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Oxford City Council has responded to the Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change.

The City Council's Cabinet will formally welcome and respond to the final report from Assembly, setting out the next steps it will take - including budget allocation - to become a Zero Carbon Council and city.

[The full response is available to read on our Committee pages.](#)

**In response to the report, the City Council will:**

- Set a Climate Emergency Budget that commits over £1 million additional operational funding and £18 million of capital investment to address the climate emergency – on top of £84 million of ongoing investment to tackle the climate emergency in Oxford and countywide
- Become net zero as a Council in 2020.
- Respond directly to the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly through raising the energy efficiency of new homes and community buildings, cutting transport emissions, boosting renewable energy installation, expanding biodiversity across the city, and increasing public engagement with recycling.
- Hold a Zero Carbon Oxford summit in the early new year – involving the major organisations responsible for the majority of emissions in the city to see how we can work together to will be to develop a shared vision, forum, and plans to set a course towards a Zero Carbon Oxford.
- Establish a Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership and influence partners to do more.
- Creation of new carbon budgets for the city to step down to zero
- Provide support to individuals and communities to tackle the climate emergency.

Throughout its programme the City Council will also have full regard to the concerns clearly expressed by both councillors and Assembly Members that the programme to cut carbon emissions in Oxford neither disadvantages low-income households in the city, or sacrifices residents' standard of living. In fact, the City Council has an opportunity to enhance residents' standard of living, especially those who are most vulnerable and have low-incomes, through its climate action.

For more information, including latest updates about the Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change, visit our [Citizens Assembly pages](#).

*“90% of members of the Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change wanted us to become sustainable quicker than the legal target nationwide—a very high majority indeed. We're proud to be the first UK city to hold an Assembly on the issue and thank all of our Assembly Members, drawn from all backgrounds, for coming together to raise differences of opinion, hear each other respectfully, and agree a consensus.*

*“We've listened to the Assembly and our brand new climate emergency budget acts on its findings by providing at least £18m of new money to the City Council's zero-carbon mission, plus a further £1m of new money to ensure that we deliver on those investments. This new funding is significant in the Council's budget context to make an immediate impact - because we have to act like there's a climate emergency if we say there is one. This £19m fighting fund comes on top of £84m of*

*ongoing measures to build a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire, leveraged into the county because of the City Council.*

*“The City Council accounts for 1% of the city’s carbon emissions. We’ve reduced our emissions by 40% in the last four years, but we have to clean up 100% of that 1% footprint.*

*“Among our measures we’re announcing in this Budget is our choice to become a net Zero Carbon Council from October 2020. We will buy certified green gas and electricity and offset our remaining carbon emissions through the planting of trees in south-east England because we know the Assembly wanted to enhance biodiversity. To ensure our estate and operations do not contribute to the climate crisis, we will also accelerating the reduction of any underlying emissions.*

*“The measures we are proposing are bold and significant in the context of the City Council’s budget and reach. We are setting a new course, taking the city towards zero carbon, while ensuring this does not sacrifice residents’ living standards or disadvantage low income households.”*

**Councillor Tom Hayes, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford**

### **The Oxford Citizens’ Assembly on Climate Change:**

In January 2019, Oxford City Council unanimously declared a climate emergency in Oxford and agreed to create a Citizens’ Assembly to consider new carbon targets and additional measures to reduce emissions.

In April, the Council set a vision to reduce its own emissions to net zero by 2030 at the latest - sooner than the Government’s deadline of 2050. During September and October, Oxford held the [Oxford Citizens’ Assembly on Climate Change](#) – making it the first city in the UK to hold a Citizens’ Assembly on the issue. 42 Assembly Members attended both weekend sessions and created a ‘mini-public’ representative of the demographics of the city’s population.

Assembly Members were asked to vote on the question: “*The UK has legislation to reach ‘net zero’ by 2050. Should Oxford be more proactive and seek to achieve ‘net zero’ sooner than 2050?*” Thirty seven out of 41 (90%) of the Assembly Members said ‘yes’.

The report, published in November and produced by experts at Ipsos MORI, summarised the Assembly’s findings and recommendations.

Breakdown of Oxford City Council response:

2019/2020 Budget allocation

The City Council will commit over a £1 million of additional operational funding and £18 million of capital investment to the climate emergency. This is on top of £84 million of ongoing investment in measures across Oxford and Oxfordshire. The Council will also explore additional sources of funding, including Government grants, investment by business and individual households, and fundraising by community groups.

City Council response to Assembly recommendations

### **Buildings**

Assembly Members were surprised that the largest proportion of emissions in Oxford came from buildings. There was a perceived need for a balanced approach to decreasing emissions from

buildings while simultaneously working to resolve the current affordable housing and homelessness crisis in Oxford.

In response, the City Council will move towards a zero carbon building system across eight areas – Council buildings, Council housing, new homes, community buildings, commercial buildings, private rented sector, planning standards, and building standards.

Key developments include:

- **Council buildings:** From October 2020, the Council will procure all its gas from certified renewable gas producers. A new contract will be agreed for the provision of green electricity, with offsetting - linked to certified sustainable tree planting in south east England - to cover the remaining emissions. The council is also considering an additional fund - Salix+ - to support delivery of energy efficiency and renewable energy related projects.
- **Retrofitting council housing:** The Council will complete an assessment of the energy efficiency of its housing stock in 2020. Following this assessment, proposals will be presented for the additional investment to deliver greater carbon reduction of Council housing, prioritising the worst performing first. Residents will be consulted on a retrofit investment programme.
- **New build homes:** The Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL) is developing a plan to progress all new build to above Part L of Building Regulation standard and without gas heating. The Council will also demonstrate net zero or Passivhaus homes, to generate local interest. In time, as acceptance of Passivhaus homes among tenants and buyers increases, and the incrementally higher costs of this form of housing narrows, it is anticipated that this will be the norm for OCHL construction.
- **Community buildings:** A full audit of all the Council's community assets is underway, which includes an appraisal of their energy efficiency. A further assessment is set to be commissioned to identify options and costs for retrofitting. All new City Council buildings will draw on best practice examples such as Rose Hill Community Centre, which has a One Planet Living Action Plan. The Council will also achieve zero carbon through working in partnership with stakeholders, identifying external funding opportunities, and lobbying the Government for changes to national policy and standards in areas such as building standards, commercial buildings, and in the private rented sector.

## Transport

Assembly Members believed encouraging behaviour change with a shift away from private car ownership and incentivising public transport use was key to achieving net zero.

In response to the theme of transport, future development of a zero carbon transport system includes: examining the City Council fleet, supporting electric vehicle take-up and charging infrastructure, supporting and incentivising electric buses and taxis, lobbying for a vehicle standards and scrappage scheme, investment in cycling, and development of both the Zero Emission Zone and Connecting Oxford proposals.

Key developments include:

- **City Council fleet:** The City Council's wholly-owned direct services company, Oxford Direct Services' (ODS) has committed to electrifying at least 25% of their fleet by 2023. ODS is also working in partnership with Pivot Power on the £40m Energy Superhub Oxford project (ESO)

which will enable superfast charging of vehicles at its depot and support the shift of the fleet to zero.

- **Electric vehicle take-up and charging infrastructure:** Oxford City Council has secured funding for the implementation of around 400 electric vehicle charging points across the city. Wider implementation will require additional funding, and could be underpinned by the £40 million Project Leo smart grid, being developed in the city with partners.
- **Electric buses and taxis:** The City Council has reached agreement with bus operators that all buses within the city will be zero emission capable by 2035. For taxis, new licensing standards will require all taxis licensed in Oxford to be zero emission capable by 2025, which the City Council is incentivising the Black Cab fleet to be zero-emission capable.
- **Cycling:** The City Council is continuing to invest in provision of extra cycle parking in the city and is working with Oxfordshire County Council on proposals to fund the creation of cycle greenways into the city.
- **Vehicle standards and scrappage scheme:** The City Council will actively lobby the Government to bring the end of the sale of all new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030.

Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council are working in partnership to introduce a zero emission zone from 2020, which aims to cover the whole city by 2035. Both councils are also working to develop proposals for a workplace parking levy and access restrictions to reduce congestion and improve walking, cycling, and public transport facilities.

The Council will also continue to support the electrification of the rail network, with particular reference to the extension of electrification of the western region to Oxford and beyond.

## **Biodiversity**

Assembly Members were positive about creating more biodiversity and green space around Oxford. They found that protecting and enhancing biodiversity and “greening” the city was seen as a key route to engagement with communities and individuals.

Current work in this area includes the City Council’s biodiversity strategy, the waterways project, green spaces strategy, planning policies, tree planting, conservation and management of nature reserves, and work with voluntary groups.

Key developments include:

- **Local Nature Partnership:** Supporting the potential formation of a countywide Local Nature Partnership.
- **Natural Resource Management:** Applying a Natural Resource Management approach to decision making - requiring a detailed mapping of natural resources that the city derives services from and impacts upon.
- **Action groups:** Enhancing engagement with local voluntary action groups involved with nature conservation and biodiversity on tree planting and other programmes.
- **Offsetting:** Linking work around biodiversity to locally based offsetting schemes

## **Offsetting:**

The Council will ensure offsets are used only in addition to other actions. The City Council will prioritise offsetting measures within the city to also allow wider socio-economic opportunities.

- **City Council Offsetting:** The City Council will follow best practice explore the potential for a locally based offsetting scheme, based on the natural capital resource management principles and linked in to our biodiversity programmes.

### **Recycling and Waste:**

Recycling, reducing, and re-using waste were important goals for Assembly Members. They felt that individuals and organisations should be encouraged to consume and produce less. Assembly Members demanded more education and information in order to ensure households recycled effectively.

Key developments include:

- **City Council waste:** Projects are currently underway to reduce water usage and increase recycling of waste from the Council's own office accommodation and operations and eliminate waste to landfill.
- **Recycling target:** The City Council is working with other Districts and the County Council to deliver an Oxfordshire-wide Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS). The JMWMS aims to keep household waste growth to zero (per person per year), increase the amount of household waste recycled to 70% by 2030, and to end less than 3% of household rubbish to landfill by 2020.  
The Council is also helping to revitalise a countywide Oxfordshire Environmental Partnership to drive behaviour change around waste reduction and recycling.
- **Public information:** The City Council budget for 2020/21 will also allow for dedicated public information and communications around recycling and waste reduction through expanding public events such as a zero-waste festival which was trialled in 2019.

### **Renewable Energy**

The Citizens' Assembly was surprised by how much Oxford has already done in this area. There was strong support for national government and the Council playing a more direct role in helping households make the transition away from gas and to new sources of power. However, there were concerns about the affordability of solar panels. Assembly Members were open to compromise in deciding where renewable sources would be placed.

Key developments include:

- **City Council renewables installation:** From December 2019, Oxford City Council will have completed the installation of one of the UK's largest solar carports at the city's Pool and Leisure Centre in Blackbird Leys. A canopy over 48 car-parking spaces will deliver up to 100,000 kilo-watt hours of green electricity to the pool and leisure centre per year, enough to power 25 homes.
- **Supporting others to install renewables:** The Council will continue to support the installation of renewable energy in and around the city, particularly where this links to local energy balancing and retaining money within the local economy, through working with organisations such as the Low Carbon Hub. The Council will continue to review investment and opportunities to support community energy network in and around the city.

## **Establishing a Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership and influence partners**

The Citizens' Assembly highlighted the importance of the Council working with partnership to achieve a significant reduction in carbon emissions. The City Council is able to convene, inform, and influence others to take action – including other statutory bodies, businesses, voluntary organisations in the city, and neighbouring local authorities and central Government.

It is estimated that the Council has the potential to influence up to 66% of Oxford's total greenhouse gas emissions. Assembly Members expressed the view that the Council should convene a "coalition of the willing" across the city which includes institutions, communities and individuals to address our climate emergency.

This will be achieved through:

- **Oxford Climate Change Summit:** The City Council will host an Oxford Climate Change Summit in early 2020, which will join key individuals from key organisations and businesses responsible for most of Oxford's greenhouse gas emissions. The summit aims to develop a shared plan towards a Zero Carbon Oxford.
- **Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership:** A relaunch of the existing Low Carbon Oxford Partnership as the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership. The partnership will encourage emitting organisations across the city to agree target and action plan for Oxford to become a zero-carbon city.
- **Retrofit Summit:** Oxford City Council will explore with others the opportunity to establish a retrofit summit, to bring together manufacturers, contractors, and designers in the domain of retrofitting.

## **Supporting individuals and communities**

The City Council is keen to encourage individuals and communities to drive change, especially in areas such as Oxford's biodiversity and increasing flora and fauna in the city.

Key developments include:

- **Community grants:** The Council's £1.5 million per annum community grants programme will be reviewed to include objective of increasing the promotion of community-led projects and organisations which are taking action on climate change.
- **School curriculum programme:** The Council's outreach and curriculum programme with Oxford schools will be expanded to cover broader climate change issues. To achieve this, the Council will also work with Oxfordshire County Council - the city's Local Education Authority.
- **Oxford Climate Change Youth Board:** The creation of a youth board to provide for the views of young people in the city. The board will work with the City Council to produce a Youth Climate Action Summit, to give young people a chance to express their views on climate change.

Other methods of supporting individuals include, creating a wider volunteer network in the city, and engaging younger people in climate issues.

## **Strengthening Council's climate communications and influence**

Assembly Members asked for greater awareness around initiatives to tackle climate change in Oxford, and the roles played by local and national Government.

The Budget 2020/21 makes provision for expenditure around public information and engagement to raise the awareness of climate change. Alongside this, the Council will achieve this through:

- **Carbon targets:** The Council will measure progress at 5-yearly intervals, linked to notional carbon budgets for the city, which will be proposed in the upcoming Sustainability Strategy
- **Oxford to Zero:** The creation of an 'Oxford to Zero' brand by the City Council, which can be used by groups and to build awareness of projects relating to the climate emergency. This includes a microsite which will showcase action, and signpost key sources of information.
- **Lobbying for change:** The Council will lobby to seek changes to the national framework around buildings, planning, transport, waste and biodiversity to unlock Oxford's potential to do more.

### **A Council-wide approach**

Every aspect of the Council's work will need to be approached through the lens of the climate emergency. Current steps to raise internal commitment includes: a formalised internal governance on the Council's response to the climate emergency, internal communications and engagement, and an audit of all current activity to inform decisions on corporate prioritisation.