

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 12 July 2023  
**Report of:** Executive Director (Development)  
**Title of Report:** Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter/Pledge

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To seek Cabinet approval to participate in the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter and endorse a series of Oxford City Council pledges
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council, Leader - Inclusive Economy and Partnerships
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Enable an inclusive economy
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Corporate Plan 2020-24

<b>Recommendations:</b> That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	<b>Approve</b> Oxford City Council's participation in the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter; and
2.	<b>Endorse</b> a series of Oxford City Council pledges that officers in respective service areas will deliver against, within existing committed budgets and for the duration of the current medium term financial strategy. Oxford City Council progress/performance against the pledges will be reported against annually and the results shared on Oxford City Council's website.

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	OIEP Charter
Appendix 2	Risk Register
Appendix 3	Equalities Impact Screening / Assessment

## Introduction and background

1. The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) is a county-wide group that brings together employers, business, education, community groups and local government, including Oxford City Council (“the Council”).

- OIEP’s aim (quoting from public web page) is:

*To work together to create a more equal region that creates opportunities and benefits for all people in Oxfordshire, making use of everyone’s potential, so that we can all benefit from Oxfordshire’s success. We are focused on four areas to deliver our vision: education, employment, social value and procurement, and place shaping. We aim to work with projects across Oxfordshire that the OIEP can support, grow or amplify their work. We are also building a repository of resources, case studies and signposting to support organisations working towards a more inclusive economy.*

- The mission of OIEP is:

*Working together to create a more equal region that creates opportunities and benefits for all people within the county. We are working to tackle some of our region’s biggest problems to create a fairer environment where everyone can contribute and share in our success.*

2. The partnership is co-chaired by Baroness Jan Royall (Somerville College) and Jeremy Long (former OxLEP Chair) and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership provides oversight to the work of the OIEP. The Council contributes project management and secretariat functions to the OIEP through the role of the Partnership Manager and contributions by other officers within the Economic Development team.

### Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Charter

3. OIEP has developed an Inclusive Economy Charter (at Appendix 1) which is a way for employers to show their commitment and support to making Oxfordshire a fairer and more inclusive place to live and work, by signing up to specific pledges. When organisations sign up to the charter, they are creating a better working environment for their staff, while also generating a clear signal to potential staff, partners and customers that this is a good organisation to deal with. The charter brings additional benefits for the participating organisations by providing an opportunity to better communicate and raise the profile at a countywide level of the social impact they are creating as part of their organisation’s pledges.

4. Employers can choose pledges that are relevant for their own organisations from 6 groups:

- Provide fair wages – *ensuring employees have a fair and decent wage*
- Support local and social economy – *using our buying power to support the local economy and maximise social value*
- Opportunities to work – *supporting those furthest from the labour market on their journey towards secure employment*
- Sharing resources, skills and assets – *practical ways to ensure goods and services are accessible to all*
- Recruit inclusively – *making jobs accessible for all residents and hiring from diverse communities*

- Improve training and educational attainment – *creating workplaces where employees can thrive and grow and supporting education programmes for children*

5. OIEP held a charter launch event on 24 January 2023 with presentations from key stakeholders in the inclusive economy across Oxfordshire as well as businesses that are already implementing inclusive practices. A recording of the event is available here: <https://boxcast.tv/view/oxfordshire-inclusive-economy-charter-launch-pf2bwne4anplvaeh3u9d>

### Oxford City Council Pledges

6. Oxford City Council is committed to creating a more inclusive economy through its Corporate Plan priorities and Economic Strategy commitments and delivery plan. Oxford City Council is therefore already engaging in activities to deliver the following pledges by respective service area and will continue to do so in 2023. It is recommended that the Council should commit as an organisation to these thirteen pledges (out of an available thirty nine) under five (of the available six) themes:

- a. Support local and social economy - *Using our buying power to support the local economy and maximise social value*

Pledge	Oxford City Council Lead	Related policy or strategy
As a buyer we pledge to continue to buy goods and services from purposeful local organisations, including SMEs, social enterprises and cooperatives, wherever possible	Procurement Manager, service area lead	Procurement Strategy
As a buyer we pledge to continue to assess and account for the social value that a supplier can offer the local community, alongside our assessment of the economic value/financial cost of the contract.		
<i>As a buyer we pledge to buy from organisations who pay the Oxford Living Wage and who request this of organisations in their own supply chains wherever possible</i>		
<i>As a supplier we pledge to use local SMEs in our supply chain wherever possible and to record the percentage of the total spend.</i>		
<i>We pledge to support our employees to volunteer on local community projects</i>	Head of Community Services, service area lead	Volunteering Policy

- b. Opportunities to work - *Supporting those furthest from the labour market on their journey towards secure employment*

Pledge	Oxford City Council Lead	Related policy or strategy
<i>As an employer we pledge to continue to be a Disability Confident Employer and support people with health conditions and disabilities</i>	Head of People, service area lead	People Strategy
<i>As an employer we pledge to improve the diversity of our workforce through more inclusive recruitment practices</i>		
<i>As an employer we pledge to offer work experience to local school/college students from areas where they may experience disadvantage through referrals from partner organisations, where appropriate</i>		
<i>As an employer we pledge that every member of our workforce has the opportunity to share how they contribute to the organisation's success and have opportunities to speak up about concerns and issues.</i>		

*c. Improve training and educational attainment - Creating workplaces where employees can thrive and grow and supporting educational programmes for children*

Pledge	Oxford City Council Lead	Related policy or strategy
<i>As a levy paying business we pledge up to 25% of our unused Levy to help grow apprenticeships in Oxfordshire</i>	Head of People, service area lead	People Strategy

*d. Sharing resources, skills and assets - Practical ways to ensure goods and services are accessible to all*

Pledge	Oxford City Council Lead	Related policy or strategy
<i>As an employer we will continue to work with the local food systems</i>	Head of Community Services, service area lead	Food Strategy and Action Plan
<i>As an organisation we pledge to ensure that our community centres are accessible and inclusive</i>		Thriving Communities Strategy

*e. Provide fair wages - Ensuring employees have a fair and decent wage*

Pledge	Oxford City Council Lead	Related policy or strategy
<i>As an employer we pledge to pay the Oxford Living Wage</i>	Chief Executive	

### **Rationale to support the recommended pledges:**

7. The recommended pledges were arrived at after engagement with all the heads of service in the Council and engagement with all staff and the unions. The Council can commit to deliver against all thirteen pledges within existing resources. Doing so would mean that the Council is setting a clear example to everyone in the county about how much every organisation can do to foster a more inclusive economy. If a local authority facing significant resource constraints can commit to thirteen OIEP pledges, then it should raise expectations of what can be done by other organisations, especially those with greater financial capacity.

### Alternative options for the Council:

8. The Council could endorse fewer pledges. However, this would undermine the impact and significance of the inclusive economy work which though currently already being undertaken by the Council has not up until now been elevated to become a pledge. If we were to reduce the number of pledges we sign up to it might suggest that some elements of the Corporate Plan or Economic Strategy were relegated to being less important than others, because these areas of activity were charter pledges.
9. The Council could endorse more pledges and indeed may in the future. However, by initially focusing on a range of identified and targeted pledges (within an agreed timescale and currently financed period), capacity and resource to deliver more pledges can be assessed and reviewed in a sustainable and responsible way before agreeing further commitments.
10. The Council could decide not to make pledges or sign up to the charter. However, this is reputationally inadvisable for a founding member and project coordinator of the county-wide OIEP. It would hamper our ability to deliver on one of our four main corporate objectives and prevent us from developing further best practice of inclusive economy as an organisation.

### **Other implications**

11. In asking Cabinet to agree to approve participation in the Charter and endorse the related pledges, officers have considered the following other implications that are relevant:

- Consultation and communications-The charter brings additional benefits for the participating organisations by providing an opportunity to better communicate and raise the profile at a countywide level of the social impact they are creating as part of their organisation's pledges. Oxford City Council have arranged for extensive staff and union engagement prior to the Cabinet Report being signed off so that we can incorporate staff member's ideas and involvement in the Charter and its pledges.
- Human resources-The Charter has been informed by the People Team and members of HR as well as a range of HR specialists from across the participating member organisations of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP). At Oxford City Council the People Team and HR are leading on pledges that will enhance our inclusivity as an employer.

- Governance - Officers from each service area will meet quarterly to review progress and we will publish a report annually for at least the next two years setting out progress and performance against the pledge commitments.

### **Financial implications**

12. No financial implications identified due to the fact that the OCC (Oxford City Council) Charter Pledges do not present new or additional service commitments that would require new or additional financial resource during the period of the medium-term financial strategy. The commitment to the pledges and to the charter can then be reviewed if required.

### **Legal issues**

13. No legal implications identified due to the fact that the OCC Pledges do not present new or additional corporate or service commitments that would require assessment from the perspective of legal issues or statutory or non-statutory obligations. Positive opportunities are presented to Oxford City Council of participating in the charter include furtherance of our Public Sector Equality Duty as outlined in the Equalities Impact Full Assessment and Screening.

### **Level of risk**

14. Oxford City Council's participation in the Charter is considered, post Risk Assessment to present Low risk as while the OCC Charter Pledges do not present new or additional service commitments, they will help us to better direct and use our existing funds to secure enhanced impacts and inclusive economy outcomes. Therefore participation in the charter presents opportunities and not threats as it will not require additional capacity/resource for participating service areas.

15. Other risks in terms of management or operational implementation have been considered and also present low to no risk with identified mitigations for the areas of risk assessed. Consideration has been given to how currently resourced priorities may change throughout the identified period and/or potential clashes between pledges and future decisions. Mitigation in place is to time-limit the pledges to the current medium term financial strategy-which is fully funded-and then review where required.

16. Lack of wider awareness and understanding of the charter and its pledges may undermine the value of council signing up to the pledges. This may also pose a risk which is being mitigated by ongoing communications and extensive staff engagement, as identified.

17. The Risk Register is included as Appendix 2.

### **Equalities impact**

18. The OIEP and its Charter and Pledge scheme contribute to our Oxford City Council Corporate Plan and our Economic Strategy and each of the pledges build on or are explicitly existing commitments of service delivery but will enhance the inclusivity with which our services are offered to Oxford's citizens.

19. The aims and objectives of our inclusive economy commitments present positive equalities implications-The OIEP and its Charter supports an inclusive economy and

is committed to improving all aspects of social mobility and increased prosperity for communities and residents, particularly if they are from disadvantaged or minority groups or communities.

20. Both an Equalities Screening and Impact Assessment have been undertaken with advice from the Council’s Equalities Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) lead officer. Each service will be encouraged to tailor their implementation of pledges to their respective service and the needs of service users so as to maximise opportunity for best practice in terms of EDI, presenting positive opportunity while overall the conclusion is that no adverse impacts are identified.

21. Equalities Impact Assessment included as Appendix 3.

**Carbon and Environmental Considerations**

22. While the pledges of the charter are not explicitly related to Environmental or carbon reduction outcomes, they do indirectly present positive opportunity through the support of local businesses and related local supply chains, local food system and networks as well as quality of life benefits which can lead to lower carbon lifestyles and reduced carbon consumption.

**Conclusion**

23. The officer recommendation to Cabinet is to approve participation in the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter (Appendix 1) and endorse the specific list of pledges for Oxford City Councils (paragraph 6). These pledges are recommended because they are affordable (para 12), the alternatives are poor options (paragraphs 8-10) and because they will raise the profile of the Council’s good practice, seeking to inspire others in the county (paragraph 7).

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<b>Background Papers:</b>	
1	None

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