

Cherwell District Council

Equality and Climate Impact Assessment Budget Proposals 2026/27

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 2026/27 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).	This assessment considers the overall budget and business planning proposals for Cherwell District Council. It outlines the key evidence and intelligence used by the Council to assess the potential impact of the proposals on the nine protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. In addition, the Council has considered the impact on people living in rural areas, individuals experiencing social deprivation, armed forces communities, and unpaid carers. An initial high-level review of all proposals was undertaken to identify any potential adverse impacts and to determine where mitigation measures might be required. This overarching assessment has been informed by individual Equality Impact Assessments and considers the cumulative impact of the budget proposals as a whole. Having reviewed the proposals collectively and in detail, the Council has concluded that none of the budget proposals are expected to have a disproportionate adverse impact on residents who share any of the protected characteristics.
Completed by	Celia Prado-Teeling – Performance & Insight Team Leader Hitesh Mahawar - Climate Change Programme Manager
Authorised by	Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director of Resources and Transformation
Date of Assessment	21 January, 2025

Section 2: Detail of proposal

Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.	Cherwell District Council's proposed Budget and Business Plan for 2026–2027 has been developed to deliver the priorities set out in the Council Plan. These include supporting economic prosperity, strengthening community leadership, promoting environmental stewardship, and enabling high-quality housing and placemaking. These priorities are underpinned by cross-cutting themes such as climate action, operational excellence, and addressing inequality, all of which are fundamental to the Council's long-term ambition for thriving communities and sustainable growth. The preparation of the budget has taken place against a challenging financial backdrop. Ongoing uncertainty around local government funding, alongside rising operating costs and increasing service demand arising from the cost-of-living pressures and sustained inflation, has required difficult decisions. Despite these challenges, the Council is proposing a balanced and prudent budget. This approach seeks to protect essential frontline services while maintaining financial resilience and responsible stewardship of public funds, whilst ensuring resources are deployed efficiently and that services remain effective and resilient in the medium to long term. Equality, fairness, and inclusivity remain integral to the Council's decision-making. All budget proposals are subject to an initial Equalities Impact Assessment, with full assessments undertaken where new policies, projects, or strategies are proposed. Fees and charges are reviewed carefully with regard to inflationary pressures, service sustainability, and prevailing market conditions. Any potential impacts on vulnerable groups are considered through the equality impact process, ensuring that mitigating actions are identified where necessary. This approach supports transparent, fair, and evidence-based decisions, reflecting the Council's ongoing commitment to supporting residents, communities, and local businesses.
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Proposals

Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action

The overall budget proposals for 2026-27 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 and savings proposals which have been reviewed:

- Continue the operation of national changes made to the household applications fee (introduced in April 2025 by central government).
- Implement administrative service changes within the Housing Team to allocate resources toward critical delivery areas, aiming to improve customer outcomes.
- Increase our focus on achieving fewer empty homes, aiming to boost supply within the local housing system.
- Continue to support the Money Advice Service, currently delivered by Citizens Advice, when the current contract concludes in 2026 through external grant funding.
- Explore moving to a three-weekly green bin collection to cut landfill by 14%, boost recycling and capture more food waste.
- Introduction of a deferred charge for lost or damaged bins—£40 for bins, £10 for outdoor food caddies, and £5 for indoor caddies—to make the waste container service fair, sustainable, and financially responsible.
- Closing or transferring the Pioneer Square public toilets in Bicester during contract retendering to cut cleaning, maintenance, utility, and cash collection costs, saving £0.026m in 2026/27, while retaining the Changing Places facility at Claremount Car Park.
- Switch urban grass verge maintenance from frequent general amenity cuts to fewer flail cuts (300mm height, 3–4 times annually) to improve cost efficiency and sustainability, funded through county and local council contributions.
- Generate commercial sponsorship and contributions from third parties to provide the floral provision, delivered in partnership with Cherwell District Council, to achieve a 10% reduction in costs incurred by the council in Banbury, Bicester, and Kidlington.
- Optimise resources within Regulatory Services to align with automation-driven efficiencies, enabling a more streamlined and future-focused operating model that does not impact on the service received by the public.
- Reduce expenditure on property consultants and other fees, increasing rental income through lettings, lease renewals, and rent reviews of commercial properties, alongside managing service charges for community associations.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of property contracts to assess the necessity of services and works, implementing adjustments where appropriate.
- Remove unfilled positions within the Council, streamlining workload and building efficiencies.
- Agree revised employer pension contributions based on the improved valuation of the council pension fund.

	• Continue optimising cash flow and investments through effective treasury management to boost interest income for supporting council operations and strategic goals. Our income proposals for 2026-27 include our income sources, fees and charges, most fees will increase by around 3.5% to match inflation; however, we are considering higher increases in some fees which have been reviewed from an Equalities point of view, ensuring there is no impact to residents within the protected characteristics.
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	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: • 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

Assessing the evidence and impact on those within the protected and additional characteristics

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.

Disability: Around 15% of Cherwell's population have a disability, according to the Census 2021. The proposed transfer/closure of the toilets in Pioneer Square could have a potential impact on residents with disabilities, however, the existence of changing places enable toilets in Claremont mitigates this potential impact.

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.

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 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. No specific issues relating to Areas of Social Deprivation have been identified as likely to arise as a result of these proposals.

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	x	☐	☐	The largest source of building-related emissions remains our four leisure centres, where targeted investment in energy efficiency measures will deliver the most significant reductions. Planned development at leisure centres and the addition of new sports pitches may lead to an increase in Scope 3 emissions, which are currently outside the Council's 2030 carbon net zero target. Historically, Bodicote House accounted for approximately 6% of CDC's total emissions. This figure is expected to decrease following the relocation of office operations to Castle Quay.	CDC has secured approximately £1.1 million through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 4 (PSDS4) to implement energy efficiency measures across leisure centres and sports pavilions. The relocation of CDC offices to Castle Quay is anticipated to further reduce operational emissions, subject to performance monitoring.	PSDS4 is a three-year programme scheduled for completion by March 2028. Progress is overseen by the Climate Change Programme Board (CCPB) and embedded within business-as-usual governance frameworks. To accurately assess Castle Quay's energy performance, a minimum of one year's consumption data will be required before emissions reductions can be quantified.
Our fleet	☐	x	☐	Measures proposed by Environmental Services are expected to have a slightly positive impact on CDC's overall emissions through reduced fuel consumption	The largest source of fleet emissions is from Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs), where investment in new technology could deliver significant reductions.	The HVO supply tender is expected to be finalized by December 2025. Current plans for investment in RCVs to transition to EVs are anticipated no earlier than 2026.

				and improved recycling rates. Continued replacement of small vehicles with electric vehicles (EVs), subject to budget allowance, will further support emissions reduction.	The Executive has approved transitioning CDC's fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel, replacing diesel with a renewable fuel source for approximately 90 heavy goods vehicles used in waste collection and other services across North Oxfordshire. This change is projected to: • Reduce fleet emissions by around 80% • Cut overall council emissions by 25–30% • Save an estimated 1,150 tonnes of CO₂ over two years HVO fuel is produced from vegetable and waste oils, primarily used cooking oils, offering a cleaner and more sustainable alternative to fossil diesel.	
Staff travel	☐	x	☐	Emissions from staff travel currently account for approximately 2% of CDC's overall emissions. While relatively small, this is an area where CDC can influence reductions, and investments that encourage lower-carbon travel options remain valuable.	An EV pool car was trialed in 2024 with limited uptake; however, the relocation to Castle Quay offers an opportunity to revisit staff travel arrangements due to its more central location. An internal survey indicates strong interest and appetite for an EV pool	To restart this initiative, a central budget allocation will be required.

					car scheme, suggesting potential for improved engagement.	
Purchased services and products (including construction)	☐	☐	x	This proposal may lead to an increase in CDC's Scope 3 emissions, which represent indirect emissions from purchased goods, services, and construction activities. A high-level estimate of emissions from purchased goods and services was completed in early 2024. To achieve reductions in our supply chain emissions, changes to CDC's procurement practices will be required.	CDC has commissioned a Net Zero Pathways study, which includes Scope 3 emissions and procurement. The report is in its final stages and will provide pathways and recommendations to reduce emissions from purchased services and products. Initial steps have already been taken: • Collaboration with CDC's procurement team • Inclusion of sustainable procurement principles in the procurement strategy Further refinement of procurement and contract strategies will be necessary to implement these recommendations effectively.	The final Scope 3 emissions and Net Zero Pathways report is expected by January 2026 (may receive mid Dec'25). Subject to capacity and resource availability, CDC may begin introducing new procurement rules thereafter.

We are also committed to enable Cherwell, and Oxfordshire to be carbon neutral well ahead of 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?	☐	x	☐	CDC has the potential to influence emissions beyond our own operations by enabling district-wide and county-wide decarbonisation initiatives. Actions such as improving energy efficiency in public assets, promoting low-carbon transport options, and supporting renewable energy deployment contribute to Oxfordshire's collective net zero ambition. Our collaboration on the Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), and leadership role within the Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PaZCO), Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership (ZCOP) ensures alignment with regional priorities and accelerates delivery of shared targets. Integrating nature-based solutions such as tree planting, wetland restoration, and green corridors can deliver co-benefits for carbon sequestration, flood resilience, and biodiversity enhancement.	Collaborating with Oxfordshire councils and stakeholders to implement LAEP recommendations and leverage funding opportunities. Supporting district-wide EV infrastructure through Oxfordshire Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (OxLEVI), and active travel schemes to reduce transport emissions Facilitating renewable energy projects through the Cherwell Solar Strategy, which sets a locally defined contribution of 225–300 MW solar PV by 2030 Embedding sustainable procurement and planning policies to influence emissions from construction and development across the district CDC will align projects with the Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Strategy, embed biodiversity net gain in planning, and prioritize habitat protection in all developments. We will integrate nature-based solutions such as tree planting and green corridors into climate initiatives and work	Progress will be monitored through: - Climate Change Programme Board (CCPB) oversight of enabling projects - Integration with Oxfordshire-wide reporting frameworks - Annual review of district emissions data and LAEP implementation milestones - Collaboration with Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership to track progress against Nature Recovery Strategy targets Key deliverables include LAEP adoption, EV chargers through OxLEVI, Cherwell Solar Strategy implementation (2025–2030), with measurable impacts tracked against Oxfordshire's net zero trajectory.

					with local partners to deliver co-benefits for carbon sequestration and ecosystem resilience. These measures ensure that CDC's proposals enable wider decarbonisation and act as catalysts for systemic change within district and across county.	
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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	20 January 2026
Person Responsible for Review	Celia Prado -Teeling Performance & Insight Team Leader Hitesh Mahawar - Climate Change Programme Manager
Authorised By	Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director of Resources and Transformation, 21 January 2026