

Oxford City Council Budget Medium Term Financial Strategy 2026-27 to 2028-2029 and 2025-26 Budget for Consultation (Equality Assessment)

The following assessment gives more details from an equality and diversity perspective on the Council’s various on-going budget proposals. It provides an initial commentary, incorporating input from Heads of Service and specialist officers, to indicate the potential risks and actual mitigating actions already in place or planned to support the investment proposals before the wider public consultation period from December 2024 to January 2025.

The draft budget has been structured so that it is in balance for the next four years, and although national economic pressures on local government are ever present, it recommends revisions, efficiencies and small reductions in service but aims to protect frontline services as far as possible, particularly for the most vulnerable. In addition it includes additional expenditure on to bolster our service provision in a number of areas and outlines proposals to facilitate capital investment for large scale regeneration projects which will bring economic growth, jobs, more social and affordable housing and wider interventions to ensure social inclusive communities and opportunities: underpinning the Council’s vision of “Building a World Class City for Everyone”.

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Budget Proposal	Increase Council Tax by an expected 2.99% for 2025/26 followed by subsequent annual increases of 1.99%, and maintain the existing Council Tax Support Scheme
Is this proposal new or subject to an annual review?	This is an annual consideration. In the Autumn Statement announcement on 30 TH October 2024 there was no mention of the Referendum Principles. It is assumed the referendum limit for District Councils will be 3% or £5 whichever is the higher. The Council is proposing an increase of 2.99% since this increase at £10.36 per annum is the higher
What are the likely risks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax rises are likely to have the hardest impact on the most economically disadvantaged groups such as part time and low paid workers (although these are mitigated by the council tax support scheme, which is being maintained in full). • Increased arrears due Council tax increases
What public consultation has been planned/ taken place?	There will be further opportunities for comment on the level of council tax increase as part of the public consultation during the period December 2024 to January 2025. The Council is consulting on the Council Tax Support Scheme. The Council is one of a small number of councils in the country that has retained the parameters of the existing scheme introduced in April 2013. And is

	proposing to keep the scheme as is for the first year.																		
What mitigating actions will the Council implement to offset any negative impacts?	The Council will consider its Council Tax Reduction Scheme when it meets in January 2025. The Council has a limited amount of Government Grant that it may use at its discretion to assist vulnerable individuals effected by the increase. The Council is willing to have discussions with individuals to ensure that they are claiming their full entitlement to benefits.																		
Overall assessment of the equality risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is difficult to estimate the dimensions of equalities risks around CT increases. The Council continues to be the one of only a few authorities to maintain a Council Tax Reduction Support Scheme covering 100% of the council tax although with the current budgetary pressures it is uncertain how long this can continue to be supported. Currently the total net caseload is 10,000 receiving Council Tax Benefit & Housing Benefit, with 4,400 of those receiving CTR discount in full with a further 500 having to pay less than £1. The 1.99% increase will have limited or nil effect on these accounts. <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>Race</td> <td>Disability</td> <td>Age</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Neutral</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gender reassignment</td> <td>Religion or Belief</td> <td>Sexual Orientation</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Neutral</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sex</td> <td>Pregnancy and Maternity</td> <td>Marriage & Civil Partnership</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Neutral</td> </tr> </table>	Race	Disability	Age	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Gender reassignment	Religion or Belief	Sexual Orientation	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Sex	Pregnancy and Maternity	Marriage & Civil Partnership	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
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Budget Proposal	Rent setting: Increase in council house rents by 2.70% per annum for 2025/26.																		
Is this proposal new or subject to an annual review?	From 1 st April 2020 under the 2020 rent standard, the Government have determined that rent will be increased by CPI +1% for a period of 5 years for local authority and housing association social rents. The last year of this 5 year program ends in 2025-26. In the Autumn Budget the Chancellor confirmed that this level of increase of CPI +1% would be retained for a further 5 years																		
What are the likely risks?	The increase for 2025-26 at 2.7% represents an average of £3.51 per week. There is a risk of increased rents arrears which could rise as a result of the increase. Issues may arise from the implementation of universal credit which is being monitored by the Council																		

What public consultation has been planned/ taken place?	Agree to consult on an increase in council rents and service charges through special focus groups of council tenants/ leaseholders									
What mitigating actions will the Council implement to offset any negative impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of end of October 2024 there are a total of 5,149 HRA tenants (67%) claiming Housing cost element of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. This is made up of 3,274 Universal Claimants and 1,875 Housing Benefit claimants. The amount claimed by each tenant will vary depending on their individual circumstances. • From 1-4-2025 there is a full migration of housing benefit claimants to universal credit which will see a significant number of in the number of housing benefit claimants that the council delas with although there will be some residual elements such as those claimants in supported accommodation. The Council will also still administer the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. 									
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Budget Proposal	Roll out of Universal Credit									
Is this proposal new or	The roll out of universal credit commenced in Oxford on 18 th October 2017 for all working age									

subject to an annual review?	claimants replacing a number of existing benefits and tax credits. Full migration of housing benefits claimants to universal credit is planned for April 2025. Budget provision has been made for changes arising from Universal Credit which will impact on staffing.									
What are the likely risks?	Risk to the Council in terms of increased rent and council tax arrears arising from claimants moved onto Universal Credit. Risk in terms of increased homelessness.									
What public consultation has been planned/ taken place?	There is no further public consultation on the roll out of Universal Credit									
What mitigating actions will the Council implement to offset any negative impacts?	Changes to staffing has been included with the MTFP									
Overall assessment of the equality risks	Strong governance and review will mitigate against any adverse impacts, although none have been flagged									
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Budget Proposal	Increases in Fees and Charges across Council services									
Is this proposal new or subject to an annual review?										
What are the likely risks?	That customers will be unable to afford to purchase council services									

What public consultation has been planned/ taken place?	Budget consultation annually (December 2024/ January 2025).									
What mitigating actions will the Council implement to offset any negative impacts?	<p>Concessions are given to users of the services who are in receipt of housing benefit, Council Tax Reduction and the housing element of universal credit re in receipt of Housing Benefit in the following areas:</p> <p>Garden Maintenance for housing tenants</p> <p>Pest Control – 50% -60% concession for most services</p> <p>Garden waste – 59% concession</p> <p>Bulky Items – 50% concession</p>									
Overall assessment of the equality risks	<p>There may be groups adversely affected by specific service fees, however, consultation and monitoring will take place with these groups once identified.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="607 730 2013 1129"> <tr> <td data-bbox="607 730 1120 922"> <p>Race</p> <p>Neutral</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1120 730 1568 922"> <p>Disability</p> <p>Neutral</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1568 730 2013 922"> <p>Age</p> <p>Neutral</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="607 922 1120 1034"> <p>Gender reassignment</p> <p>Neutral</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1120 922 1568 1034"> <p>Religion or Belief</p> <p>Neutral</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1568 922 2013 1034"> <p>Sexual Orientation</p> <p>Neutral</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="607 1034 1120 1134"> <p>Sex</p> <p>Neutral</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1120 1034 1568 1134"> <p>Pregnancy and Maternity</p> <p>Neutral</p> </td> <td data-bbox="1568 1034 2013 1134"> <p>Marriage & Civil Partnership</p> <p>Neutral</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Race</p> <p>Neutral</p>	<p>Disability</p> <p>Neutral</p>	<p>Age</p> <p>Neutral</p>	<p>Gender reassignment</p> <p>Neutral</p>	<p>Religion or Belief</p> <p>Neutral</p>	<p>Sexual Orientation</p> <p>Neutral</p>	<p>Sex</p> <p>Neutral</p>	<p>Pregnancy and Maternity</p> <p>Neutral</p>	<p>Marriage & Civil Partnership</p> <p>Neutral</p>
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