

## Oxford City Council Budget Medium Term Financial Strategy 2027-28 to 2029-2030 and 2026-27 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 2025 to January 2026.

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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<b>Budget Proposal</b>	<b>Increase Council Tax by an expected 2.99% for 2026/27 followed by subsequent annual increases of 2.99%, and maintain the existing Council Tax Support Scheme</b>
Is this proposal new or subject to an annual review?	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 £10.67 per annum is the higher
What are the likely risks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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).</li> <li>• Increased arrears due Council tax increases</li> </ul>
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 2025 to January 2026. The Council consults on the Council Tax Support Scheme which is still more beneficial than other schemes in other councils

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 2026. 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"> <li>It is difficult to estimate the dimensions of equalities risks around CT increases. The Council continues to be 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.</li> <li>Currently the total net caseload is 10,000 receiving Council Tax Benefit &amp; Housing Benefit, with 5640 of those receiving CTR discount in full with a further 129 having to pay less than £1. The 2.99% increase will have limited or nil effect on these accounts.</li> </ul> <table> <tr> <td><b>Race</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Disability</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Age</b> Neutral</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Gender reassignment</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Religion or Belief</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Sexual Orientation</b> Neutral</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Sex</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b> Neutral</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Race</b> Neutral	<b>Disability</b> Neutral	<b>Age</b> Neutral	<b>Gender reassignment</b> Neutral	<b>Religion or Belief</b> Neutral	<b>Sexual Orientation</b> Neutral	<b>Sex</b> Neutral	<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b> Neutral	<b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b> Neutral
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<b>Budget Proposal</b>	<b>Rent setting: Increase in council house rents by 4.8% per annum for 2026/27.</b>									
Is this proposal new or subject to an annual review?	Under the rent standard, the Government have determined that rents may be increased by CPI +1%. The Government have recently confirmed that social landlords will be able to increase rents by up to £1 per week towards rental convergence from 1-4-2027 and then up to £2 per week from 1-4-2028 until convergence is reached.									
What are the likely risks?	The increase for 2026-27 at 4.8% i.e 3.8% +1% represents an average of £8.47 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"> <li>As of end of October 2025 there are a total of 5,414 HRA tenants (70%) claiming Housing cost element of Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. This is made up of 3,779 Universal Claimants and 1,635 Housing Benefit claimants. The amount claimed by each tenant will vary depending on their individual circumstances.</li> </ul>									
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<b>Budget Proposal</b>	<b>Increases in Fees and Charges across Council services</b>									
Is this proposal new or subject to an annual review?	Annual									
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 2025/ January 2026).									
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><b>Garden Maintenance for housing tenants</b></p> <p><b>Pest Control</b> – 50% -60% concession for most services</p> <p><b>Garden waste</b> – 56% 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> <tr> <td><b>Race</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Disability</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Age</b> Neutral</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Gender reassignment</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Religion or Belief</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Sexual Orientation</b> Neutral</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Sex</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b> Neutral</td> <td><b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b> Neutral</td> </tr> </table>	<b>Race</b> Neutral	<b>Disability</b> Neutral	<b>Age</b> Neutral	<b>Gender reassignment</b> Neutral	<b>Religion or Belief</b> Neutral	<b>Sexual Orientation</b> Neutral	<b>Sex</b> Neutral	<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b> Neutral	<b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b> Neutral
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