

Oxford Citizens' Jury Report



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Oxford Citizens' Jury Report

Executive Summary

The Aims

The aim of the Citizens' Jury was to consider the spending priorities of Oxford City Council for 2008/9.

The Jury

The Jury were selected from Oxford City Council's Citizens' Panel, Talkback. Quotas were drawn by age, sex, race and area of residence.

The Process

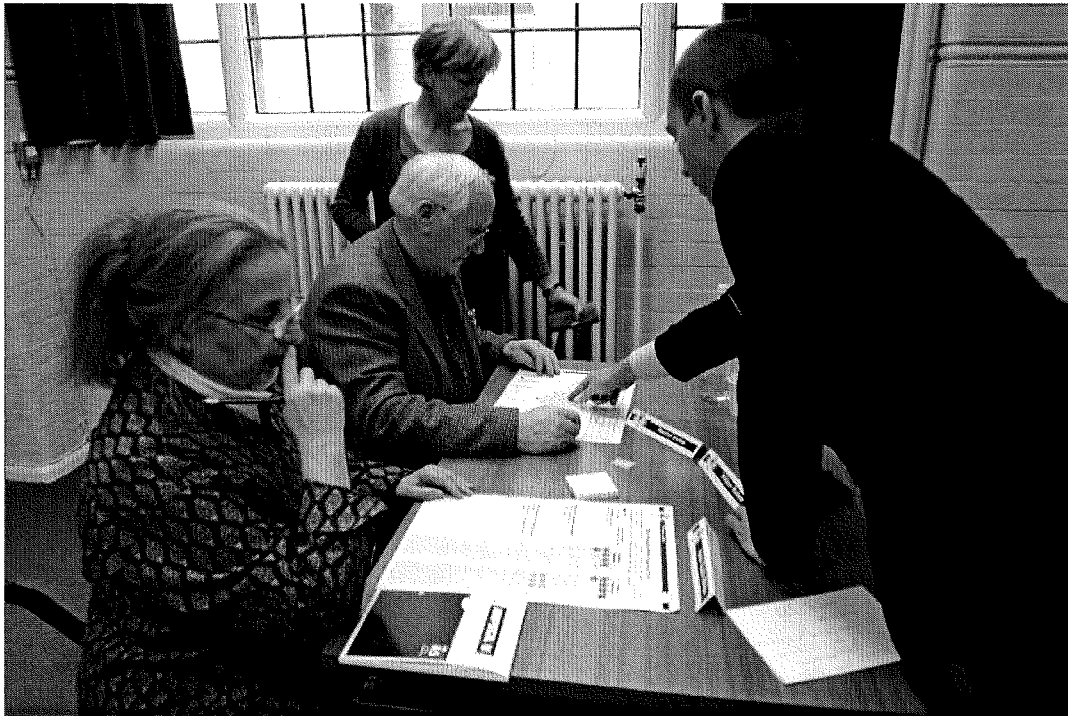
A welcome speech to the Jury was delivered by the leader of Oxford City Council, Cllr. John Goddard. Further presentations followed, in order to introduce the Jury to the budget structure and the order of events for the day.

Initially the Jury were presented with information regarding the use of Council tax funds, the responsibilities of the City and County Councils and the City Council's six priorities. These were then expanded by a presentation from the finance department of Oxford City Council, which explained how much was allocated to each priority.

The Jury were then given a worksheet on which they could allocate funds according to these priorities, with the existing allocations included as a guide. The budget was rounded up into millions to enable this to take place. The Jury then reconvened to discuss their choices.

In the afternoon session the Jury was split into three groups and each group were given worksheets showing the budget allocations of two of the Council's priorities. In this exercise the groups were able to allocate according to service areas and consider priorities in more detail.

In the final session the groups reported back, discussing any issues that were raised. Finally, each member of the Jury was asked to provide a recommendation based on their discussions.



Key Conclusions

- Housing benefit should be administered more efficiently, in particular by cutting expensive items such as counter service.
- Leisure centres should offer value for money services, opening when it is cost effective to do so and where and when there is demand, thus absorbing less Council funding. Management should remain in Council hands unless there is clear evidence to the contrary that savings could be made or services improved. Finally, services should remain subsidised where deemed appropriate.
- The City Council should spend more of its budget on developing affordable housing and less on housing support services.
- The local environment would be improved if less was spent on public conveniences, street cleaning and tourism, and more was spent on refuse collection and street bins.
- The budget to street wardens was cut. Generally, the Jury were unsure about street wardens' remit, how they differed from community support officers and whether they were needed. The lack of formal powers was felt to be an issue that detracted from their role and it was suggested that the boundaries of the two positions should be examined.

- The City Council should not subsidise profitable private provision of public transport. Suggestions were made to ensure that bus companies 'paid their way' and did not profit at the expense of the Council.
- The many health advisory services that the Council provides should be evaluated to reduce overlap with NHS responsibilities.
- The value of Area Committees was questioned although no consensus was reached.

At the end of the session the Jury were thanked by Peter McQuitty (Policy, Performance and Communication) who also undertook to provide feedback. There was unanimous agreement that participation had been interesting and also demonstrated the value of Citizens' Juries as part of the Council decision making process. In particular, several members felt they had gained a greater insight into the complex juggling act that the Council has to perform with budgets, as well as the difficulty in separating the responsibilities of the City and the County.

Oxford Citizens' Jury Report

1.0 Introduction

The idea of the Citizens' Jury has been a staple of British public administration since the mid 1990's and has been championed by the last two governments. A Citizens' Jury is a group of local people, ideally representative of the community. They meet to hear evidence, to study the issues, to ask questions and to work towards recommendations, which are in the best interests of the community as a whole rather than being skewed towards particular interests.

For example, since becoming Prime Minister Gordon Brown has announced that he intends to use Citizens' Juries to formulate key policies. They can also provide an opportunity for local government to undertake consultation with an informed group of voters from varying backgrounds. They are particularly useful for issues where technical or detailed information has to be judged, enabling the Jury to look into an issue in greater depth than is allowed by other forms of consultation.

Although the recommendations are not binding on the elected Councillors, there is an undertaking by the Council to consider the recommendations seriously and to reply to the Panel with an explanation of outcomes.

There are several advantages to this form of consultation:

- A Citizens' Jury delivers thoughtful, informed, and constructive citizen input that helps public officials make tough choices.
- A Citizens' Jury allows decision makers to hear directly from citizens, and to learn about their values, concerns and ideas regarding a particular issue or problem.
- By bringing people of diverse backgrounds together and providing an opportunity for them to learn and deliberate as fellow citizens, a Citizens' Jury is an opportunity to identify areas of agreement and build appropriate solutions to challenging problems.
- During the Citizens' Jury hearings, and in their recommendations, jurors share their opinions and the reasons for their conclusions. This can provide valuable insight into the rationale for particular viewpoints.
- Citizens' Jury projects are professionally moderated by two facilitators who create a focused and respectful environment. The agenda for a Citizens' Jury is carefully constructed to allow time for the jurors to complete their deliberation.

1.1 The Aims

The aim of calling a Citizens' Jury for Oxford City Council was to discuss the budget allocations made by the Council for the coming year, 2008/9. In particular the Jury were asked to consider the Council's priorities, set out in the Corporate Plan, and to consider which of these were the most important to them. The Jury also looked at the different areas within each priority and allocated to services as they saw fit. The Jury were not given extra funds to allocate, but could cut services or make suggestions as to how a service could improve.

1.2 Jury Members

The Jury was recruited from members of the Oxford Citizens' Panel, Talkback. Recruitment was targeted to ensure a good spread of participants. Letters were sent out with details of the day, but it was decided not to give out any prior information. This was to ensure the Jury were receiving this information for the first time and therefore unlikely to be much more informed than the general public.

The Jury was held on Saturday to allow working people to attend and began at 9:45 am. Ten people attended. These were fairly representative of the Oxford City demographic profile, although it is impossible to be completely representative with such a small number of people.

1.3 The Process

The Jury was convened on Saturday 17th November 2007. An initial period was spent meeting each other, the various City Council staff and facilitators who were present. A welcome speech to the Jury was delivered by the leader of Oxford City Council, Cllr. John Goddard. Further presentations followed, in order to introduce the Jury to the budget structure and the order of events for the day.

SRA presented an overview of the City Council's funding, noting the source of the Council's money, how much of the Council Tax goes to the City Council compared to the County Council and the Police, and how the responsibilities for different areas are split between the County and City Councils. The six priorities of the City Council were then introduced and explained. A copy of this presentation is included as Appendix A.

A second presentation by the finance department of the City Council then detailed how much money was allocated to the six priorities. This included revenue generated by Council properties, leisure services etc. The Jury were encouraged to ask questions throughout the presentation and several points were raised.

After a short break the Jury were then asked to split into three groups and begin the first exercise. This was a budget setting exercise in which Jury members allocated the current Council budget between the six priorities of the Corporate Plan. A copy of the worksheet for this exercise is provided as Appendix B.

Each worksheet rounded up the net budget figures into one million pound pots. The worksheet also listed the amount of money allocated to each priority by the Council, including the amount that the Council was bound to spend by statute. Services were allocated to appropriate priorities, although clearly many services may be relevant to more than one priority. In the far right column the non-discretionary budget was already filled in, but the remaining pots were to be allocated by the Jury. Each member of the Jury was given 34 one million £ pots to match the discretionary amount listed on the worksheets. They were then free to allocate between the priorities as they saw fit. The design of these sessions therefore allowed the Jury to judge the amount of money allocated to each priority, whilst also encouraging them to prioritise between different areas. Following this exercise the group reconvened to discuss their spending.

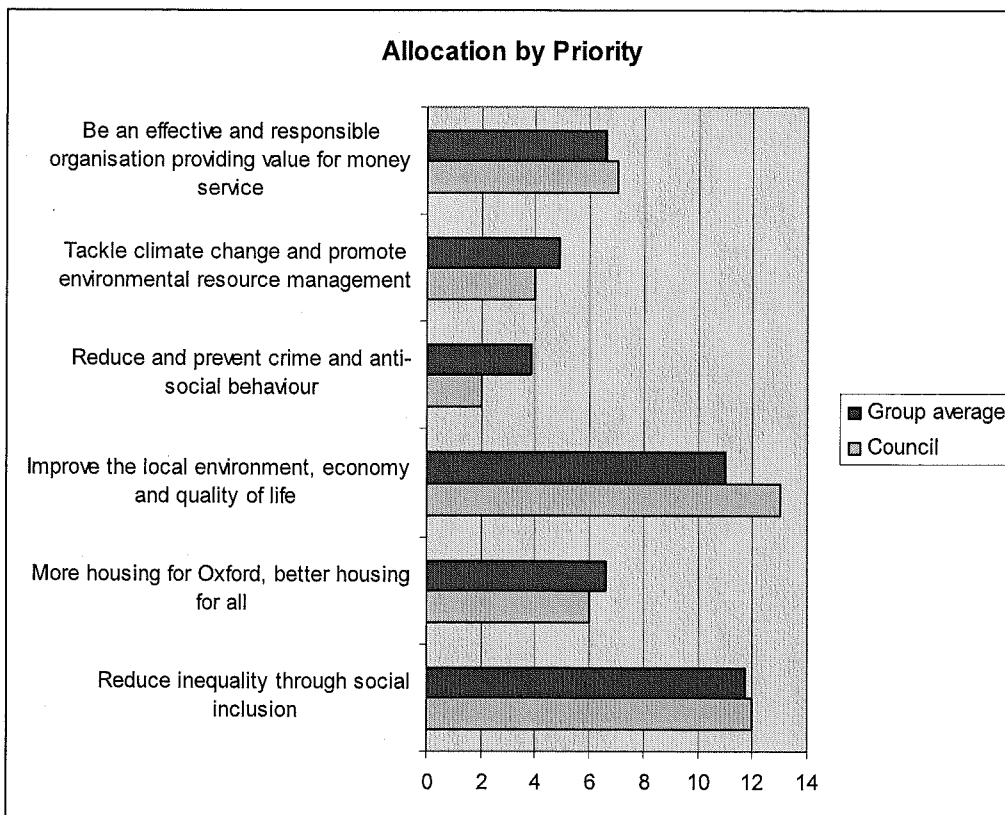
In the session after lunch, the Jury members were allotted to three groups (to ensure variety) and were asked to complete more detailed worksheets which showed the breakdown of funds between the services for each of the six priorities. Each group were given two priorities to re-allocate, with further sheets available for those who finished quickly. In this exercise the groups were able to look in depth at two of the priorities and the services contained therein. The worksheets were set out proportionate to the original budget, with pots representing figures from £500,000 to £50,000 depending on the amount of money allocated to each priority (for example, for reducing crime and anti-social behaviour each pot represented £50,000 to reflect the amounts of money available in this area). These worksheets are included as Appendix C. Group members were also asked to think about their recommendations to the Council at this stage.

In the final sessions, the groups reported back their discussions and allocations to the whole Jury and Council Officers. Each group were asked to give a reasonably detailed rundown of their considerations in coming to a decision on the allocation, and these points were discussed with the Jury as a whole. As a final exercise each Jury member was asked for their recommendations.

To close the session, the Jury were thanked by Peter McQuitty (Policy, Performance and Communication) representing the City Council. The Jury were advised that they would receive a report of the day and were given a certificate to mark their participation.

2.0 Priority Setting

Initially the Jury were required to allocate between the Council's main priorities, as identified in the Oxford City Council Corporate Plan. This exercise enabled the group to gain an overview of the budget and the types of areas that the Council had to choose between. The Jury were encouraged to reach this decision in groups to stimulate discussion, but in the event many of the Jury members produced individual budgets. Eight separate budget allocation sheets were produced and the average result is listed below. The numbers correspond approximately to millions of pounds.



Broadly, the results show an increase for reducing and preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and slight increases for housing and measures to tackle climate change. These were offset by reductions in funds for improving the quality of the local environment, organisation and social inclusion. It should also be noted that three members of the group opted to reduce the overall amount spent, each by £2million.

However, it is important to note there were significant differences of opinion between the various budgets. The table below indicates this, although these

differences were even more starkly illustrated in the subsequent discussions. Non-negotiable spending is indicated in brackets. The Council's budget is shown as the 'original' budget.

Fig. 1: Allocation between City Council priorities

	Original	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
Reduce inequality through social inclusion	12	12	12	9	10	7	10	11	11	11.8
More housing for Oxford, better housing for all	6	7	7	5	5	7	8	7	7	6.6
Improve the local environment, economy and quality of life	13	14	14	9	10	5	12	12	12	11.0
Reduce and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour	2	1	1	9	5	11	0	2	2	3.9
Tackle climate change and promote environmental resource management	4	4	4	4	4	4	9	5	5	4.9
Be an effective and responsible organisation providing value for money service	7	6	6	6	8	8	5	7	7	6.6
Overall cuts				2	2	2				0.8
Total	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	

One issue that highlighted the differences in opinion was that of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. For example, one participant wanted to spend 'much, much more' on CCTV and measures to combat anti-social behaviour. Another participant felt that 'spending more on preventing crime and anti-social behaviour will have benefits in other areas', for example in the quality of the local environment. This view was challenged by several members of the wider group,

who believed that crime and anti-social behaviour are issues that go beyond the remit of the City Council and should be properly dealt with by the police.

Likewise, it was noted that extra provision for leisure centres may also have a beneficial spin-off, as the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour discover a new outlet for their energies. It was felt by several jurors that the Council was more suited to this type of provision, 'not just punitive measures'.

The Jury also considered whether the Council should be providing leisure services at all, particularly as one person noted that despite receiving a large subsidy, the service still costs 'almost as much as LA Fitness' (private sector provider). However, other members of the Jury pointed out that not everyone attending leisure centres will be paying full charges, with many paying concessionary rates.

Some members felt that the public also needed Council-run leisure facilities to fill the gaps left by the private sector. Moreover, one Jury member felt that 'sometimes the Council should just give something back', in that it should provide certain services at below market rates.

The example of leisure services, which receive a subsidy despite charging the public to use their facilities, opened a discussion on the efficiency of Council services, and on the possibility of increased charging:

'Where can we increase revenue – what about parks and leisure? This would free up the Council to do the things that it ought.'

The finance officers from the Council then asked the Jury if they would support outsourcing the management of leisure services to help efficiency:

'I don't think there is any need for that, I'd just like to see the Council run it better'

'The public sector should provide services that the private sector wouldn't, like three quid swimming'

In the debate on public and private services, several members disagreed that the private sector could always deliver more efficient services. One member felt that in practice private sector organisations were often better, but did not want to see leisure services contracted out unless there was evidence of a clear saving.

In common with the discussion of efficiency, three members of the Jury did recommend a reduction in spending by two million. Other Juror's suggested services that they did not think offered value for money:

'Homeless services cost a lot, but rough sleeping still happens in the city'

'No one here has much experience of street wardens'

'They (Street Wardens) don't have much power, there isn't much spent on them: is there any point?'

Street Wardens were generally viewed negatively by the Jury, partly because most of them had no direct experience (although most admitted that they did not live in areas where Street Warden's were likely to patrol) and partly because many of the Jury had difficulty separating their role from that of Community Support Officers.

One area that was proposed for spending increases from almost every member was housing. In general there was support for the provision of affordable housing, with one member noting that such a measure would:

'Preserve the make-up of the City and allow people to stay on'.

Allocating between Council priorities gave the Jury the chance to study an overview of the budget, but it was noticeable that discussion inevitably veered towards the nature of specific services. The next session allowed them to look at these issues in some depth.

3.0 Council Priorities

The following session was designed to allow the Jury members to look in detail at the services that make up each priority and to consider the amount of money allocated to each one. The Jury was split into three groups so they worked with different people to the previous session, and each group was allocated two of the six priorities to consider.

3.1 Reduce inequality through social inclusion

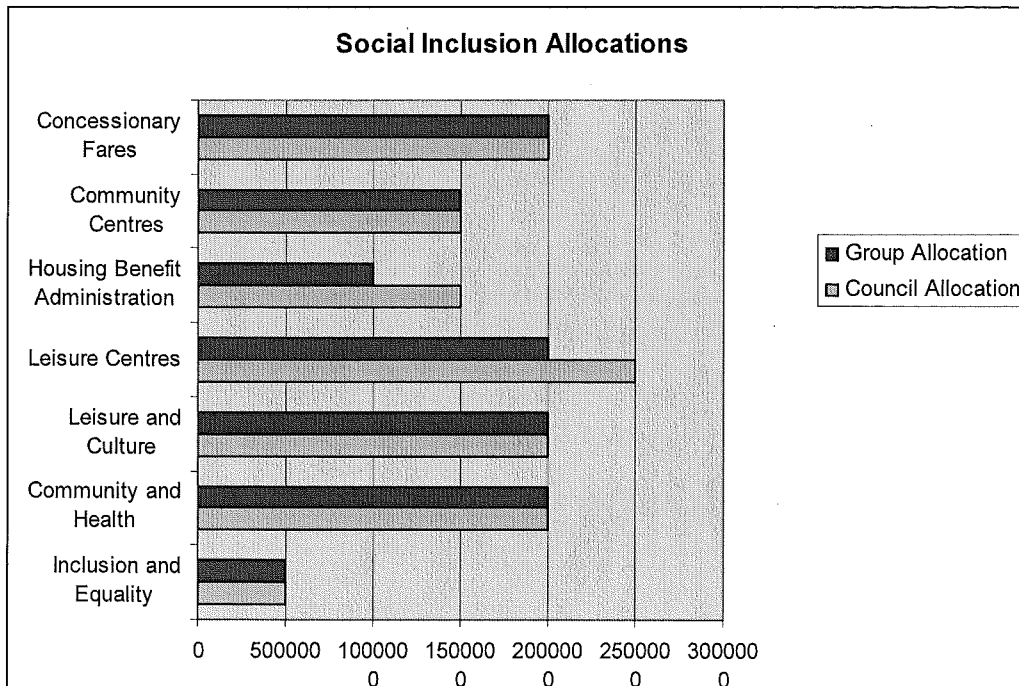
The group's allocation for this priority is shown in Fig 2.

In general, the group were in agreement with the Council's spending plans within this priority. However, the group would have liked to have seen more information about the services in order to make a properly informed decision. One prominent feature was that the group's own budget came in below the Council's, showing cuts in spending on leisure centres and housing benefit administration.

The group had debated whether health advisory schemes should be run by the Council, and considered that in general the local PCT would be in a better position to run these projects. On the same topic the group noted that there appeared to be an overlap between the schemes, in that several of them

Fig. 2: Allocation for reduce Inequality through social inclusion

		Council Allocation	Group Allocation
Inclusion and Equality	Social Inclusion, Equalities, Shopmobility and Disability	500,000	500,000
Community and Health	Play & Youth Development, Children's Holiday Activities, Local Food Development Officer, Health Promotion, Blackbird Leys Well Being Hub Project, Community Grants, Healthy Living Fund, Active Community Sports, Family Support Project ('05/06), Neighbourhood Renewal Services, Community Recreation	2,000,000	2,000,000
Leisure and Culture	Leisure & Culture Business Support, Leisure Central Management & Support, Pool Facilities, Leisure Centres, Ice Rink, Sports Development, Leisure & Culture Externally Funded/Partnerships, Housing Benefit Administration, Concessionary Fares, International Exchange, Museum & Carfax Tower, Arts, Dance & Events, Culture Management	2,000,000	2,000,000
Leisure Centres	Leisure Centres	2,500,000	2,000,000
Housing Benefit Administration	Housing Benefit Administration	1,500,000	1,000,000
Community Centres	Community Centres	1,500,000	1,500,000
Concessionary Fares	Concessionary Fares (Mandatory)	2,000,000	2,000,000
		12,000,000	11,000,000



appeared to be doing effectively the same job. The group felt they didn't know enough about the functions and geographic coverage of the schemes to recommend cutting any one scheme in particular, but nevertheless felt this area should be reviewed to ensure that health advisory functions are not being repeated by different projects.

Of the actual cuts made, the group felt that leisure centres could be run more efficiently. This followed the previous discussion on leisure services and one group member spoke of a need for 'lean thinking' on this issue. Again it was generally felt that there wasn't a need to bring in private management, but that the Council had to look at their use of current facilities:

'The issue should be about the best use – for example is it worth running sessions at nine in the morning that no one goes to?'

'The use (of leisure centres) should be diversified at slow times'.

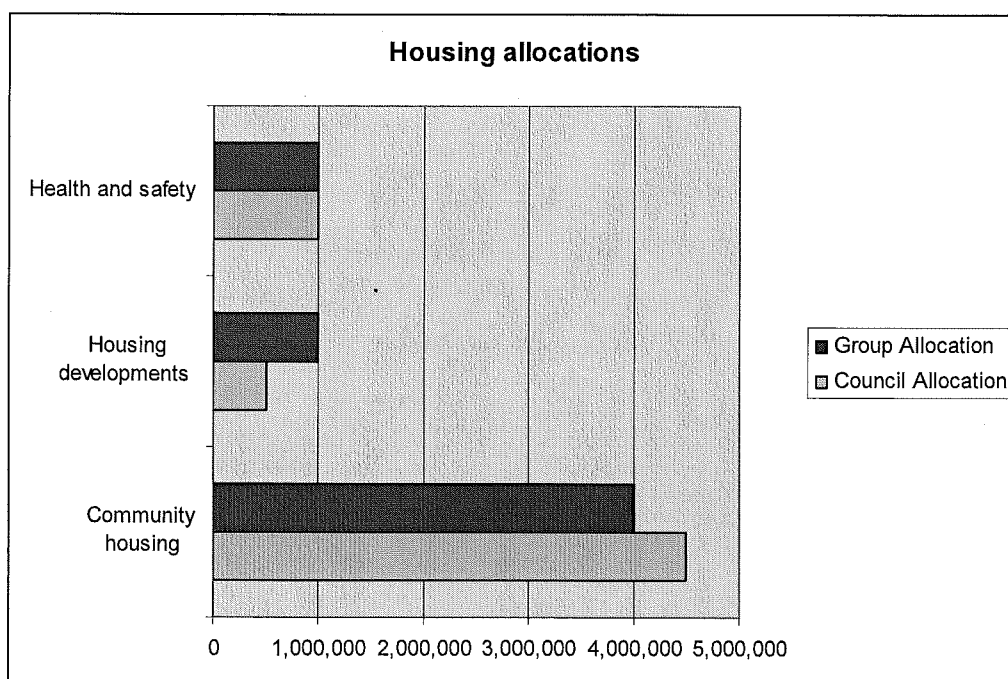
The cut in spending on housing benefit administration sprang from a feeling in the group that a more efficient way to administer this benefit could be found. In particular, the options of direct payment and direct debit were mentioned, as an alternative to expensive counter service.

3.2 More housing for Oxford, better housing for all

The group's allocation for the provision of housing is shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3 Allocation for more housing for Oxford, better housing for all

	Council Allocation	Group Allocation
Community housing	4,500,000 (£2,500,000 mandatory)	4,000,000
Housing developments and grants	500,000	1,000,000
Occupational and residential health and safety	1,000,000	1,000,000
	6,000,000	6,000,000



The housing priority had fewer choices than many of the others, but nevertheless provoked discussion. In the priority setting exercise most of the Jury supported increased funding for housing, and whilst looking at the priority in detail the group used their full allocation of funds.

The group were keen to make clear that they wanted money to be invested in housing development, particularly affordable housing. They took £500,000 away from community housing, and noted that this money could be saved through

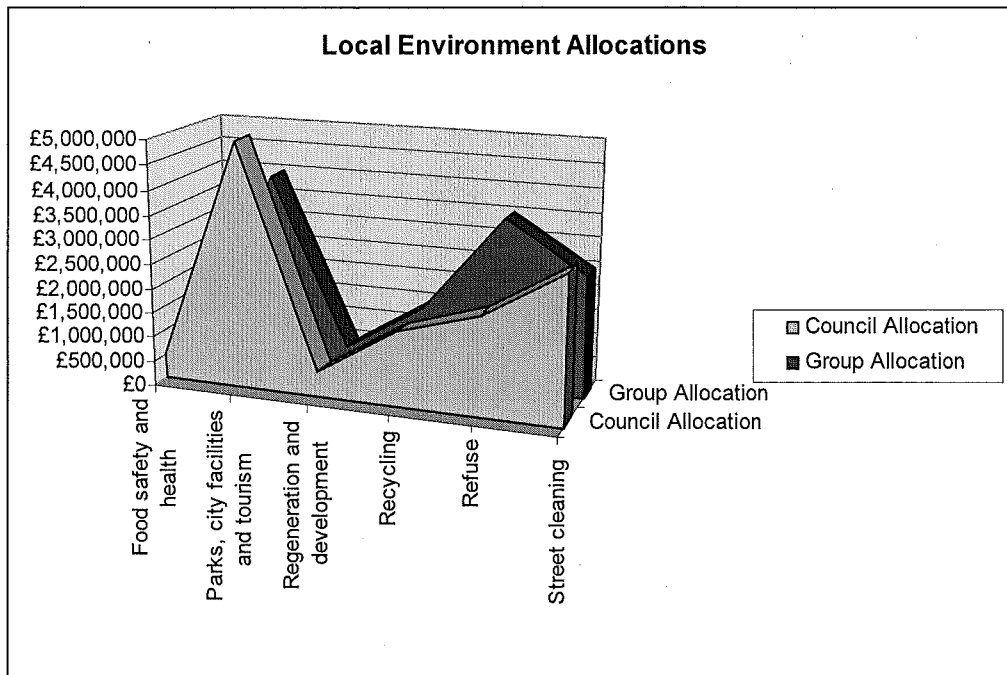
better administration and IT provision. However the group did feel that the definition of community was unnecessarily broad and should be tightened. It was felt that the residential and occupation health and safety budget was needed.

Moreover, it was felt that the provision of grants to make homes more environmentally-friendly should be encouraged and included in their raised allocation. The general message was that Oxford needed more affordable homes and opportunities for homes to become greener (for example by installing solar panels or better insulation).

3.3 Improve the local environment economy and quality of life

Fig. 4 Allocation for Improve the local environment economy and quality of life

		Council Allocation	Group Allocation
Food safety and health	Food Safety, Public Health	£500,000	£500,000
Parks, city facilities and tourism	Parks Management & Administration, Parks, Countryside, Allotments, Burial Services, Recycling, Refuse, Markets, Off Street Parking, Street Cleaning, Street Furniture, Public Conveniences, Tourism Expenses, Tourist Information Centre	£5,000,000	£4,000,000
Regeneration and development	West End Regeneration, Oxford Inspires, Economic Development, Sustainable Development, LSP/Community Strategy, Partnerships, Enterprise Centre	£500,000	£500,000
Recycling	Recycling	£1,500,000	£1,500,000
Refuse	Refuse	£2,000,000	£3,500,000
Street cleaning	Street Cleaning, Burial Services	£3,000,000	£2,500,000
		£12,500,000	£12,500,000



The group used the full available amount of money for their allocations in this area. However there were significant reallocations.

Firstly, the budget for parks was cut by a million pounds and the group highlighted the areas that they felt could be included. They felt that public conveniences weren't necessary, given that most people would not use them:

'Most people just go in McDonald's instead!'

The need for continued support for tourism was also debated, the feeling being that tourists would come to Oxford regardless. Other members of the Jury disagreed with this position, considering that tourism into Oxford should not be seen as inevitable.

The group also voted to cut back on street cleaning. This was not because they felt that street cleaning was necessarily deserving of a cut, but because they felt that the local environment could be preserved through different means. They suggested increasing the regularity of refuse collection on environmental grounds. More street bins, in particular recycling bins, would also help to make the street cleaner.

The recycling system was also discussed in some depth:

'Am I the only one who thinks that the recycling is really good?'

The response to this question revealed that most of the group supported present arrangements, but felt that more could be recycled in the City centre. In addition, they felt that shops in the centre should be made to reduce packaging.

3.4 Reduce and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour

The group's allocations for this priority are shown in Fig. 5.

In the area of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, the group used the full amount of money available, although this was considerably less than the other priorities. Allocations to particular service areas were notably different from those produced by the Council.

The areas that received more money from the group were substance misuse and benefit investigation. With regard to substance misuse, the group upped funds from £50,000 to £250,000, believing that this could have an effect on crime prevention as much crime and anti-social behaviour was caused by addictions. There was some debate as to the correct method of treatment, but it was agreed that tackling addictions would be beneficial for the City.

Members of the wider Jury questioned whether this function would not be better handled by health organisations and some suggested that the County's social service department would be best placed to tackle this issue.

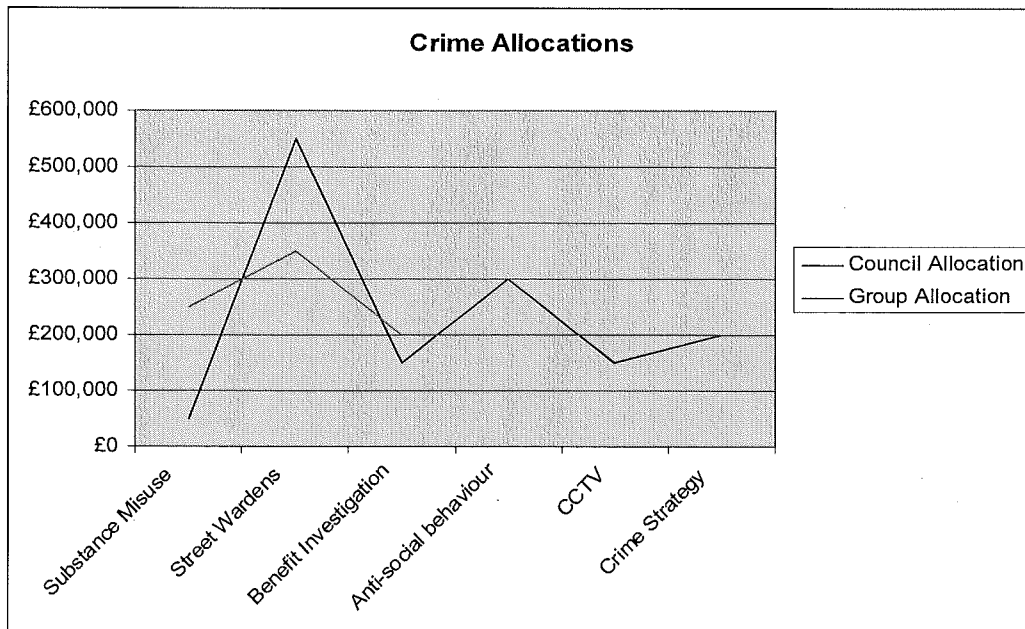
Benefit investigation was supported as the group felt that fraud was unfair on taxpayers and other claimants. However, they would like to see evidence that it was needed and producing results before agreeing to continue with the increase in the future.

Of the cuts made, the largest occurred in the budget for street wardens. The group were unsure about what street wardens did, how they differed from Community Support Officers and whether they were needed or did a good job. Accordingly, the group would have liked to have seen evidence that street wardens were needed before committing money to them.

Other budget cuts were achieved in the area of anti-social behaviour. The group did not expand the reasons for this, but earlier discussion in the Jury had focussed on whether this was an appropriate function for the Council, or whether it would be better suited to the Police

Fig. 5 Allocations for reduce and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour

		Council Allocation	Group Allocation
Substance Misuse	Substance Misuse	£50,000	£250,000
Street Wardens	Street Wardens	£550,000	£350,000
Benefit Investigation	Benefit Investigation	£150,000	£200,000
Anti-social behaviour	Anti-social Behaviour Order, Anti Social Behaviour Programme (Home Office)	£300,000	£200,000
CCTV	CCTV	£150,000	£200,000
Crime Strategy	Crime Strategy (Inc PCSOs), Target Hardening	£200,000	£200,000
		£1,400,000	£1,400,000

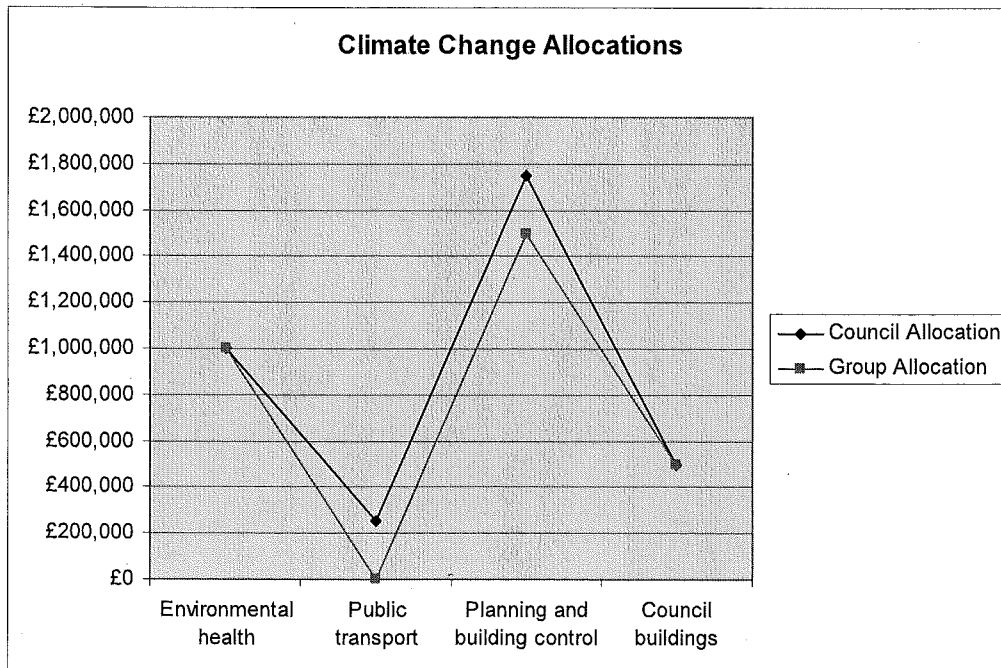


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3.5 Tackle climate change and promote environmental resource management

Fig. 6 Allocation for Tackle climate change and promote environmental resource management

		Council Allocation	Group Allocation
Environmental health	Environmental Health Support & Development, Environmental Protection	£1,000,000	£1,000,000
Public transport	Park & Ride, Public Transport, Gloucester Green Bus Station, Highways (Residual), Oxford Waterways	£250,000	£0
Planning and building control	Planning, Building Control (Ring Fence), Building Control (Other)	£1,750,000	£1,500,000
Council buildings	Design Team, Building Design & Construction, Property Maintenance (Part)	£500,000	£500,000
		£3,500,000	£3,000,000



The group cut the budget here by £500,000, advocating that the Council should recapture this money through charging the private sector. This provoked some debate within the Jury.

The group cut the £250,000 public transport allocation completely. One member noted that this covers a number of different services, but referred to the Park and Ride schemes which were being subsidised by the City Council for their part of the operation (the parking), whilst the private bus companies presumably make a profit. The member felt that Park and Ride schemes should be 'cost neutral'. In this case the idea of the Council subsidising a private company was not deemed to be acceptable.

The Jury were unsure how to tackle this. Although several members suggested giving the Council control of the bus service, there were no other concrete solutions. In other areas it was suggested that the Council should try to make more money from public transport, for example through charging the bus companies to use bays in the bus station in a similar way to airlines paying airports for take-off slots.

A second cut was made in planning, where the group felt that the Council were absorbing the costs of private developers. They noted that the developers should make up the shortfall. A member of the Jury mentioned that in large developments developers make contributions through supplying infrastructure, rather than money, but it was felt that developers could afford to raise their contributions.

3.6 Be an effective and responsible organisation providing value for money services

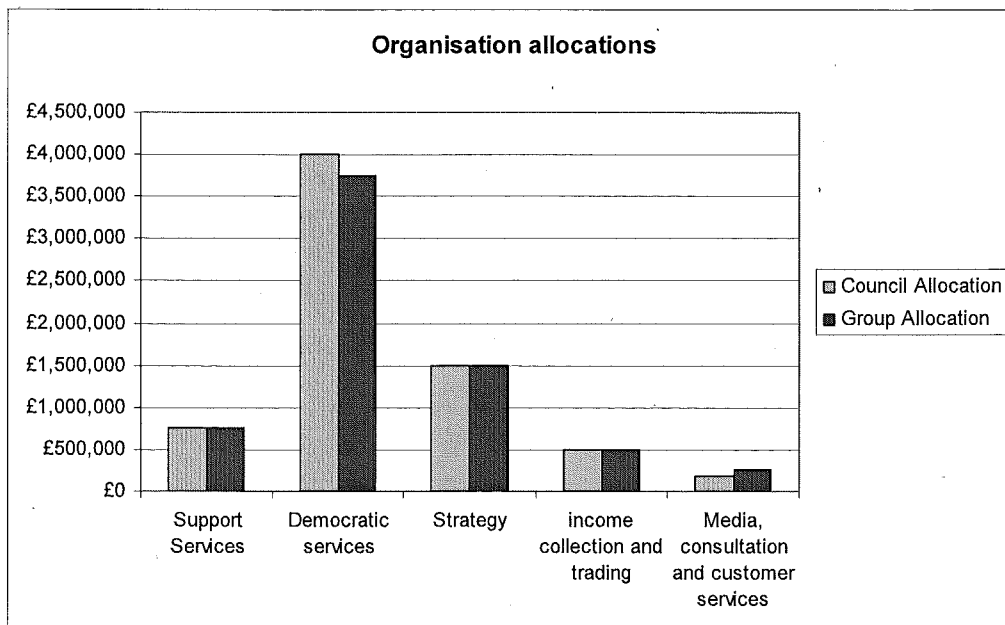
The allocations for this area are shown in Fig. 7.

In this area there was a slight decrease in spending recommended by the group. In general they felt that the Council allocations were correct.

The one cut that this group did propose was in democratic services. The group noted that this should be specifically targeted at spending on elections, which they felt should be simpler and cheaper. The group also rounded up the budget for media, consultation and customer services, specifically singling out events such as the Citizens' Jury.

Fig. 7 Allocation for be an effective and responsible organisation providing value for money services

		Council Allocation	Group Allocation
Support Services	Finance & Asset Management, Legal Services, Business Systems, Facilities Management, Environmental Health General Management	£750,000	£750,000
Democratic services	Area Co-ordinators, Committees (including area committees) Members services, Election Services, corporate and democratic development	£4,000,000	£3,750,000
Strategy	Strategy and review team management, Strategic policy, Job Evaluation, Emergency planning	£1,500,000	£1,500,000
income collection and trading	Motor transport trading account, engineering trading account, Income and collection	£500,000	£500,000
Media, consultation and customer services	Media, Communications and Consultation, Customer services	£180,000	£250,000
		£6,930,000	£6,750,000



One area that did provoke some debate was area committees. The group were unsure as to how useful they were and although they did not change the budget, this issue was picked up by the wider Jury:

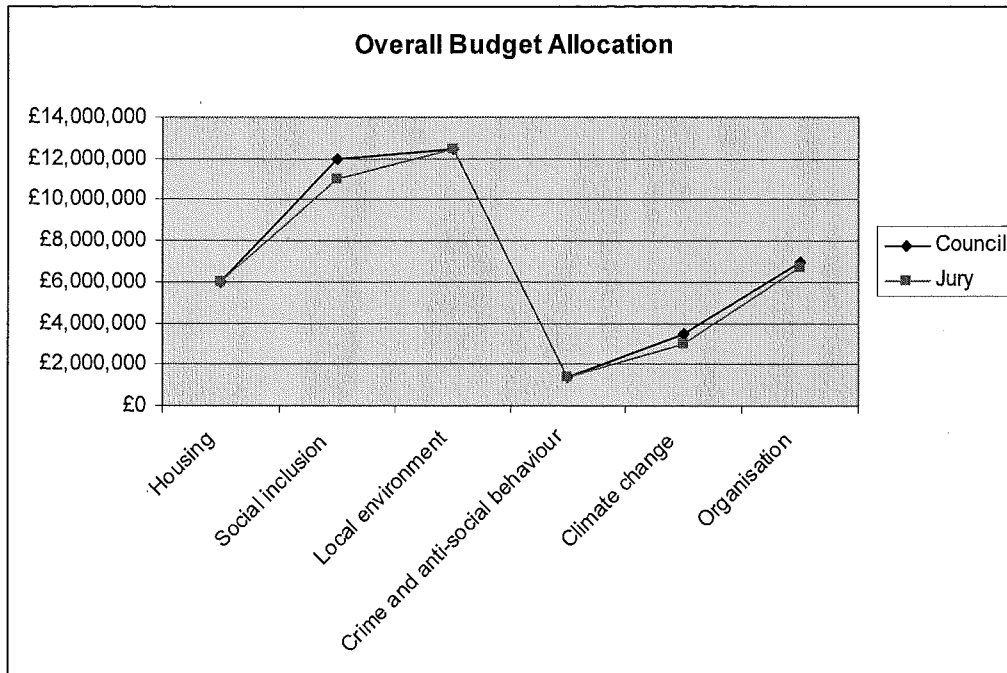
'There are residents' committees and Parish Council's already'

There was some feeling that this could be another area in which roles were duplicated, where there were 'too many cooks'. However, some Jury members noted that such committees moved decision making and planning closer to local people. One member of the Jury appeared to sum up the feelings of the group, saying that whilst in principle the committees were a good idea, it was important that all groups knew the extent and limits of their role and their responsibilities.

3.7 Final Budget

The final budget allocations for the six priorities are listed below. It should be noted that these were produced by three separate groups and therefore do not represent an agreed total by the whole Jury. Nevertheless three of the priorities received an overall budget cut:

	Council	Jury
Housing	£6,000,000	£6,000,000
Social inclusion	£12,000,000	£11,000,000
Local environment	£12,500,000	£12,500,000
Crime and anti-social behaviour	£1,400,000	£1,400,000
Climate change	£3,500,000	£3,000,000
Organisation	£6,930,000	£6,750,000
	£42,330,000	£40,650,000



4.0 Recommendations

At the end of the session each member of the Jury was asked for their impression of the day and a recommendation to take to the Council. Several members of the Jury noted how much they had learnt through the day and were pleased with how polite and supportive Jury members had been to each other. In particular, several members felt they had gained a greater insight into the difficult juggling act that the Council has to perform with budgets, as well as the difficulty in separating the responsibilities of the City and the County.

Below are some of the final statements:

'Look after older people more. Make an effort to make the City cleaner and safer'

'Make more of effort with how the City looks.'

'The BIGGEST thing is the situation with the buses – they should be under the Council's control'

Other recommendations were:

- Ensuring the improvement of footpaths and cycle paths in the City

- 'One-box' recycling (recycling materials placed in one box and sorted at a later date)
- More recycling bins on the street
- Any overlap between the various health advisory schemes that the Council operates should be investigated.
- Budget exercises such as the one done by the Jury should be shown to young people in schools to teach them how the Council works.
- Ensure that services offer 'best value' – one Jury member noted that they had spent as much time discussing efficiency as they had budgets.

5.0 Conclusions

In general the Jury were concerned to ensure that the money they allocated to each area would be used efficiently, and several comments from the group highlighted this point. This emerged in discussion of the differences between the two exercises. While three members of the Jury cut the overall budget by two million in the priority setting exercise, the Jury generally were far more willing to look at reductions in spending on a service by service basis.

A number of different themes emerged from the day:

- The Jury were concerned about potential overlaps in Council services. This was highlighted in references to health advisory schemes, but also mentioned in connection with the role of area committees.
- Area committee's were discussed by the Jury, with some supporting the expansion of local democracy that they could provide and others questioning whether they had any real influence, or whether they complicated the decision making process unnecessarily.
- Regarding transport, the Jury were worried that the Council could be seen as subsidising private companies with public money. This was a particular concern for the Council's Park and Ride schemes.
- The Jury had no objection to private companies being brought in to manage public services (such as leisure centres) in principle, but they felt that the Council should first rationalise their own arrangements and that they would like to see evidence that the private sector would actually improve things before committing to any decision. Moreover, there was a