to your house, they want to see your children's room unannounced, this kind of thing. I felt like I was in a prison. So I really love that training that Jacqui gave us. It was really helpful. And her support with the social worker. Jacqui is very knowledgeable. In fact, she's an all-rounder. There is virtually nothing you ask her, that she doesn't know what to say about it. Everything, be it children, Government, anything. I wish I lived next door to her! She has given me a lot of relief. Before I had no rest of mind, my mind was running to and from. Now I'm free.

What I took from the first course was basically about parenting in a different way. Because the way we parent at home is different from here, whatever you tell your child to do, he doesn't have the option to say no. Parents are supreme. But here it's a conversation you will have with your child or children. So you are going to reach an agreement. Negotiation, conversation, dialogue. They bring in their own ideas, then everybody will now agree on the best option. We needed to know that you cannot spank a child here, even when they're little, when they're one, two years, everybody has an opinion. So setting boundaries and limits. Back home now, when I call, I tell them, don't beat your child, don't shout at a child. Just communicate, set boundaries, if you do this, this happens. Because what I see is beating the child is not the best, actually. You make the children run away from you. After a while, they're not going to share things about themselves to you, you're not going to be their friend. They will see you as a mean parent. You're trying to correct them, trying to make them be a good citizen, to behave, but this environment does not work on that idea of parenting. We do rewards now, with the younger ones. Do this, we're going to give you a sticker. And they're so excited! If they do something good, 'Oh please, give me a sticker!' So they now struggle for rewards. It's working like magic, honestly.

Since then, I shared my contact details with AFiUK and I joined the parenting WhatsApp group. Any communication they share there, I get it. Some of the programmes are for children. If they are going for an excursion, I bring them out. But there are also programmes for parents, like what we are having right now, we have

been having this parenting course for a while now, it will run for 12 weeks. There is also another programme called Cancer Women Talk organised by AFiUK. These are the benefits of AFiUK. In all of these programmes we have breakfast and lunch when we meet. While the children are in school and I have the time, I join as well. The one we did with my husband was how to parent your children in a country where you were not parented yourself. Then I joined a new course with a broader approach. We talked about domestic abuse, we did a bit too about safeguarding for children. It has made me more aware. It's shocking for me to know, that the rate of domestic abuse in this country is still very high, despite all the laws, awareness, and interventions by the government. I compare it to back home, where we have no government intervention. The men have control over the women everything they say is what you do. But here we have a situation where women have an opinion, but the domestic abuse is still very high. So that's shocking to me.

I like being in the sessions. It's so lovely for somebody like me. I have made some friends in AFiUK. I'm still trying to figure out how the English people behave, and all of that. So knowing AFiUK is a big relief for me, especially when I was under the social worker. We come to this parenting programme every Friday and we share breakfast, we share ideas, we share what our experiences are, we laugh. People from all over Africa. I can't wait for every Friday to come to the programme, I try not to miss a session. Connections, with time, that will be a reality. We're getting to know each other. Maybe further on we can collaborate and share ideas. I love this group so much. Now I can call somebody other than Jacqui! Now I've got more friends.

Home-Start Oxford

Home-Start Oxford is a voluntary organisation providing free, confidential support to families with at least one child under five in Oxford or the west of Oxfordshire. It offers non-judgemental support for those experiencing challenges related to family life including but not limited to postnatal depression, isolation, bereavement, or illness.

The following two stories were told by a trustee and volunteer for Home-Start Oxford, and a parent who has accessed support.

Story 15: Okay Not To Be Okay

I have four children. A boy who's twenty-five from my first relationship, and a little girl, Evelyn, who's eleven. Then from my husband I've got Theo, who is now six, and Henry, who is five. I met my husband and after many miscarriages, we finally managed to hold on to Theo. He was born at thirty-eight weeks. We had a bit of a rocky ride with him at the beginning. He was in ICU for a bit, he had prolonged jaundice, and he slept for the first twelve weeks of his life. And then at twelve weeks he woke up, and he's never been asleep since. Literally.

Henry was born when Theo was fifteen months. It was at that time that I realised that Theo was quite quirky. I had my suspicions at the beginning, because of the sleeping for twelve weeks. And then he didn't like breastfeeding. He didn't have that bond. He didn't do kisses. I started noticing these little quirky things.

He would lick everything, anything that was new outside. So if there was a new pavement being laid, he'd lick it. I noticed as young as two that he couldn't communicate his frustration in a good way. It was always violence. Even at a young age he wanted so much routine. If it was broken, then the meltdowns were something I'd never experienced with my first two children. They were above and beyond meltdowns. And he didn't sleep – at all. He was up every hour.

Anyway, the months went by, and I kept in contact with health services, often saying 'There's something not quite right.' I rang once and said 'I cannot cope with him.' I actually don't remember much after that. I just kind of blocked things out, I seem to have missed a six-month period in my life. Then I had a meeting with the paediatrician. That's when they diagnosed the autism. And then the school got involved and referred me to Home-Start. That's when my saving grace came along, and Wendy called me. We had an interview and it just all went from there.

I'm still very angry. At the beginning when I reached out for help from health services, nobody contacted me or touched base for two weeks. My husband and my mum tried to sort of keep me together. And I think that's when I went to the GP and he put me on some anti-depressants. It's difficult when you finally get the courage to kind of reach out to somebody and then you're ignored. When I reflect back now, I just think I could have been a single mum living in the middle of nowhere with no friends and family. But I'm so lucky that I do have great family and a great support network with my friends.

With Theo I was just finding life challenging. It was like treading treacle every single day. I didn't quite understand him. Even between me and my husband, things were really bad. My husband's got Asperger's, and he doesn't quite understand Theo himself, although they're very close and they understand each other's silence. But he doesn't understand his needs. And so it broke down the family. We're still together, but it was a really stressful situation. My daughter was saying she wanted to go live with her dad. Theo was just so needy, twenty-four hours a day. And once the anger and his aggression kicked in, it just made family life even worse.

We can't leave them on their own, nothing. And I think that's what's so exhausting. You know, we're not a family that can run the bath, they both get in and I can put the clothes away. Because the last time I did that, Theo tried to drown Henry. Henry is very scared of Theo at times. And then I have that guilt, that I'm allowing him to bully my other children. Theo set fire to the house a couple of weeks ago. Luckily, it stayed contained in the kitchen. But you know, it's just constant. Where's Theo? What's he doing? You get yourself in a right old tizz. And then you think right, tomorrow, tomorrow's the day – I'm gonna be a really good mum tomorrow. And then within half an hour of getting up, Theo's smashed up the house, told me I'm a fat cow. And I'm like, 'Yeah, I'm done now, see ya!'

I spent so much time not wanting my life, wishing I'd never had him, wishing things were different. You then go into that mother's guilt, 'I can't believe I ever thought that, why would I wish that?' But there are times where you just want to pack your bags and run away. I think in so many situations parents feel like that, that 'I can't do this anymore.' But they would never say it.

That's one thing I've learned. I have to say it, how it is now. This morning was a bad day, the usual refusing to go to school, the shouting, the aggression, smashing up the house, not wanting to get dressed – and that is every single day.

After the school drop off, I go to my sister-in-law's and we drink coffee, or we talk outside the school gates, just sort of rant, rage, talk about it. When I have a bad morning, and I feel very tearful, and then I speak to my friends, it just makes me feel a bit better. People need to start coming forward.

We couldn't function as a normal family. I couldn't go out with my children. My daughter wouldn't come out with us because if Theo kicked off, she'd get embarrassed. And I hated people looking and staring. You just know society is judging you. So I just stopped doing stuff, I'd go to the park and pray to God that he didn't hurt a child, and that was pretty much all we ever did. So when I knew I was gonna get a home support worker from Home-Start, I said to the kids, 'We can go out, we can do stuff now as a family!' And then bloody lockdown came and everything was done over Skype. I was so gutted.

But what I found useful was that with Jude, my first home support worker, it ended up being like a counselling session for an hour. I could just be so honest, talking about how I feel guilty that I resent him. Or things that I needed to do, like find out more about his sensory processing disorder, but I never get the time, she would do that for me. It was just a little bit of extra weight lifted off my shoulders.

Then Jude moved away and I got Jane. She's lovely, and she gives me hands-on support, she will meet me places. I've always wanted to take the kids to our local café for a hot chocolate. But I can't do it on my own because Theo's a runner. So we did that one time. And then I always struggle leaving the park, because Theo will run and then I'm left with Henry and Evelyn. So she started every Friday coming to the park with me.

The Home-Start support's ended now, because of the age thing, now we don't have any kids under five. I'm gutted. It was just so nice, someone actually thinking about us and our daily struggles, it was just nice to know that people were there caring for us. Jane one day said to me, 'I don't know how you do this every day.' It was just nice for someone to acknowledge how bloody hard having a child with additional needs or any child that's got problems is, it just absolutely consumes you. It's just a roller coaster. There's days I just feel so sorry for him. And then there's days that I could literally drop him off at Social Services and say 'Don't bring him back.' Because it's just exhausting mentally.

But with the support I've had, I think Jude taught me I am a good mum. And Wendy's been like my big sister. I just felt like she had my back. And Jane's very much like you're doing a great job, we can do it. So she gives me the confidence. It's not my fault, and it's okay not to be okay. It just taught me that these negative feelings, this resentment towards Theo, in periods of my life was normal. You end up spending all night laid in bed crying, thinking, 'I'm such an awful mum.' And I just have to think, 'Well, my other three kids are okay.' So I didn't do that much of a bad job. I am a good mum.

Names have been changed to protect privacy.

Story 16: The Choppy Seas Of Parenthood

My involvement with Home-Start began when I came back to Oxford after four years in Edinburgh. I wasn't working, I'd ceased practice as a lawyer, my own children were grown. It's a cliché, but I really wanted to give back. I wanted to work with younger people, and I found out about Home-Start.

Home-Start Oxford is one of over 200 Home-Start organisations, which are independent, but come under the umbrella of Home-Start UK.

What appealed to me was that Home-Start trains volunteers to support families with at least one child under five. We then visit them in their homes, and for as long as there's a need, up to 18 months to two years, though volunteers can elect to continue contact with the family after formal support ends.

It's value is that it's a befriending model. It's in the home, completely separate from social services, we always say to the family, this is your choice, our coming into your home is something you have to feel comfortable with, it's in your gift.

I joined Home-Start Oxford in December 2010, as a trustee, at a time when it was in a difficult situation. There'd been a crisis, the funding had started to fall away. There was only one coordinator, working part-time, and at times no receptionist, so the trustees had to help out in the scheme as well as being responsible for governance and fundraising, we were really doing everything. There were only about five of us.

Although I also wanted to work directly with families, and did the volunteer training in 2011, there was such a need for fundraising and recruiting, working towards getting up and running again, that I only supported one family. It was a very challenging time. We did eventually get a Big Lottery Fund grant, which enabled us to employ somebody who'd been working at children's centres, and we managed to keep it all going.

The volunteer training is over a period of about eight weeks, in a group where we sometimes share personal experiences, but also learn a huge amount about safeguarding, the development of the child, and the development of the parenting relationship. The volunteer needs to either be a parent, or to have been in some sort of caring relationship with a child/children. Somebody who knows what the choppy seas of parenthood are like.

We get referrals all the time. The referrals can be self-referral, or from health visitors, social services, the GP, even a neighbour. The family coordinators we employ visit the family at home to do an assessment, after that choose a volunteer to suit the family, and then there's a match visit, when the coordinator comes with you to meet the family.

One of the great skills that the coordinators have is that matching choice. They have such a good sense of which volunteer is going to work with which family. After the match visit we arrange to visit the family, usually weekly for 2 – 4 hours. That way, you've got a chance for things to develop, to help out, even if it's just holding the baby while mum has a shower, or gets a meal ready, all sorts of things. We listen, encourage, signpost to other organisations if for example there's an issue about finances or housing, or flagging a mother and baby group. We have supervision with the coordinator every six weeks to check how things are going, if there are any problems or concerns. Sharing, too, as they're the one person with whom you can discuss anything that comes up in the family. So it's all relationships of confidence and trust.

I really believe strongly in the Home-Start model, it's so important for parents to gain confidence in looking after young children. So I took on the role of Chair in 2012 when that was needed. My husband was head of one of the Oxford colleges, I was often meeting alumni and I would mention my work with Home-Start. Several had heard of it, some were involved with grant-giving foundations, and suggested application to those. I spent a lot of time writing letters, getting funds in.

One very successful fundraising initiative was music-based – a GradeOneAThon, as we called it. We got enough musicians to form an orchestra, they agreed to have a go at learning a new instrument to grade one level, and then put on a concert playing those instruments in Oxford Town Hall in September 2021. It was a triumph, and raised £40,000!!

Part of being chair was amazing, but it was much more burdensome than I'd anticipated. You know, it was very hard to mouth, rarely more than one or two years forward funding, always having to think ahead, though I was really well supported by my fellow trustees.

We had a quality assurance review in 2013 which gave us a kind of clean slate, really. We changed the management structure, and recruited three new trustees, one of whom was subsequently employed as scheme manager in 2016, and is now our CEO. When she came onto the board in 2014, she'd come from a community foundation background in London, was aware of what the bigger grant organisations required, and how to put together really big funding bids. With her we moved from having an annual budget of about £50,000 in 2011 to having more like £250,000 currently. The organisation is substantially bigger than it used to be, too, in Oxford, and we've extended into Witney. When I started, the children's centres still existed, with lots of early years support, including stay and play sessions. So much of that vanished in the austerity cuts, and now we're doing more group work to deal with the primary problem for parents of young children, social isolation.

After five and a half years being Chair, I was pretty burned out, stepped down in 2017, and finally retired as a trustee in April 2021. After being at arm's length, I just wanted to do something direct. I did the volunteer training in 2022, and from August 22 to April 23 I supported a family. So I've got the full experience. Back in 2011 I'd supported one woman for about six weeks. She'd come through really severe postnatal depression, and just wanted somebody to look after the baby, so she could pick up some of the threads of her old life, practising the cello, doing Christmas cards. It was really interesting to see how much you can give, in what feels like a very little way.

The family I supported this time had more complex problems, but gradually they felt able to confide in me. While I was with them a baby was born, and I have had the pleasure of knowing that little one from birth. Volunteers always say 'I don't know that I'm doing very much.' You're sitting there, as part of the family, helping out - such a privilege and a trust. I know volunteers who've kept in touch with their families for years, really years.

Mostly people think support is for families who've got quite significant challenges, financial or through disability or whatever. But it's not always like that. Having a child is an amazing experience, but it can also be really stressful. For women, in particular, but also fathers. One thing I'd like to see across the country is more engagement for dads. Everyone comes under stress with parenting, more so if they haven't had the most positive experience of being parented themselves, it can be very difficult. I've had three children of my own, and two stepchildren. I'm reasonably sanguine now. But there were times I remember holding the baby tight, thinking, 'If this goes on much longer, I'm going to crack!' I don't know many people who feel confident about parenting, especially in those early months, where this small being can prevent you from getting dressed during the day, getting out. With my first child, I'd originally planned to go back to work at three months – after all, I'd have a sling, I could breastfeed, disposable nappies had just come in - I thought it was going to be easy, I'd just have a baby as well! Ho ho! That changed very quickly!!

Throughout my life, I've always done voluntary work, both when I was a student, and when I worked in law. I see need everywhere. It's just a question of where to focus, where I think I can be of use. At the moment, I want to do the one-on-one, be of direct help, to give back. It validates me personally. A lot lies beneath the surface of every person. If some of my experience is able to assist, support, empower somebody else, and I can give them a bit more confidence in themselves, then that's what I'd like to do at this point in my life.

Actually, I was a very unconfident teenager and young woman. I think it's part of why I feel that link with the people I'm supporting. If anyone had said to me at 18, 'One day you'll stand in front of a crowded hall, talking about an organisation you care passionately about,' I would not have believed them. I've gained a wealth of knowledge and experiences on the back of that decision to go to Home-Start. And become even more passionate about provision for children. I remain appalled at the way in which funding was taken away from early years provision. If I were younger, I would really think about going into politics to rage about it all. I mean, priorities are priorities. And what is more important than the next generation? And being custodians for them, and of the world to come?

Old Fire Station

The Old Fire Station (OFS) is a centre for creativity that encourages people from all backgrounds to understand and shape the world in which we live through stories, the arts, and connecting with others. It shares its building with the homelessness charity, Crisis, and is committed to including people facing tough times in the running of the centre and the cultural life of Oxford.

Hidden Spire is a project run in collaboration with Crisis. It brings together professional artists, Crisis clients and wider members of the community to create and present art. *Atlantis* was OFS's 5th Hidden Spire theatre production, which took audience members on a tour of an Oxford recovering in the aftermath of a devastating flood. The team worked together on the project every step of the way – everything from set design, scriptwriting and front-of-house is done as a collaboration. These stories are told by two individuals who took part in the project.

Story 17: It Put A Glow In Me

One thing I would like to go down on paper is a massive 'Thank you' to Rowan. I was withdrawing and withdrawing, my usual behaviour. I was in a café, having a cup of tea, and Rowan was there with a few other people, talking about Atlantis. I couldn't help but look over, and Rowan caught my eye. She stopped what she was doing and sort of bee-lined for me and said, 'Right, we're doing this, Atlantis, I want you to be in the chorus, it's nothing massive, it'll be a lot of fun.' Rowan did dupe me slightly! I had no idea it was gonna be a show, and people would be coming to it and there'd be audiences. But she had a way of just drawing me in and making me feel comfortable and safe. I knew my illness would not want me to go, but I said 'Yes.'

As soon as I walked in that studio, it just felt really nice. The people there were so friendly. Straight away, I could just feel a certain energy in that room – it didn't matter what I did, I could've tripped over and fell flat on my face, and everyone probably would have laughed, and I just would have laughed with them. At no point did I feel like I was being judged for my failings in any way, which was quite foreign to me. My awkwardness walking into a room is overwhelming, but that room managed to drag me in. My brain's a bully, and they started beating that bully away. That warm, happy feeling, it was an emotion that I'd forgotten about. I've been so down for two or three years. It was very overwhelming, but a wonderful, beautiful feeling.

We sat down in a circle and did something that I didn't believe I was capable of, even when I was at my best as a human being: we did a reading of the script. I put my hand up and said, 'I'll take a character, I'll read.' Now, I suffer from dyslexia quite badly, so the thought of reading out in front of people should have petrified me, but it didn't, it excited me, another emotion that I had not felt for a very long time. I just felt like it doesn't matter if I mess up, no one in here is going to judge me. I read maybe a paragraph or two, which might not seem a lot but to me that's an immense amount. And not only did I read it, I managed to inject a character into it. We were sitting in a room, people reading these different characters and then me chiming in, and suddenly it becomes something, the story started coming to life. It was just such an amazing thing; it was so much fun. And the laughter which started happening, I hadn't experienced being in a room with people chuckling for so long. It put a glow in me to be part of something like that. That first day, I really sort of got this bug.

There was so much going on, so much sound, so many visuals, which would usually bombard my senses and I can't handle it. But everything was taken care of – there was food, there were safe spaces for me to go. That doesn't happen out in the world, if things get too much out there, I have to run home as quick as I can, get back to my safe space. Whereas there, if I had these feelings, it was built in, ready for you. If you're going to slip, if you're feeling vulnerable, if everything's getting too much, there's someone and there's somewhere which can cope with that for you. That was massive. And to have that explained to everybody as well, so it wasn't just for you, you know, there's other people there who'll need that – that made me feel not alone, not the odd one sticking out.

I still had those moments when I had to get away from people, but I was made to feel that I was still safe. The unfortunate thing is that every day I'd come home at the end of it all and assassinate myself. Analysing how I conduct myself, how I speak with people, what I said, have I upset anybody, should I have done this? Should I have

done that? Done this wrong, done that wrong. I'd spend all night, the entire night, just assassinating myself. But as soon as I walked back into those rooms, there was just this feeling of a cuddle, like the room was a big cuddle. So it's alright.

I came in for a chorus but then I got all these other roles helping. I could push boats, I could push coffins! I pushed a lot of things on and off stage. I love that responsibility. I thrived on it. For me, it was otherworldly. We all got to where we had to be on time, we all knew what we needed to do, and then we went and performed. We had that professionalism, but also that wonderful air of camaraderie and fun. A perfect recipe. I had no time to think about my problems or things that have happened in my life. All of the horrible stuff which spends most of the day in my head, it was out. For the first time in a long time, I was actually just sort of living in the moment, and the moment was glorious, it was beautiful.

There's a point in the play when four of us have to run all the way around the outside of the building – out of the back, round by the bus stop, through the fire exit, back into the wings of the stage. People are performing, so you have to be quiet, there can't be a trip or stumble. We're all in this very tight, dark space, black curtains all around, and there's a coffin in there. Every night we had to really hold our laughter down because it was just so funny trying to manoeuvre in that space with four people, get Jenny in the coffin, Martin has gotta have the mop, then where's the bouquet of rubber gloves gone. It's just thirty seconds of madness going on, which nobody could see or hear, and we were giggling like schoolkids. Then the curtain would come back, and we were in a funeral scene, so we would have to deadpan suddenly. There was a little curve ball like that every night, which we had to get through, but we did. And then the curtain would come down. And all of us turn around and go, 'The wheels stopped... I couldn't see the thing... I know!' All of that pressure, making everything work, just sort of deflated, and it was just energy, talking and communication, which I usually struggle with massively, but it was so natural. It was all-absorbing and everything else just dissolved away.

Every one of those people just filled me with hope. Those actors were absolutely amazing. I could understand people in that profession being sort of snobby about it, or not necessarily snobby, but protective. You know, they could have easily said, 'It's my profession, I've worked hard at it, you want me to act along somebody here who can't even go to Sainsbury's without having a panic attack?' But they just seemed to take it in their stride, and helped me to grow and gave me confidence. There was never a 'them' and 'us', it just seemed like such a family group, so early on. Those actors sort of opened up another world.

Theatre is kind of a fit, it feels like, for me, because I'm quite multi-skilled, doing building work, carpentry, cabinetmaking and all of this kind of stuff. So those different facets of what I used to be capable of – what I believed I was no longer capable of – they're good in the theatre, there are so many different aspects. And they made me see that I am definitely capable of certain things. It really stirred something in me. Even the acting side of things, directing, you know, the lighting, the making of sets and all of that, just grabs me, I want to do it all!

If I could eventually get myself back into the world, to do something like that would be sort of dream territory. Atlantis has already been that building block, it's given me the foundation to hope. I find it just absolutely baffling and bewildering how you can

walk into a room and be nurtured in such a way. I never would have thought that was going to happen to me, actually. I thought I would feel like, 'No, you're not worthy to fit in with these sorts of people,' you know, but this just broke that wall down. It's the best medicine.

Story 18: Waking Up And It's Spring

I'm a member of Crisis. I spent nearly a year in the hotel last year, whilst just waiting for somewhere of my own to live, and it was really, really hard going. I mean, I'm forty-eight I don't have any sort of social issues, I've never been homeless before. I never anticipated I was going to be, but you know, one nightmare relationship later and there I was. I mean, if it hadn't been for the support of Crisis at the outset, and then, you know, the Old Fire Station, I'm not even sure I'd still be here.

I'm quite arty crafty by nature. I have been doing sewing and things for a long time. But obviously over the last couple of years life's been very 'interesting', to put it nicely. Anyway, so they asked me if I'd like to do a traineeship in costume. And which, you know, I jumped at the chance of - any excuse to sew. I just thought, what an amazing opportunity.

I was working under Ann, the costume designer (who has worked for things like the Crown on Netflix), who would give me tasks. It was great because Ann would give me a task and then let me get on with it. She wasn't someone who was like overseeing everything all of the time. Obviously, she's got a running list in her head with what's going on. But she kind of let me dress the character of Margarita, essentially. We bought the kimono that she wears at the beginning. And that's beautiful, actually. Everything had to be made to look like it had been cobbled together. And I made her earrings, which were made out of glass leaves, and sparkly bits and sequins and stuff, which were actually remarkably difficult to make. And they seem so inconsequential in the performance, but I guess they added to the overall look. I'm not a jeweler, by any stretch, you know. And so, we did that. And what else did I make for her, like, from scratch? The turban that she wore for the main performance, with the rose on. I made that, that started out as a flat piece of black fabric. So that was quite technical, actually. But it actually turned out really well. I was proud of it in the end.

It was lovely to work with people I wouldn't have met otherwise. People were very chatty and friendly. Everyone that I came across was lovely. I felt really supported by the Old Fire Station. When I couldn't come in, they were very reassuring because I've got quite bad anxiety. And I felt like I was letting people down if I wasn't there. But people accommodated me really, really kindly. And everybody dealt with me with tact and kindness and thought, and I wasn't made to feel different, you know, and I met some amazing people.

To be able to just be involved and to feel, I suppose how most people feel most of the time maybe? And I had forgotten what that felt like. And now I've remembered I want more. I want more of that. I haven't sewed for ten-plus years. And so, it kind of re-awoke a thing in me that reminded me of who I am, or who I could be. And that is massive, I think, in terms of confidence and how you interact in other circumstances.

Because I think when you become a problem, you lose all confidence. Because what have you got to offer? You know, you can't even house yourself.

So instead of it being something I didn't know how to do, or wasn't able to do, this was something I could do. That stretched me, but not in a way that was too frightening. And it reminded me of who I actually am underneath all the dross of just trying to navigate the system, and so on. This gave me a taste of what I could have, and who I actually am. And who, with some effort on my part and some support from people who are very supportive, that I could be, you know, that this could be me all the time.

It sounds silly and a bit over the top, doesn't it? But it is life changing. You know, and it does restore your faith in people. And it does build confidence in ways that I don't even think the Old Fire Station necessarily realise, you know. It's not just about performance, it's not just about the skills that you learn. I mean, that's really important and really special, but it's the other parts that are life altering in really positive ways. The things that they think are just normal, the way that they speak to you, the way that you're talked to, involved, listened to, asked your opinion of, those are things that you lose when you become homeless, or you have some massive social crisis, you know. You don't just lose your home, you lose anything positive, really, you just become this thing to be solved and dealt with. And as I say, because they're all such nice people, I think they just think everybody is like that. And they're not, so it's hugely important.

It's learning to live in a healthier way, and also just remembering that you have value, that you have something to offer, because you're listened to and changes are made because of the suggestions that you've made, even small suggestions. It's those bits that make it feel like a fair exchange. You feel like you're actually engaged in this exchange of ideas, this exchange of skills. Yeah. On an even level, I suppose. I was made to feel valuable and important, and listened to. And those raw skills again, they are life changing, because they change the way that you interact with people, and I think it's starting to get that confidence back. Yeah. It's like the colour coming back into the world.

And then to see the play made real and to go and watch it as an audience. It was magical, and it was believable, and it became this thing when you added the lighting and the set and the acting. You know, it becomes this whole entity of its own, doesn't it? And it is, it's like a whole creature and you're watching it.

I talked to people, and they said, 'Why do you need the arts?' but that's the bit that makes you a real person, and not a statistic. It's like being awakened, isn't it. It's kind of like you've been hibernating for a really long time. And you find that your existing, you know. And I think what this offers, it's like waking up and it's spring.

And ultimately, and in part as a result of this, I'm hoping to go to college, either September coming or the one after, for sure, to do textiles. Just going to college would be a massive thing for me now because I'm forty-eight. I haven't been in education in twenty-something years. This is something that in some way I can find a way of making a career out of, of some sort, you know, and even if I didn't I could still sort of volunteer. I can't imagine never having it again. That would be horrible. I was really sad when it ended.

And so, I am really hoping that I can do more stuff with the Old Fire Station because what I found was it does feed you at a level I'd forgotten. It made me feel like a real person again, like a proper person, I suppose. Yeah, next time they need some funding I'll stand there and talk about how vital the work is, I'd shout it from the rooftops given the chance!

Appendix 4: Funding leverage as reported in the grant monitoring form for Big Ideas grants 2022/23

Organisation	Oxford Community Impact Fund	Total public sector/national lottery funding including Oxford Community Impact Fund	Earned Income (hires, services, ticket sales, etc.)	Trusts and Foundations	Donations & Sponsorships	Total including leverage	Oxford Community Impact Fund percentage	Notes
African Families In The UK (AFiUK) CIC	£9,900.00	£15,000.00	£5,400.00	£15,000.00	£395.00	£35,795.00	28%	
Ark-T Centre	£12,600.00	£4,500.00	£900.00		£39,000.00	£44,400.00	28%	
Arts at the Old Fire Station (the Old Fire Station)	£25,200.00		£247,975.00	£792,089.23	£119,491.99	£1,159,556.22	2%	
Aspire Oxfordshire	£5,850.00		£9,200.00	£15,000.00	£10,000.00	£34,200.00	17%	
Asylum Welcome	£6,750.00	£945,817.00		£573,285.00	£347,904.00	£1,867,006.00	1%	
Barton Community Association	£5,850.00	£2,000.00		£5,000.00	£9,500.00	£16,500.00	35%	
Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground (BLAP)	£6,300.00					£0.00	100%	None reported
Cowley Road Works	£6,300.00					£0.00	100%	None reported
Donnington Doorstep Family Centre	£6,750.00		£500.00		£150.00	£650.00	90%	
Elmore Community Services	£9,000.00					£0.00	100%	None reported
EMBS	£13,500.00					£0.00	100%	None reported

Film Oxford	£13,500.00	£82,980.00	£126,747.00	£1,069.00	£800.00	£211,596.00	6%	
Fusion - Oxford's Community Arts Agency Ltd (Fusion Arts)	£18,000.00	£18,156.00	£31,749.00	£4,200.00		£54,105.00	33%	
Good Food Oxfordshire	£5,850.00	£19,850.00				£19,850.00	29%	
Home-Start Oxford	£6,300.00	£36,000.00		£232,400.00	£33,200.00	£301,600.00	2%	
Justice in Motion	£8,100.00	£65,657.00	£11,071.00		£27,596.00	£104,324.00	8%	
Leys Community Development Initiative (Leys CDI)	£5,850.00			£55,000.00	£2,000.00	£57,000.00	10%	
Makespace Oxford	£5,850.00	£447,312.00	£314,434.74			£761,746.74	1%	
Mandala Theatre Company	£5,400.00		£37,165.77	£98,047.84	£15,000.00	£150,213.61	4%	
My Life My Choice	£4,500.00	£144,514.00	£82,897.00	£226,570.00		£453,981.00	1%	
MyVision Oxfordshire	£4,950.00	£40,175.00		£92,777.00	£167,441.00	£300,393.00	2%	
OVADA	£6,300.00	£545.00	£79,595.00			£80,140.00	8%	
Oxford Contemporary Music (OCM)	£6,300.00	£189,201.00	£18,027.00	£12,500.00	£2,440.00	£222,168.00	3%	
Oxford Hub	£4,500.00			£22,200.00		£22,200.00	20%	
Oxford Playhouse	£18,000.00		£3,168,611.00	£135,000.00	£95,631.00	£3,399,242.00	1%	
Oxford Pride	£4,950.00	£2,000.00	£7,630.00		£17,200.00	£26,830.00	18%	
Oxford Youth Enterprise Ltd (Name It Youth Project)	£10,350.00	£34,000.00			£2,500.00	£36,500.00	28%	

Oxfordshire Science Festival (known as "IF Oxford")	£4,500.00	£46,485.00		£38,294.00	£67,039.00	£151,818.00	3%	
Parasol Project	£9,000.00			£22,500.00		£22,500.00	40%	
Pegasus Theatre Trust	£18,000.00	£305,493.00		£5,000.00	£9,500.00	£319,993.00	6%	
Refugee Resource	£5,850.00		£5,000.00	£350,000.00	£5,152.00	£360,152.00	2%	
Sanctuary Hosting	£4,500.00	£89,211.00			£15,500.00	£104,711.00	4%	
Tandem Oxford CIC	£5,400.00	£16,121.00		£5,000.00		£21,121.00	26%	
The Story Museum	£9,000.00	£187,220.00	£920,870.00	£140,562.00	£553,782.00	£1,802,434.00	1%	
Wood Farm Youth Centre	£6,750.00	£35,620.00	£3,851.09		£1,000.00	£40,471.09	17%	
Young Women's Music Project	£4,500.00					£0.00	100%	None reported
Total	£304,200.00	£2,727,857.00	£5,071,623.60	£2,841,494.07	£1,542,221.99	£12,183,196.66	2%	

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 5 - Examples of how the Oxford Community Impact Fund criteria were met and delivered

Criteria	A selection of examples of funded activity/impact
Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxford Youth Enterprise expanded its youth work engagement programmes - detached work, open access provision and mentoring/training. • Leys Community Development Initiative delivered its Youth and over 50s Clockhouse projects to improve mental and physical health, and reduce isolation in young people and older people in the Leys. • The Story Museum ran a year-long 'Spellbound Schools' programme designed around the national curriculum to accelerate literacy, PSHE skills and embed a whole-school culture of holistic story-sharing; all of which enhanced teaching, learning and attainment. • Oxford Hub, through their System Changer course, provided training to local people on Early Help in Blackbird Leys connecting parents with opportunities for support in the locality. • Home Start Oxford partnered with a local CIC for a project aimed at improving health outcomes for women of different ethnic backgrounds in East Oxford in the maternity and perinatal period. • Home-Start Oxford enabled volunteers to conduct home-visit support for parents with babies/children under five. • Justice in Motion set up a new Youth Panel and developed creative residency programmes for schools, colleges and youth organisations. • Oxford Playhouse co-created immersive theatre with young people and community groups across Oxford. • Pegasus Theatre Trust provided subsidised free access to culture across all the shows, classes and activities at the venue for young people and their families for whom socio-economic factors are a barrier to taking part. • MyVision Oxfordshire offered free information, advice, and support to blind/visually impaired adults/children. • My Life My Choice provided social activities, training and skills development, volunteering, paid work and leadership roles for people with learning disabilities. • Parasol supported disabled people to access essential work and life skills and development opportunities. • Yellow Submarine Holidays supported a traineeship programme for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism where individuals learned new transferable skills and gained recognised employability qualifications. • Film Oxford enabled autistic and learning-disabled participants to learn new skills and express their creativity through their Shadowlight artist programme. • Wood Farm Youth Centre worked with young people with disabilities and special educational needs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elmore Community Services supported women affected by domestic abuse. • African Families in the UK (AFiUK) supported black and Caribbean women and children impacted by domestic abuse and provided cross-cultural safeguarding training for volunteers helping newly arrived migrants. • Mandala Theatre Company used the power of performance to change young lives, build communities and foster social justice working with young people from ethnically diverse and White working-class backgrounds, including care experienced, care leavers and young people seeking asylum and refugees. • Sanctuary Hosting provided temporary accommodation in volunteer host homes for refugees, asylum seekers or other vulnerable migrants at risk of homelessness. • Refugee Resource supported refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants with a wide range of issues. • Asylum Welcome helped women whose legal status to stay in the UK is dependent on their husbands but they have had to flee because of domestic violence. • The Iranian Community Network provided English language and ICT skill classes to the communities of Refugees and Asylum seekers. • SAFE! Support for Young People Affected by Crime – ran its Blueprint creative arts project benefitting young men at risk of exploitation or criminal behaviour in Oxford City, giving them a voice and helping them and those around them to build protective communities where they can feel safe. • Oxfordshire Mind has adapted its services to better meet community needs by creating easy read electronic handouts and partnering with providers of translation services to make support more accessible. • Jacari supported young people for whom English isn't their first language to access and thrive in education. • The Young Women's Music Project provided free regular music skills courses alongside mentoring opportunities, for young women, non-binary and trans people. • Asylum Welcome started to develop avenues to support and provide services for LGBTQIA+ refugees. • Oxford Pride Group offered information and advice for the LGBTQIA+ community and delivered activities throughout the year including Pride and Glide skating and swimming at Hinksey Pool as well as the annual Pride event in Oxford • Oxford Pride provided safer spaces for the LGBTQIA+ community to get together providing visibility for the community in Oxford, as well as information, workshops and events held throughout the year.
--	---

<p>Environmental sustainability and zero carbon Oxford</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Carbon Oxford North helped residents to understand how they can improve their homes and manage their energy use to keep their heating and electricity running costs to a minimum. • Fusion Arts supported the Green Arts Network to enable the cultural sector to reduce its carbon footprint. • My Life My Choice ran a ‘Travel Buddy’ project supporting learning disabled members to travel on public transport, by walking, and by bicycle. • Film Oxford worked with the University of Oxford to promote bio-diversity and reduce the carbon footprint among Oxford Colleges and University campuses worldwide. • The Old Fire Station integrated environmental concerns into all planning and design decisions and also encouraged visitors to re-imagine solutions to climate change through art exhibitions. • Modern Art Oxford introduced mandatory carbon literacy training for staff and monitors the delivery of environmental targets for each department. • Pegasus Theatre engaged and involved young participants in their environmental sustainability and zero carbon action plan, building and sharing knowledge and ensuring participants play a role in shaping and contributing to a green future. • Aspire Oxfordshire use the Aspire hub to repair and issue refurbished digital devices that would otherwise be disposed of, contributing to environmental sustainability. • Good Food Oxfordshire and Ark-T focused on the redistribution and reuse of surplus food respectively which would otherwise go to waste. • The Parasol project supported local community food banks and the community larder to supplement their teenage cooking project. • Asylum Welcome scaled up their ‘Sanctuary Wheels Bike’ project which offers transport assistance to refugees and asylum seekers, and they also negotiate bus passes for Ukrainian refugees.
<p>Partnership working and cross-sector support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ark-T delivered many cross-sector projects including working with Donnington Doorstep, Talking Space, Victims First, Oxford Hub, TORCH, Dementia Oxford, Agnes Smith, CAP Money, Oxford Food Hub, and continues to support smaller grassroots organisations including Waste2Taste and Oxford Community Action by sharing resources such as operational processes and procedures, and training sessions. • Makespace Oxford utilised the funds to provide working and meeting space for climate/social/racial justice organisations at subsidised or free rates.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxford Playhouse partnered with Gardens Libraries and Museums (GLAM) and the NHS to develop a memory project for those with mild cognitive impairment, and also have a later-in-life project supported by AgeUK Oxon. • Justice in Motion partnered with Pegasus Primary and Wolvercote Young People’s Club on the planning and delivery of creative residency programmes and worked with the Oxford City Cultural Education Partnership on their ‘Feeling Safe programme’ supporting the mental health of young people in Oxford/shire. In addition, their project ‘RESISdANCE’ which focussed on working with Ukrainian refugees in Oxford, saw them partner with Oxford Festival of the Arts, with further support from OVADA. • Euton Daley worked in partnership with Oxford University and Oxford Brookes on a knowledge exchange research project to explore mapping African heritage. • MindBy worked in partnership with the Oxford Chinese Community Centre to build trust with the community and help people overcome the stigma of seeking support for mental health issues. • FloFest partnered with Fusion Arts to deliver a culturally inclusive art project with Asylum Welcome.
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ark-T ran Hub days offering mental health services and wellbeing support with advice sessions for adults experiencing mental health challenges. • Asylum Welcome’s partnership with Oxford Refugee Health provided asylum seekers with access to crucial health care which supplemented NHS provision. • Mandala Theatre delivered its MAD(E) project addressing how society and socialisation for boys and young men affected their mental health. • Dovecote Voluntary Parent Committee helped to support children and families to access support services, empowering them to build skills, confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging and ownership. • The Orchestra of St John’s provided serenading performances for hospital patients including those in Psychiatric Care and with mental illness. • Oxford Mutual Aid delivered a variety of food parcels to around 500 under-18s to help meet their needs. • The Porch encouraged people to sign up to the Healthy Hearts wellbeing project to improve the cardiovascular health of people most in need including those who are in the homelessness pathway.
Attracting additional funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Appendix 4 – funding leverage

Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Old Fire Station introduced ‘pay what you can’ and ‘pay it forward’ initiatives to enable those with more money to contribute more and those with less to benefit from this. • The Story Museum loaned sensory backpacks to families with neurodiverse children to help enable them to engage with the museum during their visit. • African Families in the UK provided training to people with lived experience (parent-peer advocates) so that they become co-producers of solutions to their own challenges. • Leys Community Development Initiative facilitated the development of an app by the young participants that enables booking for sessions and communication between them. • Sanctuary Hosting and Asylum Welcome developed a life skills training programme with service users to help them integrate into Oxford.
Inclusive economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makespace Oxford CIC helped fund a Community Development Coordinator to support purpose-led organisations and individuals delivering positive impact to their communities to occupy underused spaces in the city at an affordable rent. • Broken Spoke bike co-op supported people in the Leys to access bikes and learn how to ride and maintain them which, in turn, will enable them to access a wider range of job and other opportunities.

This page is intentionally left blank



Appendix 6

Form to be used for the Full Equalities Impact Assessment

Service Area: Community Services		Section: Oxford Community Impact Fund	Date of Initial assessment: 29 September 2023	Key Person responsible for assessment: Paula Redway	Date assessment commenced: 1 April 2022
Name of Policy to be assessed:			Grant allocations to community and voluntary organisations 2024-25		
1. In what area are there concerns that the policy could have a differential impact			Race ✓	Disability ✓	Age ✓
			Gender reassignment ✓	Religion or Belief ✓	Sexual Orientation ✓
			Sex ✓	Pregnancy and Maternity ✓	Marriage & Civil Partnership ✓
Other strategic/ equalities considerations			Safeguarding/ Welfare of Children and vulnerable adults ✓ Housing and Homelessness Strategy ✓	Thriving Communities Strategy ✓ Anti-Racism Charter ✓ Oxford City Council Corporate Strategy ✓	Mental Wellbeing/ Community Resilience ✓
2. Background: Give the background information to the policy and the perceived			In 2021, a strategic review of Oxford City Council's community grants programme was undertaken in order to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, reach and impact of the grants. Given the consequences of the pandemic there was a strong equalities focus within the review. In essence the review itself was an in depth Equalities Impact Assessment of the previous grant management		

<p>problems with the policy which are the reason for the Impact Assessment.</p>	<p>arrangements. As a result of the review, previous grant streams were combined into one new holistic one – the Oxford Community Impact Fund. This EIA relates to the impact of the first full year of the new funding programme.</p>
<p>3. Methodology and Sources of Data:</p> <p>The methods used to collect data and what sources of data</p>	<p>The data used was supplied by grant applicants who confirmed, as part of the application process, which communities of geography, interest and identity – including those with protected characteristics – would be positively impacted if they were awarded funding. The data is illustrated in the pie charts in Appendix 2.</p>
<p>4. Consultation</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"> • Why you carried out the consultation. • Details about how you went about it. • A summary of the replies you received from people you consulted. • An assessment of your proposed policy (or policy options) in the light of the responses you received. • A statement of what you plan to do next 	<p>Giving details about how grants will help to reduce inequalities in the city is a compulsory question. The summary of the replies given by the successful grant applicants is illustrated in the pie chart in Appendix 2.</p> <p>As the illustrations confirm, the balance of grant allocations reflect the diversity of the city including the people and places facing the greatest inequalities.</p> <p>Grant application and monitoring processes were previously a barrier to access for some groups including those for whom English isn't their first language, however the following improvements have been made since the launch of the Oxford Community Impact Fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Community Impact Fund application and assessment process has been streamlined using plain English and avoiding jargon • Comprehensive support is given both in group and individual meetings with grant applicants and assessors to explain how to apply for/assess the grants including going through the application form and answering any questions people may have. Answers to the questions are then added to a Frequently Asked Questions list on the Community Impact Fund page online • Applications and monitoring information can be made/given in different ways including different languages and different formats e.g. video submissions • The application and assessment process includes options to give feedback which is then acted upon.

	<p>Some groups had previously been unaware of the funding available - the following actions have been undertaken to address this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding calls have been more widely targeting underrepresented groups • Locality managers are helping to promote grants in the community • The grants programme is also promoted via network meetings e.g. the Interfaith Group 		
<p>5. Assessment of Impact: Provide details of the assessment of the policy on the six primary equality strands. There may have been other groups or individuals that you considered. Please also consider whether the policy, strategy or spending decisions could have an impact on safeguarding and / or the welfare of children and vulnerable adults</p>			
	<p>Race Positive impact</p>	<p>Disability Positive impact</p>	<p>Age Positive impact</p>
	<p>Gender reassignment Positive impact</p>	<p>Religion or Belief Positive impact</p>	<p>Sexual Orientation Positive impact</p>
	<p>Sex Positive impact</p>	<p>Pregnancy and Maternity Positive impact</p>	<p>Marriage & Civil Partnership Positive impact</p>
	<p>The actions and mitigations above have led to a wider variety of projects being funded which are designed to have a positive impact for those most in need including those with protected characteristics who have been impacted by the cost of living crisis.</p> <p>The availability of funding has been promoted more widely. As a result, there has been a significant increase in applications with over 20% of grants being awarded to new applicants.</p>		

<p>6. Consideration of Measures:</p> <p>This section should explain in detail all the consideration of alternative approaches/mitigation of adverse impact of the policy</p>	<p>Feedback is sought via a range of sources on an ongoing basis including briefing sessions, the grant application form, email and phone. After initial small amends to the application form, feedback has been predominantly concerned about the decline in available public funding and the impact this will have on delivery. Options to increase the availability of funding are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Maintaining the budgeted level of funding as it is b) Increasing the budgeted level of funding available c) Increasing the level of funding available via alternative mechanisms <p>Officers are recommending option c) as it will help to increase the availability of the funding without putting additional pressure on council resources, which would likely be counterproductive.</p> <p>We have not received any feedback suggesting any amendments to the criteria and, given the reach of the funding is reflective of the diversity of the city, Officers are therefore not proposing any.</p>
<p>6a. Monitoring Arrangements:</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 whether you found any evidence of discrimination.</p>	<p>The impact of the grants will be monitored via qualitative and quantitative monitoring including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical information relating to beneficiaries • Learning sessions to share best practice, identify and mitigate gaps • Impact monitoring over a longer period of time including case studies, photos, collecting and sharing stories, videos etc. • An annual report will come to cabinet reviewing the previous year and proposing any changes to the criteria
<p>7. Date report signed off:</p>	<p>2 October 2023</p>
<p>8. Conclusions:</p>	<p>The conclusion is that the policy impact will be a positive one from every perspective of EDI.</p>

What are your conclusions drawn from the results in terms of the policy impact					
9. Are there implications for the Service Plans?	NO	10. Date the Service Plans will be updated	NA	11. Date copy sent to Equalities Lead Officer	NA
.13. Date reported to Scrutiny and Executive Board:	6 November 2023	14. Date reported to Scrutiny Committee:	6 November 2023	12. The date the report on EqlA will be published	7 December 2023

127

Signed (completing officer)

Signed (Lead Officer)

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

Paula Redway – Culture and Community Development Manager
 Lee Mwaidza – Grants and External Fundraising Officer
 Mili Kalia – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead – Community Services

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 7 Risk Register

Grant allocations to community and voluntary organisations 2023-4

As at: 29 September 2023

Ref	Title	Risk Description	Opp / Threat	Cause	Consequence	Risk Treatment	Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current			Target		Comments	Control / Mitigation Description	Date Due	Action Status	% Progress	Action Owner
									P	I	P	I	Score	P	I						
	Cost of living	There may be a greater demand for grants related to the cost of living which may make it harder to fund some of the other activities delivering council objectives.	Opportunity	Cost of living crisis	Delivery of wider council objectives reduces.	Reduce	25/10/22	Paula Redway	3	3	3	3	9	2	2	Grantees will be required to provide information regarding their response to the cost of living crisis as part of project monitoring for grants awarded in 2023-4. Those requesting grants to assist with cost of living will be signposted to alternative cost of living grant provision. Additional funding will be sought via Match My Project and Oxford Lottery to increase the availability of funding.	30/04/24	In Progress	50%	Paula Redway	
	Safeguarding	Funded activities may not have full safeguarding processes in place	Opportunity	Safeguarding issue	Safeguarding consequence leading to reputational damage and possible legal action	Reduce	06/10/23	Paula Redway	3	3	3	3	9	2	2	Add a safeguarding compliance checklist to the grant application process	06/10//23	Not yet started	0%	Paula Redway	

This page is intentionally left blank

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 November 2023
Report of: Head of Corporate Strategy
Title of Report: FutureFit Oxford(shire) Project - Grant Funding Bid for Retrofit

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To seek project approval for Oxford City Council's involvement in the FutureFit Oxford(shire) Project (FOx Project), and delegated authority for the facilitation and delivery of the project.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Corporate Priority:	Pursue a zero carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-2024

Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Grant project approval for the FOx project to proceed, including approval of Oxford City Council's role as overall project lead;
2.	Recommend to Council to establish a revenue budget for £1.56 million funded by a government grant to enable the necessary resources to be employed and the work undertaken;
3.	Delegate authority to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / Section 151 Officer and the Head of Law and Governance to enter into a grant agreement with Innovate UK for the sum of £1.56 million as well as any related agreements, contracts and transactions to facilitate the project and its delivery in terms of accepting grant offer letters, partnership agreements, retrofit seed funding payments, subcontracting and subscriptions;
4.	Delegate authority to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice, to deliver the grant funded consortium project, and to comply with Innovate UK's project monitoring and grant payment processes (and project change processes, if required); and

5. **Note** that this is a multi-partner collaborative project with a total value of £5.28m. A decision from the funder to award the bid and at time of writing a decision from the funder on whether the bid has been successful has not been received (expected to be on 8th November).

Appendices

Appendix 1	Risk Register
------------	---------------

Introduction and background

1. In March 2023, Oxford City Council won a £75k bid to Innovate UK (IUK) leading a consortium that that undertook a feasibility study to look at options for developing a whole-system FutureFit One Stop Shop (FOSS) solution to address barriers and accelerate take up of decarbonisation measures by households and businesses. The consortium included Low Carbon Hub, both universities, Oxfordshire County Council, Lucy Group, ODS and others. The feasibility study was submitted to IUK and the Council was invited to bid for up to £5m grant plus commercial organisations' match funding to deliver a substantive project to test the FOSS solutions.
2. In September 2023 Oxford City Council submitted a £5.28m bid to IUK's Net Zero Living Pathfinder Places Phase 2 funding stream, to take forwards a project - now called FutureFit Oxford(shire) (FOx) - involving many of the same partners, although time also involving the other four Oxfordshire district councils. A decision from IUK on successful bids is expected 8th November 2023.
3. The project would be to lead a collaboration of 11 consortium members to accelerate retrofit and transition to smarter retrofit ("FutureFit") in Oxford and Oxfordshire. In the application Oxford City Council has requested c.£1.56m grant funding, with the remaining project funds split between other project partners.
4. The FutureFit Oxford(shire) (FOx) project intends to take a whole building approach using smart technology so that electricity generation, storage and usage can be integrated and balanced within the building (i.e "FutureFit"). This should ensure the impact on the electricity grid is a positive one. It will also establish a strategic local partnership that can help break down systemic non-technical barriers, such as standards, skills, appropriate finance and supply chain issues, faced by retrofit/FutureFit providers, households and businesses.
5. If successful in the bid, it should be noted that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Environmental Advisory Group considers FOx central to work that will be undertaken across the six Oxfordshire councils over the next two years to boost retrofit take-up. This programme, if it goes forward, will equally be of importance to many of our key city stakeholders through the existing ZCOP partnership.

Project Summary

6. The FOx project is consortium based, building on existing good relationships with local partners. There are 11 project partners: Oxford City Council (Lead project partner), Low Carbon Hub, University of Oxford, Oxford Brookes University, Retrofitworks, Lucy Group, Oxfordshire County Council and all 4 district councils. Several subcontractors will join the project (subcontractor choice subject to

individual partners' procurement processes) to provide expertise in the areas of finance, installation/supply chain, standards, inseting, smart retrofit products and education/upskilling.

7. The Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership (ZCOP) roadmap indicates significant retrofit of both domestic and non-domestic buildings are needed to reach net zero Oxford by 2040, which is why projects such as FOx are important for the Council to engage with. To tackle carbon emissions it's clear that improvements are needed across the city in terms of building fabric measures (e.g. insulation), electrification of heat (heatpumps), local generation/storage of electricity (e.g. solar PV and on-site batteries) and electrification of travel (EVs). It's known from previous projects (e.g. Project LEO) that high levels of retrofit has the potential to cause significant challenges for the local electricity grid.
8. The FOx project has two key aims. Firstly, it intends to address the electricity network challenge by transitioning retrofit to "FutureFit" (a concept being developed by project partner Low Carbon Hub). This centres on retrofit taking a whole building approach and using smart technology so that electricity generation, storage and usage can be integrated and balanced locally within the building. This should ensure the impact on the grid is a positive one.
9. The second aim of the FOx project is to scale up delivery of retrofit/FutureFit to support delivery on ZCOP roadmap milestones. The previous feasibility work (April – June 2023) identified that existing one stop shops (OSSs) providing retrofit services, such as Cosy Homes Oxfordshire (domestic retrofit) and Energy Solutions Oxfordshire (non-domestic retrofit), as well as building owners and installers, face key non-technical barriers in terms of finance, skills & capability, policy & standards, supply chain, and perception around retrofit.
10. The project will establish how a long-term strategic partnership can break down these non-technical barriers in order to support the scale up of local retrofit services and their transition to FutureFit. This partnership is intended to signal support for both existing local FutureFit OSSs and new entrants to the market through e.g. developing a FutureFit standard and quality assurance processes, as well as supporting local skills and finance interventions. Oxford City Council will lead on this work, which will include developing a business model for a sustainably funded partnership beyond the grant funding.
11. Oxford City Council will also lead a work package on finance, supported by specialist subcontractors. This will involve the Council piloting a carbon inseting mechanism and undertaking desk-based modelling and assessment of the extent to which council tax/business rates interventions can/cannot support uptake of retrofit, and desk based investigation of other financial mechanisms to support local retrofit. "Inseting" defines a localised approach to offsetting whereby an organisation may finance decarbonisation and other climate protection projects that sit outside its own assets or service delivery. Instead of buying often-discredited carbon offset credits internationally, the organisation funds tangible projects that sequester emissions within its supply chain or local geography. In the case of the FOx Project, this local area would be Oxfordshire, and ideally Oxford subject to locations of suitable retrofit projects during the trial.
12. The grant funding budget will cover delivery of the project areas the Council will be responsible for (e.g. events, communications, inseting seed funding).

13. Project activities also include significant inputs from other project partners, including: a pilot on a salary-linked financial intervention, investigating the potential for blended finance to support retrofit uptake, understanding the requirements for local retrofit skills and making the case for investment in the local supply chain, apprenticeships, and supporting existing OSSs to meet increased demand for retrofit/FutureFit services. The grant funding budget allowed to other project partners covers their own resourcing to deliver these outputs.
14. The consortium is awaiting a decision from IUK if the bid for the project has been successful. A decision is expected on the 8th November, and if successful the project would start in February 2024 and run for 21 months.

Option of not providing project approval and delegations

15. If the Council chose not to deliver the FOx project this would mean losing an opportunity to utilise a significant level of funding to create a step-change in the delivery of retrofit locally within Oxford and Oxfordshire, which in turn would impact progress towards net zero targets. Without this grant funding, this project would not go ahead as planned.
16. The officer recommended option is for Cabinet to provide project approval and delegations. Should the bid be successful and grant funding awarded, this will ensure there is the opportunity to make significant and rapid progress on retrofit and net zero goals, in an integrated way with other key local partners and stakeholders.

Financial implications

17. The Council's involvement in the project would be fully funded by grant funding awarded by IUK and does not impact the Council's capital budget.
18. The overall project value is c.£5.28m, and the share of the grant that would be awarded to the Council for its project activities would be £1.56m, spent as set out in the following table:

Table 1: break down of grant funding anticipated spend

Funding category	
	£
Staff costs	877,237
Overhead (<i>set by IUK as 20% of staff costs</i>)	175,447
Subcontracting	326,800
Other project costs (<i>includes up to £120k to fund installation of retrofits as part of the inseting trial, plus funding for other project work such as communications campaigns, events and similar</i>)	175,200
Travel and subsistence	4,800
Materials	920
Total	1,560,404

19. The project will need to adhere to the funder's financial monitoring and grant payment processes. Although Oxford City Council will be the lead project partner, all project partners are responsible for making their own claims to IUK for their own

grant funds and are paid directly by IUK. The Council is therefore not administering grant payments to project partners. Clawback therefore only applies to the Council's own grant funding, not whole project value.

20. The role of the Council set out in the bid is clear. As project lead the Council will ensure that relevant teams input such that the specific deliverables agreed with IUK on award of funds are achievable. The deliverables are not capital installations and primarily relate to project management activities, establishing partnerships, delivery of desk-based research through subcontracting, and feasibility investigation of piloting carbon insetting. Piloting carbon insetting will require the Council to administer up to total of £120k seed funding (retrofit grants) to local businesses (costs covered by the FOx grant funding).
21. The risk of clawback is considered low, and as an innovation project it is expected by IUK that some elements may not proceed as planned – in which case this is acceptable providing suitable evidence is provided.

Legal issues

22. Delivery of this project will require the Council to enter into a funding agreement with IUK, collaboration agreements with project partners and contracts such as with subcontractors. These will be overseen by the Council's legal team.

Level of risk

23. IUK required a risk register to be submitted as part of the bid. The content of this bid risk register has been provided in the Council's standard format and is attached as Appendix 1. Risk owners will be allocated on successful award of funding, via the first Project Board to be held. Ongoing use and monitoring of the risk register will be carried out as part of standard project management processes. Risk level is considered to be acceptable and in line with what would be accepted for a project of this type.

Equalities impact

24. Full Equalities Impact Assessment not applicable at this funding bid stage because the full detail of implementation of project activities has not yet been defined. At the point when details of the design and implementation of project activities are developed, full Equalities Impact Assessments will be carried out as appropriate to ensure that Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) considerations are implemented.
25. IUK did require EDI to be considered at a very high level as part of the bid submission. This noted that incorporating EDI in to the eventual design of partnerships and services is key to ensuring that systemic barriers to retrofit/FutureFit are removed for all communities and not just certain demographics. As a result EDI is therefore included in the bid submission project risk register (replicated in Appendix 1) to ensure that this important element is reviewed at appropriate points within the project delivery (should the bid be successful).

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

26. This project will align with the Council's Net Zero corporate priority and supports progress towards achieving net zero goals. Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership

(ZCOP) provided a strong basis for the FOx bid, and the project is recognised as critical to delivering on the retrofit element of the ZCOP roadmap to meet the 2040 net zero target. Its also recognised as a key workstream by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to progress PAZCO goals for the wider county.

Conclusion

27. The Cabinet is requested to consider the benefits of this project and approve its delivery (subject to successfully being awarded grant funding by IUK), in line with the recommendations made above.

Report author	Ruth Harris
Job title	Zero Carbon Project Manager
Service area or department	Environmental Sustainability
Telephone	01865 252380
e-mail	rharris@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Risk Register

Appendix 1

FutureFit Oxford(shire) Project (FOx Project)

As at: 06/09/2023

137

Ref	Title	Risk Description	Opp / Threat	Cause	Consequence	Risk Treatment	Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current			Target		Comments	Control / Mitigation Description	Date Due	Action Status	% Progress	Action Owner
									P	I	P	I	Score	P	I						
1	EDI poorly incorporated in to processes	EDI not considered in development of FOx partnership processes	Opportunity	Poor scoping of engagement with customers/clients	poorly designed processes that do not meet EDI requirements.	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	3	4	1	3	3	1	3	None	WP2 (Governance) has a specific activity to understand customer/client segments for the FOx, to ensure that over the longer term services can grow that go beyond able-to-pay. There are extensive engagement activities throughout the project that will ensure that the diverse needs of local communities are incorporated.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
2	Lack of diversity consideration	Lack of diversity or consideration of diversity in partnership ways of working.	Opportunity	Poor scoping of engagement with team members and stakeholders	Poor outcomes for team members and stakeholders.	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	3	4	1	3	3	1	3	None	All partners committed to the LCH Ethical Framework for the detailed design of trials. Best practice applied in relation to EDI. Subcontracts to include EDI considerations in their scope of work.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
3	Equitable retrofit / FutureFit	Retrofit / FutureFit outcomes are not equitable	Opportunity	Limited engagement with stakeholders	It is not possible to develop FOx partnership or the enabling environment in a way that fully incorporates EDI requirements, to ensure retrofit/FutureFit is equitable.	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	4	5	1	5	5	1	5	None	Utilizing existing networks strong relationships with stakeholders will help ensure EDI is addressed within project outputs, and that EDI is considered at the design stage of retrofit solutions.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
4	Inflation costs	project costs (i.e., materials and subcontractor costs) due to fast escalation of inflation rate	Threat	Inflation rates	Project cannot deliver as much work due to increased costs.	Contingency Plans	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	5	4	4	1	4	4	1	None	Small numbers of installs directly delivered as part of the project therefore low risk from increasing product costs. Subcontractor quotes received in context of high UK inflation and based on project start in Jan 2024. Contingency plan would be to reduce the amount of installs to remain inside budget.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
5	Viability of FutureFit One Stop Shop models	Poor viability of models scoped for different retrofit/FutureFit approaches	Threat	Limited engagement with customer/client segments	Low uptake and poor commercial viability of models scoped for different FOSS approaches	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	4	5	2	2	4	2	2	None	The project will work with demonstrator FutureFit One Stop Shops and we also have touchpoints with businesses through all LA partner economic development teams.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
6	FOx Partnership does not meet aim.	FOx partnership does not achieve required retrofit / FutureFit aims	Threat	Limited engagement with stakeholders	It is not possible to develop an holistic, innovative and locally informed FOx or enabling environment	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	4	5	1	5	5	1	5	None	Utilizing existing networks including ZCOP and strong relationships with stakeholders will help with extensive national reach into leading bodies in the retrofit space.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
7	Low retrofit growth	Low levels of retrofit growth	Threat	Low uptake and challenges demonstrating commercial viability of FOx models.	Limited market acceptance and demand for building owners to implement retro/FutureFit.	Accept	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	3	5	1	3	3	1	3	None	WP2 will involve development of a comprehensive marketing, communications and engagement approach. Inclusion of seed funding in WP2 will secure engagement. Project partner, Lucy Group, are an engaged and influential, local building owner.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
8	Stakeholders do not accept novel finance solutions	Implementing and gaining acceptance for novel financial solutions might face resistance from stakeholders/regulatory bodies and financiers	Opportunity	Limited engagement with stakeholders	Pushback may result in financial solutions trials terminating early, necessitating project plan changes additional efforts which could lead to increased project costs.	Accept	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	4	4	2	2	4	2	2	None	Expert input from consultants (e.g., Arup and Anthesis) will engage with financiers to understand their requirements around risks and novel finance. An output of the project will be to ensure that the financial solutions we trial are financially viable.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
9	Supply chain confidence	market conditions impact supply chain	Threat	Low customer confidence in the supply chain due to market conditions (e.g. high costs)	Low uptake of Retrofit/FutureFit measures through WP3 financial trials	Accept	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	4	4	1	3	3	1	3	None	Working with established demonstrator FOSSs who have experience generating engagement with clients and customers locally within the context of a variable RF market. This means that the project has a better chance of getting the required levels of engagement to test the financial mechanisms.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded

10	Project deadlines	Project deadlines not met	Threat	Delivery delays due to dependency on key personnel and/or inexperience in delivering on short term deadlines	Key project outputs are not delivered on time/at all, leading to cascading impacts on WPs with interdependencies.	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	4	5	2	2	4	2	2	None	Project partners to recruit project resource ahead of time to ensure that adequate persons are available for delivery of project.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
11	Project dependant on key team members expertise	Project's dependency on key team members	Threat	Key members of the project team being absent and failing project management deadlines	Project cannot be completed or is delayed	Contingency Plans	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	2	4	1	4	4	1	4	None	Knowledge is already embedded across organisations and a shared file storage/workspace across all partner organisations has already been established. Therefore, loss of key members of the project team would not mean loss of access to the knowledge base or products required to deliver this project successfully	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
12	Partnerships	Difficulty in aligning partner views and priorities within a partnership project.	Opportunity	Inability to efficiently progress due to difficult in aligning and accommodating different interests and views of the 11 project partners	Project cannot be completed at all or completed in time, due to lack of consensus amongst multiple project partners	Accept	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	2	4	1	4	4	1	4	None	OCC already has well established relationships with many of the project partners through delivering Phase 1 and long-standing partnerships working on the net zero pathways. The governance structure will clarify the decision-making hierarchy, so that the project can meet the desired outputs. We have done a significant amount of collaborative project pre-planning as a consortium which has mapped the project outputs and roles of different project partners. This has already accommodated the different interests and views of project partners.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
13	Financial management	Financial management of grant funds	Threat	Inability to efficiently manage funds including seed funding and financial trials	WP3 (financial trials WP) cannot be completed to the agreed timescale and budget, this could also compromise on quality or prevent delivery of project outputs.	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	2	5	1	3	3	1	3	None	Experienced staff being brought onto the project to manage this element, and it's expected that IUK stagegate will focus on this WP.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
14	Lack of subcontractors	Inability to secure appropriate subcontractors on time.	Threat	External dependencies on securing and managing subcontractors (i.e., WP3 on finance)	Project cannot be completed to the agreed timescale and budget, this could also compromise on quality and effectiveness of project outputs.	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	4	3	1	3	3	1	3	None	All partners have a clear and transparent procurement process to secure subcontractors, and we are aware there are multiple subcontractors with the relevant skills to carry out the work specified.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
15	Carbon footprint	Project has a short term impact on climate change.	Opportunity	Partner travel to workshops and events.	FOx project has a higher than necessary carbon footprint.	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	4	3	1	2	2	1	2	None	Many partners are used to remote-working which reduces travel requirements and therefore carbon emissions. Most project partners are local to Oxford and won't be travelling long distances to attend events. Moreover, most will travel by public transport rather than by car.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
16	Climate change impact	Project doesn't have a long term positive impact on climate change.	Opportunity	FOx doesn't achieve the overall aim to increase RF & FF in Oxford(shire) Carbon emissions associated with buildings and energy use are not reduced against current levels in Oxford(shire)	Worsening climate change.	Accept	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	3	5	1	3	3	1	3	None	FOx project runs successfully due to good management and implementation of the project. Project partners are committed to achieving goal of increasing RF & FF.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
17	Lack of skills	Lack of diverse range of technical skills required to deliver FOSSs.	Threat	Shortage of skilled professionals capable of designing, installing and maintaining complex systems.	Project issues / could lead to delays or quality issues.	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	4	5	2	2	4	2	2	None	WP4 will include a FutureFit training and skills needs analysis, this will enable us to identify technical skills gaps. WP4 will also develop a skills intervention plan and develop an internship program for those seeking practical experience of non-domestic assessment delivery.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded
18	Integration of energy technologies	Poor integration of energy technologies	Threat	Integration of renewable energy systems, storage, smart meters and controls is not seamless.	Lack of customer confidence in the FOSSs	Reduce	06.09.23	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	3	4	1	3	3	1	3	None	The FOx project's main focus is to test processes and business models to support scaling of retrofit and transition to FutureFit. However, we will use known and trusted suppliers and we are developing quality assurance standards that will reduce risk in technology integration. WP4, WP5 and WP6 have elements which focus on developing the supply chain.	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded	TBC by Project Board if grant funding awarded

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 November 2023
Report of: Executive Director (Development)
Title of Report: Commercial Property Lettings

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To seek authority to let 16-17 Turl Street, 24-26 George Street, 33-35 George Street and Cadogan House, Wheatley to provide a rental income to the Council
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management
Corporate Priority:	Enable an Inclusive Economy
Policy Framework:	Asset Management Strategy

Recommendation: That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Delegate authority to the Executive Director (Development) in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / S.151 Officer, the Head of Law and Governance and the Deputy Leader (Statutory) Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management to agree final terms, negotiate the form of documents and then enter into leases and any ancillary documents required for the letting of 16-17 Turl Street, 24-26 George Street, 33-35 George Street and Cadogan House, Wheatley subject to the requirements of S.123 Local Government Act 1972 being met.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Exempt Appendix 1 – Not for Publication
Appendix 2	Risk Register

Introduction and background

1. The Council owns the freehold of 16-17 Turl Street, 24-26 George Street, 33-35 George Street and Cadogan House, Wheatley. These commercial properties comprise city centre retail units and an industrial property located in Wheatley.

2. The properties are currently non-income producing, have been marketed by the Council's agents and are at various stages within the leasing process. See Confidential Appendix 1 for detail.
3. Rental values for each property are anticipated to exceed £125,000 per annum and therefore Cabinet approval is required to enter into the new leases. It is proposed Cabinet delegate this authority subject to the terms of any new lease meeting the requirements of s.123 Local Government Act 1972.

Financial implications

4. These lettings are assumed within the Medium Term Financial Plan at the financial terms outlined in Exempt Appendix 1 with appropriate void periods and allowance for any initial rent free period. The lettings will provide significant revenue once completed.

Legal issues

5. Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers a local authority to dispose of land, by way of lease or sale. The disposal of land cannot be for a consideration less than the best that can be reasonably obtained, unless the consent of the Secretary of State is obtained. The letting proposals for 16-17 Turl Street, 24-26 George Street, 33-35 George Street and Cadogan House, Wheatley are in line with s.123 requirements. In the case of the letting of 16-17 Turl Street, the agreement for lease will make clear that completion of the lease will be conditional on value for money and best consideration being established.

Level of risk

6. A risk register is attached at Appendix 2.

Equalities impact

7. This will be a property transaction with the Equalities Impact being neutral.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

8. With the exception of 16-17 Turl Street, which is a listed property and therefore exempt, all of the properties have an up to date EPC and are within the correct parameters for letting.

Report author	Alex Miller
Job title	Transaction Manager
Service area or department	Corporate Property
Telephone	01865 335849
e-mail	amiller@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

Appendix 2 - Risk Register

Last Updated		06.10.23											
Updated By		AM											
Revision		06.10.23											
Commercial Property Lettings													
NO.	Date Raised	Risk Type	Risk Category	Risk Description	Current Risk - Probability	Current Risk Impact	Current Risk Score	Risk Response	Mitigating Actions	Action Due Date	Risk Owner	Risk Status	Comments
1	06.10.23	Threat	Economic, financial & Market	Tenants pull out of lettings prior to completion of legals	3	3	9	Accept	Commercial agents are appointed by both Council and tenants and should problem arise solutions would try to be worked through. Solicitors will also be instructed to complete documentation as quickly as possible and regular meetings will take place. Ultimately if lettings do become abortive then the properties would be remarketed.	Ongoing	AM	Open	
2	06.10.23	Threat	Economic, financial & Market	Tenants try to renegotiate terms prior to legal completion.	3	4	12	Accept	This is anticipated on 16-17 Turl Street on determining the value of remedial works but costs will be reviewed at the appropriate time and approval sought to the relevant amount of additional rent free. Should other tenants try to renegotiate then a solution would try to be worked through ensuring terms remain s.123 compliant. However if the terms requested are not acceptable the properties would be remarketed.	Ongoing	AM	Open	
3	06.10.23	Threat	Economic, financial & Market	16-17 Turl Street - Tenant undertakes investigative works but does not undertake remedial works.	3	4	12	Accept	Additional rent free will be negotiated to compensate the tenant for undertaking remedial works. However, if this could not be agreed for any reason the Council would be in a position where the investigative works have been done, the solution and cost know. Approval would then be sought to the Council undertaking those works to resolve issues prior to reletting to another tenant.	Ongoing	AM	Open	

This page is intentionally left blank

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on Wednesday 18 October 2023



Cabinet members present:

Councillor Brown	Councillor Turner
Councillor Chapman	Councillor Hunt
Councillor Railton	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Upton	

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
David Butler, Head of Planning and Regulatory Services
Lucy Cherry, Policy and Partnerships Officer
Rose Dickinson, Carbon Reduction Team Manager
Sarah Harrison, Team Leader (Planning Policy)
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer
Tina Mould, Capital Programme Project Manager
Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy
Rachel Williams, Planning Policy and Place Manager

Apologies:

Councillors Munkonge and Rehman sent apologies.

66. Addresses and Questions by Members of the Public

Helen Marshall, on behalf of CPRE Oxford, had submitted a representation relating to the Oxford Local Plan 2040 Regulation 19 Consultation Document.

Kaddy Beck, on behalf of the Save Bertie Park Campaign, addressed Cabinet on the subject of the Oxford Local Plan 2040 Regulation 19 Consultation Document.

Both statements, and the responses provided, are attached to these minutes.

67. Councillor Addresses on any item for decision on the Cabinet agenda

None.

68. Councillor Addresses on Neighbourhood Issues

None.

69. Items raised by Cabinet Members

None.

70. Scrutiny reports

The Climate and Environment Panel had met on 12 September 2023; the Housing and Homelessness Panel had met on 5 October 2023 and the Scrutiny Committee had met on 10 and 16 October 2023. Recommendations had been made at those meetings relating to:

- (i) Air Pollution
- (ii) Delivery of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure for Oxford
- (iii) Oxford Local Plan 2040 Regulation 19 Consultation Document

In the absence of the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet noted the recommendations during consideration of the individual agenda items. Responses had been provided in a separately published supplement, and the scrutiny recommendations had been largely accepted.

In relation to Air Pollution, which was not on the Cabinet agenda, it was noted that the Climate and Environment Panel had made two recommendations which related to (i) producing an accessible summary of the annual Air Quality Status Report and (ii) considering how to identify and promote the broader benefits of action to improve air quality. Both recommendations had been accepted.

71. Oxford Local Plan 2040 Regulation 19 Consultation Document

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Services had submitted a report to seek approval for the Oxford Local Plan 2040 Proposed Submission Document for public consultation and recommend to Council its approval for consultation and, subject to the outcome of the consultation, if no matters are raised that materially impact upon the Plan strategy, submit the Submission Draft Oxford Local Plan 2040 to the Secretary of State for formal examination.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, highlighted the importance of the Local Plan in achieving the Council's goals, which included ensuring that future developments did not adversely affect climate change, and tackling the issue of unaffordability of housing for many of Oxford's residents. Councillor Upton outlined that the draft Local Plan incorporated a broad range of policies covering areas such as protecting the world class heritage buildings of the city whilst ensuring that they could adapt to climate change; protecting district and local centres so that valued services remained close at hand for residents; ensuring that Oxford remained a vibrant and attractive place to live; requiring a higher level of social housing within developments than in neighbouring districts; and ensuring that Oxford's residents benefitted from a thriving economy by being able to access well-paid jobs. Policies had also been included relating to affordable workplaces being provided in large developments; allowing the loss of some badly placed employment land to housing whilst allowing densification of employment at sites closest to transport hubs; increasing biodiversity by 10% within developments; and encouraging greening of the urban environment. Councillor Upton highlighted the innovative nature of many of these policies.

Cabinet noted that the Scrutiny Committee had considered the report on 16 October and had made eight recommendations. Of these, six had been accepted. Several minor changes had been made to the document as a result, which had mostly related to points of clarification. Two recommendations had not been accepted. These related to the definition

of a Local Centre and the list of Local Centres. The response had outlined the process which had been undertaken to define the list and its appropriateness, and signposting the definition of a Local Centre which was shown in the glossary.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Recommend to Council** that it approves the Oxford Local Plan 2040 Proposed Submission Document for consultation;
2. **Recommend to Council** that it approves the following supporting statutory documentation: the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment, Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) and Equalities Impact Assessment;
3. **Authorise** the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, to make any necessary minor typographical changes and modifications to the proposed submission document, IDP, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment, and to agree the final publication style of the draft version before publication; and
4. **Authorise** the Head of Planning & Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, to make any minor changes to the document following publication which are deemed necessary as a result of the consultation, and then to formally submit the Oxford Local Plan 2040 to the Secretary of State for examination. In the event that significant issues are raised that suggest the Plan is not sound and major amendments are required, the Plan will need to be re-drafted and brought back to Council to approve another public consultation before submission.

72. Partial CIL Charging Schedule Review

The Head of Planning and Regulatory Services had submitted a report to seek approval for the Draft CIL Charging Schedule to be published for public consultation.

Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, outlined that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was a tariff charged on new developments. The CIL charging schedule had been reviewed to assess whether the tariffs were still at the appropriate level, or whether any changes were needed as a result of changing circumstances. The review had determined that for most of the use classes an increase in the CIL rate would result in developments becoming unviable. However, there were three business class uses where the amounts had been set much lower than that of housing land. It was considered that these would remain viable with much higher CIL rates and it was therefore proposed to increase these from £31.50 per sqm to £158.00 per sqm, which was in line with the charges for many other types of development including housing.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Draft Charging Schedule to be published for public consultation (Appendix 1);
2. **Authorise** the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, to make any minor typographical changes to the Draft Charging Schedule before publication; and

3. **Authorise** the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services to formally publish the Draft Charging Schedule and associated evidence base for public consultation.

73. Delivery of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure for Oxford

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report to (i) seek approval for Oxford City Council's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (EVI) Delivery and Implementation Plan, which clarifies the work packages and resources needed to deliver the first chapter of Oxford's EVI strategy (OxEVIS) up to April 2026; (ii) seek delegated authority for officers to enter into contracts and agreements with third parties to deliver the OxEVIS Implementation Plan; and (iii) agree to changes to the GULO (Go Ultra Low Oxford) project.

Councillor Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice set out the background to the report, principally the increasing shift in responsibility for electric vehicle infrastructure (EVI) to Tier 1 authorities. In this context, Oxfordshire County Council had expressed the wish to take full control of EVI on the highways, including the existing installed Go Ultra Low Oxford (GULO) estate and future GULO phase 2 deployment which had to date been managed by the City Council. The report therefore sought the required authorities and delegations to allow the various contract arrangements, stock and remaining funding to be migrated. It also signalled the County Council's intention to honour Oxford City Council's existing EVI strategy.

Four scrutiny recommendations had been made, which had all been accepted.

Cabinet Members expressed regret that the City Council would not be able to oversee its own infrastructure strategy to fruition, or fully benefit from projects in which resources of time and investment had been made. It was noted that Oxford City Council could still install its own EVI on land which it owned (such as city-owned car parks and park and ride), and potentially on third party land through back-to-back contract agreements.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Approve** the draft Implementation Plan for the Council's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (OxEVIS) delivery as set out in Appendix 4 and **delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities and the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice to make amendments to the Implementation Plan where required to ensure delivery of the OxEVIS;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice, the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer, and the Council's Monitoring Officer, to enter into partnerships and collaborative working arrangements with third parties as required to deliver the Implementation Plan;
3. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice, the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer, and the Council's Monitoring Officer, to accept tenders and enter into concession contracts (within the constraints set out in paragraph 39 of this Cabinet report) for the purposes of delivering the Implementation Plan;

4. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer, and the Council's Monitoring Officer, to give grants for the purposes of delivering the Implementation Plan up to an aggregate value of £500k;
5. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Head of Corporate Property, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, the Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer, and the Council's Monitoring Officer, to enter into leases up to a rental value of £5M for the purposes of delivering the Implementation Plan;
6. **Note** the interdependency with the funding bid under the standard 2024 MTFP budget setting process (detail as per Table 1 of the report). Over the four year budget period this implementation plan delivers an estimated net income of £24k. Net income for 2029-2040 is estimated at up to £5.2M;
7. **Agree** the On-street elements of the Go Ultra Low Oxford project (GULO) transition from Oxford City Council delivery to Oxfordshire County Council delivery, subject to the following conditions being fulfilled:
 - a. The County Council is satisfied that it can meet the funding obligations within the GULO funding agreement;
 - b. The funding body for GULO agrees (Office for Zero Emission Vehicles/OZEV) for the transfer to take place;
 - c. There is an agreement by both Councils on the methodology for delivery of the key outputs of GULO Phase 2, including the number of electric vehicle charging points and cable channels (GUL-e) committed under GULO are delivered to updated timeframes that are agreed with Oxford City Council and the funding body;
 - d. The existing GULO estate and highways related GULO Phase 2 funding are both transferred; and
 - e. An updated partnership agreement, including a revenue share arrangement for the assets associated with GULO is put in place that recovers the City Council investment to date; and
8. **Note** the reduction of Oxford City Council control over delivery of the OxEVIS Strategy due to national delegation of Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) grant deployment to tier 1 authorities. Moving from overseeing city-wide delivery of OxEVIS to collaborating with Oxfordshire County Council on relevant OxEVIS policies related to highways EV Infrastructure deployment.

74. Utilities Procurement 2024 - 2028

The Head of Corporate Strategy had submitted a report to seek delegated authority for the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / Section 151 Officer, to approve contracts for gas and electricity and agree to extend the current contract for water utilities.

Councillor Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice outlined that the report set out options for re-procurement of utilities contracts which were due to expire in October 2024. The Council had, since 2004, purchased energy on a framework agreement with LASER (Local Authority South East Region), a Public Buying Organisation. Options for re-procurement included buying into a new Public Buying Organisation contract, which was currently the preferred option. The report also reiterated the Council's decision not to buy green electricity due to high premiums, but to instead use the price gap to deliver projects which decarbonised the Council's operations. This was a pragmatic decision which had been taken on the advice of the Council's scientific advisor.

Authorisation was also sought to extend the current water contract, which would expire in September 2024, with a recommendation to exercise the option to extend existing contract for a further two years on the same terms, conditions and pricing.

It was noted that an Energy Procurement Review was proposed within the next six months or so, to inform the Council's longer-term approach from 2027 onwards.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Head of Financial Services / Section 151 Officer, to:
 - decide the procurement route for purchasing the supply of gas and electricity from October 2024
 - agree to enter into contracts for gas and electricity, subject to a maximum term of four years from October 2024;
2. **Approve** the extension of the Council's water contract with Wave for a further two years; and
3. **Note** the proposal to undertake an Energy Procurement Review to inform the Council's longer-term approach (from 2027 onwards).

75. Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge

The Chief Executive had submitted a report to update members on the key scope, process and recommendations from the July 2023 Peer Review Team and to outline the future Action Plan.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships commented that the peer review had been a helpful process which had been reassuring in many aspects but had also involved challenge. Ten recommendations had been made, which were set out in the report. Work had already started on a number of these, and an action plan was being developed proactively by the Corporate Management Team and was expected to be brought to Cabinet in December. This would include commentary on areas which it was felt hadn't been properly communicated at the time of the peer review. A progress review would be undertaken by the LGA in March and April of 2024.

A Cabinet Member commented that the LGA's compressed timescale for progress reporting and review meant that the impact of actions against some of the recommendations (for example, training for new Councillors) may not be able to be

fully assessed at that time. It was agreed that it would be helpful to have a further update to Cabinet in a year's time, to allow for a fuller internal review of progress.

Cabinet resolved to:

1. **Note** the Local Government Peer Challenge Feedback report of July 2023; and
2. **Note** the recommendations from the Peer Review Team and that the Chief Executive has already commenced action planning to address these.

76. Minutes

Cabinet resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2023 as a true and accurate record.

77. Dates of Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates:

15 November 2023

13 December 2023

24 January 2024

7 February 2024

13 March 2024

17 April 2024

All meetings start at 6pm.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.01 pm

Chair

Date: Wednesday 15 November 2023

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank