

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 03 September 2024
Report of: Executive Director (Development)
Title of Report: Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter/Pledges – Annual Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	This report is the year 1 report on an annual organisational audit against all Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter pledges requested by Scrutiny Committee in 2023.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Business, Culture and an Inclusive Economy
Corporate Priority:	Strong, Fair Economy
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2024-28
Recommendation(s): That the Committee resolves to:	
1. Note and comment on the report and agree any recommendations.	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	OIEP Charter
Appendix 2	Oxford City Council OIEP Charter Annual Audit

Introduction and background

1. On 12 July 2023, [Cabinet approved](#) participation in the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter (**Appendix 1**) and endorsed a series of Oxford City Council, Oxford Direct Services (ODS) and OX Place pledges.
2. Oxford City Council is committed to creating a more inclusive economy through its Corporate Plan priorities and Economic Strategy commitments and delivery plan.
3. The Council committed as an organisation to 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</i>		

<i>opportunities to speak up about concerns and issues.</i>	
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- 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	

4. At its meeting on 04 July 2023 the Scrutiny Committee requested an annual audit of the organisation against all pledges in the OIEP Charter. This report is the year 1 report on that audit, as 2023 audit established the baseline. Despite the broader remit of the audit, the Council remains committed to 13 pledges; not the full list of 39 pledges.
5. The OIEP Charter has 39 pledges, and the following summary is an audit of the organisation against all possible pledges, not just the 13 initially adopted and which were arrived at after engagement with all Council Heads of Service and engagement with all staff and the Unions. The Council agreed it could commit to deliver against 13 pledges within existing resources. Doing so meant that the Council was and continues to set a clear example to others in the county about how much every organisation can do to foster a more inclusive economy. It was agreed that if a local authority facing significant resource constraints could commit to 13 OIEP pledges, then it raised expectations of what could be done by other organisations, especially those with greater financial capacity.
6. **Note:** Please read **Appendix 2** with Annual Audit Information alongside the following section of the report as it lists a full summary of the audit.

Year 1 Oxford City Council OIEP Charter Pledges Audit Results (2024)

7. The following summarises the year 1 (2024) audit of the organisation against all Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Pledges (39), compared to the baseline (2023) and examples of evidence.
8. The principal learning from the first-year audit is that despite agreeing to adopt 13 of the 39 possible OIEP pledges, Oxford City Council, when audited against the full list of 39 pledges can demonstrate progress against the majority (35 of 39 total pledges) in 2024. Progress is RAG-rated: Red - no progress, does not meet target; Amber - some progress, partly meets target; Green - significant progress, meets target.
9. The following is a breakdown which shows that, of the 35 of 39 pledges that Oxford City Council is performing against, the majority are rated green, a small number amber and none are red:
 - Green for 31 of the 35 Pledges
 - Amber for 4 of the 35 Pledges
 - Red for 0 of the 35 Pledges
10. As well as demonstrating performance against the majority of the pledges, significant improvements in the progress against pledges in 2024 (compared to the 2023 baseline) can be seen for 32 of the total 39 pledges, as broken down below:
 - Within Green, improvements for 10 of the total 39 pledges
 - Amber to Green, improvements for 21 of the total 39 pledges
 - Red to Amber, improvements for 0 of total pledges
 - Blue (or not applicable) to Amber, improvements for 1 of total 39 pledges
11. Oxford City Council's People Team has led on the majority of these improvements.
12. As well as improving in some areas, the Council has also maintained continuity of progress (neither declining nor improving, but remaining the same) in 2024 (compared to the 2023 baseline). This is the case for 17 of the total 39 pledges.
 - Remained Green, for 10 of the total 39 pledges (of which improvements within green were identified in addition)
 - Remained Amber, for 3 of the total 39 pledges.
 - Remained Red, for 3 of the total 39 pledges.
 - Remained Blue (Not applicable), for 1 of the total 39 pledges.
13. There is no decline in progress against pledges in 2024 compared to the 2023 baseline. Given the increasingly constrained financial environment both this continuity and lack of decline is noteworthy and should also be considered an indication of success.
14. The only pledges not currently being progressed are 10, 11, 18 and 32. The reason they are not being progressed is because they are not within the 13 original pledge commitments and are therefore not deliverable within existing service resources and planned, budgeted, delivery:

- *Pledge 10. ‘As an employer I pledge to sponsor a volunteer in a school for the Assisted Reading for Children (ARCh) programme (£450 per volunteer)’*
 - Pledge 10 is not applicable to Oxford City Council, OX Place, or ODS.
- *Pledge 11. ‘As an employer we pledge to offer an alternative interview process i.e. 1 day in the workplace seeing how an individual works and interacts with others’.*
- *Pledge 18. ‘As an employer we pledge to ‘Ban the Box’ – removing the need to ask for details of previous convictions by applicants unless there are clear and compelling (safeguarding) reasons for this.’*
 - Pledges 11 and 18 are being considered as part of wider People Team initiatives but not currently being implemented.
- *Pledge 32. ‘I pledge to become a mentor via the OxGROW virtual mentoring platform to help individuals looking for support to find a job or change career, to help them with areas such as developing resilience, CV writing and preparing for interviews’*
 - Pledge 32 could potentially be integrated into initiatives around reinvigorating the employee volunteering programme.

Recommendations

15. The officer recommendations are that:

- Oxford City Council should continue to participate in the OIEP Charter (**Appendix 1**). The audit demonstrates that Oxford City Council is delivering effectively against the committed 13 pledges and also performing successfully when monitored against the majority of all available pledges.
- Scrutiny should continue to consider the organisational audit against all pledges annually to raise the profile of the Council’s good practice, seeking to inspire others in the county; and
- Scrutiny considers making recommendations on ways that the Council can identify opportunities to improve progress against all 35 pledges ahead of the year 2 (2025) audit as well as exploring potential to deliver against pledges not currently being progressed.

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Background Papers: None

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