

Oxford City Council

A Sustainability Strategy for Oxford (2011 – 2020)

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Introduction

2. The City Council recognises that the quality of a local environment is a vital ingredient in contributing to the quality of life for residents and visitors to this historic City. It also recognises that by improving the local environment this will make a contribution to related goals, such as improved health, better social cohesion and economic prosperity. This linkage becomes very important when the issue of sustainable living is examined. In common with most cities, Oxford currently has an unsustainable ecological footprint. The City Council recognises that to adjust this footprint to a sustainable level will require a considerable effort not only by its enlightened citizens and environmentally conscious organisations, but also by people and organisations not yet engaged with this challenge.

Purpose of the Strategy

3. This Sustainability Strategy for Oxford brings together within one overarching document, all the Council's existing policies relating to sustainability and sets out a longer term framework to address these issues. This strategy will enable the Council to broaden its scope in dealing with the Council's corporate objectives relating to sustainability and will assist in the delivery of broader objectives for the City as a whole such as those set out in the Low Carbon Oxford Strategy.

Review

4. The City Council's Sustainability Strategy will be in place for the period to 2020. It will be reviewed regularly and updated if the need arises within the period.

Delivery

5. The City Council already has a successful track record in dealing with sustainability issues. A number of the actions taken already have been recognised by external bodies as exemplars of good practice and it is the intention of the Council to continue this approach. The Sustainability Strategy will act as an overarching document which sets out the Council's overall sustainability targets. These will be delivered principally through a series of strategies and related action plans which in turn relate to individual issues. The intention is that these will ultimately include as a minimum:
 - Climate Change
 - Air Quality
 - Waste
 - Water Quality
 - Biodiversity
 - Land Quality

5.1 Other relevant programmes/action plans (both internal to the City Council and resulting from partnership with external organisations). include:

- Asset Management Plan
- Low Carbon Oxford Strategy
- 'Getting our House in Order' (The Carbon Management Plan)
- Local Development Framework including the Sustainability Appraisal
- Oxford Area Flood Partnership Agreement
- Oxfordshire Partnership
- Oxford Strategic Partnership
- Oxfordshire Waste Partnership
- Procurement, Commissioning and Supplier Management Strategy
- Work Place Travel Plan

Governance

6. The additional plans and strategies identified in para 5 will be reported to the Executive in due course.

Performance Context

7. The City Council's Corporate Plan 2011-2014 and the Oxford Sustainable Communities Strategy 2008 – 2012 set targets addressing sustainability issues and are key priorities for the City Council. These plans necessarily have limited timeframes and whilst they are the base from which a start has been made they are too short term to address the longer term issues around climate change and sustainability. This Sustainability Strategy therefore looks beyond the shorter term of these plans.

Climate Change

8. The City Council, in common with expert opinion, recognises climate change as the most significant of the environmental challenges. In view of this, it has prioritised action on climate change and is ensuring that mitigation actions (to reduce carbon emissions) in particular are at the top of the local environmental agenda. There are broadly three different types of activities through which the Council seeks to reduce its carbon footprint;

- (i) those through which it has direct control (e.g. it's own estate),
- (ii) those through which it has some control and
- (iii) those activities over which it has influence.

Related strategies and action plans include the Climate Change Strategy and the Low Emissions Strategy

Targets

Targets in this area to continue to drive the existing programmes and maintain the exemplar reputation of the Council.

- By March 2012 reduce CO₂ emissions from City Council buildings and operations by 28%, compared to 2005/06 and then by at least a further 3% year on year
- By 2017 to have improved the energy efficiency in Council housing by 50%
- To reduce the overall CO₂ emissions in the City by 40% compared to 2005 by 2020
- By 2020 to have ensured a 50% reduction in CO₂ emissions, from the housing stock by using renewable energy schemes.
- By 2020 or earlier all new homes built within the City to meet level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Development.
- By 2020 Oxford will be a Low Carbon City.

Sustainable Energy Use

9. In order to achieve the reductions necessary to reach the immediate target of reducing our CO₂ emissions by 28% by 2012 and continuing to reduce them by at least 3% year on year, the Council will need to become sustainable in its use of energy. This will require utilising a number of complementary approaches. Firstly, the Council will need to reduce the amount of energy it uses by changing behaviours, secondly it will need to make all buildings energy efficient and thirdly it will need to ensure that wherever practical, all remaining energy needs are met from renewable sources. Wherever possible renewable energy will be generated at the point of need.
- 9.1. All City Council buildings are now on a low carbon 'good quality combined heat and power' electricity tariff, and the Council will work with its energy supply companies to look at the installation of renewable energy technology in Council buildings so that by 2017 one Council building and by 2020 two Council buildings will be powered by electricity generated on site. The Council has already used biomass boilers as a way of delivering heat and reducing the use of fossil fuels and will further develop the use of this technology as opportunities arise within the Council's estate. In this respect the Council intends by 2017 to have one, and by 2020 two buildings heated from biomass boilers.

- 9.2. The City Council also intends to work in partnership with the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership to investigate and invest in energy from waste both as an alternative energy source and to realise value from the waste itself. This partnership will look at developing combined heat and power capability for communities in Oxford. (See Managing our Waste).
- 9.3. The City Council is the first Council in the UK to sign a formal agreement with PfR. It intends to continue to investigate how to realise the benefits of onsite renewable energy and is currently working on a pilot scheme to realise the benefits of the Feed In Tariff.

Sustainable Transport

10. In the UK, transport is responsible for around a quarter of the man made greenhouse gas emissions that contribute significantly to climate change. Road traffic has a number of detrimental effects upon the environment including carbon, NOx and particulate emissions, together with noise and vibration pollution. Traffic congestion can reduce air quality and general quality of life as well as impacting negatively upon economic activity. A recent consultation on the UK's future transport system for 2014 and beyond, sets out the need to take full account of transport's wider impact on climate change, health, quality of life and the natural environment.
 - 10.1 Getting around our City should be as environmentally friendly and fuel efficient as possible, thereby making Oxford a cleaner, greener and healthier place to live. In this vein, in conjunction with partners the City Council will also investigate the viability of a rapid transit public transport/tram system for the Oxford area.
 - 10.2 The City Council takes action on air quality both to protect people's health and to protect the natural and built environments. To achieve Low Carbon City status, the City Council recognises it must have regard to the impact of transport. Hence the City Council has put sustainability at the heart of its transport objectives.

Achievements in this area to date include:

- Working towards the introduction of Low Emissions Zone in the City Centre in 2014.
- Ongoing air quality monitoring and measurement.
- Air Quality Action Plan development
- Development of a Low Emissions Strategy
- Adapting our own fleet to 38% now running on a 30% blend of bio-diesel (a low CO₂ / zero sulphur fuel) and a further 32% on LPG/unleaded.
- Implementing an award winning Green Driving programme which was a national winner for the EST 'Fleet Hero Awards.'

- Implementation of the Workplace Travel Plan 2010-2013
- An ambitious programme to introduce electric vehicles (EVs) and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) into the City environment.
- Trials using MINI E vehicles in conjunction with the Technology Strategy Board, South East Economic Development Association, Scottish & Southern Electricity, Oxford Brookes University and Bayerische Motoren Werke, the manufacturer

10.3 Air quality management is one of the most established in the Council's sustainability programme and as such the Council will continue to link air quality action planning with its monitoring and measuring programme to ensure that initiatives are focused on areas which will have the most material impact.

10.4 The City Council will also use its planning powers to encourage more enlightened road layouts in new developments to encourage more sustainable modes of transport such as public transport and bicycles.

Related strategies and action plans:

- Climate Change strategy
- Low Emissions Strategy

Targets

- By 2011 joint working with partners will establish a low emission strategy which will relate to the entire City.
- By 2014 low emission zone enforcement commences.
- By 2015 to achieve a reduction of 25% in the number of miles driven by officers and Councillors on Council business and operations (measured against mileage driven in 2009/10)
- By 2017 to have increased the number of cycle miles ridden on Council business by 100% (measured by miles ridden in 2010).
- By 2017 there will be a co-ordinated Green Travel Plan for the City in its entirety.

Sustainable Business

11. The City Council understands the desirability and the benefits that flow to the local community from a successful and financially sustainable local business economy. It is sometimes less well recognised that having a successful and environmentally sustainable local business economy brings many gains. The City is renowned for being an international business hub with a number of international businesses located within the City environment. Equally, there are many more small and medium enterprises that support those international businesses and serve the local economy. The City also has an internationally renowned academic sector where leading edge research

into technologies that will help mitigate the effects of climate change and carry out adaptation to it, is being undertaken.

- 11.1 Business has a crucial role to play in helping the City realise its ambitions to achieve Low Carbon City status. Whilst the large international businesses have the means to understand their impact on the environment and to reduce their adverse effects, many smaller enterprises find it difficult to understand and quantify their impact and to address these effects.
- 11.2 The City Council in recognising its leadership responsibilities in tackling climate change and improving sustainability for all, will seek to help those businesses to mitigate the effects of their impact on the local environment. This will involve sharing methodologies and good practice with them to reduce their impact. In particular the Council will share with business the outcomes it has been able to achieve through the use of BREEAM and similar methodologies. The Council will aim to identify the sources of grant funding that will assist businesses to switch over to green technology, to enable them to reduce their own carbon footprint.
- 11.3 The Council will share the lessons learned from green purchasing (see Sustainable Procurement), in order to assist business progressively reduce environmental impact - save money, thereby helping the businesses be more sustainable. The Council will support the local business community by sourcing goods and services locally wherever possible.
- 11.4 The Council will expand its Low Carbon Oxford initiative to include more local small and medium enterprises, will agree priorities together and will work to achieve the Council's vision for the City. It will seek to deliver the Low Carbon Oxford strategy using mechanisms such as the Low Carbon Hub and existing community networks, it will lead the governance and assurance, collaboration and programme progression to ensure that the people of Oxford benefit directly from the programme.

Sustainable Procurement

12. The City Council spends over £53 million each year on commissioning services, goods and works and recognises its responsibility to ensure that all purchasing is undertaken in a way that minimises negative environmental and social / ethical impact.
 - 12.1 Buying 'green' not only contributes to improving the Councils environmental performance, but also drives greater sustainability and innovation within the market place. There can also be significant cost savings as modern green products are in most cases more energy efficient and cost less on a 'whole life cycle cost basis'.

- 12.2 The City Council is committed to managing its supply chain as set out in 'The Procurement, Commissioning and Supplier Management Strategy' (2010-2014), so as to in particular:
- Reduce the consumption of scarce natural resources, including fossil fuels, water and tropical timber
 - Reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and other environmental pollutants
 - Reduce packing at source
 - Reduce residual waste
 - Reduce landscape degradation and impact upon wildlife habitat
 - Reduce traffic congestion
 - Reduce workforce exploitation
- 12.3 In order to develop a sustainable local economy, the City Council will purchase goods and services locally wherever possible. The Council's Procurement, Commissioning and Supplier Management Strategy requires suppliers to provide evidence of their sustainability policies and the City Council also looks at whole life costing details including the cost of disposal if appropriate, when making its purchasing decisions. The City Council will particularly look at the energy efficiency rating of all equipment, as part of its purchasing decisions. When seeking tenders for the design and construction of any new Council building, it will expect to see designs that meet best practice in the context of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- 12.4 The City Council will look to work with its partners and stakeholders to share good practice in relation to procurement wherever possible. Since April 2009, the City Council has hosted the shared procurement hub for Oxfordshire District Councils and the achievements of this grouping have been recognised and commended by Improvement and Efficiency South East (IESE).

Water Consumption

13. Climate change will bring about changes in rainfall within general warmer drier summers, and wetter warmer winters. Rainfall may occur in heavier downpours which could lead to more flooding and to droughts. It is projected that the amount of water in rivers and ground water reserves will decrease over time which could lead to shortfalls in water supply. Similarly, losses in the supply system could also have a material effect upon water availability. By actively reducing water use the City Council will place less demand on decreasing resources and will reduce energy usage and carbon emissions - since water supply and treatment processes consume energy. The Council recognises the need to ensure that the use of water is at sustainable levels, encourage water conservation.

- 13.1 The Council will ensure that the water it uses is maintained at the levels of usage that were measured in 2008/09 (as the benchmark) and thereafter will progressively reduce consumption by 3% per annum from 2010/11.
- 13.2 The City Council will wherever practicable use the advice contained within the BREEAM methodology to set best practice within its existing use of water within Council buildings. Where buildings fail to meet the benchmarks of best practice, then actions will be implemented to adopt best practice by 2012 by building type. New water demands for Council operations will be balanced by savings elsewhere in the estate and operations, e.g., from harvested rainwater, either on the demand site or elsewhere. Street cleansing operations will be carried out using harvested rainwater, or where impracticable, will be balanced out by rainwater savings made elsewhere on the estate.
- 13.3 The Council recognises the role that the Development Control process has to play in promoting good practice in terms of new developments. Through the Local Development Framework and in particular the Sustainability Appraisal of the Oxford Core Strategy, it will ensure that all new homes have regard to the Code for Sustainable Homes. All new commercial property will also be encouraged to meet the best practice standards as laid down in the BREEAM methodology

Flooding

14. In terms of flood management, the City Council chairs the Oxford Area Flood Partnership which works on flood risk management much of which is related to adaptation requirements. Through the work with the partners, the Council is driving forward practical measures that will help reduce the risk and impacts of low order flooding and improve flood resilience. The Council has been commended for this model which has been endorsed by Sir Michael Pitt's report 'Learning Lessons from the 2007 Floods'.
 - 14.1 The City Council will share this practice in rainwater harvesting with the public, so that it can learn from good practice and implement it in a domestic setting. The City Council will investigate and implement where practicable sustainable urban drainage schemes within its own properties by 2017, to reduce the risk of flooding of sites and adjoining land. The Council will share this information with the public through its 'Oxford is my World' website. Also by March 2017, the City Council will achieve a reduction of 30% in the use of mains water in Council buildings when measured against the 2008/09 base.

Targets

- The Council will ensure that the water it uses is maintained at the levels of usage that were measured in 2008/09 (as the benchmark) and thereafter to progressively reduce consumption by 3% per annum from 2010/11.
- Where buildings fail to meet the benchmarks of best practice, actions will be implemented to adopt best practice by 2012 by building type.
- The City Council will investigate and implement where practicable sustainable urban drainage schemes within its own properties by 2017, to reduce the risk of flooding of sites and adjoining land.
- By March 2017, the City Council will achieve a reduction of 30% in the use of mains water in Council buildings when measured against the 2008/09 base.

Land Quality

15. The City Council takes positive steps to address all forms of pollution involving land including the public realm. The main causes of pollution are industrial processes, waste / litter and dog fouling.
- 15.1 Potentially contaminated land occurs within the City both in the Council's estate and about the wider City area. The majority of contamination is either the product of earlier industrial use or results from the importation of spoil / waste to raise local land levels. The City Council has established a detailed database of potential sites and has graded them according to risk. High risk sites have been remediated and lower risk sites are dealt with through the development control processes.
- 15.2 The dumping of waste including fly tipping and dog fouling is a matter of local public concern and through the Council's Cleaner Greener programme such events are investigated and enforcement action taken wherever possible.

Managing Our Waste

- 16.0 The City Council wants the removal of waste to landfill or traditional mass burn incineration plants, to become a thing of the past. This will be achieved by having regard to the waste hierarchy. The City Council will cut back the amount of waste generated, encourage the use of products rather than throwing away and will recycle and compost waste as far as possible. The City Council will also seek to achieve appropriate treatments for any residual waste that cannot be recycled. The Council recognises that waste is a resource with a value.

- 16.1 The City Council, in conjunction with the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership, has set a long term goal of reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill to zero by 2025. This will require action by all sections of society, including business, to radically rethink the ways that waste is generated and disposed. The Oxfordshire Waste Partnership has agreed targets for the achievement of combined waste recycling and composting of at least 40% of household waste by 2010 and 45% of household waste by 2015.
- 16.2 Residents of Oxford have reminded the Council of how important a priority recycling is for them, so the Council will therefore continue to work with communities on recycling so that by 2020 at least 55% of all household waste generated is recycled or composted.
- 16.3 The Council will work with all of its communities to look at ways of minimising the municipal waste currently generated by households so that by 2020, taking into account the recycling improvements, the average annual amount of residual waste is reduced from approximately 353kg to 300kg or less per household.
- 16.4 The City Council will also work with businesses in the City to help them achieve waste reduction and recycling improvements.
- 16.5 The City Council also has to tackle the waste it generates from its own operations. It is reducing the amount it produces and increasing the amount that is recycled or composted. The Council has set the target that by March 2012, 50% of the waste generated by the City Council's offices will be recycled. This will be increased to 60% by March 2015 and 80% by March 2020.
- 16.6 The Council will also investigate whether or not any of its waste can be reused or used to generate heat or power and will work with the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership to investigate and invest in energy from waste as an alternative energy source - to realise value from the waste. The partnership will look at developing combined heat and power capability for communities in Oxford.
- 16.7 The City Council will also look with business and the third sector at ways in which materials can be reused by all sectors of the community.

Targets

- The City Council will work together with the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership to deliver our shared targets for waste minimisation and recycling.
- The City Council will work with communities on recycling so that by 2020, 55% of all household waste generated is recycled or composted.
- By 2020, taking into account the recycling improvements, the average amount of residual waste will be reduced from 353kg to 300kg per household.
- By March 2012, 50% of the waste generated by the City Council's offices will be recycled. This will be increased to 60% by 2015 and 80% by 2020.

New & Emerging Areas.

- 17.1 In addition to applying sound principles of environmental management, this strategy will build on the reputation of the Council in areas such as climate change and seek to develop it in new and emerging areas. By expanding the scope of issues managed, as part of the sustainability strategy, the Council will seek to tackle key barriers to sustainable development such as understanding tradeoffs between relevant issues and ensuring that materiality is addressed.

JSC/MG
Nov 2011

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