

**To:** Audit and Governance Committee  
**Date:** 28 January 2026  
**Report of:** Group Finance Director  
**Title of Report:** Setting of the Council Tax Base 2026-27

Summary and recommendations	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To set the “Council Tax Base” for 2026-27 as required by section 33 of The Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012.
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Cabinet Member with responsibility:</b>	Councillor Turner - Deputy Leader (Statutory), and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	A Well Run Council.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	None

<b>Recommendation(s):</b> that the Audit and Governance Committee:	
1. <b>Agree</b> that the 2026/27 Council Tax Base for the City Council’s area as a whole is set at <b>48,724.9</b> (as shown in Appendix 1)	
2. <b>Agree</b> that the projected level of collection is set at <b>98%</b>	
3. <b>Agree</b> that the tax bases for the Parishes, and for the Unparished Area of the City (as shown in Appendix 2) be set as follows:	
Unparished Area of the City	40,729.2
Littlemore Parish	2,138.8
Old Marston Parish	1,319.8
Risinghurst & Sandhills Parish	1,604.0
Blackbird Leys Parish	2,933.4
City Council Total	48,725.2

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Oxford City Council Tax Base 2026-27	No

<b>Appendix 2</b>	Parish Councils' Tax Bases 2026-27	No
<b>Appendix 3</b>	Dwellings by valuation band as at 30 November 2025	No
<b>Appendix 4</b>	Risk Register	No

## **Introduction and background**

1. Responsibility for setting the Council Tax Base for the Council's area as a whole and for the individual parishes is delegated to the Audit and Governance Committee.
2. The Tax Base is the estimate of the taxable capacity of the area for the period. The number of dwellings in each valuation band are converted to Band D equivalents. The starting point is the current number of dwellings, exemptions and discounts as at 30 November 2025 and projections are then made for expected movements over the period 1 December 2025 - 31 March 2027. Separate calculations are required for a) the whole of the Authority's area and b) the individual Parishes and the Unparished area of the city.
3. The Tax Base is used by the Council to calculate the yield from Council Tax for 2026/27, and by Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner (Thames Valley) to apportion their precepts from 1 April 2026.

## **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

4. The Council's share of the cost of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme arising from reduced council tax income is currently estimated at £1.9 million (based on a band D equivalent number of properties of 5,295.3 [the actual number of properties is 6,136.0] receiving support and a 2.99% Council Tax increase on the city band D charge [including Parishes] recommended for 2026/27). This has the effect of reducing the Council Tax precept income that the Council can receive.
5. The caseload estimate included in the 2026/27 Tax Base calculation is an average level of the actual 2025/26 caseload. An average of the 2025/26 caseload can be used to estimate the caseload for 2026/27 as the Council's Revenues Team continually monitors the caseload in line with the eligibility criteria and as such, it is felt a prudent approach of using the 2025/26 average caseload is accurate for the 2026/27 Tax Base calculation.

## **Factors taken into account in the calculation of the Tax Base**

6. The following factors are taken into account when calculating the Tax Base:

- **Dwellings:** The number of dwellings in each valuation band as at 30 November 2025, totalling 63,942 (Appendix 3 attached shows the bands as per the Valuation Office Agency as at 27 November 2025. This is the closest issued report to 30 November 2025 from the Valuation Office Agency, with the base report from the Council's revenues system being run at the end of 30 November 2025).

- **Exemptions and Discounts:** Not all dwellings are liable for the full Council Tax charge, some are exempt. Others can attract a discount, either at 25%, 50% or 100% dependent on the number of adults who are resident. The level of exemptions and discounts reduces the Tax Base.
  - The estimate of the number of dwellings that will be eligible for a 25% discount (primarily dwellings occupied by one adult only) is 19,099. This figure is shown in line 7 of Appendix 1 and is based on data as at 30 November 2025.
  - The estimate of the number of dwellings that will be eligible for a 50% discount (primarily dwellings where all the occupiers are disregarded) is 172. This figure is shown in line 8 of Appendix 1 and is based on data as at 30 November 2025.
  - The estimate of the number of dwellings that will be eligible for a 25% discount in 2026/27 (recently built or uninhabitable dwellings) is 85. This figure is shown in line 9 of Appendix 1 and is based on data as at 30 November 2025.
- **Disability Reductions:** Where there is a disabled occupant, and adaptations have been undertaken for their benefit, the dwelling is treated as being in the band below the one in which it was actually valued (lines 4 and 5 of Appendix 1).
- **Council Tax Reduction Scheme:** The estimate of the total number of dwellings that will be eligible for discounts under the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2026/27 is 6,136.0 compared to 6,754.2 dwellings which was used for setting the Tax Base for 2025/26 (detailed in paragraph 12 below). The breakdown per band is detailed in line 15 of Appendix 1. Please also see the Risk Register (Appendix 4).
- **Second Home Premium:** This charge is a 100% premium i.e. a 200% council tax charge to those dwellings that have been identified as second homes and came into effect from 1 April 2025.  
Second homes are defined as a furnished property where the owner has a main home elsewhere.  
The estimate of the total dwellings that will pay a total 200% council tax charge is 852 which is shown in line 12 of Appendix 1.

- **Long Term Empty Premium:** This charge applies to dwellings that have been empty for more than 1 year and came into effect from 1 April 2024.

The premium applicable compared to the total council tax charge payable is detailed below:

Empty period	Premium	Council Tax Charge
Between 1yr and 5yrs	100%	200%
Between 5yrs and 10yrs	200%	300%
Over 10yrs	300%	400%

The total estimate of the number of dwellings that will incur a long term empty premium is 591. This figure is broken down to 543 dwellings that have been empty for more than 1 year, 36 dwellings that have been empty for more than 5 years and 12 that have been empty for more than 10 years. These figures are shown in lines 11a, 11b and 11c of Appendix 1.

- **Discretionary elements:** The Council has discretion in the following areas when calculating its Council Tax Base:

(i) **Number of new properties built:** Appendix 3 is the statement issued by the Valuation Office Agency showing the Council's dwelling numbers for each Council Tax band as close to 30 November 2025 as possible. This data is shown in line 1 of Appendix 1 and is the starting point for the calculation of the Tax Base. The Council's overall total of dwellings has increased from 63,603 on 30 November 2024 to 63,942 one year later, an increase of 0.53%.

In addition to the report issued by the Valuation Office Agency, there is an estimate of new dwellings that are due to become chargeable. A figure of 18 new builds has been included for the remainder of 2025/26 (line 1a of Appendix 1). This number is net of the fact that some of those dwellings will be exempt or liable for a discount.

For 2026/27 an estimate of 210 new dwellings has been built into the calculation (line 1b) based on planning applications and an assessment from the Council's Revenues Team - a 50% discount has been assumed (line 10) which allows for dwellings not being in the Valuation List for the entire period.

(ii) **Allowance for non-collection** – The Council is required to make an allowance for non-collection of Council Tax. Collection of Council Tax in 2025/26 has remained consistent with the collection performance of 2024/25. It is critical that the Tax Base is maintained to an optimum level to ensure Council Tax income is maximised. Consequently, the Group Finance Director has recommended that the allowance for 2026/27 remains at 2%.

## **Calculation method**

7. The method used to calculate the Tax Base is prescribed by the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2914). The basic calculation is as follows:
  - Number of dwellings in each of the valuation bands
  - Less:
    - Exempt dwellings
    - Disabled reductions
    - Discounts (25% and 50%)
    - Dwellings eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme
  - Plus:
    - Long Term Empty Property Premiums
    - Second Home Property Premiums
  - Convert to Band D equivalents
  - Adjust for projected collection rate of 98%
8. Appendices 1 and 2 attached set out the requisite calculations for the Authority as a whole as well as for the Parished and Unparished areas of the City. Table 1 below shows the total number of chargeable Council Tax Dwellings by Parish. This is after exemptions have been removed.

<b>Table 1 : Total Chargeable Council Tax</b>				
	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>Change</b>	
	<b>Nos</b>	<b>Nos</b>	<b>Nos</b>	<b>%</b>
Unparished Area	46,492.0	46,370.0	+ 122.0	+ 0.26
Littlemore	3,005.0	2,978.0	+ 27.0	+ 0.91
Old Marston	1,501.0	1,505.0	- 4.0	- 0.27
Risinghurst & Sandhills	1,909.0	1,912.0	- 3.0	- 0.16
Blackbird Leys	5,015.0	5,020.0	- 5.0	- 0.10
<b>City Council Total</b>	<b>57,922.0</b>	<b>57,785.0</b>	<b>+ 137.0</b>	<b>+ 0.24</b>

9. Table 2 below illustrates the calculation of the Tax Base broken down into discount and premium categories, arriving at the proposed 2026/27 Tax Base.

<b>Table 2 : Analysis of Chargeable Dwellings converted to the Tax Base</b>					
	<b>Dwellings</b>	<b>Expressed as Band D</b>	<b>At the 98% Collection Rate</b>	<b>Discount / Premium Applicable</b>	<b>2026/27 Tax Base</b>
Dwellings Eligible for 25% Single Person Discount	19,099.0	18,061.1	17,699.9	-4,425.0	13,274.9
Dwellings Eligible for 25% Uninhabitable Dwellings discount	85.0	89.8	88.0	-22.0	66.0
Dwellings Eligible for 50% All Residents Disregard Discount	172.0	200.7	196.7	-98.4	98.3
Dwellings Eligible for 50% New Dwellings discount	210.0	212.2	208.0	-104.0	104.0
Long Term Empty Property Premium (100%)	543.0	570.2	558.8	558.8	1,117.6
Long Term Empty Property Premium (200%)	36.0	37.2	36.5	73.0	109.5
Long Term Empty Property Premium (300%)	12.0	12.8	12.5	37.5	50.0
Second Home Premium (100%)	852.0	841.1	824.3	824.3	1,648.6
Number of dwellings assumed to be entitled to no discounts / premium	36,913.0	38,223.0	37,458.5	-5,202.2	32,256.3
Estimated Chargeable Dwellings	<b>57,922.0</b>	<b>58,248.1</b>	<b>57,083.2</b>	<b>-8,358.0</b>	<b>48,725.2</b>

10. Table 3 below then compares the discounts and premium for the proposed 2026/27 Tax Base calculation with the 2025/26 Tax Base to show the individual category movements.

<b>Table 3 : Movement between Chargeable Dwellings and the Tax Base</b>				
<b>Numbers (Band D equivalents after applying the 98% Collection Rate)</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>Change</b>	
	<b>Nos</b>	<b>Nos</b>	<b>Nos</b>	<b>%</b>
Estimated Chargeable Dwellings expressed as Dwelling Numbers	<b>57,083.2</b>	<b>56,974.8</b>	<b>+ 108.4</b>	<b>+ 0.19</b>
Reduction in Chargeable Band D equivalents as a result of				
Dwellings Eligible for 25% Single Person Discount	-4,425.0	-4,353.1	-71.9	+ 1.65
Dwellings Eligible for 25% Uninhabitable Dwellings discount	-22.0	-11.7	-10.3	+ 88.03
Dwellings Eligible for 50% All Residents Disregard Discount	-98.4	-92.7	-5.7	+ 6.15
Dwellings Eligible for 50% New Dwellings discount	-104.0	-68.2	-35.8	+ 52.49
Additional Chargeable Band D equivalents as a result of				
Long Term Empty Property Premium (100%)	558.8	170.9	+ 387.9	+ 226.97
Long Term Empty Property Premium (200%)	73.0	71.6	+ 1.4	+ 1.96
Long Term Empty Property Premium (300%)	37.5	30.6	+ 6.9	+ 22.55
Second Home Premium (100%)	824.3	686.0	+ 138.3	+ 20.16
Reduction in Chargeable Band D equivalents as a result of dwellings eligible for Council Tax Reduction Scheme	-5,202.2	-5,770.4	+ 568.2	- 9.85
Estimated Tax Base expressed as Band D Equivalents after applying the 98% Collection Rate	<b>48,725.2</b>	<b>47,637.8</b>	<b>+ 1,087.4</b>	<b>+ 2.28</b>

11. Table 4 below shows the principal changes between the actual Tax Base for 2025/26 and that proposed Tax Base for 2026/27, with the movement broken down by properties receiving discounts, premiums and paying the full charge.

<b>Table 4 : Estimated change in Tax Base</b>	
<b>Numbers (Band D equivalents after applying the 98% Collection Rate)</b>	
Prior Year Tax Base	<b>47,637.8</b>
Movements	
Reduction of properties eligible for Council Tax Reduction Scheme	+ 568.2
Increase of properties eligible for Discounts	- 123.6
Increase in properties subject to a Premium Charge	+ 534.5
Increase in properties paying a full Council Tax Charge	+ 108.3
New Year Tax Base	<b>48,725.2</b>
<b>Net Change (Nos)</b>	+ 1,087.4
<b>Net Change (%)</b>	+ 2.28

### **Reasons for the overall increases in the Council Tax Base**

12. The reasons for the 2.28% overall increase in the Council Tax Base compared to the 2025/26 Tax Base are due to:

- a. Increase in properties subject to the Second Home Premium

The Second Home Premium is now fully embedded within the Council's Council Tax charging system. This has improved the accuracy of identifying and reporting genuine second homes across the city. Initial forecasts at the time of the premium's introduction assumed a phased implementation, and the full effect is now being realised in the Tax Base.

- b. Reduction in properties eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)

All properties receiving Council Tax reduction have been reviewed in line with the Council's revised Council Tax Reduction Scheme, approved by the Council in February 2025. As a result of this review, a significant number of claimants have been reassessed and deemed no longer eligible, increasing the overall Tax Base.

- c. Increase in properties subject to Long Term Empty Property charges

The long term empty property charging regime was expanded to include properties vacant for over one year, with effect from 1 April 2024. The full financial impact of this policy change is now being reflected, resulting in an increased number of properties attracting empty property premiums.

13. Table 5 below then summarises the Tax Bases by Parishes.

<b>Table 5 : Council Tax Bases</b>				
	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>Change</b>	
	<b>Nos</b>	<b>Nos</b>	<b>Nos</b>	<b>%</b>
Unparished Area	40,729.2	39,882.6	+ 846.6	+ 2.12
Littlemore	2,138.8	2,029.9	+ 108.9	+ 5.36
Old Marston	1,319.8	1,311.6	+ 8.2	+ 0.63
Risinghurst & Sandhills	1,604.0	1,579.8	+ 24.2	+ 1.53
Blackbird Leys	2,933.4	2,833.9	+ 99.5	+ 3.51
<b>City Council Total</b>	<b>48,725.2</b>	<b>47,637.8</b>	<b>+ 1,087.4</b>	<b>+ 2.28</b>

14. Tax Bases in the Parishes.

The changes in the Parish Tax Bases are consistent with the changes described for the overall Council Tax Base changes and relate to the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the continued embedding of the Second Homes and Long Term Empty Property Premiums.

### **Risk Implications**

15. A risk assessment has been undertaken and the risk register is attached at Appendix 4.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

16. There are no specific Equalities implications relating to the setting of the Tax Base as detailed in this report.

### **Financial Implications**

17. These are all included within the main body of the report.

### **Legal implications**

18. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 states that Billing Authorities are to calculate their Council Tax Base figures as at 30 November preceding the financial year to which the Tax Base applies. These figures must be notified to the major precepting authorities by the following 31 January.

19. The method used to calculate the Tax Base is prescribed by the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2914). (EG 20/1/26 13715)

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**Background Papers:** None.

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