

Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Budget Review Group of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Budget Review Group and endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee on 29 January 2025 concerning the Scrutiny Budget Review 2025/26. The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

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<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1) That Officers should consult with cities with Community Councils such as Milton Keynes and Swindon as to whether their governance structures enabled them to fund public services better, and if so consider whether Oxford would benefit from similar arrangements.		
2) That the Council allocate a budget of £100,000, and officer capacity, to support work and preparedness required for the implementation of the local government restructure.		
3) That the Council applies a higher optimism bias of 45% than the 40% applied in the capital budget. This reflects the challenges of bringing slippages under tighter control.		
4) That any cut to the Council Tax Reduction programme should be entirely or mostly relating to the schemes' higher-income bands.		

5) That the Council commit to identifying schemes which will directly benefit areas of deprivation within the city for allocation of any Recovery Grant funding.		
6) That the Council will ensure that the costs savings proposed in Fit for the Future changes do not result in the digital exclusion of vulnerable constituents.		
7) That the Council will expedite efforts to identify savings which could be generated using Artificial Intelligence technology.		
8) That the Council makes an allowance for a rising ICT budget over the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as current ICT cost estimates assume they increase in 2025/26 and then remain steady.		
9) That the Council considers a larger increase on the non-concessionary garden waste bin rate.		
10) That Council ensures cost components such as overheads and administration used to calculate full costs are analysed in detail to identify the scope for higher charges.		
11) That the Council monitors the waste collection service and compares the experience of periods between 2024-2025 budget and 2025-2026 budget to see whether the savings proved a false economy in terms of improved recycling behaviour and		

reduced landfill charges.		
12) That the Council includes provision for business support along the lines of Talk of the Town in the City Centre for areas outside the Centre, such as Cowley.		
13) That the Council will facilitate and engage in discussions with local retail centres to understand their individual challenges and allocate appropriate resources to support through either marketing or direct them to appropriate resources in the county.		
14) That the Council provides support to the city centre businesses whose agreement is needed to establish an Accommodation Business Improvement District and will engage with University Colleges, Businesses, hoteliers and recognised business organisations on plans for an ABID and bring proposals forward to Councillors, which could include the introduction of a tourist tax whose revenues would fund city centre improvements, reducing the need for City and County expenditure.		
15) That the Council explores the scope for pursuing landlords whose property has been vacant for more than 12 months in a 24-month period to auction these properties for rent		
16) That the proposed new car parking charges are either rounded up to the nearest pound or		

rounded up to the nearest £0.25, depending on the type of car park.		
17) That the Council recommends applying some optimism bias to the projected increases in corporate assets' commercial rental income. A figure of 20% is suggested, to allow for slippage in the completion of redevelopment and leasing of assets.		
18) That the Council's Town Hall team meet their counterparts in the University, running the Schwarzman Centre and Sheldonian, as well as colleges with good performance spaces, to discuss cooperation in the hire of medium to large sized venues.		
19) The Council to request data on the financial viability of the Rose Hill community centre, which is both modern and well established, to assess whether the financial projections in the Budget are realistic in the light of experience.		
20) That the Council works with other councils to lobby Central Government to adapt the housing benefit system to remove this anomaly and a budget be allocated to examine the business case for a model of enhanced links with RPs as an Invest to Save initiative.		
21) That the Council will address unpredictable levels of Temporary Accommodation requirement by securing further contracts		

with accommodation providers across the city.		
22) That the Council investigates the scope for working with an existing company or to establish a separate company, similar to Low Carbon Oxford's investments in solar panels at schools, to finance investments and share energy cost reductions with HRA tenants.		
23) That the Council reject the £120,000 investment in the Fibre to Homes Initiative where 25+Mbps services are already available without fibre.		

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