

**Oxford City Council Budget 2013-2014: “A Fair Future for Oxford” (Equality impact/ outcome assessment)**

During the course of the consultation process work will continue to be undertaken to determine any adverse impact on protected characteristic groups.

Budget proposal	Is this proposal new or subject to an annual review?	What are the likely risks?	What public consultation has been planned/ taken place?	What will we do to offset any identified negative impacts?	Overall assessment of the equality risk
Increase Council tax by 2%	Annual The Autumn 2012 budget statement lowered the local authority tax referendum threshold to 2%	<p>This is likely to impact hardest on the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups and low earners in work. Need to determine whether any group with a protected characteristic might be more adversely affected</p> <p>Accepting the Council Tax Freeze Grant will lead to a loss of income of £659,000 over four years</p>	Agree to consult on the proposed increase during the budget consultation December 2012/ January 2013	<p>The Council has agreed to suffer a potential loss of grant but to keep the Council Tax reduction/ support scheme in place</p> <p>The anticipated Council Tax collection rate has been reduced from the current 98% to 97% due to proposed welfare benefits changes</p>	Initially low but depends on outcome of fuller impact assessment

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<p>Consider the level of Council Tax exemptions and discounts on empty homes and unoccupied properties</p>	<p>October 2011 government proposals to give billing authorities greater discretion over setting “reliefs”</p> <p>The Government has exempted all newly built commercial property completed between 1 October 2013 and 30 September 2016 from empty property rates for the first 18 months</p>	<p>Some income gains are expected</p>	<p>Agree to consult on recommended proposals</p>	<p>Positive outcomes could arise through the proposals to implement a 25% exemption for Class A and Class C properties, a 0% exemption (e.g. full charge) for Class L and Second Homes, and a 150% council tax charge for Empty Homes after two years left unoccupied/ unfurnished</p>	<p>Low/ minimal</p>
<p>Increase in council house rents by 4.61% (following national convergence formula)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>4.61% is equivalent to £4.27 per week (average rent will be £96.83/ week)</p> <p>Expected to produce an additional £1.58</p>	<p>Possible risk of a rise in rent arrears (factoring the change to direct payments)</p> <p>Detailed analysis of the groups at greatest risk is required to enable proactive work to</p>	<p>Agree to consult on an increase in council rents and service charges through special focus groups of council tenants/ leaseholders</p>	<p>Work in accordance with the steer from central government and the rent calculation formula.</p> <p>Note: There is a provision for bad debt of around</p>	<p>Low / Medium</p>

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	million per annum	prevent social housing tenants being placed at risk of being served notices seeking possession		£500k in place.	
Increase in council house service charges by 3.1% & removal of the service charge limiter subject to a cap of £1 per week per annum on the increase	<p>RPI linked increases</p> <p>Proposal to approve a reduction of £1 per week over a four year period</p> <p>Council's rent accounts have "service charge limiters" that effectively reduce the level of charges payable Annual value of limiters is c. £650,000k. The historic position was principally affordability</p>	<p>It is estimated that 2,800 tenants will be initially affected (although some might see the increase covered by HB)</p> <p>The Council will need to determine the greatest areas of disadvantage and whether any specific protected groups are placed more at risk</p>	Consultation as above	<p>Remove inequity/ anomalies that tenants living side by side and in receipt of the same benefits associated with service charges are being charged different amounts</p> <p>Housemark sector benchmarking indicates that the average landlord spends £157 per property on estate services each year and that spend is increasing, therefore this is a prudent measure to help to maintain the quality of housing stock and services</p>	Low/ Medium

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<b>Fees and charges on all services</b>	<p><b>Existing</b></p> <p>Leisure activities average 3.2%</p> <p>License fees approximately 2%</p> <p>Garden waste bins by 5%</p> <p>Planning 15%, pre application 10% (determined by central government)</p> <p>Car Parking 2% (following a two year freeze)</p> <p>Park and Ride from £1.50 to £2.00</p>	<p>Some potentially (but crucially the Council is committed to continuing with protections and exemptions in place)</p>	<p>Budget consultation annually (December 2012/ January 2013)</p> <p>Consultation was undertaken on the new Community Infrastructure Levy in July/ August 2012</p>	<p>Discounts and subsidies remain in place, e.g. Fusion/ OCC Slice Card leisure membership, and free swimming for U17s</p> <p>Creation of new season concessionary ticket schemes for park and ride car parks</p> <p>Charges apply across the board without discrimination</p>	<p>Low/ Medium</p>
<b>New Homes Growth Bonus Payments</b>	<p>System introduced by central government in 2011/ 2012 to pay grant based on the net growth in housing</p>	<p>Net growth in housing and affordable homes will have a positive impact on regeneration projects</p>	<p>Monitoring potential growth estimates until 2016/ 17</p>	<p>Conservative estimates indicate a positive return above £1 million for each of the years.</p> <p>NHB will continue to at least 2020</p>	<p>Low/ minimal</p>

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Expansion of contracts by Direct Services and City Leisure	Proactively bidding for and winning new tenders with other authorities and Housing Associations, e.g. highway maintenance and housing, grounds maintenance contracts (schools et al)	Positive (revenue reinvested in the business and the creation of jobs)  Currently provide contributions to offset overheads in the order of £500,000k	N/A	Contingencies in place in lieu of income shortfall	Low / minimal
Apprenticeships	Existing £200k budget for current cohort of 10 apprentices over two years and a further commitment to invest £150k in 2015/16 and 2016/17	Further opportunity for positive action in recruitment and community leadership, targeting a critical 16-19 age group (returns from the 2011 census indicate that the 15-29 group in Oxford has experienced the largest growth)	Budget consultation	Targeting Oxford City postcodes to develop local talent  Successful scheme extended over the life of the plan with a commitment to plan a new cohort of apprentices every two years	Low/ minimal
Educational Attainment	Existing £400,000 per annum ring fenced for the duration of the MTFS	Positive impact on literacy and a continued commitment to invest	Budget consultation	Project manager has been appointed, contracts have been let to provide	Low/ Medium

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				leadership, and 10 schools within Oxford have already signed up to participate	
Youth Activities	Existing £240,000 per annum ring fenced for the duration of the MTFS	The greatest risk is that the provision is not targeted to areas of greatest need and the Council is unable to expand activities to improve life-chances	Budget consultation	Reverse County Council's reductions in youth provision where appropriate and to the extent affordable  Target key areas of deprivation across the city  Potential partnership funding levered from other organisations	Medium
Disabled transport	New investment	Responsibility for concessionary fares transferred from the City to the County Council who reduced the service from two to one bus per week	Budget consultation	City Council officers to negotiate an increased service with the County Council  Contingency earmarked for this	Medium/ residual