

Cherwell District Council
Equality and Climate Impact Assessment
Budget Proposals 2025/26

Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	All Directorates and Service Areas
What is being assessed? (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	This assessment sets out the overall impact that the budget and business planning proposals have on a range of equality and diversity characteristics, including the nine protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010, and against our climate change commitments, setting out any mitigations that have been put in place against possible negative impacts.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	This impact assessment provides an overview of the 2025/26 budget and business planning proposals and so comments on changes to existing programmes as well as new proposals.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change and its possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (Following completion of the assessment).	<p>This assessment covers the overall budget and business planning proposal for Cherwell District Council and seeks to highlight key evidence and intelligence that the Council has used to assess the impact of its budget proposals on the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. The Council has also assessed the impact on those living in rural areas, those living with social deprivation, armed forces communities and carers.</p> <p>An initial review of all proposals was completed by the Performance and Insight Team to review their potential impact and determine where mitigations would be required. This overarching impact assessment has been carried out taking into account any individual Equalities Impact Assessments plus the combined impact of proposals for the budget.</p> <p>After assessing the and their com we have determined that none of the proposals will have an impact on residents within the protected characteristics.</p>
Completed by	Celia Prado-Teeling – Performance & Insight Team Leader
Authorised by	Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director of Resources and Transformation
Date of Assessment	28 November, 2024

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>The Council's budget and business planning proposals are designed to enable us to deliver the key priorities in our Council's Plan supporting our communities to thrive and businesses to grow, inspiring and enabling positive, lasting change. Our strategic priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic prosperity. • Community leadership. • Environmental stewardship. • Quality housing and place making. <p>In addition, key themes including climate action, operational excellence and addressing inequality will be critical in supporting the delivery of the Council's overarching priorities and vision.</p> <p>Cherwell Council has faced significant challenges in planning the 2025–2026 budget due to uncertainties in government funding, rising costs, and increased service demands. Despite needing to find £1.020m in savings, the council is proposing a balanced budget, reflecting our commitment to financial responsibility and service protection. We acknowledge the financial pressures on residents and, through careful planning and over £1 million in back-office savings, have managed to protect vital frontline services and minimise cost increases.</p> <p>This budget and business planning round has been impacted by ongoing uncertainty in major funding streams such as Business Rates. In addition, significant budget pressures have arisen due to the cost of living crisis and the associated high levels of inflation. In combination, this is resulting in a challenging budgeting and business planning process which is hoping to address some of these pressure through a transformation programme that has been part of this Budget and Business Planning process to make sure we are making the most of our current resources.</p> <p>Every proposal considered was required to undertake an initial Equalities Impact Assessment, completed by the service manager, to indicate whether they had identified any potential impacts of their savings proposals on protected characteristics. Please note that completing an individual</p>
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	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment is mandatory for all new projects, policies, strategies, and proposals presented by council services.</p> <p>Changes to fees and charges are addressed in the associated Fees and Charges schedule. Any increase to fees and charges may impact on those with more need to use a service, including due to an individual having one or more of the protected characteristics. Changes to fees and charges are proposed after consideration of inflation, service need, benchmarking, and market opportunities. Where material service impact has been assessed from changes in charges these will be addressed through the equality impact assessment process that supports decision making on the budget and business planning report or the later specific decision making process associated with review and any subsequent proposed change.</p>
<p>Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action</p>	<p>The overall budget proposals for 2025-26 have been developed with the objective of effectively targeting services, so that we continue to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and fulfil our statutory duties. They are mixture of efficiency savings proposals which have been reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charging developers for extra monitoring and defect checks. • Reducing costs in our leisure contracts • Using electric pool cars to save on mileage expenses and reduce carbon emissions. • Transferring the 5 to 11-year-olds' holiday programme to our leisure provider. • Exploring a shared contractor framework for property, wellbeing and housing repairs to reduce costs. • Removing vacant job posts where possible. • After reviewing our balance sheet, using available resources to help lower borrowing costs. • Centralising our computer budgets and making our equipment replacement programme more efficient. • Simplifying the job evaluation process by using one scheme instead of two. • Reducing weekday overtime rates to standard pay. • Introducing a secure electronic document signing and sealing system to save time and money. • Finding efficiencies in facilities management. • Clarifying tenants' responsibilities to avoid extra work and costs. <p>Our income proposals for 2025-26 include our income sources, fees and charges, most fees will increase by 2% to match inflation; however, we are considering higher increases in some fees which</p>

	<p>have been reviewed from an Equalities point of view, ensuring there is no impact to residents within the protected characteristics.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact</p>	<p>In considering the impact of budget proposals before they are formally agreed, the Council undertakes a detailed process of democratic and community engagement. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of health and wellbeing needs, the associated Equalities Briefing and Cherwell District Profile and the results of the 2021 Census, to consider the making of our communities, and the possible impact of the proposals as they are drawn up. • A public consultation process, the results of which are published alongside the Budget and Business Planning proposals. • A democratic process including agreement of proposals by Executive, analysis and comment on those proposals by Budget and Business Planning Committee, and adoption of the budget by Full Council. Each of these stages provides an opportunity to invite comment and engagement from the public and representatives of particular organisations or population groups.

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Equalities Impact

<p>Assessing the evidence and impact on those within the protected and additional characteristics</p>	<p>Age: According to the 2021 Census there are 161,016 residents in Cherwell, of which 2.3% (3,751) are aged 85+. Cherwell’s population is ageing with the 85+ population predicted to increase by 88% by 2037. No specific issues relating to resident’s age have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.</p> <p>Disability: Around 15% of Cherwell’s population have a disability, according to the Census 2021. No specific issues relating to disabilities have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.</p> <p>Gender Reassignment: During the 2021 Census, a total of 657 residents stated that their gender identity is different from the sex registered at birth. No specific issues relating to gender reassignment have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.</p>
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Pregnancy and Maternity: There were 1,784 live births in Cherwell in 2022, a higher fertility rate in comparison with the county average. No specific issues relating to pregnancy nor maternity have been identified as likely to arise because of these proposals.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: According to the 2021 Census 48.6% of residents in Cherwell were married or in a civil partnership and 682 registered same-sex civil partnerships. No specific issues relating to marriage and civil partnership have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Race including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality: In the 2021 Census, 88.7% of Cherwell's residents identified as white, 6% as Asian/Asian British or Asian Welsh, 2.9% as mixed or multiple ethnic groups, 1.8% were Black/Black African/ Black Caribbean or Black British and 1.3% were other ethnic groups. The majority of ethnic minority populations in Cherwell are based in Banbury. In regard to nationality 86.7% of residents only have UK national identity, 11% has a non-UK identity and 2.3% has UK identity and a non-UK identity (simultaneously). No specific issues relating to race including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Religion or belief: Regarding religion and belief, in the 2021 Census 50% of Cherwell residents identified as Christians, 38% as having no religion, 6.1% did not answer, 3.2% as Muslim, 0.8% as Hindu, 0.6% as Buddhist, 0.4% as Sikh, 0.5% other religion and 0.1% Jewish. No specific issues relating to religion or belief have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Sex: In the 2021 Census, Cherwell reported to have a population composed by 81,112 females (50.4%) and 79,904 (49.6%) males. No specific issues relating to sex have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Sexual Orientation: According to the Census 2021, of all over 16 years old Cherwell residents, 90.3% identified as heterosexual, 1.3% as gay or lesbian, 1.1% bisexual, 0.2% pansexual, 0.1 asexual and 6.8% did not respond. No specific issues relating to sexual orientation have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Rural Communities: Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South East at 2.6 people per hectare and 40% of our population live in smaller towns and villages. No specific issues relating to rural communities have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Armed Forces: According to the Census 2021 there are 4,214 residents in Cherwell that have previously served in regular UK armed forces. No specific issues relating to the armed forces have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Carers: In 2021 there were a total of 11,597 unpaid carers in Cherwell. No specific issues relating to carers have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

Carer leavers: Care Leavers face many challenges as they move into adulthood, such as those relating to careers, education, accommodation, and personal change. This assessment has identified no specific impact of our budget and business planning proposals on Care Leavers.

Areas of Social Deprivation: Although Oxfordshire is generally considered to be relatively affluent, there are pockets of deprivation and a number of these are located in Cherwell wards. Parts of Banbury Cross and Neithrop, Banbury Ruscote, Bicester South and Ambrosden, Bicester West, Kidlington East, and Launton and Otmoor are within the 20% most deprived areas of Cherwell.

Section 4: Impact Assessment - Climate Change Impacts

CDC aim to be carbon neutral by 2030. How will your proposal affect our ability to reduce carbon emissions related to

Climate change impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Energy use in our buildings or highways	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bodicote House currently produces around 6% of overall CDC emissions. It is likely that this will fall following the move to Castle Quay.	The biggest source of buildings emissions is from our four leisure centres where investment in energy efficiency measures will have the biggest impact.	It will require a year's worth of energy usage at Castle Quay before we will begin to have an idea of the size of reduction in emissions.
Our fleet	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assuming that there is an allowance to continue to replace small vehicles with EVs, this will support overall emissions reductions.	The biggest source of emissions from fleet is from our RCVs and where investment in new technology could have a significant impact.	Current plans for investment in our RCVs is predicted to be no earlier than 2026.
Staff travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emissions from staff travel currently make just over 1% of overall emissions. It is an area where CDC can have an impact however, so investments which encourage lower carbon forms of travel are useful.		An EV car has been trialled during 2024 with limited success, however the move to Castle Quay provides an opportunity to review staff travel, given the more central location of CQ.
Purchased services and products (including construction)	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A high-level estimate of emissions from purchased goods and services was done in early 2024. Changes in CDC procurement will need to be introduced in order for us to see reductions in our supply chain.	We are intending to work with OCC as they already have experience in understanding their supply chain and reducing emissions.	In March 2025, we will have updated figures on emissions, and depending on capacity, may be in a position to introduce new procurement rules.

We are also committed to enable Cherwell to become carbon neutral by 2030 and Oxfordshire by 2050. How will your proposal affect our ability to:

Climate change impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Enable carbon emissions reduction at district/county level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	The increase in the size of the climate team during 2024, is enabling CDC to play a greater role in supporting emissions reductions across both the district and the county.		Currently very difficult to measure this impact or to give a timescale.

Section 5: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	28 November 2024
Person Responsible for Review	Celia Prado -Teeling Performance & Insight Team Leader Jo Miskin – Climate Action Manager
Authorised By	Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director of Resources and Transformation, 28 November 2024