

Chief Executive

The Oxford Plan

Oxford City Council's Corporate Plan 2005/2008

www.oxford.gov.uk



Foreword

This document sets out Oxford City Council's objectives and priorities for 2005 to 2008 based on public priorities, local and central government priorities and audit and inspection advice. It brings together the Council's ambitions for Oxford and for the Council as an organisation. It also brings together and prioritises the higher level aims from within other key documents:

- Our Vision
- Our Improvement Plan
- Our Community Strategy

We want the Oxford Plan to provide one central access point to the plans of the Council and act as an introduction to them for the public, our stakeholders and every member of our staff. The plan also provides the basis for the rest of our business planning and budget process. The key partner document to this plan is the Budget Book. The Budget Book provides details of the resources allocated to deliver the statutory duties of the Council and the priorities outlined in this plan and includes the detailed Business Unit business plans.

To help minimise the number of planning documents that we have, the Oxford Plan will also become our Best Value Performance Plan for 2005/2006 by the addition of performance data for 2004/2005 as soon as it becomes available in June 2005.

The Oxford Plan for 2005-2008 is our first corporate plan and the process of drafting it has itself proved to be a learning opportunity for the organisation. In future years we intend to build on what we have learned from this experience, developing our business planning processes to establish a robust, timely review of our direction and performance and building an open structure around which we can review the Oxford Plan next year and in years to come.



Building Pride in Our City

We believe that democratic local government can and should make a positive difference to people's lives. We want to work with all our communities to build a city that all our people can be proud of.

The Oxford Plan

	Contents	Page
Part One	Statement by the Leader of the Council	1
Part Two	Your City, Your Council – How it works	2
Part Three	Your Priorities, Our Priorities – Vision into action	15
Appendix 1	Key Improvement Activities 2005-2008	43
Appendix 2	Best Value Performance Indicator Tables. (Performance Results for 2004/2005 will be published by 30 July 2005)	49
Appendix 3	Glossary	50
Appendix 4	Council policy and strategy documents	56

1.0 A Statement by the Leader of the Council

The city of Oxford is a dynamic and exciting place to live and work and the Council is working hard to ensure it plays its part in creating a lively, clean and safe city that meets the needs of all citizens – and particularly those who have previously been excluded from city life.

Disappointingly, we were deemed to be a ‘weak’ Council by the Audit Commission’s Comprehensive Performance Assessment earlier this year. The inspection helped us to realise we have not always focused as much as we should on the needs of our residents and the customers of our services. For example, our satisfaction survey in October 2003 showed we had increased resident satisfaction by only two percentage points (though other district Councils on average, witnessed a reduction of 10% during the same period).

We recognise we have still a long way to go and all elected members, irrespective of political party, are determined to put every effort into improving our services and making sure we prioritise those which our citizens tell us are the most important. Our determination is shown in our commitment to do all we can to make sure we move up the Audit Commission’s Comprehensive Performance Assessment scale to ‘fair’ and ‘good’ over the next two years with our ultimate aim being to be seen as an ‘excellent’ Council of which all the people living and working in the city can feel proud.

This, our first corporate plan, therefore describes our priorities for the next three years and sets the scene for the future. We have listened to what the people of Oxford have told us and we have set our objectives and our actions in ways we think and hope will meet these aspirations.

We want to work in close partnership with individuals, faith and voluntary groups, businesses, health, police, the ambulance and fire services, the universities and colleges and the County Council to deliver our priorities.

We hope you will work with us to make this an even greater city. If you have any comments on this plan we welcome your contribution. You can either write to me at the Town Hall or email us at improvement@oxford.gov.uk.

Alex Hollingsworth, Leader of the Council

2.0 Your City, Your Council – How it works

2.1 Your City

Oxford City Council is a district Council covering only 17.6 square miles. It is the county town of Oxfordshire and has historic assets of international significance. It is a world-class educational centre, an international business hub, a global tourist destination and a world-renowned centre for medical science.

Few cities contain more magnificent buildings, gardens and open spaces within such a small area. Watercourses, including the River Thames or Isis, add to the attraction of the city and provide ecological value and opportunities for leisure. This is all part of the distinctive character of Oxford. It is an affluent city but contains pockets of severe deprivation. Oxford is, however, undergoing evolutionary change to deliver urban regeneration, such as the work of East Oxford Action and the West End Renaissance programme, which will help unlock the city's economic potential.

During recent consultation the people of Oxford told us they feel a strong sense of community and of the city's history and identity. Across all ages, people feel the city is cosmopolitan, are proud of the universities, our parks and open spaces and generally feel the city is comfortable and safe.

2.2 What your Council does

In partnership with other agencies (public, private and voluntary) we provide a wide range of services for our 134,600 residents, the 100,000 people who work in Oxford and the additional 7.6 million people who visit the city every year.

As a city within a shire county, Oxford has two tiers of council: Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council, each with different responsibilities.

Services provided by Oxford City Council include:

- Local planning
- Housing
- Environmental Health
- Electoral Registration
- Refuse collection
- Provision of leisure facilities
- Management of public parks
- Management of markets
- Events such as fairs
- Provision of Tourist Information
- Management of cemeteries
- Collection of Council Tax
- Collection, on behalf of central government, of Business Rates

Services provided by Oxfordshire County Council include:

- Schools
- Social services
- Fire service
- Roads
- Libraries and museums
- Trading standards
- Transport planning
- Waste disposal
- Planning and monitoring land use

2.3 Funding Council Services

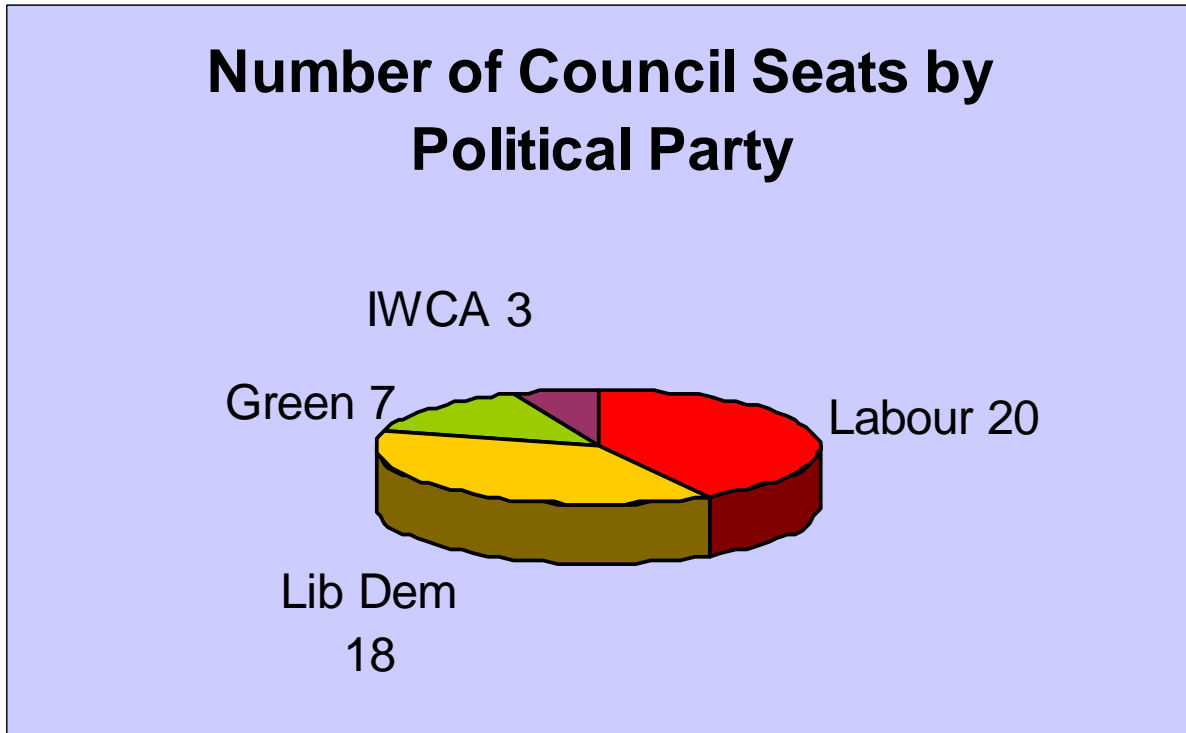
Oxford City Council spends over £113 million a year providing services. Some of this we receive in subsidies and grants from central government and some through the fees, charges and rents we levy, but £9 million has to be funded locally from a share of the Council Tax. Not all of the Council Tax comes to us: most goes to the County Council and some to Thames Valley Police. A significant increase in the funding required for County and police services has resulted in a high rate of increase to Council Tax in Oxford over the last few years. To help pay for the services the people of Oxford receive from the City Council we get only 17p of every pound of Council Tax we collect. For a band D Council Tax payer, that came to £215 of a £1,261 bill for 2004/2005, or £17.92 per month.

2.4 Representing the people of Oxford – political structure of the Council

The Council is composed of 48 councillors representing the 24 wards that make up our city. Every two years half the Council seats come up for election. Councillors are democratically elected by residents of their ward and, whilst the overriding duty of councillors is to the whole community, they have a special duty to those who live in the ward they represent. The elected Council also represents the interests of the people of Oxford to the County Council, the South East Region government office and to national government. Councillors are responsible for setting the policies and priorities of the council and have made a commitment to listen carefully to all points of view in the city and to defend the rights of Oxford citizens.

Following the 2004 local elections, the Council's political makeup is as shown in Figure 1 on the following page.

Figure 1 – Political representation of Oxford City Council as at November 2004



¹ IWCA is the Independent Working Class Association

Make sure you can vote for the Councillor you want.

Did you know that you can now register to vote at any time of the year? We still carry out a citywide registration process every autumn but if you miss this or change address you can contact us at any time to make sure that you get a voting card for elections.

Too busy to get to the polling station? Register to vote by post.

If it would be easier for you to vote by post let us know.

Find out more:

- Visit our website at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/council/community-54.cfm>
- E-mail us at elections@oxford.gov.uk.
- Phone 01865 249811 and asking for the Electoral Registration Office.

2.4.1 The Decision-Making Structures of the Council

The Council's decision-making structures are based on four key elements supported by additional committees charged with making decisions on some specific issues, such as the Licensing Committee. There are also advisory boards such as the Improvement Board and the Housing Advisory Board.

The four main elements in the decision-making structures are:

- **Full Council** which is made up of all the elected members of the Council and it decides on policies, priorities and budgets and elects the Executive Board members.
- The **Executive Board** which is a cabinet of councillors and a leader who aims to provide clear and accountable leadership.
- Six **Area Committees** with some devolved powers and budgets providing focus on community issues.
- **Scrutiny Committees** which examine and review the decision-making of the Council.

Figure 2 – The decision-making structure of Oxford City Council



Want to know who your Councillors are and how to contact them?

Details of all your councillors, the above boards and committees and their roles can be found as follows:

- Visit our website at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/council/who-represents.cfm>
- E-mail jskip@oxford.gov.uk.
- Phone 01865 249811 and asking for Committee Services.

2.4.2 More about the Executive Board

The Executive is the decision-making body of the Council. Whilst the majority of its members are from the Labour Party, this being the political party with the largest number of seats on the Council, there are two councillors from opposition parties.

Figure 3 – The members of the Executive Board as at November 2004

Member	Portfolio
Alex Hollingsworth (Chair)	Financial Stability and Asset Management
Alan Armitage	Liberal Democrat Opposition
Bill Baker	Corporate Governance and Procurement
Susan Brown	Crime and Community Safety
Maureen Christian	Culture, Events and Tourism
Mary Clarkson	Local Environment
Dan Paskins	Social Inclusion
Craig Simmons	Green Opposition
John Tanner	Performance and Service Quality
Ed Turner	Strategic Planning, Housing and Economic Development

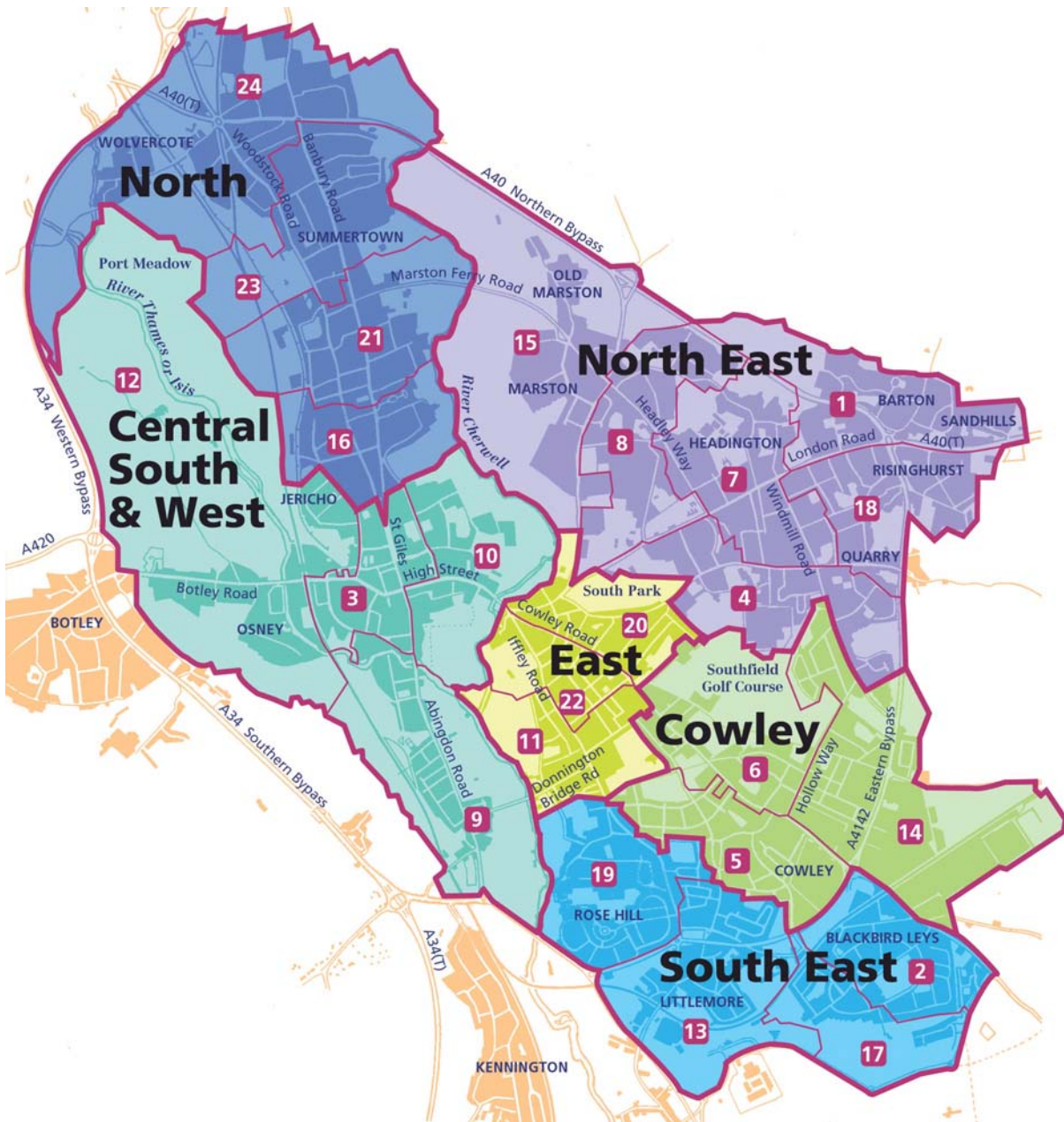
2.4.3 More about Area Committees

Since November 2001 Area Committees have been meeting on a regular monthly basis. There are six Area Committees each covering several wards of the city as shown in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4 – The Area Committees for each Ward

Area Committee	Name of Chair	Wards Represented
North	Jim Campbell	Summertown (23), Wolvercote (24), St. Margaret's (21) and North (16)
North East	Dee Sinclair	Marston (15), Headington Hill & Northway (8), Headington (7), Barton & Sandhills (1), Quarry & Risinghurst (18) and Churchill (4).
East	Craig Simmons	St. Clement's (20), St. Mary's (22) and Iffley Fields (11)
South East	Gill Sanders	Rose Hill & Iffley (19), Littlemore (13), Blackbird Leys (2) and Northfield Brook (17)
Central, South & West	Paul Sargent	Jericho & Osney (12), Carfax (3), Holywell (10) and Hinksey Park (9)
Cowley	Bryan Keen	Cowley Marsh (6), Lye Valley (14) and Cowley (5)

Figure 5: Political wards within Oxford City grouped by Area Committee



Each Area Committee is made up of the ward councillors for its area. The county councillors for the area and parish Council representatives are also members but on a non-voting basis. Partnerships are being developed with the police and the Oxford City Primary Care Trust who can choose to be present at the Area Committees too. Each Area Committee appoints its own Chair and Vice-Chair and is supported by an Area Co-ordinator.

The Area Committees form part of Oxford City Council's democratic structure and are responsible for the following services in their areas:

- Planning applications
- Street cleaning
- Abandoned vehicles
- Public toilets
- Parks, play areas and countryside/green spaces
- Off-street car parking
- Dog wardens
- Community centres
- Ditches and streams

Each area is developing an Area Plan to shape and improve services in their area.

When and where does your Area Committee meet?

Find out which is your area committee, when and where it meets and more about how to have your concerns heard::

- Visit our website at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/council/area-committees.cfm>
- Phone 01865 249811 and asking for Area Committee Co-ordinators

2.4.4 More about Scrutiny Committees

The City Council has five Scrutiny Committees. These hold the Executive Board to account by reviewing their decisions, reviewing the policies of the Council and helping develop emerging policies.

Each committee has nine councillors. To avoid any conflict of interest none of these councillors can be members of the Executive Board. Committee members are drawn from the political parties that make up the full Council.

There are 5 scrutiny committees that focus on different aspects of the Council's work:

- Finance
- Housing
- Community
- Environment
- Health

The meetings are open to the public. Anyone attending may address the committees, either on an item already on the agenda or on any other matter within the remit of that particular committee.

2.4.5 The Council's Constitution

Oxford City Council agreed a new constitution in 2001 which has recently been revised and updated. This sets out procedures for how the Council operates and how decisions are made to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by law, while others are chosen by the Council.

The constitution is grouped into sixteen parts or 'Articles'. These set out the rules governing the Council's business. More detailed procedures and codes of practice are provided in separate rules and protocols.

Want to know more about the constitution?

The constitution and attached rules and protocols can be obtained as follows:

- Visit our website at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/council/constitution.cfm>
- Phone 01865 249811 and ask for Democratic Services Team.

2.4.6 Details of Council Meetings

The Council publishes details of the dates for meetings for the forthcoming four months, including information on the key decisions expected to be made. Nearer the date of the meeting, the agenda is published. The Council also publishes a record of what was discussed and the decisions taken.

Want to know more about what is happening at Council meetings?

All meetings that form part of the Council's decision-making process are open to the public. You are entitled to attend any of them that you wish to. You may even be entitled to speak at the meeting. Find out more:

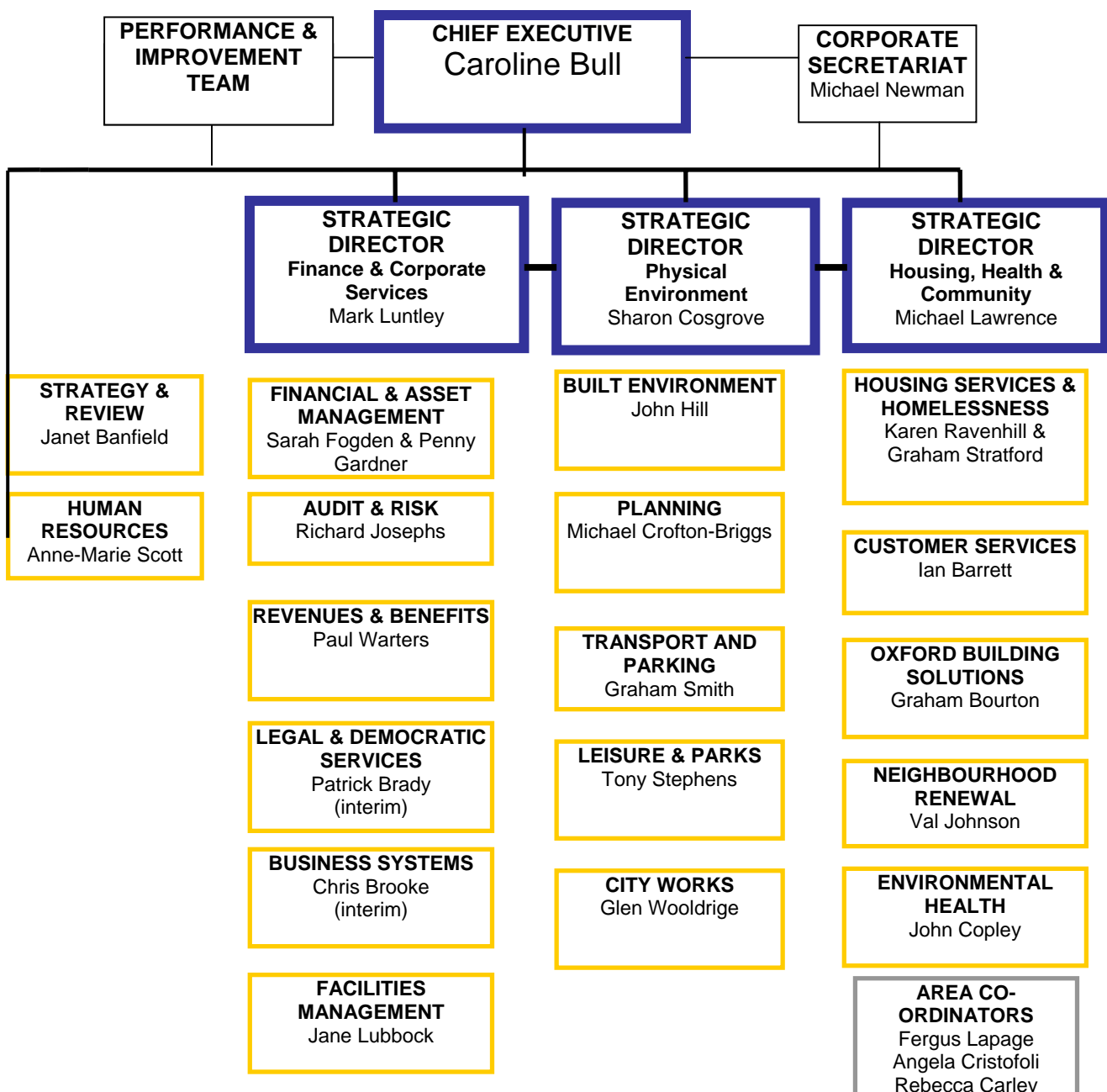
- Visit our website at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/council/meeting-diary.cfm>
- Phone 01865 249811 and asking for Democratic Services Team.
- Copies of agendas and minutes can also be found at libraries, the Town Hall, Local Services Shops and a range of community organisations.

2.5 Delivering Services to the people of Oxford – officer structure of the Council

As described above, elected councillors ('members') set the policies and priorities of the Council; Council officers are charged with carrying them out. In total we have 1400 staff bringing professional knowledge and expertise to advise councillors and working hard to deliver Council services to the people of Oxford.

The work of the Council is currently divided into eighteen different service areas that we call Business Units. Each unit has a Business Manager, sixteen of whom report to one of the three Strategic Directors and two directly to the Chief Executive. The following diagram shows you who these people are and what they are responsible for managing. Further details of the work of each Business Unit and what it aims to do to achieve the Council's vision for Oxford can be found in the Council Budget Book 2005/2008.

Figure 6 – Oxford City Council's Senior Officer Structure



3.0 Your Priorities, Our Priorities – Vision into Action.

3.1 Oxford's Community Strategy

The Council works in partnership with other organisations delivering services in the area such as the County Council, Thames Valley Police, Oxford Primary Care Trust, both universities and OX1 (the city centre management company). These organisations and others form the Oxford Strategic Partnership. Working together we can make a greater difference to the lives of the people of Oxford. To help all the organisations in the Oxford Strategic Partnership work together we have agreed on a Community Strategy for Oxford. Our common goals are based on a wide range of research conducted by the partnership with residents and local communities. These goals are grouped into five themes:

- **A vibrant and inclusive economy**
- **Safer communities**
- **A better living environment**
- **Opportunities for life**
- **Active and healthy communities**

Oxford City Council's plans for Oxford have influenced the content of the Community Strategy, as have the plans of other members of the partnership. This is a two-way process and the Community Strategy has also influenced our plans. Some aspects, more than others, of the Community Strategy are influenced by what Oxford City Council does: for example, housing issues are a key area of responsibility for Oxford City Council. Other aspects are more strongly influenced by the work of other organisations in the partnership, for example Oxford City Primary Care Trust encouraging healthy lifestyles. But, whatever influence our work has, we want to make sure that we are working towards the same aims. The Community Strategy therefore plays an important role in how Oxford City Council plans and prioritises its work.

Like to know more about the Oxford Strategic Partnership?

You can find out more about the strategic partnership by visiting the website, <http://www.oxfordpartnership.org.uk/>

Like to see a copy of the Community Strategy?

Phone us on 01865 249811 and ask for our Strategy and Review Team

3.2 The Council's Vision Statement

In 2002 the Council agreed the following Vision Statement:



Building Pride in Our City

We believe that democratic local government can and should make a positive difference to people's lives. We want to work with all our communities to build a city that all our people can be proud of.

The Council has agreed to review the vision statement during 2005/2006 in order to make sure we are sensitive to the changing needs and priorities of the people of Oxford. We will also ensure that any updated vision reflects changes agreed to our Community Strategy when it is reviewed in 2005.

Want to know more about our vision for Oxford?

- Visit our website at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/council/vision.cfm>
- Phone us on 01865 249811 and ask for our Media and Communications Team

We intend to achieve our vision by working with others to deliver shared goals and improve the Council's performance. We recognise we will only be successful if we:

- Have well trained staff who feel valued and are motivated
- Have sound financial management
- Aspire to improve whilst accepting that we must prioritise
- Are open and responsive to our customers' needs.

We have developed seven priorities based on our consultation with the people of Oxford. People told us their priorities were:

- Housing
- Safety
- Environment
- Prosperity
- Consultation
- Leisure
- Transport

3.3 What type of organisation do we want to be?

The Council recently asked central government for money from their Capacity Building Fund to help us become the type of organisation we want to be. In asking for this help we considered what our values might be to help deliver our priorities. Oxford City Council is determined to be an organisation where the people of Oxford and our staff are treated fairly. We aspire to make our services accessible to all and to offer staff equal opportunity to succeed and develop. The values for the culture of the organisation as outlined in our Capacity Building Fund bid are shown below; however, these are initial thoughts and our organisational values are currently being developed throughout the Council:

Our ambition is to transform the culture of Oxford City Council by developing the skills, behaviours and capacity of our councillors and staff and to become an organisation where:

- The customer is the focus of service delivery
- Staff are empowered to act within a clear governance framework
- We enable flexibility and creativity in our thinking and our actions
- We are business-like in the way we set our policy and financial framework and the way we procure our goods and services
- We work closely in partnership with others to ensure the needs of our citizens are met
- We look forward and outward and learn from others

3.4 Deciding on priorities

We recognise we cannot change everything at once and that we have to decide what is most important and what we will do first by agreeing on priorities. Our first priorities must always be making sure we provide those services for which we have a legal obligation, such as providing housing and dealing with Council Tax Benefit claims. But we also aim to make sure our other priorities reflect those of the people of Oxford. To help us do this we carry out research through surveys and consultation. We survey users of particular services and every three years carry out a general satisfaction survey. For specific projects, we also conduct more in-depth research: for example, through Talkback, our panel of residents.

Our 2003 customer survey helped us to identify what the people of Oxford would most like to change and this helped us develop our improvement plan, which is part of this Oxford Plan. In September 2004 we asked citizens what they thought our budget priorities should be. This Oxford Plan also reflects the results of that consultation.

Want to find out more about consultation?

Examples of some of the consultation work that has influenced the priorities in this plan include Budget Consultation in September 2004, Best Value Performance Indicator Surveys 2003/2004, and the Talkback Panel and Recruitment Survey in February 2004. To access more information on consultation:

- Visit our website at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/council/consultation-vision.cfm>
- Phone 01865 249811 and asking for our Consultation Officer
- E-mail consultation@oxford.gov.uk

3.5 Linking Priorities to Plans

One of the ways to make sure we can deliver services efficiently and stay focused on what we must do better is to set and agree our priorities not just in consultation with the public but also with other public service organisations and businesses in the area. Our agreed priorities are set out in several key documents. These key documents are:

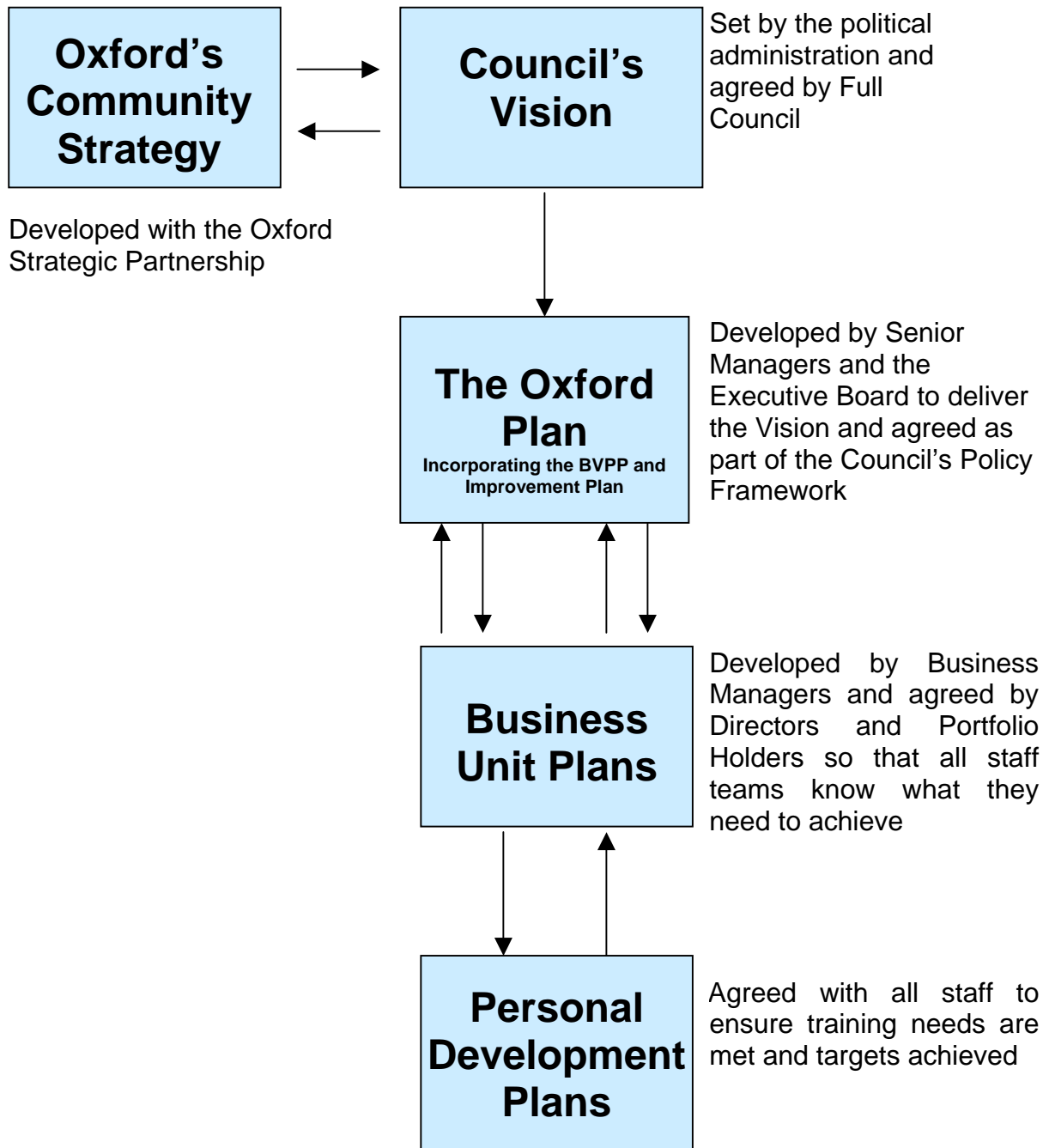
- **Oxford's Community Strategy** – this contains the objectives and priorities that we have agreed for the area in partnership with other organisations in the city.
- **The Oxford Plan** – this is the document you are reading; it is an annually-reviewed three-year plan setting out the objectives and priorities for Oxford City Council based on our statutory duties, public priorities, local and central government priorities and audit and inspection advice. Sometimes we need to provide more details about how we are going to approach service delivery either corporately or in a specific service area. These additional details are contained in the supporting policies and strategies of the Council. These are listed in Appendix 4 and further details of which can be found on our website or from our Strategy and Review Business Unit.
- **Business Plans** – each of our service areas or Business Units produces an annually-reviewed three-year business unit plan. This gives more detailed information on what the Business Unit is setting out to do in the coming years, how much it will cost and whether goals for the previous year have been achieved. The objectives of these Business Plans are based on the statutory duties of the Council and the Council's priorities as set out in the Oxford Plan.
- **Area Plans** – plans based on local areas are being developed and, once approved, will also be integrated into the planning process of the Council.
- **Personal Development Plans** – as a Council it is only through our staff that we can achieve what we set out to do. We evaluate how well we are all performing to see how we might do even better the next year. We do this to make sure we give staff the training they need to succeed and we agree a personal development plan for every staff member, every year. The PDP is based on the skills each individual needs to do their job and work towards achieving the Council's objectives.

All these documents help us translate our Vision Statement into practical plans of action for Oxford. In order to deliver improvements to services and to the way we work all these plans must flow together. This is a two-way process; we monitor our performance at every level and feed this information back into the business planning process as we seek to continually improve. We recognise and support best practice and we also learn from our mistakes by evaluating our progress. In this way we intend to improve the quality and efficiency of the services we deliver.

The following diagram illustrates how the Council's key planning documents relate to our Vision Statement and to each other to form the business planning and performance management framework.

The rest of this document outlines the progress made so far and our objectives for the future for each of our improvement priorities.

Components of the Business Planning Framework



3.6 Plans into action

We have our priorities, as agreed through public consultation on the vision and the Community Strategy, to guide what we do. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment carried out in February 2004 by the Audit Commission has also guided us. Unlike all previous inspections of the Council this assessment looks not just at the services we provide but also how we go about our business. The report told us that whilst we are making significant improvements in some areas, standards of service are patchy and we need to make substantial further improvements to how we work and prioritise. As a result of this the Council developed a set of priorities for improvement. This was agreed by the Council and published in our Best Value Performance Plan in July 2004. Since then the plan has been refined and refocused. We now have two key aims: improving services and transforming the way we work. These are linked to the vision with an underlying group of key objectives and supporting set of actions.

- **Improving services** is a key aim of the Council as our very reason for being here is to provide services to the people of Oxford. We want the services we provide to be efficiently-run, good quality services that meet the needs of our citizens.
- **Transforming the way we work** is a key aim because we know that people expect the services they receive to be delivered efficiently, without waste. To ensure that we can do this we need to look at how we go about our business and make sure our staff, our processes and our systems co-ordinate, have focus and are the best they can be.

In 2004/2005 we produced our first Improvement Plan in which we focused on some key transformational activities and those actions we believed we could and should achieve as rapidly as possible. For the coming three years there are further improvement activities that we intend to undertake and these are outlined in Appendix 1.

We have made considerable improvements in our performance during 2004/2005 and we intend to sustain these. These, and some of the key improvement actions on which we will focus in the coming three years, are explained in more detail in the following section:

- The diagram on the following page illustrates how the aims and objectives within our Improvement Plan link to the Council's vision.
- Sections 3.6.1 to 3.6.5 deal with service-based areas targeted for improvement.
- Sections 3.6.6 to 3.6.10 deal with internal processes within the council that have been targeted for improvement in order to aid overall service improvements.
- Section 3.7 describes how we will monitor and report our performance against these targets.

Our Budget Book includes details of the business of all units of the Council, many of which are recognised by the public and external inspection as providing a good quality of service. Those services that are already considered higher quality may not be a priority for improvement activity but we aim to maintain these and make further improvements to them where we can.

OUR VISION

**Improving
Performance**

&

**Working With
Others
To Deliver
Shared Goals**



LINKAGE WITH
IMPROVEMENT
PLAN AIMS

Improving Services

**Transforming
the Way We Work
& Building Capacity**

OUR IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

Increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in all sectors (3.6.1)

Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (3.6.2)

Reduce poverty and social exclusion (3.6.3)

Further develop and implement the Council's Equality Policy (3.6.4)

Improve the quality of our environment (3.6.5)

Embed Performance Management and effective governance across the Council (3.6.6)

Build capacity by investing in our staff and Councillors (3.6.7)

Enhance customer focus (3.6.8)

Develop in partnership a long-term vision for the city on which to base future plans (3.6.9)

Continue to improve financial capacity and improve financial performance (3.6.10)

3.6.1 Improving Services – Increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in all sectors.

This priority for improvement links to:

- The Council's strategic priority to provide more affordable housing.
- The Community Strategy objective to improve the supply and condition of affordable housing in Oxford, part of its theme for a better living environment.

Oxford City Council's role as landlord is one of our major functions. We spend £40 million on social housing and homelessness every year. House prices and rents in Oxford are amongst the highest in the country outside London. Indeed, housing costs in Oxford often exceed those in the capital.

High housing costs can threaten the sustainability of communities and result in the break-up of extended families. They also impact on the cost of delivering public services as they contribute to the difficulties public services have in recruiting and retaining staff. In addition to the pressures on general housing the city has a greater challenge in dealing with homelessness; the scale of our challenge is in fact similar to that faced by the centres of large conurbations when, despite our city status, we are in character more akin to a large market town. During recent budget consultation one of the findings was that there was consensus amongst all age groups of people that affordable housing was a major issue for the city.

We have:

- Provided 150 new social housing units during 2004/2005*
- Consulted with Oxford Tenants Panel on repairs and redecoration policy. The panel accepted that the current policy was fair, simple and affordable given the Council's budgetary constraint
- Achieved our target for 2005 to increase the proportion of local authority homes that meet government decent homes standard from 49% to over 61.7%*
- Achieved our target to increase the level of rent collected in housing from 94% to over 96.9%.* At September 2004 this amounted to a reduction in arrears of over £400,000
- A tenant satisfaction survey is underway. Final data are not yet available but initial findings suggest that we have not succeeded in increasing overall satisfaction with our landlord services. Further work in 2005/2006 will determine the causes of dissatisfaction so that we can improve satisfaction.

*(*outcomes expected by March 2005)*

We will:

- Encourage additional housing of all kinds, to meet current and future needs, in central Oxfordshire, both on existing brownfield sites and on an urban extension as part of a revised and enduring greenbelt around Oxford
- Carry out a Registered Social Landlord and housing procurement review with a view to increasing capacity and partnership working in order to facilitate the provision of at least 150 social housing units each year for the next two years
- Complete a comprehensive review of the options for the future of our housing stock by July 2005 to determine the best way to ensure the ongoing provision of good quality homes
- Achieve a Housing Inspection standard of 'one star with prospects of improvement' by September 2005 and 'two star' by 2008
- Increase the proportion of local authority homes that meet the decent homes standard to over 68% by March 2006, 75% by March 2007 and 81% by March 2008
- Increase rent collected in housing to 98% by March 2007 to increase income due to the Council and reduce arrears
- Extend the discretionary homes in multiple occupation licensing regime as an adjunct to forthcoming mandatory licensing to increase registration to 1000 properties by March 2006 and thereby increase the number of homes improved
- Work to secure planning requirements in the adopted Local Plan, by March 2006, of 50% affordable housing on new developments to help increase provision of affordable housing in the city.

The majority of the work on these commitments is carried out by the Business Units listed below. More information on the work of these units and the resources allocated to their work can be found in the relevant sections of the Budget Book.

- Housing Services
- Planning
- Oxford Building Solutions
- Environmental Health
- Neighbourhood Renewal

3.6.2 Improving Services – To reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

This priority for improvement links to:

- The Council's strategic priority to make Oxford a safer city
- The Community Strategy theme for safer communities

Although crime figures show that Oxfordshire is one of the safest areas of the country, we know that in Oxford we have pockets where crime and particularly anti-social behaviour cause concern and distress. We will continue to work in partnership with local communities, Oxford Safer Communities Partnership and the Home Office to provide a city where all our people are confident that they can safely enjoy all it has to offer.

We have:

- Achieved Together Action Area status so that we can work with the Home Office and maximize our power to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour
- Developed a Child Protection Policy in consultation with internal and external representatives so that people can be confident that their children are protected and safe from harm when engaged with activities with the Council
- Started the Oxford Nightsafe campaign with the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership to reduce binge drinking and violent crime in the city centre
- Consulted the public on what our priorities should be for tackling crime. We will base our plans on this and information on local crime
- Our work with the Safer Communities Partnership has been recognised by other local authorities as a model of good practice.

We will:

- Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) through Together Action Area status. By April 2005 commence a rolling programme with the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership and the Home Office ASB Unit to work with 50 of the most challenging cases
- Extend the existing Street Warden scheme, increasing numbers of wardens to 25 by March 2008 and help fund an increase to 11 Police Community Support Officers by March 2008
- Help empower local communities using the increased funding we have made available for local projects through our Area Committees
- Carry out our duties under the Licensing Act 2003 and related enforcement.
- Use our licensing powers liaising with our Planning staff for future premises to regulate them and their hours of operation.

The majority of the work on these commitments is carried out by the Business Units listed below. More information on the work of these units and the resources allocated to their work can be found in the relevant sections of the Budget Book.

- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Planning
- Environmental Health
- Strategy and Review

3.6.3 Improving Services – Reduce poverty and social exclusion

This priority for improvement links to:

- The Council's strategic priority to create local prosperity and sustain full employment
- The Council's strategic priority to improve transport and mobility
- The Council's strategic priority to dialogue and consultation
- The Council's strategic priority to provide improved and affordable leisure facilities
- The Council's strategic priority to provide more affordable housing
- The Community Strategy theme for a vibrant and inclusive economy

Oxford City Council has a role to play in reducing the inequalities that exist in our society and supporting people within our communities. Many of our services contribute to this work, for example Housing and Homelessness Service, Benefits Service and Neighbourhood Renewal Service often work with individuals or groups experiencing a difficult time in their life. Our leisure and transport services provide discount schemes to remove financial barriers to accessing facilities. We want to do more to ensure that people from all sections of our multi-cultural and diverse city can access our services.

We also want to encourage business and investment in a world-class local economy and to regenerate less well-used areas of the city centre. This can help provide jobs, enhance our status as a centre for tourism and increase our trade as a major shopping centre. A strong and sustainable local economy means good long-term job prospects for the people of Oxford, increasing standards of living and health.

We have:

- Achieved our target for 2005 to improve processing of new benefits claims to achieve an average less than 40 days*
- Improved processing of changes in circumstance for benefit claimants from an average of over 28 days to one of less than 17 days*
- Publicised Housing and Council Tax Benefits by doing roadshows, producing leaflets which are easier to understand, using the radio and voluntary group poster campaigns.
- Helped develop a mortgage scheme in Oxford acceptable to the Muslim community
- Established a Credit Union, offering savings and banking facilities to those who might not otherwise be able to access them
- Become a full member of LIFT (Local Improvement Finance Trust) so that we can support an ongoing programme of new and upgraded health facilities in the city, beginning early in 2005/2006.

(outcomes expected by March 2005)*

We will:

- Implement a co-ordinated Council approach to tackling poverty and social exclusion, particularly in areas of child and family poverty, which is linked to the Local Strategic Partnership by March 2006.
- Improve processing of new benefits claims to achieve an average of no more than 30 days by March 2006 and 28 days by March 2007.
- Investigate a financially-viable free bus fare scheme for older people
- Investigate options for free swimming for pensioners and young people.

The majority of the work on these commitments is carried out by the Business Units listed below. More information on the work of these units and the resources allocated to their work can be found in the relevant sections of the Budget Book

- Strategy and Review
- Transport and Parking
- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Revenues and Benefits
- Leisure and Parks