

Report of: Caroline Bull

To: Executive Board

Date: 21 August 2006

Item No:

Title of Report : Approval for Consultation on The Oxford Plan 2007-2010

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: This report seeks approval to conduct consultation on development of The Oxford Plan 2007-2010 from 3 August 2006 to 26 September 2006. It outlines the consultation approach, the timetable of events and the objectives.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: John Goddard (Overarching Responsibility)

Deputy Responsibility: Finance Scrutiny

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by

Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Goddard

Legal: Jeremy Thomas

Finance: Penny Gardner

Policy Framework: The Oxford Plan 2006-2009
Consultation Strategy 2004-2007

Recommendation(s):

Executive Board approves the consultation objectives and timetable.

Executive Board approves use of an amended draft of the Oxford Plan 2006-2009 as the basis of discussion for that consultation.

Executive Board will promote engagement of officers, councillors, public and stakeholders with consultation and development of the plan.

Executive Board acknowledges the timetable pressures in producing The Oxford Plan and will support adherence to timetable to permit timely delivery of an improved quality of document.

Background

- 1.1 Oxford City Council succeeded in producing its first two annual corporate plans, The Oxford Plan, for 2005-2008 and 2006-2009. Both plans successfully combined organisational objectives for the document with the government requirements for Best Value Performance Plans and received unqualified audits from the Audit Commission.
- 1.2 In the first two years much of the work involved in developing the plans focussed on establishing the consultation and business planning processes necessary for their development. As these processes become more mature and embedded this will permit a greater focus on improving the quality and accessibility of the document.
- 1.3 In the second year consultation and cross-party working to develop and agree the 7 Strategic Priorities was extensive, running from June through to November. Good practice requires stability of strategic priorities to give an organisation the opportunity to focus on them and deliver against related objectives. Substantial changes at this level would be justified only if there were compelling changes in circumstance. It is proposed therefore that consultation during 2006 should focus on identifying the key outcomes that the council should commit to achieving under each of those 7 Strategic Aims.
- 1.4 Further work in the second year developed stronger links to the Business Unit Plans, providing a framework for their development with direct links to corporate plan commitments and how managers proposed to achieve them. The development framework also provides the details for the performance team to build the Oxford Plan Monitoring Framework into CorVu for quarterly monitoring. There remains a need to improve content quality, particularly in terms of ensuring outcome-based objectives, appropriate measures and robust targets.
- 1.5 Proposed objectives for development in the current year are:
 - Further development of business planning processes to link with the budget development process. The aims are to provide a clearer and longer-term financial context to inform the setting of corporate objectives, to develop and agree a financial strategy that supports the delivery of the corporate objectives and to develop clearer ways of presenting financial information, in order to facilitate more effective planning and management of activities and financial resources. This work is being undertaken by the Strategic Director for Finance, the Budget Process Improvement Group and the Business Mangers for Finance & Asset Management and Strategy & Review.
 - To deliver a shorter, more accessible and user-friendly Oxford Plan. This work is being undertaken by the Performance Planning Manager.

- To better focus commitments by having fewer of them and selecting those with the strongest community demand and support, that will best help the council towards achievement of its strategic aims. This work is being undertaken by the Performance Planning Manager.
- To provide greater support to managers so that they develop business plans that: support Strategic Aims and Corporate Objectives, contain outcome-based objectives, have appropriate measures and robust targets. This work is being undertaken by the Performance Planning Manager with the support of external trainers.

Considerations

- 2.1 As the Oxford Plan is part of the policy framework of the Council it has to be put out to consultation. Previous consultation focussed on establishing the strategic level priorities, particularly in light of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, (CPA) inspection findings. We now have the opportunity to build on these and focus consultation more on shaping the specific outcomes that the public wish to see in progressing towards those strategic priorities.
- 2.2 Some such initial consultation work has been carried out. This work will be cross-referenced with the Oxford Plan consultation that takes place during 2006.
- 2.3 The consultation may provide desired outcomes that are too specific to have a place in a corporate plan. However, analysis of the results will clarify the higher-level outcomes that are appropriate, whilst also providing some information on specific actions that can inform the thinking of Business Managers in developing their Business Unit Plans to meet the commitments in the Oxford Plan.
- 2.4 Clear objectives have been set for how the third Oxford Plan needs to develop, both in terms of style and content. These are based on best practice and the comments of councillors. Consultation will help us refine these objectives and provide a clear direction in terms of presentation and content level.
- 2.5 As consultation will be conducted using a discussion draft modelled on the existing plan and will focus on the specific commitments within it, only these have been reproduced with committee papers. If councillors wish to see the whole discussion draft, it is available on the intranet or can be emailed upon request. Copies have also been made available in group rooms.

Consultation Timetable

- 3.1 Consultation will take place from 30 August 2006 to 26 September 2006. This meets statutory requirements and has also been carefully timed to permit inclusion of all Area Committees, a validation exercise, three days to analyse findings and prepare discussion papers and 2 cross-party events a week apart, the second will only take place if required.
- 3.2 This is a challenging timetable and slippage at any point would jeopardise the business-planning timetable for the rest of the year, along with the ability to structure the appropriate links with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and with budget setting. To achieve improvement in the quality of The Oxford Plan, its monitoring framework, the Business Unit Plans and the robustness of the resulting targets at the end of the process it is vital that councillors and officers adhere to this very challenging timetable. This will permit time for better communication of the process and associated events as well as providing the best opportunity of significant improvement for the 2008-2011 plan.
- 3.3 Details of the timetable and proposed events are shown at Appendix 1 and will be posted on the intranet.

Consultation Approach

- 4.1 At each consultation event there will be a display of a number of Corporate Plans from various local authorities and comment boards. In this way we will get reactions from the Oxford City public to differing styles and approaches to ensure that the document we produce for 2007-2010 has the best chance of communicating what we have achieved and what we plan to do next.
- 4.2 Our approach to producing the plan will also need to take account of legislative requirements and this may force some restrictions on our preferred way forward.
- 4.3 Discussion at each consultation event will begin with asking groups to identify the participants 'Big 3' ideas on the outcomes that need to be achieved for each of the 7 Strategic Priorities. The aim is to identify key outcomes that may provide a manageable number of corporate objectives and give the authority greater focus.
- 4.4 Groups will then be asked to comment on the existing commitments ("We will" statements) with reference to their 'Big 3'. By bringing in existing commitments we hope to provide some challenge and discussion to the identified 'Big 3' and to the relevance and fit of the existing commitments.

- 4.5 If time becomes an issue at an event, priority will be given to identification of the 'Big 3'.

Consultation Events

- 5.1 In line with councillors' express wish for data at a local level, consultation will run alongside Area Committee meetings wherever possible. It will be publicised in advance via our website, community posters and with area committee papers and key local groups will be invited. It is envisaged that events will take place before Area Committees and will last for an hour. Where this is not possible, alternative venues and dates will be found, but the method of consultation will be the same for all events.
- 5.2 Consultation on area priorities has already taken place and will inform Area Plans. It is hoped that this data will be available for use at the final Talkback event to provide further information for discussion where it identifies repeat themes across areas. Publicity for each Area's Oxford Plan event will draw a distinction between this earlier work where comment was directly related to the area in which people live and the wider Oxford Plan consultation where comment is invited on issues that affect any part of Oxford.
- 5.3 Councillors on each area committee will be very welcome to take part in their area event. Whilst there is no requirement for AC members to attend their event it is hoped that they would wish to hear the views of local people should they be able to do so and to inform the discussion.
- 5.4 The same consultation exercise will be conducted with Business Managers at an extended CMG lunch meeting during September. Portfolio Holders may also wish to join this event.
- 5.5 There will also be a Business Breakfast consultation event. Strategic leads from major local business will be invited and the event will include the same consultation as other groups but will include some financial information and the developing Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 5.6 On the final day of consultation, 26 September, there will be a slightly different event involving invited members of our new Talkback Panel. This event will permit some open discussion but will primarily seek to validate initial findings from the earlier events. There will be one table discussing one of each of the 7 Strategic Priorities. Members of the public will be seated at a table discussing a priority that they expressed a wish to be involved in. This event would benefit from the active involvement of Portfolio Holders, Shadow Portfolio Holders, Strategic Directors and Business Managers. It is proposed to invite these groups.
- 5.7 Comment will also be invited via the website throughout the consultation period.

Recommendations

- 6.1 Executive Board approves the consultation objectives and timetable.
- 6.2 Executive Board approves use of an amended draft of the Oxford Plan 2006-2009 as the basis of discussion for that consultation.
- 6.3 Executive Board fully supports the engagement of citizens, councillors and officers with the consultation process and development of the Oxford Plan.
- 6.4 Executive Board supports adherence to the proposed timetable as this is required for the timely delivery of a best yet Oxford Plan.

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Background papers: None



Consultation Timetable

Date	Consultation Event	Comments
21/08/06	Consultation approval sought from Executive Board	
30/08/06	Public consultation begins	Comment available via website from this date
4/09/06	South East Area Committee	17:00 at BBL
06/09/06	Cowley Area Committee	17:00 at John Bunyan Baptist Church
07/09/06	North Area Committee	15:30 at NOA Community Centre
12/09/06	Business Breakfast	08:00 at Town Hall
12/09/06	Corporate Management Group event	12:00 Town Hall
12/09/06	Central South and West Area Committee	14:00 Venue TBC
19/09/06	North East Area Committee	17:00 at Sandhills Primary School
09/06	East Area Parliament	Arrangements to be confirmed
26/09/06	Talkback Panel Public consultation ends	Resource for 2 working days available to draw together and analyse results and prepare event. Time and venue TBA but likely to be afternoon in the Town Hall
03/10/06	Discussion of emerging findings with Directors. Papers issued for cross-party talks	Resource available for 3 working days to analyse consultation data. This will allow for brief discussion with BMs over any unexpected emerging findings to help inform cross-party talks.
05/10/06	First Cross-Party Event to discuss findings and identify areas of consensus.	Suggest 2 representatives from each party attend. External Facilitator. Early evening? Town Hall

10/10/06	Second Cross-Party Event to reach decision of areas where no consensus.	Suggest 2 representatives from each party attend. External facilitator. Early evening? Town Hall. Decision must be reached at this stage or document cannot be finalised and timetable may be jeopardised. Specific areas of disagreement could be referred to EB for decision and recommendation to council.
16/10/06	Final Oxford Plan 2007-2010 and covering report submitted for Portfolio holder, Chief Executive, Finance and Legal approval	3 working days available to finalise document
23/10/06	Committee deadline for papers for Executive Board	
06/11/06	The Oxford Plan 2007-2010 to Executive Board	
20/11/06	The Oxford Plan 2007-2010 to Council	

Note/ This timetable meshes during it final weeks with that for production of draft Business Unit Plans (still being finalised) to permit discussion between officers and councillors on specific actions and targets that support the Oxford Plan prior to budget setting.

The Business Unit Plan development timetable in its turn meshes with that for production of the Best Value Performance Plan appendices to The Oxford Plan, the end of year report and the production of the Oxford Plan Monitoring Report for the first quarter monitoring. The cycle completes in June and overlaps with the beginning of the next year's cycle.

List of current, 2006-2009, corporate commitments.

Strategic Priority - Reduce inequality through social inclusion
Tackle and reduce homelessness
Support the development of culturally and economically diverse, cohesive communities
Ensure that the areas of deprivation in the City benefit from the economic success of the City as a whole
Provide at least 600 children with free activities during the school holidays
Establish a Healthy Communities Partnership to reduce health inequalities in Oxford
Progress through the Equalities Standards
Improve the employee profile of the Council so that it better reflects that of the local community (BVPI 16a (Registered Disabled) and BVPI 17a (Ethnic Minority))
Ensure that the services provided to black and ethnic minority communities and to people with disabilities better reflect their own aspirations and needs identified through effective consultation
Strategic Priority - More housing for Oxford, better housing for all
Find sustainable solutions to Oxford's need for more housing
Improve the quality of homes across all sectors
Reduce fuel poverty among the most vulnerable
Improve the performance of our Housing Service for our Tenants
Increase support for vulnerable young homeless people
Invest to increase the quantity and quality of social and affordable housing
Ensure that the standards of all multi-tenanted (Houses in Multiple Occupation/HMOs) in the City are acceptable
Strategic Priority - Improve Oxford's Environment, Economy and Quality of Life
Keep the streets clean throughout the City ¹
Launch a 'Keep Oxford Tidy' campaign to discourage littering and fly-tipping
Take enforcement action to fine those responsible for littering and fly-tipping
Reduce pollution in all its forms
Work with partners to restore and improve the riverbanks
Improve the quality of our parks and green spaces
Introduce a uniformed park ranger service to improve safety and security
Seek to sustain the City's economic status and success
Increase the economic benefits that the City realises from visitors
Redevelop the West End of Oxford as new urban quarter
Ensure that the West End development achieves the highest possible standards of urban design
Establish a Business Improvement District
Promote cultural and arts activities for all
Improve the appearance of the city centre by reducing the amount of clutter of unnecessary signs
Develop the enforcement of licensing conditions of pubs and clubs which balance the needs of residents and the local community
Strategic Priority - Reduce and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour
Extend the Street Warden scheme
Extend the number of Police Community Support Officers
Consult on a city-wide alcohol free zone
Invest in improved CCTV for our city centre and tower blocks
Work with Thames Valley Police to implement neighbourhood policing throughout the City
Implement the new three year Community Safety Strategy with the Safer Communities Partnership to achieve our targets for crime reduction*

¹ Currently has 18 specific objectives within this including graffiti, abandoned vehicles, education, enforcement and customer satisfaction.

Strategic Priority - Tackle climate change and promote environmental resource management
Extend kerbside collection for recycling by including new materials and methods to increase our recycling rate to 45% by 2008
Reduce fuel poverty, promote alternative energy sources and maximise fuel efficiency
Reduce energy use in our business premises, public buildings and vehicle fleet
Adopt a Supplementary Planning Document on Natural Resource Impact Analysis
Work with our suppliers to reduce the negative environmental impacts of the supply chain
We will strive to implement the goals set out in the Oxford Climate Change Prevention Action Plan'
Strategic Priority - Ensure more efficient and improved services
Improve our planning performance by increasing the percentage of planning appeals which the Council wins
Improve debt recovery
Improve our performance in collecting of Council Tax by co-operating with other local authorities and outsourcing responsibility for collection to an external provider.
Establish capacity and skill levels in business units, management and council members for leadership, performance management and governance and we will provide training or on-site support where needed
Continue training in tools and techniques for continuous improvement throughout the Council
Use value for money information to identify possible areas for service improvement or efficiency savings
Further develop the role of public consultation, governance and risk issues in identifying key corporate priorities and focussing resources accordingly.
Continue to target areas of poor performance identified through government's Best Value Performance Indicators.
Ensure that elements of the Local Area Agreement to which Oxford City Council signs up are given due focus to ensure that the targets are met.
Work with our partners on LIFT to improve health care provision in the city.
Develop our performance monitoring software – CorVu – to permit individual staff and their managers secure access to their personal development plans on our intranet during 2006/2007 and in the longer term develop the system to link with ad map Learning and Development needs identified through appraisal.
Further develop our performance management systems to link with and map Learning and Development needs.
Delivered basic financial training to all Business Managers and interested Councillors.
Strategic Priority - Be an open, intelligent and responsive organisation
Maintain and expand our neighbourhood working through Area Committees to ensure that the Council can respond flexibly to differing local priorities
Develop and embed Investors in People principles in all business units
Continue working to improve staff satisfaction with the Council as an employer in order to improve recruitment and retention of staff
Encourage business units to share good management practice across the authority. E.g. through our corporate Coaching and Mentoring Programme
Improve customer contact practices
Increase customer satisfaction
Continue to work with focus groups, using existing surveys and the 2006 General Satisfaction Survey when conducted, to identify the causes of low satisfaction with certain services and work to resolve the issues

Note/ Commitments that will be completed prior to the period of the plan being consulted on will not form part of the consultation exercise.

Document Control

Document	EB Report seeking consultation approval for The Oxford Plan 2007-2010
Owner	Caroline Bull
Author	Helen Rowlands
Date	8 August 2006
Review due	
Version	1.2
Notes	Approved for submission to EB.

Version No.	Date	Notes
1.0	02/08/2006	Initial draft for comment
1.1	04/08/2006	CJB and PH amends
1.2	08/08/2006	Final amends after CJB discussion with Cllr Price