

**Report of: Janet Banfield and Helen Rowlands
Strategy and Review Business Unit**

Title: First draft Oxford Plan 2006-2009 for consultation approval

Ward: All

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Key Decision: Yes

Lead Member: Councillor Alex Hollingsworth

Scrutiny responsibility: Finance

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Board endorse this draft of the 2006-2009 Oxford Plan to be released for public consultation, in line with the requirements of the Policy Framework.

1. Summary

- 1.1 Work is underway to develop the Oxford Plan (the Council's corporate plan) for 2006-09. While consultation on the priorities that should be included in the plan is ongoing, the document itself must also be consulted upon. This year we intend to combine these two aspects of consultation to ensure that the final draft of the Oxford Plan reflects the outcomes of consultation in terms of both what the key priorities are for the Council and how we can convey these in an accessible way.

2. Fit with Vision and Strategic Aims

- 2.1 The Oxford Plan provides a direct thread from the Vision to the business plans, and helps to turn statements about our strategic aims, into key priorities for delivery to help us achieve those aims.

3. Background and context

- 3.1 Work has been progressing to develop the 2006-2009 Oxford Plan (our corporate plan). The starting point for this work has been last year's plan, which has been used to stimulate debate around the priorities agreed last year.

3.2 This first (consultation) draft has been framed around the content and format of last year's document. However, there have been some significant structural changes, and more remains to be done. To date, the following amendments have been made:

- A new section outlining the pressures and drivers that the authority faces and to which we must respond.
- A new section outlining how we have taken on board the results of consultation, and outlining our reasons for not responding to any clear and consistent views.
- Clarified the split between the externally-facing service delivery priorities and the internally-facing process improvement priorities.
- The document now makes reference to the relevant strategies and plans within the text on each priority, rather than as a separate list.
- Strengthened the links between the corporate plan and the Community Strategy.
- Strengthened the links between the corporate plan and area plans.

3.3 Before the publication of the second draft, further structural changes are intended, including:

- The list of actions currently in appendix 1 will be replaced with the newly devised Oxford Plan Monitoring Framework, the details for which will be completed at the end of the business planning cycle.

3.4 The improvements to the Oxford Plan that are being incorporated this year are the first step to an even more improved version next year. The 2007-2010 Oxford Plan will feature the following improvements:

- It will be more closely aligned with the raft of strategies that the council has adopted to guide its work.
- All consultation on priorities will be conducted before the consultation draft is released (this has not been possible this year due to time pressures and committee deadlines)
- Committee dates and deadlines will be specifically set to accommodate the needs of the business planning cycle.
- A discussion draft will be developed prior to the release of the consultation draft. This discussion draft will be based on the full outcomes of consultation on the priorities and form the basis of a cross-party discussion that will be held earlier in the year, to help give more certainty as to political negotiations at an earlier stage to help business managers plan their services more effectively for the coming years.

4. Consultation

4.1 Substantial consultation is already underway with regard to the relative importance of the priorities in the current Oxford Plan, to help inform the development of new version. Consultation exercises are progressing as follows:

- Four workshops for elected members and representatives of partner organisations (identified from our CPA list of partners)
- One Business Breakfast event

- All party groups, scrutiny committees, area committees and Executive Board were invited to take part.
 - All business units have been invited to take part
 - A dedicated event for members of the public, selected from our TalkBack panel, is scheduled for mid-September. This will be combined with consultation on the draft document itself and a session on readability.
- 4.2 Where possible, the outcomes of these sessions have been incorporated into the first draft of the Oxford Plan, which will itself be consulted on as part of the Policy Framework. Responses received after the committee deadline for 12th September EB will be incorporated at the second draft stage. This will include the collated outcomes on priorities.
- 4.3 Although still in progress, some key messages have already been noted, including:
- The combination of strategic high-level aims and delivery-based targets within the priorities in the current Oxford Plan, with a recommendation that the delivery-based targets are not best placed in a corporate plan;
 - The prohibitive number of priorities in the current Oxford Plan;
 - The lack of clarity and complexity of some of the priorities;
 - Confusion as to the relevance of the internal process improvement priorities, and
 - Problems with still too much use of terminology and jargon.
- 4.4 In response to these comments, all of which have been received from more than one of the consultation workshops, it is intended that the new Oxford Plan will:
- Maintain a high-level strategic focus, with service-based targets fed into the business plans (the format of which is also being revised this year)
 - Contain a reduced number of priorities, focusing on those that are new, additional to requirements, or that represent areas of work in which we want to stretch our performance
 - Keep the priorities to clear simple statements that set out the Council's key aims.
 - Maintain a Plain English approach and further strip out jargon and the use of terminology wherever possible, and explain it where it is more appropriate to leave phrases in "local government speak".
- 4.5 However, given the importance of the improvement agenda in the light of the CPA assessment, the internal process improvement priorities will remain part of the corporate plan.

5. Legal, Financial and Staffing Implications

- 5.1 As this is the corporate strategic planning document for the activities of the authority over the next three years, the decisions made regarding the content of the Oxford Plan may have implications with regard to legal, financial and staffing issues. However, as this is the consultation draft, and there is much

work still to be done, it is premature at this stage to attempt to identify and address what they may be.

6. Timetable for action

- 6.1 The outcomes of the consultation will be discussed with members at a cross-party event in October and incorporated into a second draft. This will then be presented for further discussion and comment at a leaders meeting in October and the final draft prepared for presentation to EB on 21 November asking for recommendation to Council on 21 November.
- 6.2 Some results have already been recorded in the light of this consultation, and where clear, consistent views on the relative importance of priorities have been expressed, these views have been incorporated into the first draft of the corporate plan. However, the full results of consultation on the priorities will not be available until early October. It is therefore likely that the second draft of the Oxford Plan may look significantly different from this first draft.
- 6.3 There are bound to be areas in which no clear and consistent views were expressed. These areas will be the focus of debate at a cross-party event to be held in October.

7. Appendices:

Oxford Plan 2006-09, Consultation draft

<p>THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY: Portfolio Holder: Alex Hollingsworth Chief Executive: Caroline Bull Legal and Democratic Services: Jeremy Thomas Financial Management: Mike Baish</p>

There are no background papers