

Agenda



Listening Learning Leading

Contact Officer: Steve Culliford
Tel: 07895 213735
E-mail: steve.culliford@southandvale.gov.uk
Date: 22 November 2023
Website: www.southoxon.gov.uk

A MEETING OF THE Cabinet

**WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 6.00 PM
MEETING ROOM 1, ABBEY HOUSE, ABBEY CLOSE, ABINGDON, OX14
3JE**

To watch this virtual meeting, follow this link to the council's [YouTube channel](#).

Members of the Cabinet

Member	Portfolio
David Rouane (Chair)	Leader of the Council
Robin Bennett (Vice-Chair)	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for economic development and regeneration
Maggie Filipova-Rivers (Vice-Chair)	Statutory Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for community wellbeing
Pieter-Paul Barker	Cabinet member for finance and property assets
Sue Cooper	Cabinet member for the environment
Andrea Powell	Cabinet member for corporate services, policy and programmes
Anne-Marie Simpson	Cabinet member for planning
Freddie van Mierlo	Cabinet member for climate change and nature recovery

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include large print, Braille, audio, email and easy read. For this or any other special requirements (such as access facilities) please contact the officer named on this agenda. Please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC PRESENT

Reports considered with the public present are available on the council's website.

1 Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

2 Declaration of interests

To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and non-registrable interests or any conflicts of interest in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

3 Urgent business and chair's announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chair.

4 Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

5 Recommendations and updates from other committees

To consider any recommendations to Cabinet from other committees.

6 Joint Local Plan 2041 - Approval of Preferred Options Document for Public Consultation (Pages 3 - 11)

To consider the head of policy and programmes' report.

7 Car park fees and charges (Pages 12 - 33)

To consider the report of the head of development and corporate landlord.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

8 Council tax base (Pages 34 - 38)

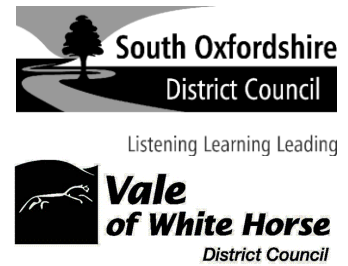
To consider the head of finance's report.

9 Council tax reduction scheme (Pages 39 - 43)

To consider the head of finance's report.

Patrick Arran
Head of Legal and Democratic

Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Policy and Programmes

Author: Andrew Lane

E-mail: Andrew.Lane@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

South Cabinet member responsible: Anne-Marie Simpson

Tel: 07738 568907

E-mail: Anne-Marie.Simpson@southoxon.gov.uk

Vale Cabinet member responsible: Andy Foulsham

Tel: 07977 416133

E-mail: andy.foulsham@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: Joint Scrutiny Committee, 27 November 2023

To: South Cabinet, 30 November 2023

To: Vale Cabinet, 1 December 2023

Joint Local Plan 2041 – Approval of Preferred Options Document for Public Consultation

Recommendation for Joint Scrutiny Committee:

The Committee is being asked to review this report and share any comments or recommendations with South and Vale Cabinets (meeting on 30 November & 1 December respectively).

Recommendations for South and Vale Cabinets:

- (a) To approve the Preferred Options version of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041 and supporting documents for a six-week period of public consultation in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- (b) To delegate authority to the Head of Policy and Programmes, in consultation with the South Cabinet Member for Planning and the Vale Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Policy and Programmes, to make any necessary minor amendments, updates or corrections to the Joint Local Plan and supporting documents/ mapping/ appendices, prior to commencement of the consultation period.

Purpose of report

1. To summarise the progress made to date with preparation of the Joint Local Plan, including explaining how comments raised during previous public and internal consultation have influenced its structure and content.
2. To seek both Cabinets' approval for the next stage of public consultation on the Joint Local Plan, which will be a Preferred Options consultation proposed for January – February 2024.

Corporate objectives

3. The key themes for the Joint Local Plan have been identified from, and inspired by, the main planning issues and priorities set out in the councils' Corporate Plans. These themes are:
 - Reducing Carbon Emissions
 - Nature Recovery and Landscape
 - Protecting and Enhancing Local Heritage
 - Thriving Inclusive Communities
 - Transport and Facilities
 - Healthy Lifestyles and Safe Communities
 - Jobs and Opportunities for Innovation

Background

4. Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils are working together to produce a Joint Local Plan. Local planning authorities must prepare their local plan, setting planning policies for their area, in a manner consistent with national policy, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).
5. Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires public consultation as part of the process of local plan preparation in its formative stages, where local authorities should invite representations about what a local plan ought to contain.
6. The NPPF, at paragraph 16c, also requires 'early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees.'
7. The Joint Local Development Scheme highlighted the intention to split the Regulation 18 consultation into two main stages, with an 'Issues' consultation in 2022, followed by a 'Preferred Options' consultation in 2024.
8. In accordance with the above, we undertook a six-week period of public consultation from 12 May to 23 June 2022 on an Issues Consultation Document, in order to facilitate timely and effective preparation of our emerging Joint Local Plan. This document set out a draft Vision for the Plan, highlighting goals for the future and explaining what the councils wanted to achieve. Seven key themes were then identified to support delivery of the Vision and, under each, the document asked for comments and suggestions on what the Joint Local Plan could do to address important spatial challenges and opportunities within South and Vale.

9. The Planning Policy Team worked closely with communications colleagues to prepare an online, interactive version of the Issues document, which sat alongside the more traditional desktop-published version. Through the use of engaging visuals, a range of media types and a concise, user-friendly and specifically ordered consultation document, the aim was to encourage a wider range of new audiences to engage with our Local Plan process from the outset, in addition to the usual residents, businesses and organisations.
10. Overall, the Issues Consultation Document was very well received, with high praise for the innovative approach we took towards greater engagement using StoryMaps as an effective digital consultation tool, which led to the councils being shortlisted for the Digital Impact category in the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards. Our websites were also recognised by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as excellent examples of a digital-first approach to planning.

Progress with Joint Local Plan preparation since Summer 2022

11. For the Issues consultation on the Joint Local Plan, we experimented with inviting both anonymous and named responses, to try to widen participation. This worked well, and we found the views expressed were broadly similar from the anonymous respondents as those who gave their details. We received 314 completed responses to the full Issues Consultation survey from respondents who gave their name, which included those individuals or organisations who responded via email. In addition, we received a total of 2,564 responses from those answering anonymously by clicking answers on the interactive website (adding all their answers to all questions together – NB: this does not mean 2,564 separate respondents). After analysing all the responses received, we updated our **interactive Issues Consultation website** to share the consultation results in February 2023. We also published a full '**Issues Consultation Results**' document in a more traditional document format. The consultation findings have provided a useful insight into the main issues facing our districts and how we can use the Joint Local Plan to address them.
12. Over the past year we have commissioned a wide range of evidence base studies (including a Town Centres and Retail Study, a Zero Carbon Study, and an Employment Land Needs Assessment), the findings of which we have used to help shape our policies and overall Plan strategy. Other studies are currently being produced and will be used to refine our policies and site allocations before we reach the Regulation 19 'Draft Plan' stage in autumn 2024.
13. We have carried out a Settlement Assessment (in-house) to gain a better understanding of how well residents' everyday needs are met in the towns, villages and smaller settlements of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. This Assessment included the collection of information on levels of service provision, population size, number of households, employment opportunities and access to employment, shops, and schools. We sought the help of all the Parish and Town Councils in South and Vale, firstly to shape the methodology we applied to conducting the Assessment and again in July/August 2022, where we asked them to help identify what services and facilities were available within each of the settlements within their administrative area. The findings of the Settlement Assessment have informed the development of our Settlement Hierarchy policy (Policy SP2).

14. Officers have also carried out a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) in-house, which identifies a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and/or economic development uses across South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts over the Plan period. The assessment is an important source of evidence to inform plan-making.
15. In order to help draft and refine the emerging Joint Local Plan's policies, we have sought the views of officers from across council departments, holding meetings and sharing draft content with colleagues in Planning (Development Management), Economic Development, Housing, Garden Communities, Climate, Ecology, Landscape and Urban Design.
16. We have received invaluable input and guidance from Members during the Plan preparation process to date. The JLP Steering Group has met nineteen times over the last two years to receive presentations from officers and to comment/provide feedback on particular topics during each meeting. We have also held eight All-Councillor Roundtable sessions covering key JLP matters (including climate change; housing affordability, numbers & mix; spatial strategy; settlement hierarchy; green infrastructure; transport; town centres & retail; and economy & employment), and we have consulted Steering Group Members on the wording of our draft chapters for the Preferred Options consultation document, with amendments made to reflect the comments received, where appropriate.

Preparation of our Preferred Options Document

17. Since our Issues Consultation last year, there have been a number of key changes which have influenced the way in which we have approached the development of our Joint Local Plan Preferred Options.
18. The most significant change has been the unanimous decision of all the Oxfordshire local authorities in August 2022 not to progress with the preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (see the [joint statement](#) published online). This has meant that our Joint Local Plan will now identify the housing and economic land requirements for South and Vale, as well as setting the spatial strategy for the districts over the Plan period to 2041, while engaging with our neighbours under the duty to cooperate.
19. In terms of setting housing numbers, officers at South and Vale recommend following the Government's Standard Method for calculating future housing requirements (which is a lower number than the last local plans), plus an uplift to account for the existing unmet need from Oxford that was agreed through the last local plans. We have not included a figure for any new unmet need from Oxford at this time, although Oxford City Council is raising this as an ask of its neighbours.
20. With the new lower requirements and given the healthy level of supply in the pipeline, our new evidence for both housing and employment land needs indicates there is no need to find new greenfield sites like the strategic allocations that South and Vale made in the last local plans.
21. A detailed review of our existing allocated strategic sites has taken place, with a proposal to remove some allocations or a part of an allocation, either because they do not comply with our new preferred spatial strategy or because there are other significant reasons which affect successful delivery of development on the site.

22. In the Joint Local Plan Preferred Options consultation document, we set out our preferred options for each policy topic, alongside other alternatives that we have considered where relevant. We have also included draft policy wording to show what the policy would look like for our preferred option. Draft policy wording is typically provided at the next consultation stage – Regulation 19 – but we feel it is important to share (as bonus material) the detailed draft plan content now, in order to ensure our local communities have the best opportunity to feed into policy development at this key stage of plan preparation.
23. When formulating each draft policy, we have sought to take forward the best aspects from existing South and Vale local plan policies, harmonising policy approaches and taking a cross-boundary view, where appropriate, whilst also recognising the uniqueness of each district and the need for differing policy approaches in certain circumstances. We have also looked at best practice in across all policy areas (such as in relation to net zero and climate change policies), with the ultimate aim of producing a plan which is at the forefront of policy development and is ground-breaking in terms of its style and accessibility to wider audiences.
24. After the Preferred Options stage, the plan will undergo further refinement and testing before we reach the stage of consulting on the Draft Joint Local Plan in the Autumn of 2024. At this stage there will be further material in the evidence base such as viability testing of each policy and each site allocation.

Format of the Consultation

25. Just like with the Joint Local Plan Issues consultation in summer 2022, the councils are taking new approaches to improve accessibility of our plan and boost public participation. Rather than a lengthy pdf document, we anticipate that most users will interact with the plan using a version built using ArcGIS Storymap. This provides a navigable and image-rich experience designed for viewing on a mobile phone or tablet, with the opportunity to use interactive maps and other engaging features.
26. A short online document, which we are calling the ‘Joint Local Plan in a Nutshell’, will provide a summary of our plan, with simple questions around its key headlines and direction. We anticipate that this will be a popular and straightforward way for the general public to give feedback on the plan.
27. We have prepared an interactive digital online Policies Map to show where different policies will apply and where the allocations are located. This map enables users to click a hyperlink to see the relevant written policy in the local plan.
28. Various evidence base reports and topic papers will also be published, which we have prepared to explain the background/ rationale to the formulation of particular policies, site allocations etc.
29. The community engagement team is working with the planning policy team to help design multi-format consultation materials and plan a series of exhibitions/ engagement opportunities, with the aim of achieving wide participation and ensuring that needs of different groups are met.

Supporting documents

30. Alongside the Joint Local Plan, we need to carry out both Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of our emerging policies and site allocations. These assessments will make sure the Plan considers the relevant environmental, social, and economic issues and minimises any potential negative impacts.
31. We have appointed consultants to conduct both the SA and HRA of our Plan and they have worked with officers to revise our draft SA Framework and sustainability objectives and to develop a series of detailed decision-making criteria, against which the emerging policies and site allocations have been assessed and refined. The latest iteration of the Sustainability Appraisal report, as well as a high-level preliminary HRA screening report (appended to this report), will be published alongside Preferred Options consultation document to allow consultees to consider and comment on the assessed effects of our preferred approach and the alternative.

Options

32. There are some changes on the horizon to the planning system and to Government planning policy. A Government consultation on a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been anticipated for some time now. Consequently, we could choose to consult on our 'Preferred Options' at a later date, when we have more certainty about the direction that national planning policy and the new Levelling Up legislation will be taking. However, this would delay our progress with preparing the Joint Local Plan and prevent us from meeting the JLP timescales set out in the Joint Local Development Scheme, approved in September 2023. It would also delay the councils from introducing stronger planning policies that help us to address the climate emergency.
33. Opting to wait is likely to mean that we find ourselves in a situation where we cannot submit the Plan for examination before the deadline proposed by government under the transition arrangements to a new local plan system. This could mean we would be limited to adopting a narrower suite of local plan policies, set at national level. There is concern that these nationally-set policies could potentially stifle our policy ambition and innovation if they do not go as far as the policies currently drafted in our Preferred Options document, particularly those relating to net zero and taking action on climate change. Government's latest consultation indicated that current emerging local plans would need to be submitted for examination no later the 30 June 2025 and adopted by 31 December 2026. If either are missed, then the Councils would need to prepare a new style local plan instead.

Climate and ecological impact implications

34. The Corporate Plans have inspired the key themes and direction of the Joint Local Plan. In particular, the Plan provides a clear opportunity to further Corporate Plan objectives on reducing carbon emissions, supporting nature recovery and protecting valued landscapes.
35. The draft vision for the Joint Local Plan sets ambitions for our districts to become:
 - carbon neutral districts for current and future generations;

- places where local residents can reach the facilities they need for everyday living on foot, bicycle or by zero-emission and low carbon transport choices; and
- places where people are safe from pollution, flooding, and the effects of climate change.

36. The Joint Local Plan Preferred Options consultation document has been shaped throughout by recognising that the councils have a commitment and a duty to tackle the climate emergency, reduce carbon emissions, increase biodiversity and reverse nature's decline. The Plan contains policy options designed to improve and address these challenges, and these are now ready for consultation.

Financial implications

37. The decision to commence 'Preferred Options' consultation will incur some costs associated with the engagement activities, editing, printing and couriering of documents for deposit at local libraries/Abbey House as well as the production costs of leaflets and display boards. These costs can all be met from within existing budgets.

Legal implications

38. All aspects of Joint Local Plan preparation have been undertaken in accordance with the relevant planning legislation and regulations.

Risks

39. If consultation on the Joint Local Plan (Preferred Options) does not commence in January 2024 as proposed in this report, the councils will not be able to meet the plan preparation timetable set out in the Joint LDS, which would have several consequences as highlighted in paragraphs 32 and 33 above.

40. This report will be considered separately by South and Vale Cabinets, so in order to progress with the Preferred Options consultation, there is a requirement for approval from both Cabinets.

Other implications

41. An Equalities Impact Assessment of the Joint Local Plan has been carried out by officers and will be published alongside the Preferred Options consultation document. This identifies policy options that may differentially impact different groups within the community (positively or negatively), considering the nine protected characteristics, rural communities and areas of deprivation. A commentary describes any differential impacts and identifies any actions or mitigations to reduce any negative impacts.

42. Most of our policies are considered unlikely to differentially impact any specific groups and we anticipate that several policies may offer positive impacts for some groups. However, the EQIA does indicate that Policy SP1 (Spatial Strategy) may require mitigation. This policy directs new development towards the most built-up settlements in the districts and therefore supports development in the most sustainable locations. This is expected to have a positive impact for rural communities in maintaining the character of smaller settlements. However, it could also have negative impacts in

directing the new infrastructure and services associated with new development towards more built-up settlements rather than to more rural parts of our districts.

43. We will review feedback from the Preferred Options Consultation, as well as any emerging evidence, to determine whether Policy SP1 requires further amendment. If this policy were to be adopted with little or no amendment, we would need to monitor the above potential impacts. SP1 encourages neighbourhood planning groups to address the needs of local communities, which could offer some mitigation for any potential negative impacts faced by rural communities.
44. The Equality Impact Assessment will require updating for the next stage of plan preparation (Reg 19), taking into account any changes to policy wording resulting from new evidence and/or consultation feedback.

Conclusion

45. Publishing a Preferred Options document for a minimum of a six-week consultation period will facilitate timely and effective progression and preparation of the Joint Local Plan for Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils, allowing the Planning Policy team to gather a wide range of comments and views which will help us to refine our policies and site allocations, before finalising our Draft (Regulation 19) Plan next year.
46. Any necessary minor amendments or corrections to the Joint Local Plan or supporting documents/mapping that are required prior to commencement of the public consultation will be agreed by the Head of Policy and Programmes, in consultation with the South Cabinet Member for Planning and the Vale Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Policy and Programmes.

Appendices

1. Preferred Options Consultation Document (link to Storymap interactive version and PDF version)
2. Joint Local Plan in a Nutshell
3. Emerging Policies Map (link to the interactive site)
4. Equalities Impact Assessment
5. Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan - Nov 2023
6. Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Preliminary Screening Report – Nov 2023

Appendix 1: Preferred Options Consultation Document (Storymaps Version), link: <https://jlp.southandvale.gov.uk/>

The report has six appendices as follows. Due to the large size, the appendices are listed separately on the agenda pages for SODC

<https://democratic.southoxon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=341&MId=3240>

And VOWHDC:

<https://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=549&MId=3182>

1. Preferred Options Consultation Document (provided in two formats, [weblink](#) to our online interactive version and as a PDF on the agenda webpage)
2. Joint Local Plan in a Nutshell (PDF on the agenda webpage)
3. Emerging Policies Map ([Weblink](#) only)
4. Equalities Impact Assessment (PDF on the agenda webpage)
5. Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan - Nov 2023 (PDF on the agenda webpage)
6. Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Preliminary Screening Report – Nov 2023 (PDF on the agenda webpage)

The weblinks provided show the documents in the way they will appear online during the consultation.

Officers encourage using the link to view the Joint Local Plan Preferred Options via the interactive website, in order to see the content in its best format and how it will be publicly presented.

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Development and Corporate Landlord

Author: John Backley

Telephone: 01235 422667

Textphone: 18001 01235 42267

E-mail: john.backley@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: all

Cabinet member responsible: Sue Cooper

Tel: 01491 835631

E-mail: sue.cooper@southoxon.gov.uk

To: CABINET

Date: 30 November 2023

Car park fees for 2024-25

Recommendations

- (a) Cabinet to agree the car parking fees for the financial year 2024-25.

In addition, if cabinet amends the fees and charges that require a change in the car parking fees or order, to:

- (b) authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic to prepare a Notice of Variation under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 for publishing in the local newspaper and all affected car parks. (Or authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic to prepare and publish a draft order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984)

and

- (c) authorise the Head of Development and Corporate Landlord to oversee necessary communications and consultations and report back to Cabinet.

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides information to help the Cabinet decide if it chooses to amend the car park fees and charges in South Oxfordshire District Council car parks.
2. Reviewing the car park fees and charges each year is in line with the council's car park policy as updated in 2022.

Corporate Objectives

3. The provision and pricing of car parks contributes to the delivery of the objectives of the South Oxfordshire Corporate Plan 2020/24, wherein strategic objective six seeks to deliver the achievement of “investment and innovation that rebuilds our financial viability” – this leads us to setting fees which cover the full cost of providing the car park service.
4. Reviewing how much we charge for car park fees also supports our Corporate Plan objective three, “action on the climate emergency” Transport, including fossil fuel vehicles, makes up the largest share of the UK’s carbon emissions. Using mediums such as car park fees can have the ability to influence changes in transport behaviour, and support a move towards alternative, sustainable modes of transport such as active travel like walking, public transport and cycling.

Background

5. The car park policy as agreed by cabinet in August 2022 included guidance from the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA) which states that local authority parking enforcement should be self-financing, and we should aim for our parking income to at least meet the cost of managing and running our car parks.
6. The current fees and charges and the price of parking permits (and the previous years’ fees) are shown in Appendix 1 and a comparison of fees in other neighbouring car parks is shown in Appendix 2.
7. In February 2022, cabinet agreed to amend the fees and charges for 2022/23 which were implemented on 4 April 2022. In summary these were:
 - a. Increase fees (for up to two hours and above) by 40p with some exceptions at Riverside car park, Wallingford, Southfields, Henley and Goldsmiths Lane car park, Wallingford.
 - b. Extend the parking charge period from 9am to 5pm to 8am to 6pm Monday to Saturday (Sunday remains 10am to 5pm). Not including Goldsmiths Lane car park, Wallingford.
 - c. Season tickets to be specific to each car park and removal of weekly season tickets.
8. Last year, in December 2022, the cabinet agreed for a further increase of all fees and permits by 10 per cent (rounded up). These were implemented on 4 April 2023 which officers estimated would increase income by £70,000 per year. At the end of the first six months of the year, an early indication is that this estimate will be achieved.
9. The level of car park penalty charges is set by legislation which changed on 1 November 2022 when we introduced civil parking enforcement (CPE). In addition, there are now two ‘levels’ (for example ‘minor’ infractions such as overstaying your time set at £50 reduced to £35 if paid within 14 days and some are higher for example if you park in a disabled bay without displaying a blue badge, set at £70 reduced to £35 if paid within 14 days). All charges are increased if the penalty charge remains unpaid after 28 days and the council issues a charge certificate and then there are further increase if the case is registered as a debt.

10. The purpose of having car park orders under Section 32 of the 1984 Road Traffic Regulations Act (RTRA) is for 'relieving or preventing congestion of traffic'. The council meets this requirement by having off-street car parks which are accessible and well used which means that people do not park on the highway which may cause traffic to be held up. Under the new civil parking regulations, the council has no legal powers to set parking fees at a higher level than that needed to achieve this.

Car park account

11. Table 1 below estimates how the net cost of car parks including ancillary services, will change over a five-year period up to 2026/27 if no changes are made. Reviewing the income and expenditure over the medium term allows cabinet to take a view of how income and expenditure are likely to change and see whether the account is predicted to run at a loss or with a surplus.
12. The actual turnout for 2022/23 shows a small deficit in the car park account of £8,790. The increase in fees in April 2023 is estimated to provide a surplus income at the end of 2023/24 of £144,858.
13. In the medium term, the account will still be in surplus in 2026/27 by £6,371.

Table 1. Car park income and expenditure over a five-year period					
	Actual	Predicted	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	2022/23	Outturn	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
	£	£	£	£	£
Car park expenditure					
Employees:	37,105	48,380	50,799	53,339	56,006
Contract costs	229,398	273,000	286,650	300,983	316,032
Premises (e.g. repair and maint. elec. Rates)	409,069	336,660	353,493	371,168	389,726
Transport:	1,176	2,690	2,825	2,966	3,114
Supplies and services (e.g. banking, materials)	156,690	92,089	96,693	101,528	106,605
Central and administrative:	159,543	108,635	114,067	119,770	125,759
Depreciation	145,598	131,283	133,983	133,983	133,983
Total expenditure:	1,138,578	992,737	1,038,510	1,083,736	1,131,224
Car park income					
Enforcement:	(56,218)	(58,000)	(58,000)	(58,000)	(58,000)
Season tickets:	(57,198)	(53,000)	(53,000)	(53,000)	(53,000)
Pay and display:	(967,959)	(971,000)	(971,000)	(971,000)	(971,000)
Contribution from outside bodies:	0	0	0	0	0
Other income (from WC and PCN debt)	(48,412)	(55,595)	(55,595)	(55,595)	(55,595)
Total income:	(1,129,788)	(1,137,595)	(1,137,595)	(1,137,595)	(1,137,595)
Surplus (-) / deficit	8,790	(144,858)	(99,085)	(53,859)	(6,371)
Note - Without toilets Surplus (-) / deficit	(274,681)	(394,002)	(363,470)	(332,776)	(300,547)

Options for fees and charges

14. Based on the current usage and estimated income and expenditure shown in Table 1, there is sufficient surplus to not make any changes to the car park fees.
15. However, there are some changes cabinet may wish to consider to improve the car parks operations and encourage parking outside of the town centres. These are summarised in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Summary of options

Option	Description	Estimated change in revenue (pa)	Communications campaign recommended?	Can be dealt with by a Notice of Variation?
A	No change	£0	No	N/A
B	Provide permits for residents local to Church Road, Wheatley at a cost of £70 pa	De minimis	No as applies only to local residents	No, requires new Order (and seek to cover cost from OCC)
C	A new simplified parking structure	+ £100,000	Yes	Yes
D	Remove half price permits for electric vehicles	De minimis	No	Yes

Option A – No Changes

16. Make no change to the fees. No change in income.

Option B - Wheatley permits

17. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is due to consult on implementing on-street parking restrictions on Church Road in Wheatley to reduce congestion close to the district council car park entrance and bus stops. OCC has requested allowing local residents of properties in Church Road to use the car park at all times (it currently has a limited waiting of four hours Monday to Sunday 8am to 6pm). The exact numbers are still to be agreed but will be less than ten.

18. Church Road car park has 24 bays and usage figures show car park is only half full most of the day on average.

19. This would require a local parking permit scheme as below:

- permits would only be for residents' own vehicles, with one permit issued per property (six/seven properties tbc)

- cost of £70 per year replicates the price charged in Oxford by OCC. Elsewhere in South Oxfordshire there are higher prices for OCC resident permits, Henley is £110 pa and Wallingford is £100 pa.
- there are no current permits issued in Wheatley so this will require an addition to the car park schedule. As this is an introduction of something new, it is the Legal Services view that this cannot be dealt with by way of a variation order. We are of the view that a new order will need to be made, however if this is the only option that is to be introduced, or if no other options to be introduced require a new order, then a new order is made for this car park alone which would save advertising costs although the same process of making a new order would need to be followed.
- if agreed officers would advertise permits for all of the 'free' car parks (Benson, Culham lock and Chinnor) so this can be considered in the future.
- the permits would be issued by the council's parking contractor, Saba and enforced as part of regular inspections.
- officers will finalise the arrangements and numbers with OCC and look to recover all costs.

Option C - A new simplified charging structure

20. A simplified charging structure aims to make the purchase of tickets and the transactions at the machines quicker, simpler and easier to understand for customers. In addition, any Notices or advertisements of the parking fees would be easier to understand and cheaper to produce.
21. In the long stay car parks, the fees are fixed for up to one, two, five and ten hours. Without an 'up to three hours' option, visitors would have the choice of a relatively short stay for only £2.00 or to select the option of paying just one pound more and staying for up to five hours.
22. The medium stay charges in Goring and Edinburgh Drive car park in Didcot are set in order to be competitive with nearby train station car parks.
23. Table 3 and table 4 show current and proposed car park fees. Appendix 1 provides a full list of current charges with changes in previous years.

Table 3. Current car parking fees

Location/ Postcode	1 Hours	2 Hours	3 Hours	5 Hours	10 Hours	Operational	
						Days	Times
<u>Didcot</u>							
Edinburgh Drive - OX11 7LT	Free	1.80	2.40	2.80	6.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
<u>Goring on Thames</u>							
Goring - RG8 9HB	Free	1.60		2.80	6.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
<u>Henley On Thames</u>							
kings Road - RG9 2DQ	Free	1.80	2.40			Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Greys Road - RG9 2AA	Free	1.80	2.40			Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Southfields - RG9 1BJ				3.20	4.40	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
<u>Wallingford</u>							
Cattlemarket - OX10 0AU	Free	1.80		2.80	3.30	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Goldsmiths Lane - OX10 0DN	Free	Free	1.80		3.60	Mon - Fri	9 - 5
						Sat	9 - 2
Thames Street - OX10 0HD	Free	1.80		2.80	3.30	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Castle Street - OX10 8DL					2.50	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
St Georges - OX10 8HJ					2.50	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Riverside - OX10 0BU	1.10				2.20	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Riverside High Season	1.10		2.20		3.30	As Above	As Above
Riverside Out Of Season	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Mon - Sun	
<u>Thame</u>							
Cattlemarket - OX9 3FD	Free	1.80		2.80	3.30	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Southern Road - OX9 2EE	Free	1.80	2.40			Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5

Table 4. A proposed simplified car park pricing structure

Location/ Postcode	1 Hours	2 Hours	3 Hours	5 Hours	**10 Hours	Operational	
						Days	Times
Didcot							
Edinburgh Drive - OX11 7LT	Free	2.00		4.00	6.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Goring on Thames							
Goring - RG8 9HB	Free	2.00		4.00	5.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Henley On Thames							
kings Road - RG9 2DQ	Free	2.00	3.00			Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Greys Road - RG9 2AA	Free	2.00	3.00			Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Southfields - RG9 1BJ				4.00	5.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Wallingford							
Cattlemarket - OX10 0AU	Free	2.00		3.00	4.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
*Goldsmiths Lane - OX10 0DN	Free	£2.00 (free)	(£1.80)	3.00	4.00 (£3.60)	Mon - Fri	9 - 5
						Sat	9 - 2
Thames Street - OX10 0HD	Free	2.00		3.00	4.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Castle Street - OX10 8DL					3.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
St Georges - OX10 8HJ					3.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Riverside - OX10 0BU	Free	2.00			4.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Riverside High Season	Free	2.00		3.00	4.00	As Above	As Above
Riverside Out Of Season	Free	Free		Free	Free	Mon - Sun	
Thame							
Cattlemarket - OX9 3FD	Free	2.00		3.00	4.00	Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5
Southern Road - OX9 2EE	Free	2.00				Mon - Sat	8 - 6
						Sun	10 - 5

*Goldsmiths Lane car park, Wallingford (current fees in brackets) is currently part owned by South Oxfordshire District Council, Wallingford Town Council and a private developer. The council manages the whole car park and collects the income which is distributed according to area once a management fee is deducted. Officers are currently in negotiation with the town council aiming to bring Goldsmiths Lane car park in line with

other South car parks and specifically to match the fees and charging at Cattlemarket car park, Wallingford. If negotiations are not successful, the fees will stay as they are currently.

**Officers recommend a review of the charges for up to 10 hours each year for the next two years with a view to increasing them to bring them in line across all car parks.

Option D – To remove the offer of half price permits for electric vehicles (EVs)

24. The take up of half price permits for EVs is low with only six half price permits sold out of a total of 85 from the 1 April to 31 October 2023.
25. There is some confusion reported by Saba (who manage and issue the permits on behalf of the council) on whether hybrid vehicles are included and self-charging electric vehicles. The offer of half price permits does not appear to be a sufficient incentive to encourage take up. Officers consider this incentive should be put on hold and reviewed annually.

Economic development implications

26. Research undertaken by the Institute of Place Management on behalf of the High Streets Taskforce list car parking as one of 237 'Vital and Viable' factors that influence the success of high streets. This research (last updated in November 2021) lists car parking as the 45th most influential factor. (Car parking for the purpose of the study refers to the number or availability of parking spaces, parking costs, maximum parking duration, the location of parking spaces, and the diversity of parking supply).
27. Seen alongside 236 other influential factors, it should be understood that although parking is regarded as highly influential, it should not be viewed in isolation as a factor that will dictate the success of the high street economy.
28. In the view of Economic Development, Option A, that continues to offer a free hour of parking in all car parks (Note: except in Goldsmiths Lane, Wallingford where it is two hours) and keeping fees at current rates provides continues support to the high street businesses. It is our understanding that car parking numbers have not declined following the change from two free hours to one free hour in recent years and we can reasonably conclude that footfall from our car parks has not been affected.
29. Option B – Wheatley permits – no significant implications.
30. Option C - Guidance on Parking Provision in Town and City Centres published in the study "Re-Think! Parking on the High Street (2013) suggests that the "value" of car parking is more important than the cost. Value in this respect includes both the location and proximity of parking to attractions. Relevant to South Oxfordshire's market towns, the report suggests that "smaller locations, with relatively fewer attractions (retail and otherwise) need to carefully consider their parking provision and fees".
31. Planning Policy have commissioned a town centres and retail study to help inform the new joint local plan. This report is in progress and will undertake a health check of South's market towns, while this study won't examine the impact of parking charges on the town centres, information on accessibility and pedestrian flows will be included within the final reports, detailing public transport and active travel links to our town centres that could present an opportunity for future marketing.

- 32. Option D – remove half price permits for ‘plug-in’ EVs only – no significant implications.
- 33. Current indications are that leisure and hospitality service providers are occupying a higher proportion of local town centre premises, that may indicate longer parking stays are likely as the focus of the high street changes from retail to more experience led occupancy.

Climate and ecological impact implications

- 34. Option A. Continuing to offer a period of free parking of one hour may encourage increased vehicle turnover in the town centres and impact negatively on the air quality.
- 35. Options B, Permits in Church Road car park aim to support OCC in reducing congestion and thereby reducing carbon emissions from idling vehicles.
- 36. Option C South Oxfordshire District Council has agreed a target to work towards being a carbon neutral council by 2025 and a carbon neutral district by 2030. Increased fees may encourage people to consider alternative more sustainable forms of transport like public transport, walking or cycling.
- 37. A fee of £2.00 to stay for up to two hours puts directly comparable with bus fares which are set to be held at £2.00 per journey at least until the end of 2024.
- 38. In 2021, the council introduced a reduced permit for EV vehicles. The uptake of these permits in 2022 is less than ten vehicles out of a total number of active permits of 104. The uptake in 2023 is still low.
- 39. Option D Maintaining reduced price permits for EVs shows positive commitment from the council towards a shift to electric vehicles, which are an important part of the journey to net-zero. However, it is acknowledged that the financial saving from this permit is unlikely to be a key motivator for residents changing to an EV. Going forwards, reduced priced permits for EVs could be reviewed annually.
- 40. Surplus income from car park revenue could be used to improve cycle infrastructure and storage to further encourage alternative, sustainable modes of transport.

Financial Implications

- 41. Refer to summary table (paragraph 15) for estimated changes in total fee income for each option in paragraphs 16 to 25.
- 42. Option A. Any surplus income is ring fenced and will need to be used in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Section 55, for specific improvements to the car parks, highway, public open spaces or recreational facilities.
- 43. Options B. Income from issuing six permits to residents in Wheatley is £420. Officers will be looking to OCC for any costs associated with implementing the change.
- 44. Option C. Income from simplified parking structure is estimated at £100,000 based on current ticket sales and any surplus will need to be used in accordance with legislation.
- 45. Option D. The change in income from removing the half price permits for EVs is de minimis as the take up is so low.

46. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For South, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to full Council in February 2023 showed that it is due to receive £644,000 less in revenue funding than it plans to spend in 2023/24 (with the balance coming from reserves), with this budget gap expected to continue in future years. However, there is great uncertainty over this caused by a lack of clarity from government.
47. The future funding gap is predicted to increase to over £8.5 million by 2027/28, based on current cautious officer estimates of future funding levels. Whilst it is anticipated that overall funding for the council will remain relatively unchanged in 2024/25, the lack of certainty on future local government funding from 2025/26 onwards means the level of funding, and the resulting estimated funding gap, could be significantly different from current officer estimates in either a positive or negative way. Every financial decision, particularly those involving long-term funding commitments (i.e., those beyond 2024/25), needs to be cognisant of the potential for significant funding gaps in future years.
48. Under CPE the car park account should be clear and transparent and published to show the council is not making excess surplus income.
49. In line with legislation under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 para 55 (2), at the end of the financial year any deficit in the (car park) account shall be made good out of the general fund.
50. Any surplus income generated from these increases will need to be used in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 Section 55 specific definitions (Highways, car parks, free public open spaces and recreational facilities).
51. Changes to the schedule can be made by placing Notices in the car parks and by advertising in local newspapers at a cost of £5,000 per Notice which can be met from existing car park budgets. A change to the Order will require advertising a draft Schedule to allow for feedback from the public and a further Notice for the making of the new Order.
52. If a simplified charging system is adopted, future amendments to the car park fees will be easier to manage and at less cost as the advert in the newspaper would be reduced.

Legal Implications

53. A Notice Of Variation under the regulation covers tariff changes only and the Notice requires you to state what the charges are now and what the charges are going to be when the Notice comes into force. It is designed purely to allow for tariffs to be increased on a yearly basis without the need for going through the full making of an Order.
54. Any change other than a tariff change falls outside a Notice of Variation. These should not be dealt with by a Notice of Variation, because it is not a change to an existing tariff but rather the introduction of an additional charge. This would include the case when there is no charge.
- 54. Option A** no change to the current Order.

55. Option B is in relation to residents permits for Church Road Car Park in Wheatley has arisen because Oxfordshire County Council intend to carry out some on-street parking enforcement and six properties have been identified along Church Road where residents currently are able to park on-street outside of their houses. OCC has “requested allowing residents of these six properties to use the Church Road car park”.

In the current order, there is no provision for permits to be purchased for this car park and there is also no charge for parking for a maximum stay of four hours. Latest usage surveys show there is capacity for such permits to be issued without having a negative impact on other users of the car park. Under Part II paragraph 3(6) it states that “Insofar as a vehicle is parked in a parking place for which a parking permit has been provided by the Council, the driver of that vehicle shall immediately display a valid permit for the duration that the vehicle is parked in that parking place under the terms of the parking permit” and so if the permit wasn’t correctly used that would result in enforcement action being taken. Therefore, the existence of such permits will need to be referred to in the schedule attached to the council’s car parking order to allow for enforcement measures to be relied upon and as this is an introduction of something new it is the Legal Services view that this cannot be dealt with by way of a variation order.

Officers consider that a new order will need to be made, however if this is the only option that is to be introduced, or if no other options to be introduced requires a new order, then a new order is made for this car park alone which would save advertising costs although the same process of making a new order would need to be followed and therefore officer time is unlikely to be drastically reduced.

56. Option C a new simplified parking structure. As this option is solely making tariff changes to the charges already payable then that can be dealt with by way of a variation order.

57. Option D is to remove half price permits for ‘plug in’ electric vehicles can be done by Notice.

Communications Implications

55. Any of the options agree will have an impact on users of the car park. Given the current economic climate, the need to be transparent and to provide background information to reasons for the changes, officers recommend a communications campaign to inform stakeholders.

56. The outcome of any changes to be clearly communicated to the public by social media and on the council website and officer time will be required in promoting and updating the changes.

Equality and Diversity

57. The council continues to offer parking at no charge for users displaying a ‘blue badge’ although the maximum stay is still enforceable (in Kings Road and Greys Road car

parks in Henley and Southern Road car parks in Thame the maximum stay is three hours during the charging period).

58. The council aims to meet the national standard of at least five percent of car park bays as extra wide bays dedicated to blue badge users.

Risks

59. Option A. By continuing to offer a period of free parking the Council could be criticised for not taking the opportunity to actively tackle climate issues by discouraging customers traveling by car.
60. Option B. The offer of parking permits in the off-street car park will be limited to those houses directly affected by the new on-street parking restrictions. Usage figures show occupancy as half full most days. As the permit does not reserve a space, this is similar to the current parking on-street but the risk is that residents who have paid for a permit will not find a space.
61. Initially the permits will be limited to the residents identified by OCC. The council may receive requests from other residents for permits and this can be considered on an annual basis.
62. Option C. A simplified fee structure of fees to the nearest pound will increase some of the fees but rounded to the nearest pound will make coin paid transactions quicker and easier for users.
63. Option D. Small risk of negative public perception by removing these permits as they show support for a greener mode of travel.

Conclusion

64. The car park account shows a relatively healthy surplus in the medium term and so there is no policy requirement to make any changes to car park fees.
65. The report has set out a range of options for Cabinet to consider in paragraphs 16 to 25. In setting the fees and charges for the financial year 2024-25, the options provide a range of interventions and there are implications to be considered. There is a balance to be struck between the revenue position, and the economic and climate implications of the options proposed.

Background Papers

- Car park policy 2022
- Car park usage survey September 2023

Appendix 1 South Oxfordshire District Council car park fees and charges and permit changes 2023

CAR PARK	TYPE OF PARKING		PERIOD	Charges			
	Charging Period 2021	New Charging Period from 4 April 2022		2021	2022	2023	
Edinburgh Drive Didcot	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	No charge	
			Up to 2 hrs	£1.20	£1.60	£1.80	
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.80	£2.20	£2.40	
			Up to 5 hrs	£2.20	£2.60	£2.80	
			Up to 10 hrs	£5.00	£5.40	£6.00	
	Permits			Annual	N/A	N/A	N/A
				Low emission discount *	N/A	N/A	N/A
				3 months	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Market trader permits			Annual	N/A	N/A	N/A
				3 months	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wheel Orchard Goring	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	No charge	
			Up to 2 hrs	£1.00	£1.40	£1.60	
			Up to 5 hrs	£2.20	£2.60	£2.80	
			Up to 10 hrs	£5.00	£5.40	£6.00	
	Permits			Annual	£858.00	£927.00	£1020
				Low emission discount *	£429.00	£468.00	£510
				3 months	£250.00	£270.00	£297
	Market trader Permits			Annual	£143.00	£154.00	£169
				3 months	£42.00	£45.00	£50
	Kings Road Henley	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	No charge
Up to 2 hrs				£1.20	£1.60	£1.80	
Up to 3 hrs				£1.80	£2.20	£2.40	
Up to 10 hrs				£5.00	£5.40	£6.00	
Greys Road Henley	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	No charge	
			Up to 2 hrs	£1.20	£1.60	£1.80	
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.80	£2.20	£2.40	

Southfields Henley Off Goodall close	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 5 hours	£2.40	£3.00	£3.20	
			Up to 10 hrs	£3.40	£4.00	£4.40	
	Permits			Annual	£583.00	£686.00	£755
				Low emission discount *	£292.00	£343.00	£378
				3 months	£170.00	£200.00	£220
				Low emission discount *	£85.00	£100.00	£110
	Market trader Permits			Annual	£97.00	£114.00	£126
				3 months	£28.00	£33.00	£37

Cattle Market Thame	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	No charge	
			Up to 2 hrs	£1.20	£1.60	£1.80	
			Up to 5 hrs	£2.20	£2.60	£2.80	
			Up to 10 hrs	£2.60	£3.00	£3.20	
	Permits			Annual	£446.00	£515.00	£567
				Low emission discount *	£223.00	£258.00	£284
				3 months	£130.00	£150.00	£165
				Low emission discount *	£65.00	£75.00	£83
	Market trader Permits			Annual	£74.00	£86.00	£95
3 months				£22.00	£25.00	£28	

Southern Road Thame	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	No charge
			Up to 2 hrs	£1.20	£1.60	£1.80
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.80	£2.20	£2.40

Thames Street Wallingford	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	No charge	
			Up to 2 hrs	£1.20	£1.60	£1.80	
			Up to 5 hrs	£2.20	£2.60	£2.80	
			Up to 10 hrs	£2.60	£3.00	£3.30	
	Permits			Annual	£446.00	£515.00	£567
				Low emission discount *	£223.00	£258.00	£284
				3 months	£130.00	£150.00	£165
				Low emission discount *	£65.00	£75.00	£83

	Market trader Permits		Annual	£74.00	£86.00	N/A	
			3 months	£22.00	£25.00	N/A	
Cattle Market Wallingford	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 1 hr	No charge	No charge	No charge	
			Up to 2 hrs	£1.20	£1.60	£1.80	
			Up to 5 hrs	£2.20	£2.60	£2.80	
			Up to 10 hrs	£2.60	£3.00	£3.30	
	Permits			Annual	£446.00	£515.00	£567
				Low emission discount *	£223.00	£258.00	£284
				3 months	£130.00	£150.00	£165
				Low emission discount *	£65.00	£75.00	£83
	Market trader Permits			Annual	£74.00	£86.00	£95
				3 months	£22.00	£25.00	£28

Goldsmith Lane Wallingford	Pay and Display (Mon-Fri 9:00am to 5:00pm) (Sat 9:00am to 2.00pm)	Pay and Display (Mon-Fri 9:00am to 5:00pm) (Sat 9:00am to 2.00pm)	Up to 2 hrs	No charge	No charge	No charge	
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.80	£1.80	£1.80	
			Up to 10 hrs	£3.60	£3.60	£3.60	
	Permits			Annual	£617.00	£617.00	£679
				½ price **	£308.50	£308.50	£340
				3 months	£180.00	£180.00	£198
				½ price**	£90.00	£90.00	£99
	Market trader Permits			Annual	£102.00	£102.00	N/A
				3 months	£30.00	£30.00	N/A
	St Georges Wallingford	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 10 hrs	£1.90	£2.30	£2.50
Permits				Annual	£326.00	£395.00	£435
				Low emission discount *	£163.00	£198.00	£218

			3 months	£95.00	£115.00	£127	
			Low emission discount *	£47.50	£58.00	£64	
	Market trader Permits		Annual	£54.00	£66.00	N/A	
			3 months	£16.00	£20.00	N/A	
Riverside Wallingford Low Season 1 March-30 June 1 Sept-31 Oct	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 1 hr	0.80	£1.00	£1.10	
			Up to 10 hrs	£1.30	£2.00	£2.20	
	Permits			Seasonal	£223.00	£343.00	£343
				½ price *	£112.50	£172.00	£172
				3 months	£65.00	£100.00	£100
				½ price*	£32.00	£50.00	£50
	Market trader Permits			Seasonal	£37.00	£58.00	N/A
		3 months	£11.00	£17.00	N/A		
Riverside Wallingford High Season 1 July-31 August	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 1 hr	£0.80	£1.00	£1.10	
			Up to 3 hrs	£1.30	£2.00	£2.20	
			Up to 10 hrs	£2.60	£3.00	£3.30	
	Permits			Seasonal	£446.00	£514.00	£566
				½ price *	£223.00	£258.00	£283
				3 months	£130.00	£150.00	£165
				½ price*	£65.00	£75.00	£83
Market trader Permits			Seasonal	£74.00	£86.00	N/A	
			3 months	£22.00	£25.00	N/A	

Castle Street Wallingford	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 9:00am to 5:00pm Sun 10:00am to 5:00pm	Pay and Display Mon-Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm Sun 10.00am to 5.00pm	Up to 10 hrs	£1.90	£2.30	£2.50	
					Annual	£326.00	£395.00
	Permits			½ price *	£163.00	£198.00	£218
				3 months	£95.00	£115.00	£127
				½ price*	£47.50	£58.00	£64
	Market trader Permits			Annual	£54.00	£66.00	N/A
				3 months	£16.00	£20.00	N/A
General – On application	Daily rate for Skips			£40.00 + vat	£40.00 + vat	£44.00 +vat	

	Daily rate for gazebo, trailers and market stalls		£20.00 + vat per space	£20.00 + vat per space	£22.00 _ vat
	Permit replacement		£12.00	£12.00	£13.00
* Vehicles able to travel at least 20 miles with zero CO2 – (EXCEPT Goldsmiths Lane which at under 120g CO2/km)					
Excess/Penalty Charges from Nov 2022	Up to one hour over the time		£50.00	£50.00	£50.00
		If paid within 14 days	£25.00	£25.00	£25.00
	Excess of an hour allowed on the ticket/no ticket/parked out of bay or in a disabled bay		£70.00	£70.00	£70.00
		If paid within 14 days	£35.00	£35.00	£35.00

Appendix 2 Comparison of car park fees and charges with local suppliers, October 2023

Place	Average Charging periods	up to 1 hour	up to 2 hours	up to 3 hours	up to 4 hours	up to 5 hours	up to 6 hours	Up to 7 hours	up to 8 hours	up to 10 hours	up to 12 hours
South Oxfordshire District Council	8am to 6pm Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm Sunday	Free	1.80	2.40		2.80				6.00	
Train Station, Henley (APCOA on behalf of First Great Western) (discounts apply if pay by 'phone)	All days any time			2.00	3.00		4.00				
Train Station, Didcot			2.50	4.50	5.60						7.20 (24 hrs)
Train Station, Goring											£4.60 Mon – Fr per day
Dry Leas (Henley rugby club)	7am-10pm Mon to Sunday										3.50
Mill Meadows (Henley Town Council) Mon-Fri Free after 7:00pm Sat and Sun and BHs	All days Free from 7pm to 9am	1.50/1.80	3.00/3.50		6.00/7.00	Over 4 hrs 8.00/9.00					
Wycombe DC (High Wycombe) Easton Street	7am – 8pm Mon – Sat - Sunday £1.00 all day Free from 8pm to 7am	1.10	2.10	2.60	3.10	3.60	4.10	Over 6 hr 9.10			

Wycombe DC (High Wycombe) Baker St	Car Park Closed										
Wycombe DC (Marlow) Riley Road	7am to 7pm Mon - Sun	90p	1.70	2.60	3.10		4.10				6.60
Woking Borough Council (Victoria Way, Brewery Road & Heathside Crescent)	6am - 6pm Charges on Sunday at reduced rate, 1 hr 1.60, 2 hrs 3.00 over 2 hrs 3.30	1.80	3.50	5.00	6.50		8.00	12.00			15.00 up to 24hr
Aylesbury Vale DC (Friarscroft – outer long stay)	6.30am - 8.30pm Mon – Sat										3.10 Mon – Sat 8am to 9pm 1.60 Sundays & BH
Banbury (Market Pl, ultra short stay)	8am - 6pm Mon –sat (Sundays & B/H 1hr – 1.10, over 1 hr 1.60)	1.60 (1.10 up to 30 mins)									
West Oxfordshire DC (Marriotts Walk multi-storey, Witney)	7am – 1am Mon -Sat 9am -1am Sunday	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	
West Oxfordshire DC (Woodford Way)	All day - Mon -Sun	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	
Cherwell DC (Claremont)	Mon – Sun 8am to 6pm Free after 6pm	1.10 Sundays 1.10	2.20 or Sunday 1.60 over 1hr	3.00							
Cherwell DC (Cattle Market)	8am - 6pm Mon -Sun. Free parking after 6pm Mon - Sun	1.10 Sunday 1.10	2.20 or Sunday 1.60 over 1hr	3.00	3.80						5.00 – Day rate

Newbury Central KFC car park	Mon to Sun. 8am to 6pm (6pm to 8am £2.00)	1.50	2.70	3.90	5.20		7.20		8.70		12.00
OCC (Redbridge Park & Ride)	24 hours	free	1 to 16 hrs 2.00	16-24 hrs 4.00	24-48hrs 8.00	48-72hrs 12.00	28 days 30.00				
OCC (Oxpens)	6am -5pm Mon-Sun 5pm-6am Mon-Sun £4.00	3.90	5.0	6.10	8.30	10.50	12.70	6-12 hrs 20.40			12-24 hrs 28.10
OCC (Worcester Street)	8am -8pm Mon-Sun After 8pm 5.00-5.50	5.00 / 5.50	7.20-8.60	10.50- 11.60	13.20- 14.30		20.40- 22.60		31.40- 33.60	39.10	
Oxford Westgate	Mon to Sun 6am to 5pm	3.80	4.80	5.80	7.80	9.80	13.00			6-10 hrs 22.00	10-24 hrs 35.00
Oxford Westgate	Mon to Sun 5pm to 6am	3.80									Over 1hr 4.40
Reading Broad Street Mall	Mon- Sun 24 hrs. 6pm to 8am £4.10	1.60	4.10	6.10	8.10	10.10	12.20				14.20 (up to 24 hrs)
Swindon, Whalebridge multi-storey	Mon to Sat 6am to 6pm Mon – Sat 6pm to 6am – up to 2hr 1.00 Over 2hrs 2.00 Free parking Sundays	1.30	2.60	3.90	5.20		8.40				9.70 6 to 24 hrs
Waitrose Abingdon	Mon – Fri 7.30-9pm Sat 7.30am – 8pm Sun 10am – 4pm		Free for customers Max stay is 2 hrs								
Waitrose Faringdon	Free										
Waitrose Wantage	Free										

Waitrose Wallingford	Mon – Fri 8am – 9pm Sat – 8am - 8pm Sun 10am – 4pm	£1.00 (refunded with min. £10 spend in Waitrose)	Max Stay 2hrs								
Didcot Gateway	Open 24hrs		2.50	4.50	5.60						7.20 up to 24hrs
Orchard Centre Didcot	Mon – Sat 7am – 7pm Free Parking on Sunday		Free	1.70	2.50	4.80 – Max 5 hrs stay					
Sainsburys Wantage	Mon – Sat 8am – 6pm Free any other time	Free	1.50	2.10	3.70	3.70	4.10				Max 4.50

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Finance

Author: Vicky Johnson

Telephone: 01235 422481

Textphone: 18001 01235 422481

E-mail: Vicky.johnson@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

Cabinet member responsible: Pieter-Paul Barker

Tel: 01189 722565

E-mail: Pieter-Paul.Barker@southoxon.gov.uk

To: CABINET on 30 November 2023

To: Council on 14 December 2023

Council tax base 2024/25

Recommendations

That Cabinet recommends Council to:

- (a) Approve the report of the head of finance for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2024/2025.
- (b) Agree that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by South Oxfordshire District Council as its council tax base for the year 2024/25 be 62,683.2.
- (c) Agree that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by South Oxfordshire District Council as the council tax base for the year 2024/25 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix A of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 30 November 2023.

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to ask Cabinet to recommend the council tax base for 2024/25 to Council for approval.

Corporate Objectives

2. The calculation of the tax base is a legal requirement and an essential part of the tax setting process which helps to achieve the council's corporate objectives.

Background

3. Before the council tax can be set by the council, a calculation has to be made of the council tax base, which is an estimate of the taxable resources for the district as a whole and for each parish area.
4. The council tax base for the district has to be notified to Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley by 31 January 2024. Each parish and town council is also notified of the figure for its area.
5. The legislation requires that the council tax base is approved by full council or a non-executive body with delegated powers. No such delegation exists, so cabinet is therefore asked to recommend to council the schedule set out in **Appendix A** as the council tax base for the district as a whole and for each parish area.

Options - Calculation of the tax base

6. The starting point for the calculation is the total number of dwellings and their council tax band.
7. The council then allows for the following information, for each band:
 - (a) dwellings which will be entirely exempt so no tax is payable (e.g., those occupied entirely by students)
 - (b) dwellings which will attract a 25 per cent reduction (e.g., those with a single adult occupier)
 - (c) dwellings which will attract a 50 per cent reduction (e.g., those where all of the adult residents qualify for a reduction)
 - (d) dwellings which will be treated as being in a lower band because they have been adapted for a severely disabled person. The regulations provide methodology to take account of the reduction available to those in band A dwellings
 - (e) dwellings which will be on the valuation list but which attract discounts or disablement relief or are exempt, for only part of the year
8. Each band is then converted into "band D equivalents" by applying the factor laid down by legislation. For example, a band A dwelling is equal to $\frac{2}{3}$ of a band D dwelling and is therefore multiplied by $\frac{2}{3}$ to arrive at the band D equivalent figure, whilst a band H dwelling is equal to twice a Band D dwelling and is therefore multiplied by two to arrive at the Band D equivalent figure. All these are then added together to give a total of band D equivalents.

9. A final adjustment is required to allow for non-collection. The council is required to decide what its collection rate is likely to be and apply this to its council tax base. Historically the council has assumed a 98 per cent collection rate, however, it would be more appropriate for this to be set at 98.5 per cent for 2024/25. A bad debt provision of 1.5 per cent is therefore proposed for 2024/25.

Taxbase for 2024/25

10. Based on the assumptions detailed above the council tax base for 2024/25 is 62,683.2.
11. Similar calculations are required for each parish in order to calculate the proportion of the district's tax base which relates to its area. A schedule of the tax base for each parish is set out in **Appendix A**.
12. To calculate the council tax amounts payable per property band for the council, its council tax requirement (i.e., the amount of council tax to be raised) is divided by the Band D equivalent (tax base). This will be finalised during January and February, culminating in the council tax being set by council in February 2024 (the exact date is subject to the council being notified of the major precepting authorities' council tax requirements).

Financial Implications

13. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For South, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to full Council in February 2023 showed that it is due to receive £644,000 less in revenue funding than it plans to spend in 2023/24 (with the balance coming from reserves), with this budget gap expected to continue in future years. However there is great uncertainty over this caused by a lack of clarity from government.
14. The future funding gap is predicted to increase to over £8.5 million by 2027/28, based on current cautious officer estimates of future funding levels. Whilst it is anticipated that overall funding for the council will remain relatively unchanged in 2024/25, the lack of certainty on future local government funding from 2025/26 onwards means the level of funding, and the resulting estimated funding gap, could be significantly different from current officer estimates in either a positive or negative way. Every financial decision, particularly those involving long-term funding commitments (i.e. those beyond 2024/25), needs to be cognisant of the potential for significant funding gaps in future years.

Legal Implications

15. These are set out in the body of the report.

Climate and ecological impact implications

16. There are no direct climate and ecological implications arising from this report

Equalities implications

17. The calculation of the tax base is a legal requirement and there are no equalities implications with this process.

Risks

18. The council's methodology for calculating the tax base involves basing the calculation on actual dwellings at a certain point in time, rather than forecasting on potential new dwellings that may be built in the future. Because of this the risk exposure is considered to be low.

Other Implications

19. n/a

Conclusion

20. As covered above, the calculation of the tax base is a legal requirement and it is asked that Cabinet recommends the council tax base for 2024/25 to Council for approval in accordance with Appendix A.

Background Papers

None

Appendix A

PARISH COUNCIL TAX BASES - 2024-25

PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL	NUMBER OF DWELLINGS 2024-25	NUMBER OF DWELLINGS 2023-24	PARISH TAX BASE 2024-25	PARISH TAX BASE 2023-24	% CHANGE ON YEAR	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL	NUMBER OF DWELLINGS 2024-25	NUMBER OF DWELLINGS 2023-24	PARISH TAX BASE 2024-25	PARISH TAX BASE 2023-24	% CHANGE ON YEAR
Adwell	16	16	15.7	15.1	4.0%	Sandford on Thames	582	581	499.9	497.9	0.4%
Aston Rowant	353	352	435.7	436.0	-0.1%	Shiplake	753	744	1,045.3	1,020.8	2.4%
Aston Tirrold & Upthorpe	238	231	288.1	277.0	4.0%	Shirburn	55	55	63.0	62.1	1.4%
Beckley & Stowood	256	257	287.5	288.3	-0.3%	Sonning Common	1,806	1783	1,793.8	1,763.5	1.7%
Benson	2,176	2065	2,170.6	2,039.0	6.5%	South Moreton	133	133	132.1	129.5	2.0%
Berinsfield	1,112	1111	683.7	673.9	1.5%	South Stoke	226	222	236.4	230.4	2.6%
Berrick Salome	131	131	179.6	176.1	2.0%	Stadhampton	401	396	408.0	402.0	1.5%
Binfield Heath	290	288	333.0	325.8	2.2%	Stanton St John	190	189	224.2	226.0	-0.8%
Bix & Assendon	263	265	341.5	340.1	0.4%	Stoke Row	286	282	348.5	343.1	1.6%
Brightwell Baldwin	85	83	105.0	110.1	-4.6%	Stoke Talmage	27	27	35.3	34.4	2.6%
Brightwell cum Sotwell	657	657	698.1	701.1	-0.4%	Swyncombe	119	118	146.7	145.0	1.2%
Britwell Salome	87	87	105.7	104.4	1.2%	Sydenham	152	151	169.9	167.4	1.5%
Chalgrove	1,268	1245	1,163.3	1,158.8	0.4%	Tetsworth	335	336	347.3	340.5	2.0%
Checkendon	219	219	254.0	254.4	-0.2%	Thame	5,793	5775	5,066.7	5,030.5	0.7%
Chinnor	3,248	3171	3,025.6	2,949.4	2.6%	Tiddington with Albury	281	281	270.7	268.9	0.7%
Cholsey	1,973	1893	1,765.2	1,678.5	5.2%	Toot Baldon	64	62	80.1	75.0	6.8%
Clifton Hampden	255	256	293.4	293.1	0.1%	Towersey	190	186	201.7	197.6	2.1%
Crowell	54	47	65.8	57.9	13.6%	Wallingford	3,961	3885	3,249.8	3,167.5	2.6%
Crowmarsh	955	856	921.5	832.0	10.8%	Warborough	466	460	527.0	515.1	2.3%
Cuddesdon & Denton	211	210	193.1	187.9	2.8%	Waterperry with Thomley	81	83	90.4	95.9	-5.7%
Culham	176	175	186.3	184.6	0.9%	Waterstock	44	44	51.9	51.6	0.6%
Cuxham with Easington	60	60	62.2	65.6	-5.2%	Watlington	1,379	1295	1,309.1	1,224.7	6.9%
Didcot	13,943	13676	11,035.3	10,767.8	2.5%	West Hagbourne	120	120	132.0	127.0	3.9%
Dorchester	481	482	559.2	556.6	0.5%	Wheatfield	11	11	16.0	15.8	1.3%
Drayton St Leonard	117	117	133.9	133.3	0.5%	Wheatley	1,944	1941	1,804.4	1,788.5	0.9%
East Hagbourne	512	504	527.4	516.4	2.1%	Whitchurch on Thames	336	336	409.3	410.0	-0.2%
Elsfield	47	47	53.0	53.2	-0.4%	Woodcote	1,086	1059	1,092.9	1,064.5	2.7%
Ewelme	431	431	369.3	392.3	-5.9%	Woodeaton	29	29	37.0	37.4	-1.1%
Eye & Dunsden	155	156	196.1	190.4	3.0%	TOTAL	65,984	64,880	62,683.2	61,349.5	2.2%
Forest Hill with Shotover	422	421	387.4	381.5	1.5%		1.7%		2.2%		
Garsington	811	792	736.6	715.9	2.9%						
Goring	1,581	1572	1,782.2	1,753.7	1.6%						
Goring Heath	507	506	600.9	592.4	1.4%						
Great Haseley	255	252	275.7	267.0	3.3%						
Great Milton	355	353	340.0	328.0	3.7%						
Harpden	161	160	229.7	225.6	1.8%						
Henley on Thames	6,204	6146	6,177.1	6,102.7	1.2%						
Highmoor	145	143	186.8	177.2	5.4%						
Holton	169	165	200.4	188.8	6.1%						
Horspath	620	620	625.2	626.2	-0.2%						
Ipsden	158	157	168.0	166.2	1.1%						
Kidmore End	542	542	710.5	706.4	0.6%						
Lewknor	308	308	333.0	328.9	1.2%						
Little Milton	206	206	214.8	215.1	-0.1%						
Little Wittenham	28	28	34.6	34.3	0.9%						
Long Wittenham	394	363	381.1	346.8	9.9%						
Mapledurham	130	130	134.0	130.3	2.8%						
Marsh Baldon	126	118	138.5	128.1	8.1%						
Moulsford	218	218	255.7	255.3	0.2%						
Nettlebed	345	346	378.4	372.1	1.7%						
Newington	46	46	57.9	59.0	-1.9%						
North Moreton	162	161	195.6	194.2	0.7%						
Nuffield	225	226	247.3	245.8	0.6%						
Nuneham Courtenay	104	105	112.9	106.7	5.8%						
Pishill with Stonor	146	145	193.8	191.5	1.2%						
Pyrton	104	92	128.5	117.5	9.4%						
Rotherfield Greys	193	189	259.8	253.2	2.6%						
Rotherfield Peppard	700	698	958.6	947.4	1.2%						

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Finance

Author: Trevor Gaffney

Telephone: 01235 422748

Textphone: 18001 01235 422748

E-mail: Trevor.gaffney@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All

Cabinet member responsible: Cllr Pieter-Paul Barker

Tel: 07764 281854

E-mail: pieter-paul.barker@southandvale.gov.uk

To: CABINET on 30 November 2023

To: COUNCIL on 14 December 2023

Council tax reduction scheme 2024/25

Recommendations

- (a) It is recommended that for the 2024/25 financial year onwards the council continues to adopt the previous 2023/24 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme but with the following amendment:

Where the council has identified that a taxpayer has failed to notify the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) of a relevant change in circumstances, affecting their legacy benefit or Universal credit, then (where necessary) their entitlement to CTR will be stopped, until that notification has taken place and revised DWP benefit entitlement known.

- (b) Cabinet recommends to Council for the above change to be incorporated into its CTR Scheme for the oncoming 2024/25 financial year onwards.

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the council to adopt and implement a modified council tax reduction scheme for the financial years 2024/2025 onwards.

Corporate Objectives

2. The council is required by statute to adopt a scheme to help those on low incomes to meet their council tax liability. In accordance with the strategic objective “running an efficient council” by having a scheme we meet this objective.

Background

3. From April 2013, the national scheme to help people on low incomes pay their Council Tax (Council Tax Benefit), was abolished and a local scheme was introduced called Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme. The Government continued to fund the new scheme, but with a 10 per cent reduction in funding from the previous CTB scheme. In 2013, the council decided to keep the new CTR scheme as close to the old CTB scheme as possible.
4. Throughout, joint working with the DWP has remained essential in maintaining accurate CTR entitlement when known taxpayer(s) change in circumstances occur.

Proposals for 2023/24 onwards

5. It is proposed to insert a requirement for individuals to demonstrate (where necessary) that they have notified the DWP that they have had a change in their circumstances.
6. The current CTR scheme is designed that any person in receipt of one of the below benefits is deemed as passported.
 - Employment and Support Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Job Seekers Allowance
 - Universal Credit

The requirement is for the person to notify any changes in circumstances to the DWP and not necessarily the council. Therefore, in circumstances where the council has identified undeclared changes, it is unable to currently correct any discrepancy until the individual has notified the DWP any revised UC or legacy benefit entitlement determined. This can lead to lengthy delays and CTR being wrongly claimed. Joint working with the DWP, to investigate cases where changes may not have been brought to their attention, would help minimise risk, however, due to recent changes within the DWP (covered below) has meant that this approach can currently no longer be relied upon. The introduction of this rule will allow the council to require individuals to provide evidence that a change in circumstance has been reported to the DWP and allow the council to stop CTR entitlement (where necessary) until this requirement has been done. This addition to the current CTR Scheme is required to prevent error and ensure CTR is only being awarded where entitled. It will also help reduce fraudulent activity.

7. The CTR scheme was designed that anyone in receipt of a passported benefit (listed above) must notify the DWP (as the central point of contact) of any change in circumstance and they then drive the CTR award based on the outcome from that change. However, where the council's investigations team has established an undeclared change in circumstance to the DWP, the council is unable to correct or terminate the CTR until the DWP have adjusted their benefit first. This can lead to error, fraud at the taxpayers expense, and highlights why working with the DWP proved essential to conduct joint investigations. Due to recent changes within the DWP means this joint working has now been significantly impacted and is why this proposed CTR

change is necessary in order to continue to protect the public purse and minimise fraud.

8. The Council has recently been informed by the DWP that their local offices at Oxford, Reading and Slough are being closed and will remain closed until April 2024 at the very earliest (likely to be much longer) and there is risk that they may not reopen. As such, DWP has notified the council that the former joint working arrangements have ceased. Any reports of fraud, error, and undeclared changes, which are identified by the councils investigation team, are therefore having to be passed to the Gloucester DWP and only the largest value cases are being investigated, meaning lower value overpayments, such as Council Tax reductions, are passed back.
9. The current system was designed to ensure that an individual only notifies one central point, however, if they fail to notify that central point then, with the current wording of the rules, it does leave the councils open to risk, especially with the local DWP offices disbanding. The proposed amendment to the current scheme will remove this risk.

Options

10. Based on the current situation it is recommended that Cabinet should recommend to Council to proceed with the modifications detailed below. Therefore, in view of the foregoing, the scheme that is recommended to Council to adopt for 2024/25 onwards is the 2023/24 scheme but with the following amendment:

To include that, where requested, an individual is required to demonstrate that they have notified the DWP of a change of circumstance which may affect the amount of Council Tax Reduction they are in receipt of. Failure to do so can lead to the council stopping ongoing CTS entitlement.

11. The other option is to do nothing.

Climate and ecological impact implications

12. None

Financial Implications

13. If the proposal is accepted into the CTR scheme there will be ongoing protection of the public purse. Individuals are currently able to continue receiving Council Tax Reduction when the investigations team has identified undeclared changes to DWP which would affect their benefit entitlement.
14. Since 2023 the councils investigations team has identified 5 cases where we have been unable to progress, due to failure of the DWP to offer a joint investigation. It is estimated that these cases would equate to approximately £22,390 in CTR and/or other discount being incorrectly applied. This demonstrates the exposed risk and the need for the recommended change to the scheme to protect the council for all future years.
15. Any council decision that has financial implications must be made with the knowledge of the council's overarching financial position. For South, the position reflected in the council's medium-term financial plan (MTFP) as reported to full Council in February 2023 showed that it is due to receive £644,000 less in revenue funding than it plans to spend in 2023/24 (with the balance coming from reserves), with this budget gap

expected to continue in future years. However there is great uncertainty over this caused by a lack of clarity from government.

16. The future funding gap is predicted to increase to over £8.5 million by 2027/28, based on current cautious officer estimates of future funding levels. Whilst it is anticipated that overall funding for the council will remain relatively unchanged in 2024/25, the lack of certainty on future local government funding from 2025/26 onwards means the level of funding, and the resulting estimated funding gap, could be significantly different from current officer estimates in either a positive or negative way. Every financial decision, particularly those involving long-term funding commitments (i.e. those beyond 2024/25), needs to be cognisant of the potential for significant funding gaps in future years.

Legal Implications

17. The current council tax reduction scheme was adopted in 2023/24. There is a statutory duty to adopt a 2024/25 scheme by 11 March 2024. If this deadline is not adhered to, the council's 2023/24 scheme will automatically be rolled over as a consequence.

Procurement implications

18. Any council decision that involves buying goods, services or works must comply with the Procurement Procedure Rules and the councils' Procurement Strategy.
19. This recommendation does not involve the need for any procurement.

Risks

20. There is a risk that the current CTR rules allow an individual to continue claiming CTR, without the council being able to make sure its correct. The current risk is to the public purse due to error and fraud, through undeclared changes in circumstances.
21. Changing a council tax reduction scheme which levels up categories of all claimants without being supported by robust principles and consultation, could be open to legal challenge on equalities grounds. However, to mitigate this, the council has ensured that it has fully complied with the necessary equality requirements.

Other implications

22. As this modification to the current scheme is designed to minimise error and help protect the public funds then no other considerations have been deemed necessary. No Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed change has been conducted, as by its nature, the proposal purely addresses an administration risk which currently exists for undeclared changes.

Conclusion

23. The council must adopt a local council tax reduction scheme for 2024/25 by 11 March 2024 and it is proposed that this be based on a scheme which intends to support all residents on low incomes with help towards paying their council tax. The proposal in this report as proposed by the Cabinet Member for Finance, is to enhance the current scheme to ensure it helps residents during the cost-of-living crisis; continues to be fair

on all residents, protects the vulnerable, and helps minimise error and potentially fraudulent activity.

Background Papers

None