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Oxford City Council
Annual Report 2008-2009

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1. Message from Group Leaders and the Chief Executive

Welcome to the Annual Report for 2008-09.

The purpose of this report is to tell you how Oxford City Council has performed over the last twelve months. It includes information about:

- The context within which the Council has been operating
- The challenges that the Council has faced and the improvements that we have been able to deliver during this time
- How the Council's internal management arrangements have changed in ways which have been fundamental to the Council's improvement in its efficiency and cost effectiveness over the past year
- How the Council has been managing its finances.

Last year's Corporate Plan set out the Council's ambition, developed with partners across the city, to make Oxford a world-class city for everyone. It also set out our plans for transforming the way that the Council does business. It set out our intention to become a high performing council, delivering high quality services and excellent value for money for all our citizens.

In summary, we can report that the Council has moved forward quickly and confidently in making improvements over the last 12 months.

By sticking to the transformation plans set out in our last corporate plan, and by improving the management systems underpinning the delivery of these plans, we have significantly improved the Council's performance across a range of important services. We are already delivering better value for money, and have saved 25% of our net revenue budget over 2 years. In the year ahead we are planning to save a further £4.5m. We are achieving cost efficiencies at double the rate required by the Government. The work that we have been doing over the last twelve months in partnership with our Trade Unions on Single Status is bearing fruit. Our Single Status agreement will deliver a fair deal for our staff and for the council taxpayers of Oxford when it is introduced later this year. We have continued to increase the strength of our partnership working within the region.

The Audit Commission – the local government watchdog - has recognised these improvements by raising the Council's Value for Money score to Level 2, and by publishing a positive Annual Audit and Inspection Letter and service inspection reports. The Audit Commission has recognised our Strategic Housing service and our Regeneration policies as among the best in the country.

The City Council has had two key objectives over the last twelve months: to speed up the transformation of our services and to avoid being knocked off financial course by the banking crisis, the recession and other external issues.

We have managed to achieve both of these objectives through sound management and unity of purpose on the part of the councillors, senior management and staff.

The Council is now in a strong position to sustain current improvement levels and to fulfil our aspiration to provide excellent services for all our citizens.

2. 2008-09: The Year in review

2.1 National context

Improving public services and increasing efficiency, especially through partnership, have been core policy themes for this Government. These themes - underpinned by the savings targets set out in the last Comprehensive Spending Review, and by the recommendations set out in the Gershon and Varney reports - cut across all areas of service delivery. They remain the key drivers of national policy.

Current economic conditions – and these seem likely to continue for some time – have added real urgency to the demands for greater efficiency, and the need to look at new ways of delivering public services.

2.2 Local context

Contemporary Oxford has a beautiful and historic city core and extensive, green spaces, but it is also a densely packed and culturally diverse urban area, with around 150,000 people living in 46 sq kms. Oxford is ethnically diverse, with the third highest minority ethnic population in the South East. And with around 32% of Oxford's population consisting of young people between the ages of 16 and –29, the city has a wide range of facilities catering for students and young adults. Social inclusion and community cohesion are important issues for us.

Oxford is a global brand for a diverse range of industries. However, the average earnings of residents are lower than the regional average and the city contains significant areas of severe and multiple deprivation. Current economic circumstances threaten not just workers in the car industry but in other areas of the local economy as well.

Oxford faces an affordable housing crisis. House prices are almost ten times greater than annual incomes and there are large concentrations of homes in multiple occupation and significant numbers of homeless and other vulnerable groups. These problems are likely to be exacerbated if the recession is prolonged.

3. Oxford City Council's priorities

The Council's sustained focus on its priorities - developed with reference to the social, demographic, economic and environmental character of the city and through consultation with residents and other stakeholders - is at the heart of its approach to managing its resources.

Oxford City Council and its partners are committed to making Oxford a world-class city for everyone who lives here, not just a privileged minority.

In April, the Council agreed the Corporate Plan for 2009/12. The new plan confirms the Council's vision and its commitment to six priorities, which flow directly from the needs of the city:

- More housing, better housing for all
- Tackle inequalities and support communities
- Improve the local environment, economy and quality of life
- Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
- Tackle climate change and promote sustainable environmental resource management.
- Transform Oxford City Council by improving value for money and service performance.

4. Managing through recession

The current economic conditions make it particularly challenging for the Council to successfully deliver its priorities.

The impact of the banking and credit crisis has been significant. Income from planning, parking and commercial investment has declined by around £350K, and increased fuel costs will amount to £600K per annum. And the Council will be obliged to fund some key capital activities from revenue funding following falls in capital receipts costing over £1m per year.

The challenges for Oxford (and other urban districts) have been compounded by recent Government initiatives.

- Grant increases are significantly below inflation - 1.2% this year.
- Changes to the LABGI regulations represent a loss of £800K per year.
- Oxford's exposure to the collapse of the Icelandic banks - £4.5m - was considerably less than some other public bodies. However, the collapse has had a disproportionate impact on district councils and our assets that have been frozen are equivalent to an entire year's capital programme.
- The reductions in interest rates are good news for people paying their mortgages, but the interest income on the City's investments has reduced by nearly £0.5 million with each percentage reduction in interest rates. These reductions now amount to £2 million in a full year.

The national concessionary bus fare scheme continues to create serious financial problems for the City. The scheme has had excellent and beneficial effects for people over 60 and the disabled because it increases their mobility and quality of life. It is also good for the environment because it means fewer cars on the roads.

We welcome the scheme but the formula through which it is funded is inequitable. The cost that is borne by Oxford Council taxpayers is over £1 million this year and will carry on rising. The financial difficulties imposed by this scheme have been exacerbated by the decision by the Department of Transport to uphold the Bus Operators Appeal against the Concessionary Fare reimbursement factor. Oxford City Council will now spend £4.0m on concessionary travel. This is an increase of £1.9m from the introduction of the new scheme in April 2008 compared to additional funding from Government of £821,000. We have improved the council's efficiency in recent years so this excessive cost will not create a budgetary crisis; our balances will enable us to meet the cost. But the loss of over £1 million in 2010/11 which could have been available to improve services, is very serious indeed.

In spite of these problems, the Council – working with its partners - has made systematic progress in delivering its aspirations for the city. We have quickened the pace of improvements and cost efficiencies, and we have avoided being knocked off financial course by the credit crunch and other external issues. We have been able to do this because we have managed our resources flexibly and effectively.

4.1 Transforming our management arrangements

We have been able to make significant progress because we have transformed the arrangements for managing resources across a wide range of council activities.

5. Managing our business

- We have restructured the Council, deleting one third of senior management posts and one fifth of management posts below Service Head and resulting in a leaner, more focussed management structure. The new management structure is helping to improve corporate governance because it logically groups functions and enables more effective performance management.
- Corporate Boards and meeting arrangements are tightening corporate discipline and improving governance across the full range of management issues.
- The Weekly Business Meeting maintains oversight of all of the Council's day-to-day business, including early drafts of all proposed City Executive Board reports and establishment control requests.
- The Strategy and Resources Board ensures that there is a clear link between strategic development and organisational resources. The Board is currently overseeing the development of new strategies in the areas of asset management, accommodation, and human resources. It has also drawn up a timetable for a systematic review of all Council strategies.
- The Performance Board tracks delivery against our corporate priorities, key performance indicators (including LAA2 indicators), data quality, equalities, consultation, the risk register and other key corporate initiatives and intervenes where necessary to improve performance.
- The Transformation Board develops, drives, and monitors large-scale projects aimed at transforming the Council's infrastructure. The key objectives are to improve value for money and to improve services for customers, e.g. through the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) project which has been rolled out successfully in our landlord service. The wider roll-out will be completed over the next eighteen months.
- The Wider Leadership Team - consisting of the Chief Executive, Executive Directors, and Heads of Service - meets at least every month but more often when necessary. This ensures that everybody in the corporate management team has the opportunity to contribute to and understand the decision-making process.
- The Management Practice Group, consisting of managers from all levels of the organisation, meets every two months in order to debate and develop sound management practice.
- The adoption of modified Prince 2 as the corporate project management approach has ensured that we have agreed common terminology and templates, and that we are aiming to achieve our objectives with full understanding of budgets and schedules. Contingency plans for all programme and project risks are developed and monitored. All new projects must be supported by a rigorously argued and resourced business case.
- New arrangements for improving people management have included: a fundamental restructure; the launch of a project to achieve IIP accreditation in 2011; the introduction of a comprehensive management development programme; a revised appraisal scheme; production of new HR policies with a focus on performance; development of a workforce plan; and investment in a new Human Resources Management

Information System. Measures have been put in place to improve the Council's attendance rates. Management and trade unions work together on delivering change and it is a reflection of the growing trust and confidence that the number of employee relations issues has dramatically reduced in the last year. Management and unions meet regularly to discuss issues and head off potential problems.

- A programme of fundamental service reviews and, where appropriate, market testing ensures that the Council is systematically reviewing cost and quality. The major focus in the coming year is on waste and recycling.
- The Council has drawn together disparate property related services to form a new Property and Facilities Management service. This new function manages all the Council's assets (with the exception of the day-to-day management of the Housing portfolio) at a strategic and operational level. This will enable an holistic approach to delivering property-related priorities, including its key objectives of affordable housing and climate change. At the same time, the Council commissioned a new Strategic Asset Management Plan and an Office Accommodation Strategy, to be approved in summer 2009. The vacation of office accommodation at Northway in the summer of 2009 will reduce the amount of space occupied by the Council by 12% as well as bringing significant benefits in terms of CO₂ emission reductions.
- Arrangements for managing data and information have strengthened markedly over the last twelve months. While the integrity of performance data management has been a significant focus, we have also improved the use of contextual demographic information and qualitative data resulting from the consultation programme. Our objective has been to ensure that our priorities fully reflect the needs of our citizens and that our progress in meeting these priorities is tracked in an efficient and quality assured manner. The Knowledge Management project includes the quality of all service information provided by the council. We have also improved the way we manage data security.
- Arrangements for delivering our ambitious equalities agenda have been strengthened and delivery targets are now included in all Service Transformation Plans. An innovative training programme has also been put in place.
- The Carbon Trust has described Oxford City Council as an exemplar authority thanks to the focused management arrangements in place to reduce our carbon dioxide by a challenging 25% by the end of March 2011 (and then 3% year on year thereafter). The Council has exceeded its 800 tonne target for the first year of the programme. 'Getting our House in Order' will deliver potential financial savings to the Council of around £1.24 million over 5 years.
- The Council's arrangements for risk management, overseen by an effective Audit & Governance Committee, have been strengthened. Risk management is now embedded from senior officers and Members through to service level and project and programme management arrangements. Risk assessment is an active tool in decision-making; examples include the Office Accommodation Options Appraisal and Leisure tender evaluation.

- The Annual Governance Statement has been strengthened to ensure that assurances from good governance across Council services are actively evidenced and areas where improvement is needed documented and action plans put in place. The governance of significant partnerships is regularly reviewed.
- The Standards Committee has, for the past 3 years, made an annual report to Council and reported again to Council in April 200909. In doing so the Committee are able to make public their assessment of the ethical health of the Council and provide reassurance to the public as to their effective operation.
- Cross-party working arrangements continue to ensure that key areas of potential disagreement can be discussed and negotiated.

6. Managing our partnership arrangements

We benefit from a vibrant and highly participate Local Strategic Partnership. A highlight was the publication of the Affordable Housing Select Committee report; an approach which has been cited as an exemplar by IDeA and has already led to fresh approaches in delivering much needed additional housing for Oxford.

We have strengthened our partnership working arrangements with the Homes and Communities Agency, SEEDA and Oxfordshire Economic Partnership.

The City Council's role in the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (MKOB) partnership, and the key thematic partnerships that have been developed to deliver the Local Area Agreement 2 and other priorities has been strengthened over the last twelve months. The recent Annual Audit and Inspection Letter notes the Council's effective work on partnership and the benefits that this has brought the city, whether in local communities or in bringing affordable housing, jobs, and improved retail and cultural opportunities to the city centre.

Our approach to partnership has now gone beyond creative participation in and, often, leadership of sub-regional partnerships. The city is now using partnership as a way of delivering key services.

- **Leisure:** We carried out a fundamental service review of our underperforming leisure service. As a result, a partnership agreement with Fusion Lifestyle, a not for profit trust, has been signed and – as of Sunday 29 March 2009 – Fusion are managing the Council's leisure centres on our behalf. This will generate annual savings of around £700k for the Council and enable substantial investment into our leisure service.
- **Park & Ride:** The Council's decision to transfer management of our Park and Ride sites to the County Council means that we can give commuters a better deal by enabling them to park for free, reduce the number of cars coming into our city, and save the Council £1m over the next five years.
- **ICT:** The City Executive Board agreed a business case to transfer management of our ICT service to the County Council and this transfer took effect as of Wednesday 1 April 2009. This will enable us to improve the quality of our service and save £1m over the next five years.
- **Internal Audit:** We re-tendered this service as a joint exercise with Cherwell DC that will save both Councils together £100k over 3 years. As of April 1, PWC are the Council's internal auditors.

6.1 Partnership and procurement

The Council's performance on procurement has been strong for a number of years, with our strategy for procurement being cited by IDeA as an example of best practice.

Since 2002 the Council has invested in the creation of a skilled in-house procurement team. The Council has had an ongoing programme of tendering

activity and a large part of its £55m pa spend is already managed through corporate contracts. The Council is continuing to target new spend areas to achieve savings either through more effective purchasing or using joint leverage with partner authorities.

Our overall approach to procurement has evolved with our colleagues from the other Councils. Since 2005, the council has been an active member of the Strategic Procurement Partnership for Oxfordshire (SPPO), and used this alliance to develop a number of framework contracts such as:

- Stationery and IT consumables (county-wide reverse e-auction currently saving £70,000/year)
- Recruitment and statutory advertising (currently saving £10,000/year)
- Temporary agency staff (saving in excess of £110,000/year)
- Building Materials (saving in excess of £50,000/year)

The Strategic Procurement Partnership for Oxfordshire SPPO (SPPO) merged in 2008 with a similar Buckinghamshire group to form the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Procurement Partnership. During 2008/09, the Council has taken the lead in setting up a joint procurement hub for other Oxfordshire districts. As a result of a successful funding bid through Improvement and Efficiency South East (IESE) and additional funding from the other districts, the hub has been in place since 1st April. During the first three months of 2009 some early work has been carried out analysing potential savings and over £100k of quick win savings have been identified.

The Council's strategy focuses on:

- Developing the local supply chain and local economy
- Implementing streamlined and efficient procurement, including e-procurement
- Working with the voluntary sector and developing procurement benefits for these groups through our procurement activities
- Developing sustainable procurement including through the supply chain
- Service design and how to partner with other sectors to deliver the most effective outcome
- Developing key suppliers and developing ongoing efficiencies and innovation through contract development.

The procurement team actively engages with Business Link, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce. The team regularly support the work of these groups by giving talks to members and offering training. The team hosted a Meet the Buyer event on 2nd April which saw over 300 local businesses attending and meeting with 20 public sector organisations and charities, including Oxfam as well as working with local professional services such as banks, solicitors and accountants who have agreed to provide free advice to businesses at the event. Business Link and FSB are supporting this event.

7. Outcomes and Community Benefits

Demonstrating that we are aligning our use of resources with our priorities effectively and efficiently is a key part of our function as the democratic body for Oxford. Within this context it is worth remembering some of the practical things that our use of resources has achieved over the last 12 months or so.

7.1 More housing, better housing for all

- The Audit Commission assessed our strategic housing service as a two-star service with excellent prospects of improvement.
- Oxford has exceeded the 2010 target to reduce the number of people in temporary accommodation by 50% from the December 2004 level.
- We have paid almost £50k in discretionary payments to help reduce homelessness and reliance on short-term temporary accommodation.
- The Old Fire Station project is an innovative approach to providing education, training and life-skill development to homeless people, set in the context of a vibrant community arts venue. The project has capital funding from the Community and Local Government Places for Change Programme, and will be delivered in partnership with the homelessness charity Crisis
- Our new Choice Based Lettings Scheme is enabling housing applicants to make bids for houses they are interested in. The development of a sub-regional Choice Based Letting scheme will broaden choice still further and encourage geographical mobility
- Our Community Housing & Community Development service area has been awarded £80K over two years to kick-start an Enhanced Housing Options Service, which will offer advice and assistance on issues beyond simple rooflessness
- Over 88% of our council managed homes now meet the Decent Homes Standard
- Oxford City Homes has set up an Involvement Monitoring Panel, which will enable tenants to engage more fully in shaping the services that they use.
- We held the first of what will be quarterly money management workshops at the Oxford Tenants' Resource Centre
- Two tenancy services open days were held in November with tenants, leaseholders, staff and partner agencies (Social Services, advice centres, voluntary groups and support providers). Our aim was to increase cross-sector understanding of the issues relating to our services and to provide a networking opportunity
- We are developing a Landlord Accreditation Scheme to improve standards in Private Rented Sector. We are also pro-actively prosecuting rogue landlords who exploit their tenants by providing sub-standard accommodation
- We have received £4m from the Homes and Community Agency to convert 46 units of temporary accommodation into permanent accommodation.

7.2 Tackle inequalities and support communities

- We are processing applications for housing benefit more quickly. Time taken to process new applications has fallen from 38.53 days in 2005-06 to 22.39 days in 2007-08, and our ranking compared to all English Districts has improved from 185th to 83rd (CIPFA). Similarly, time taken to process changes of circumstances has reduced from 22.34 to 13.42 days over the same period.
- We are using Acorn and PayCheck software to help us target our benefits take-up campaign more effectively. Over 100 new claimants have received benefits this year, with over £40k backdated benefits being paid.
- We opened a new Local Services Shop at Cowley Centre in the east of the city, as part of our programme to locate services where people need them. Footfall has been steadily increasing, with around 1,500 visits a month.
- City Executive Board has agreed to spend £2.5m to update children's play areas across the city.
- We launched the Concessionary Bus Fares Scheme, with 89% of passes being issued on time.
- Funding of £37,500 was secured from the Arts Council for Dance Festival 2009 following the success of the festival in 2008. The Arts Council stated that we have developed a visionary approach to dance development.
- SOCITM commended our website for providing best practice in encouraging local communities to engage online in discussion forums
- We launched the city's first Disability Directory in partnership with Oxford Brookes University.

7.3 Improve the local environment, economy and quality of life

- The redesigned Bonn Square was reopened in November, as part of a wider celebration, which involved switching on the city's Christmas lights and launching the Winter Light festival.
- The city has been awarded £3m of New Growth Points funding for the next three years.
- Design proposals for Frideswide Square and the surrounding areas are nearing completion.
- We recommitted, with the Trade Unions, to our Skills for Life programme. This helps staff with reading, writing, numerical and IT skills. Our current centre is at City Works and a second centre will open at Oxford City Homes in 2009.
- The West Oxford Community Centre became our second centre (and only the fifth nationally) to gain VISIBLE Standard for outstanding work with the community.
- Our parks achieved Quality Standard ISO 9001 and Florence Park became our third park to gain Green Flag status.
- Barton Leisure Centre was the first of our leisure centres to be audited under the QUEST framework and achieved 77%, putting it into the top quartile nationally.
- Over £100k has been spent on developing the gym at Temple Cowley Pools. This was completed on time and within budget.

- Oxford City has seen the greatest growth in adult participation in sport nationally of all of the authorities. This is from 20.5% to 25.2%, an increase of 4.7%.
- After a rigorous market testing and procurement process, we have entered into a partnership agreement with Fusion Lifestyle to manage our leisure centres.
- We scooped two awards in the Oxford Preservation Trust Awards - one for transforming Underhill Circus in Barton and the other for our new civic plate display in the Town Hall.
- We met our target of ensuring that 90% of our streets meet the National Quality Standard
- Eight of our public toilets were awarded star ratings in the Loo of the Year awards.

7.4 Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

- We have invested £120k in free holiday activities for 5-19 year olds, living in Rose Hill, Blackbird Leys, Barton and Wood Farm. A further £30k was awarded to provide holiday activities in East Oxford and Cowley.
- Our Neighbourhood Policing Programme is now working successfully throughout Oxford. All Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) regularly consult with residents to identify community priorities.
- We have been awarded £1.6m to support cohesive communities.
- We are working with Muslim communities in building resilience among communities to tackle extremism, including working with two women's empowerment programmes, young people's activities, and working with Muslim institutions.
- We supported a two-day police operation in Barton. Day one involved enforcement of drug warrants and tackling unlicensed and uninsured vehicles. Day two was a community action day held at the Barton Neighbourhood Centre. Over 700 residents attended the event.
- Three CCTV cameras have been installed along the Cowley Road to assist in reducing alcohol related crime and disorder.
- The work of street wardens in Barton, Wood Farm, Blackbird Leys and Rose Hill continues to progress and two of our wardens recently received a national award for their work with young people.
- Oxfordshire's Domestic Abuse website - www.reducingtherisk.org.uk - has been relaunched

7.5 Tackle climate change and promote sustainable environmental resource management

- We have made good progress on the flood priority actions agreed with the Oxford Area Flood Partnership. We are holding £50k in reserve for Flood Prevention Activities to be agreed with the Environment Agency. We have introduced a quarterly newsletter to keep affected residents informed of progress.
- We have implemented major changes to our waste and recycling collections. Changes to the rounding system have simplified the collection

days for many residents, reduced travelling time for crews and reduced fuel costs.

- Our performance on recycling is stronger than at the same time last year and a report will go to CEB later this year setting out ways of making this service more effective and inclusive.
- Our decision to transfer management of the City Council's Park & Ride sites to the County Council will benefit the environment by further reducing the number of cars coming into our city. It will also benefit commuters in that they can now park free of charge.
- We achieved our 2010 target to reduce domestic CO2 emissions by 30% from our 1995 levels in March 2008
- Our Environmental Development team launched *Getting our House in Order*, our plan to reduce the Council's carbon emissions by 25% by 2010.

7.6 Transform Oxford City Council by improving value for money and service performance

- In September 2008, we ran a series of six staff conferences to ensure staff were involved in shaping the transformation programme. These conferences – jointly organized with the Trade Unions - were held in the Town Hall and provided an opportunity for staff from all service areas to meet with and hear from the senior management team and the Trade Unions about the Council's transformation agenda. A group exercise formed part of this process where staff were encouraged to discuss ideas they had for improvements.
- The Business Transformation Strategy – setting out our approach to project management, back-office shared service arrangements and modernisation of processes in the back office - was approved by CEB in October 2008.
- We have adopted a modified version of Prince 2 as our corporate project management methodology and set up a Programme Management Office. We are also rolling out a training programme; twenty members of staff have already been trained.
- In June 2009 we will go live at Oxford City Homes with the first phase of a corporate CRM system that will involve significantly re-engineering of front and back office functions.
- Our shared ICT management arrangements with the County Council went live on April 1 2009.
- We have appointed an experienced interim Property Manager with a remit to: centralise asset management; improve the rate of return on the corporate portfolio; and rationalise operational assets, including offices, depots and leisure facilities.

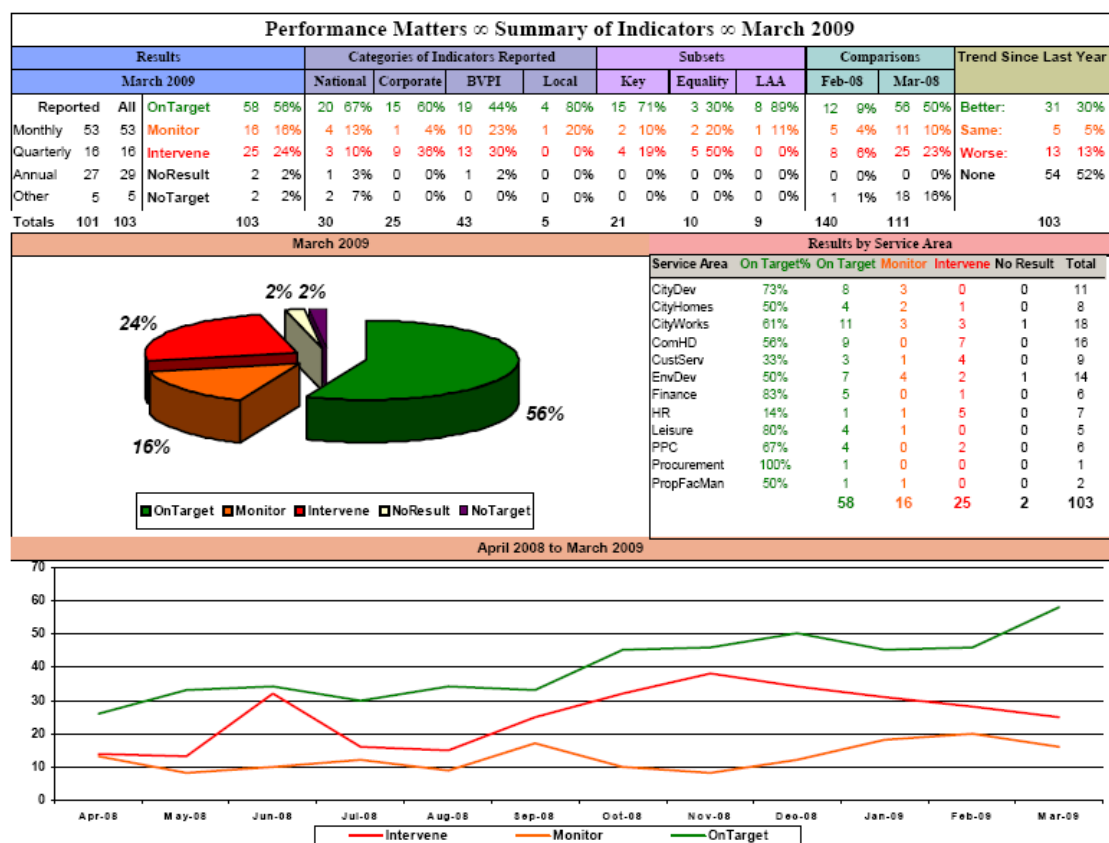
In the last year, the Corporate Procurement Team achieved new procurement savings in excess of £200,000, managed several complex procurements including the purchase of a corporate CRM and HR, Payroll system, shared internal audit contract with Cherwell District Council and competitive dialogue tender leading to a transfer of leisure services to a trust. The team has received funding to set up a district procurement hub to enable sharing of

skills and the achievement of new savings across the four districts. The hub will be managed through the team in Oxford.

8. Performance Management

Like all councils Oxford is obliged by government to report progress against key national priorities (for instance the percentage of waste that is recycled). Detailed definitions as to what should be measured and how it should be measured are published by the Audit Commission on an annual basis. In addition to these national indicators the City Council also reports progress against local priorities as detailed in the Corporate Plan. In 2008/09 we reported progress against 103 key priorities.

8.1 Performance Results 2008/09



Monitoring results, however, is only part of performance management and in 2008/09 a number of new procedures were introduced:

- Performance reports reviewed and improved
- A deadline has been set for the return of performance results and results for all indicators are now requested on a monthly basis (previously many had been reported quarterly/annually)

- Detailed graphs and summaries emailed back to officers responsible for reporting results and heads of service responsible for delivering against targets the day after the deadline has expired
- Performance reports displayed in staff areas and in areas open to the public
- One week after reports have gone to service areas exceptions reports (detailing indicators below target or where no result has been reported) are sent to Directors, this allows Directors to review performance in their directorate almost two weeks before the next board meeting.
- Exception based reports to the Corporate Performance Board to focus on results where targets are not being met
- Where results are below target or where no result has been reported heads of service are asked to provide action plans detailing why we are below target, what actions will be taken and when we expect to be back on target.

These changes are designed raise awareness amongst all staff as to progress against priorities and to ensure that the Corporate Performance Board (attended by the Chief Executive, Directors, Performance Team and Heads of Service) have sufficient, robust and timely information to drive performance against key priorities.

A great deal of work has also been done to ensure that results conform to data quality criteria as defined by the audit commission. Where possible data is captured as part of normal business processes and is used not only to measure performance but also to inform management and strategic decisions. All results are published back to data handlers (responsible for reporting results) and service heads (responsible for delivering against targets) in the form of graphs and textual summaries before results are reported to the performance board. This ensures inaccuracies can be identified at the earliest opportunity and corrected. Where possible the performance system (Corvu) is linked by directly into back office systems such as (Agresso – finance), where this is not possible steps have been taken to ensure that data is collected according to the Collect Once and Use Numerous times principle and as part of normal business processes.

All performance indicators were reviewed 2008/09 to ensure that they were SMART (Stretching, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely), that they were relevant to the local priorities as detailed in the Corporate Plan and that they were measuring outcomes (benefits that residents would recognise) rather than inputs (such as money invested).

In September 2008, for the first time, all performance and financial indicators were compiled into one monthly report “Performance Matters”, which is published on the council’s website following the board meetings each month.

9. Managing our finances

Information to follow