

**To: City Executive Board**

**Date: 1 July 2009**

**Item No:**

**Report of: Head of City Development**

**Title of Report: Economic Downturn**

### **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** To provide City Executive Board Members with information regarding measures being developed and implemented to help address the prevailing economic downturn.

**Report approved by:**

**Finance: Chris Kaye**

**Legal: Emma Griffiths**

**Director of City Regeneration: Mel Barrett**

**Recommendation(s):**

**It is recommended that Members note the current actions to help mitigate against the impact of the economic downturn upon Oxford's businesses and Oxford's workforce, and provide feedback in relation to these actions, and the preferred content and format of a regular update to City Executive Board.**

### **Introduction**

This report highlights actions being taken to help mitigate against the impact of the economic downturn upon Oxford's businesses and Oxford's workforce.

A similar report was presented to the Partnership and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2009. The minutes of which are attached as Appendix 4 for information.

The Scrutiny Committee were interested in receiving more information about both "Train to Gain" and the Oxfordshire Learning and Skills Partnership and the skills gap.

“Train to Gain” was originally introduced by the Government two years ago as an incentive for businesses to further develop the skills of their workforce, and thereby achieve gain. In April 2009 responsibility for “Train to Gain” was transferred from the Learning and Skills Council to SEEDA and there is now a period of change being worked through prior to a new approach to helping skills development being officially in place in August. A further report on “Train to Gain” will be brought before the Executive Board once this change has been clarified and is in place.

The Oxfordshire Learning and Skills Partnership was established last year in order to bring together the main bodies involved in addressing learning and skills issues across the County. The Partnership is serviced by the secretariat of the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership. Membership currently comprises some 34 bodies. The City Council is a partnership member and is represented by the Strategic Director for Regeneration, Mel Barrett, and the Corporate Partnerships Manager, Val Johnson. As the learning and skills agenda is wide, four groups have been set up to identify learning and training needs, and to identify actions to help increase the take-up of learning and training opportunities. The groups are “Improving Educational Output”, “Employment Skills Board”, “Back to Work”, and “Community Learning”.

It is proposed that future City Executive Board meetings will be updated with current economic indicators, and information on how the ‘credit crunch is affecting Oxford business, its workforce, and its residents.

### **Responding to the economic downturn.**

Since November 2008, and arguably before this, the emergence of an economic downturn has become abundantly clear. Most economists are of the view that the downturn will prevail until at least mid 2010, with a following period of recovery likely to be protracted. As the information in Appendices 1 and 2 help to show, Oxford is clearly being affected, although perhaps not yet as badly as other places. Given this situation a range of City Council supported measures/initiatives have been identified.

There are a number of reports available from various national and regional bodies, including the LGA and IDEA, which refer to a range of actions being considered and put in place or developed by Local Authorities in response to the economic downturn. The IDEA report ‘No Council of Despair: local leadership in a recession’, which can be accessed via [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk), is an example. The table below shows the main areas of focus/initiative being referred to by these reports and where the City Council relates to them.

Activity/Focus type	City Council activity/focus?	Detail
<b>LA as a business</b>		
Prompt payment of bills	yes	See activity 1
Assisting business rate payers	yes	See activity 2
Assisting business tenants	yes	See activity 3
Local procurement opportunities	yes	See activity 4
Meet the Buyer events	yes	See activity 5
Assisting housing tenants	yes	See activity 7
<b>LA as enabler</b>		
Assisting homeowners	yes	See activity 6
Enhanced benefits advice	yes	See activities 6 and 7
Intelligence sharing/gathering	yes	See activity 9
Help for businesses	yes	See activities 10 and 11
Financial help for businesses	yes	See activities 18 and 19
Business engagement	yes	See activities 12, 13, and 17
Help for the redundant, and unemployed	yes	See activities 8, 11, 14, 15, and 16
Support for community and voluntary group self-help	yes	See activities 14 and 15
Working in partnership	yes	See activities 7,8,12,13,17, 18 and 19
Planning for recovery	yes	See activities 20, 21, and 22
<b>LA as employer</b>		
Helping with skills development	yes	See activity 23
Providing redeployment support	yes	See activity 23
Supporting a minimum wage	yes	See activity 23
Changing from agency to direct employment	yes	See activity 23

The City Council is responding to the economic downturn through a combination of maintaining commitment to services and projects already in place, and introducing or developing new measures/initiatives. These activities provide either help or support for businesses, or for redundant employees and others out of work, and those needing training or skills. They include:

1. Council business policy: prompt payment

To help local businesses the City Council is committed to prompt payment of local suppliers, with invoices paid within 10 days.

2. Council business policy: flexibility with business rates

The City Council is adopting a more flexible stance in helping businesses who might be experiencing difficulties in meeting their business rate payments, with phasing of payments being offered. See Appendix 3. We are offering businesses that are experiencing financial difficulty a 12 month period to pay rather than the statutory 10 monthly instalments. The criteria we are using to make this decision is:

- i. no previous history of late payment/non payment
- ii. makes payment by Direct Debit.

### 3. Council business policy: flexibility with commercial rents

The City Council is adopting a flexible approach towards the payment of commercial rents on Council owned business units in order to assist tenants, e.g. allowing payment of rent monthly in advance to ease cash flow rather than quarterly in advance providing an administrative charge is made to compensate the Council for a loss of interest.

### 4. Procurement Strategy

The City Council Procurement Strategy is providing clearer opportunities for local businesses to secure contracts to supply the Council with goods and services that it needs. In the current climate the capacity of the City Council to provide contracts for small businesses can be key to their survival.

Currently 30% of the City Council's annual expenditure on goods and services is sourced locally. The intention is to increase that percentage over time, making particular use of events such as Meet the Buyer.

### 5. Meet the Buyer events

Meet the Buyer events involve a number of organisations and companies coming together in one place and being available to potential suppliers to come along to and interact with a view to supplying goods or services. In recent years this has built upon work carried out in conjunction with Business 2 Business Exhibitions in reaching out and engaging directly with businesses. The City Council's procurement team staged a joint meet the buyer event with the County Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, which was very well attended.

These events are linked to the City Council's Procurement Strategy as they represent an extra means of local businesses securing business with the Council.

### 6. Assisting homeowners

The City Council is able to refer homeowners in the latter stages of losing their homes to the Citizens Advice Bureau and then to a Housing Association as a result of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme introduced nationally. This scheme allows a Housing Association to purchase the property and rent it back to the occupant. The City Council has had two enquiries about the scheme. At a national level the Government are considering changes to it in view of the low take up.

A leaflet has also been produced to signpost people to sources of information and advice regarding debt management and mortgage advice.

In terms of the impact on homelessness the City Council is not experiencing a significant change. The level currently is consistent with that over the last two years, with interviews running at between 250 and 300 per month.

#### 7. Assisting Council housing tenants

The City Council is arranging money advice classes for its own tenants to help them with financial concerns and debt management.

The City Council is introducing the Enhanced Housing Options Project which will offer an 'holistic' service to people in housing need including tenants providing signposting to other agencies and resources that would improve their access to education, training and employment opportunities. This will be progressed through joint working with a number of agencies, including Job Centre Plus.

#### 8. Redundancy advice leaflet

A redundancy leaflet has been produced as a Customer Services leaflet providing information regarding key agencies for people to contact when made redundant or expecting redundancy, together with other agencies able to advise re starting a business. The information is available via the City Council's web-site.

#### 9. Intelligence sharing

In response to BMW announcing the intention in February to release 850 agency staff the Oxfordshire Task Force was established under the chairmanship of SEEDA. The purpose of the Task Force has been to share intelligence regarding businesses affected by the downturn across the County, redundancies arising, and to identify actions that would help mitigate against the situation. Agencies represented on the Task Force include SEEDA, the Learning and Skills Council, Job Centre Plus, the City Council, the County Council, Oxfordshire Economic Partnership, Business Link, and Government Office for the South East.

#### 10. Oxford Enterprise Centre.

The Enterprise Centre, located in St Clements, is owned and managed by the City Council. This provides 18 units for small start-up businesses to rent for a three-year period. It is a key commitment of the City Council in helping to stimulate local business formation and job creation and in the current climate provides an opportunity for those wishing or needing to make a fresh start following redundancy.

#### 11. Business mentoring support

The City Council, together with other Local Authorities across Oxfordshire, provides financial support to Oxfordshire Business Enterprises (OBE) that provides mentoring to small business start-ups. OBE calls upon a number of

advisors able to give their time freely and offer advice and help based on their own business experience. In the current climate this type of support is invaluable with redundant workers considering starting a business as a possible option.

#### 12. Joint Business Breakfasts

The City Council has introduced joint business breakfast meetings with the County Council to meet Oxford's businesses and local economy stakeholders on a frequent basis, four times a year. This is intended to enhance engagement with the business community, consider matters of mutual interest and concern, and help build an on-going relationship. It will help in terms of better appreciating what the downturn means to businesses and how the two Local Authorities might be able to respond.

#### 13. Joint Business Visits

Visits to individual businesses in the City by the Leaders of both the City and County Councils are being arranged. This is a further element to enhancing business engagement by providing an opportunity for both Councils to learn more about particular businesses, and for those businesses to gain a better insight not only as to what their Local Authorities are responsible for but what they might be in position to help with as well.

#### 14. Community and Voluntary group help : Credit Unions support

The City Council provides grant funding support towards Credit Unions in Oxford which are groups of people who organise themselves so that they can provide each other with cheap credit or goods exchange. In the current climate it is likely that more people will be attracted to the help that credit unions offer.

#### 15. Community and Voluntary group help

Information regarding how the City Council provides other support for community and voluntary groups will be presented at the meeting.

#### 16. Job Clubs

One of the Oxfordshire Task Force's key actions was to quickly enable the setting up of job clubs in Oxford in order to support BMW workers with a range of advice, information, and help available from a range of agencies. This assistance was complemented by employment and retraining opportunities being offered by employment agencies and training providers.

Two job clubs were arranged and staged at Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre during March. The City Council provided use of the Leisure Centre free of charge and officers were on hand to help the running of each job club.

Agencies attending the job clubs included Job Centre Plus, TABS Training, Monarch Education, Champion, Office Angels, Business Link, Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action, City Council Housing and Council Tax service, Oxford and Cherwell Valley College, Oxfordshire Adult Learning, Ethnic Minority Business Service, and Trading Standards.

Job clubs had initially been introduced in Oxfordshire in Banbury with the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership looking to encourage the roll out of the model adopted across the County. The BMW announcement meant the focus was quickly directed to Oxford.

Job Centre Plus is awaiting the outcome of a funding bid to Government in order for the job club initiative to be properly managed locally and maintained at intervals across several County town locations, including the City.

#### 17. Refocusing City Centre management.

The City and County Councils have refocused the city centre management service following the unsuccessful attempt to establish a Business Improvement District. The service will concentrate on providing an effective interface between the two Councils and City Centre businesses, residents, and visitors.

This refocused approach to city centre management is intended to help businesses in more direct practical ways by acting as a clear point of contact, and helping with communication, helping to resolve issues, and helping involvement with major initiatives and other changes which may be mooted concerning the City centre. As improvements to city centre management are developed the Council will consider how lessons learnt may be applied for the benefit of district centres.

#### 18. Working closely with SEEDA

The City Council will continue to maintain excellent working relationships with SEEDA in order to help maintain the Regional Development Agency's focus on Oxford.

#### 19. Working closely with Business Link

The City Council is working more closely with the local Business Link service, known as Ngage, in providing better access to a range of support and advice to businesses and those thinking of starting a business. This includes free health check sessions arranged in Ramsey House where businesses can see Business Link advisers, disseminating information about 'Beat the Credit Crunch' seminars, providing a 'Guide to Doing Business in Tough Times', and advice regarding the government's 'Real Help with Finance' announcement. Business Link have produced a 'Surviving the Downturn' guide which identifies sources of help and funding packages available. This information can be accessed via [www.businesslink.gov.uk/southeast/support](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/southeast/support)

Business Link provides an enterprise gateway service to support people from under-represented or disadvantaged communities wishing to consider self-employment or setting up their own business. An outreach worker is able to use space available at Blackbird Leys Community Centre. The service is being extended to Barton and Rosehill. Links have also been made to East Oxford Action, Leys Learning Community, Oxford Women's Training and Job Centre Plus. The service provides one-to-one support, runs a Business Starters Network, and has developed training workshops around business skills.

## 20. A new Enterprise Centre

A bid has been put forward to secure Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement funding towards the construction of a new Enterprise Centre in East Oxford. The Enterprise Centre development would provide additional business floorspace in the City able to accommodate small business start-ups. Space available for small businesses is generally in short supply and this project will help address this, but in a way which encourages such businesses to grow and help generate employment opportunities locally. Government policy is geared towards promoting enterprise and entrepreneurialism, and the prevailing economic circumstances greatly reinforce the importance of this.

## 21. Promoting Oxford

SEEDA is looking at what different parts of the south east region can offer and accommodate in terms of maintaining economic competitiveness and sustaining economic growth, and as part of this Oxfordshire Economic Partnership is now looking at how the County overall can be better promoted to stimulate further investment.

Although key development aspirations are emerging to both the south (the Science Vale) and to the north of the County (in Bicester and Banbury), Oxford itself is in a position to offer opportunities to inward investors. The four principal locations of Oxford West End, Oxford Science Park, Oxford Business Park, and the Northern Gateway, can accommodate significant investment seeking a high profile address.

The City Council, as a member of the Partnership, will be working with the OEP in how promotion of Oxfordshire is developed.

Promoting Oxford as an investment location will trigger further job opportunities and help mitigate against jobs and businesses being lost due to the economic downturn.

## 22. Northern Gateway

The Northern Gateway is expected to become available for development to commence within the next two to three years when the process of securing planning approval has been fulfilled. This will then offer a new employment-



led development capable of accommodating significant investment and the potential for a large number of job opportunities.

### 23. City Council as employer.

The City Council will be exploring the scope for taking on apprentices under the Government's new drive to encourage apprenticeships, and its offer of financial help towards this. This will allow the City Council to demonstrate a direct contribution to the need to generate local job opportunities and skills.

The City Council is also offering redeployment support to those Council workers affected by organisational change. It has also introduced the Oxford Living Wage, with the recent contract with Fusion Leisure to run the City Council's Leisure Centres being an example of where this has applied.

The City Council is also seeking to move away from the employment of agency workers to engaging permanent employees where possible.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1	Oxford's economy
Appendix 2	Unemployment and claimant information
Appendix 3	Business Rate Information
Appendix 4	The minutes of the Partnership and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 29 <sup>th</sup> April 2009

**Name and contact details of author: Steve Daniels**  
[sdaniels@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:sdaniels@oxford.gov.uk); Mark Jaggard [mjaggard@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:mjaggard@oxford.gov.uk)

**List of background papers:**

**Version number: 4**

### Oxford's Economy

- A highly qualified and growing working age population that has recently included migrants from Eastern Europe. Large amount of commuting into the city.
- Health, education, manufacturing, tourism, retail, high-technology industries.
- Large public sector but a private sector that accounts for a greater proportion of gross value added (GVA).
- Fewer small employers than the national average.
- Rising unemployment due to recession.

#### What does the working population look like?

Area	No qualifications	Lower level qualifications	Higher level qualifications
Oxford	28.7%	30.8%	40.6%
Oxfordshire	28.7%	42.7%	28.6%
England	37.2%	42.3%	20.5%

- Grown to 108,900 (from 94,300 in 2001)
- Around 30,000 full-time students
- Net inward commuting amounts to an additional 26,000 workers.
- Workforce boosted by migrants from Eastern Europe – 5,500 since 2004.
- Highly qualified resident workforce.

## Employment and economic activity

	16+					Working Age (16 - 59/64)				
	Total in employment	Employment rate	Economic Activity Rate	ILO Unemployment	Unemployment Rate	Total in employment	Employment rate	Economic Activity Rate	ILO Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
England	24,643,000	60.2	63.5	1,365,800	5.3	23,551,700	74.5	78.8	1,346,400	5.4
South East	4,174,000	63.1	65.8	184,100	4.2	3,961,100	78.6	82.1	180,600	4.4
Oxfordshire	336,400	66.2	68.6	12,600	3.6	316,500	79.3	82.4	12,600	3.8
Cherwell	73,500	64.7	67.9	3,600	4.7	69,500	80.5	84.7	3,600	4.9
<b>Oxford</b>	<b>78,500</b>	<b>63.5</b>	<b>67.3</b>	<b>4,700</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>75,000</b>	<b>70.6</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>4,700</b>	<b>5.9</b>
South Oxfordshire	65,200	65.0	67.1	2,100	3.1	61,300	80.3	83.0	2,100	3.3
Vale of White Horse	65,000	70.2	70.9	!	!	60,600	86.2	87.1	!	!
West Oxfordshire	54,200	69.3	71.2	1,500	2.8	50,200	83.2	85.8	1,500	3.0

Source: Nomis, Annual Population Survey July 2007-June 2008 (latest available data at local authority level)



## **Which industries provide jobs?**

Oxford has a larger than average number of jobs in the service sector – most notably, 40% of all employee jobs are in the public administration, education or health sectors – the large universities and hospitals are the biggest drivers of this. The second largest employment sector is financial and business services, accounting for 24% of jobs. Manufacturing accounts for 9% of jobs, half of which are at the BMW car plant.

<b>Employee jobs, 2006<sup>1</sup></b>				
	<b>Oxford (employee jobs)</b>	<b>Oxford (%)</b>	<b>South East (%)</b>	<b>Great Britain (%)</b>
<b>Total employee jobs</b>				
Full-time	69400	65.4	69.3	68.9
Part-time	36700	34.6	30.7	31.1
<b>Employee jobs by industry</b>				
Manufacturing	9300	8.8	8.8	10.9
Construction	2000	1.9	4.5	4.8
Services	94400	88.9	85.2	82.9
Distribution, hotels & restaurants	17100	16.1	24.6	23.5
Transport & communications	3800	3.6	6	5.9
Finance, IT, other business activities	25300	23.9	24.1	21.2
Public admin, education & health	44200	41.6	25.4	26.9
Other services	4000	3.8	5.2	5.3

Although not specifically identified in these figures, the voluntary and community sector (VCS) is also an important employer. It is estimated that 6% of the South East workforce are employed in the VCS<sup>2</sup>, and an estimate by Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action suggests that there around 3,000 full-time and 8,000 part-time jobs in the Oxford VCS.

<sup>1</sup> ONS annual business inquiry employee analysis

<sup>2</sup> Hidden Asset, RAISE, 2005

## What is the size of the Oxford economy?

Gross value added by industry	Oxford		South East	UK
	millions			
	£	%	%	%
Public (and other) Services	1310	32.0%	20.7%	24.1%
Financial & Business Services	1261	30.8%	37.2%	33.6%
Manufacturing	568	13.9%	12.0%	14.4%
Distribution, Hotels & Catering	486	11.9%	16.8%	15.7%
Transport & Communications	230	5.6%	7.6%	7.7%
Construction	99	2.4%	6.2%	6.3%
Mining & Utilities	56	1.4%	2.0%	2.0%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	2	0.0%	0.7%	1.0%
Total Gross Value Added	4093	--	--	--

- GVA measures the contribution of an activity to the economy – used in the measurement of the UK's gross domestic product
- Public sector accounts for 42% of jobs but only 32% of Oxford's GVA

## How many enterprises are there?

Enterprises by industry	Oxford (%)	Oxon (%)	South East (%)	England (%)
Property & Business Services	37.9	35.8	35.9	31.3
Public Admin & Other Services	12.6	10.2	8.9	8.0
Retail	12.0	8.0	9.1	10.7
Hotels & Catering	10.9	6.3	5.8	6.7
Production	7.4	7.2	7.3	8.2
Construction	7.2	12.1	13.2	12.0
Wholesale	3.0	5.0	5.8	6.4
Education	2.9	1.3	0.9	0.8
Motor Trades	2.0	3.6	3.8	4.0
Health	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.6
Transport	1.3	2.2	3.2	3.4
Agriculture	0.5	6.5	4.0	6.2
Finance	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.6
Post & Telecommunications	0.3	0.6	0.9	1.0

- There are 3,000 VAT registered enterprises in Oxford – over a third in property & business services

## How large are Oxford's employers?



The vast majority of businesses employ less than 5 people, but Oxford has fewer small firms than the regional or national average.

### **Enterprises by size of group (all industries)**

	0-9 employees	10-49 employees	50-99 employees	100-249 employees	250 + employees	Total no: firms
<b>Oxford</b>	84.7%	11.2%	1.2%	1.9%	1.1%	2,850
South East	89.0%	9.0%	0.9%	0.6%	0.5%	252,450
GB	88.1%	9.7%	1.0%	0.7%	0.5%	1,607,675

(Source: ONS 2004)

There are relatively few large firms, with only 3% of Oxford firms having over 100 jobs. Only 1.7% of companies in Oxford employ over 200 people, yet these account for 49% of the City's workforce.

## Who are Oxford's largest employers?

<b>Larger Employers</b>		
	<b>Estimated number of employees</b>	<b>Business Description</b>
Oxfordshire County Council*	18,700	Local Authority
University of Oxford	-	University
BMW (UK) Manufacturing Ltd	4,000	Car assembly
Oxford Radcliffe Hospital NHS Trust	-	Health care
Oxford Brookes University	2,900	University
Oxford City Council	1,352	Local Authority
USG Ltd (Unipart Group Company)	1,200	Logistics
Oxford University Press (OUP)	1,200	Publishing
AC Nielsen	750	Market Analysts
Blackwells Publishing	600	Publishing
Oxford Bus Company	560	Transport
Oxfordshire Mental Health Care NHS Trust	-	Health care
Amey	500	Construction/Infrastructure
Oxford College of Further Education	-	Education
Oxfam	770	Charity
Newsquest Oxfordshire	200	Newspaper publishers
Sharpe Laboratories of Europe	110	Display technology R&D
Harley Davidson	100	Motorcycle distribution
Electrocomponents	70	Electronic equipment distrib
MacMillan Publishers	-	Publishing

\* Note that while the County Council is the biggest employer in the County, and is counted against Oxford, a number of their staff are employed across the County.

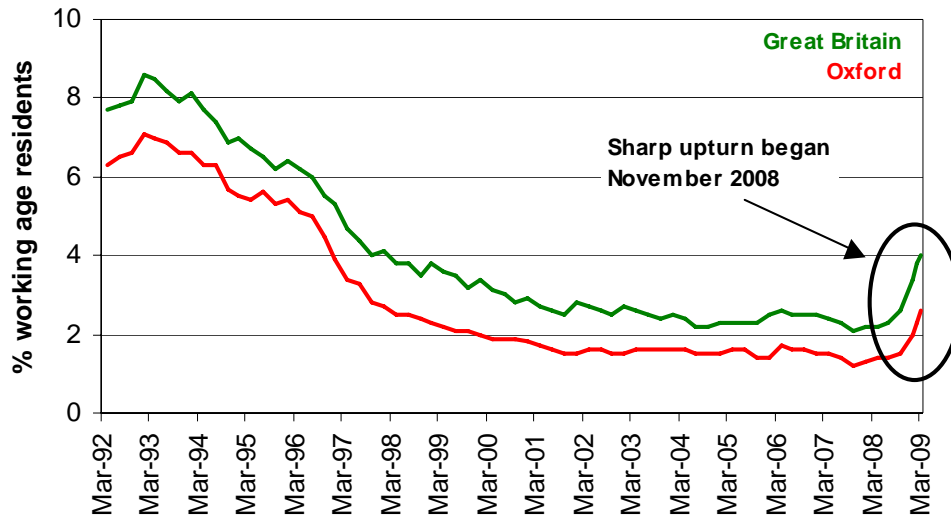
The largest employers within Oxford include the two Universities, the hospital trusts, BMW and Unipart, the City and County Councils, as well as the various publishing firms.

Oxford has the highest proportion of large employers in the County, with 7 of the largest 10. Oxfordshire County Council is the largest (18,700) followed by the University of Oxford (presumably included OUP), third is BMW (4,000) and the Oxford Radcliffe Hospital Trust in 4<sup>th</sup>. Also in the top 10 are UGC Ltd (Unipart), Oxford Brookes University, and Oxford Mental Health Care Trust.



Unemployment and claimant information

**Rising unemployment in 2009**



Source: Jobseeker’s Allowance claimant count, National Statistics

November 2008: **1,800** claimants  
 March 2009: **2,800** claimants  
 Peak in last recession: **6,000** claimants

**Increase in Claimant Count**

Percentage Increase in Claimant Count Feb 2008 - Feb 2009

Rank	District	Claimants Feb-08	Claimants Feb-09	% increase
1	Magherafelt (NI)	283	940	232.2
2	Vale of White Horse	429	1,290	200.7
3	Swindon	1,926	5,726	197.3
4	Kennet	320	948	196.3
5	East Dorset	299	880	194.3
16	West Oxfordshire	376	1,027	173.1
30	South Oxfordshire	553	1,429	158.4
48	Cherwell	865	2,148	148.3
<b>307</b>	<b>Oxford</b>	<b>1,474</b>	<b>2,550</b>	<b>73.0</b>

Source: Nomis

## Claimant Count

Claimant Count February 2009								
	Level				Rate (%)			
	Men	Women	Total	+/- previous month	Men	Women	Total	+/- previous month
UK	1,087,707	372,133	1,459,840	177,195	5.5	2.1	3.9	0.5
South East	103,098	39,242	142,340	22,564	3.9	1.6	2.8	0.4
Oxfordshire	6,235	2,209	8,444	1,538	2.9	1.1	2.1	0.4
Cherwell	1,539	609	2,148	444	3.4	1.5	2.5	0.5
<b>Oxford</b>	<b>1,954</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>2,550</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>
South Oxon	1,033	396	1,429	252	2.5	1.1	1.8	0.3
Vale of White Horse	958	332	1,290	261	2.6	1	1.8	0.3
West Oxon	751	276	1,027	239	2.3	1	1.7	0.4

Source: NOMIS, Claimant Count, not seasonally adjusted

## Claimants per notified vacancy

### Number of Claimants per Notified Vacancy

	Claimant Count	Notified Vacancies	Claimants per Vacancy
October 2008	1634	1,283	1.27
November 2008	-	1,490	-
December 2008	-	1,127	-
January 2009	2208	556	3.97
February 2009	2550	619	4.11
Oxfordshire February 2009	8444	2,900	2.9

Source: Oxfordshire Data Observatory

### Claimant in-flows, Claimant off-flows, and Claimant Count

<b>Oxford Job Centre</b>							
<b>claimant in-flows by Occupation</b>	<b>Oct-08</b>	<b>Nov-08</b>	<b>Dec-08</b>	<b>Jan-09</b>	<b>Feb-09</b>	<b>Mar-09</b>	<b>Apr-09</b>
Managers and Senior Leaders	50	65	50	60	105	70	70
Professional Occupations	50	60	45	45	65	60	60
Associate Professional	55	80	55	65	120	85	95
Administrative and Secretaries	80	100	95	80	215	145	125
Skilled Trades Occupations	65	90	105	125	190	150	135
Personal Services Occupations	45	45	30	35	70	65	50
Sales and Customer Service	75	115	90	65	175	165	130
Process, Plant and Machine	60	80	75	95	145	145	105
Elementary Occupations	180	245	200	200	395	295	255
	<b>660</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>755</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>1490</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>1040</b>

<b>Oxford Job Centre</b>							
<b>claimant off-flows by Occupation</b>	<b>Oct-08</b>	<b>Nov-08</b>	<b>Dec-08</b>	<b>Jan-09</b>	<b>Feb-09</b>	<b>Mar-09</b>	<b>Apr-09</b>
Managers and Senior Leaders	35	50	20	30	60	55	60
Professional Occupations	35	40	40	25	50	50	50
Associate Professional	55	50	35	45	75	75	70
Administrative and Secretaries	75	80	60	55	135	120	105
Skilled Trades Occupations	60	65	50	40	105	115	95
Personal Services Occupations	45	40	15	25	35	40	40
Sales and Customer Service	80	95	65	40	105	105	115
Process, Plant and Machine	40	50	30	30	85	80	95
Elementary Occupations	165	200	115	110	220	215	210
	<b>590</b>	<b>665</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>880</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>835</b>

<b>Oxford Job Centre</b>							
<b>Claimant Count by Occupation</b>	<b>Oct-08</b>	<b>Nov-08</b>	<b>Dec-08</b>	<b>Jan-09</b>	<b>Feb-09</b>	<b>Mar-09</b>	<b>Apr-09</b>
Managers and Senior Leaders	125	135	165	195	230	245	255
Professional Occupations	120	145	150	175	185	200	210
Associate Professional	185	210	225	240	280	295	325
Administrative and Secretaries	260	275	310	335	410	435	460
Skilled Trades Occupations	240	270	325	415	490	525	565
Personal Services Occupations	115	120	130	140	175	200	215
Sales and Customer Service	290	310	335	360	430	490	505
Process, Plant and Machine	180	205	255	315	380	435	450
Elementary Occupations	745	790	875	970	1140	1215	1265
	<b>2260</b>	<b>2465</b>	<b>2780</b>	<b>3150</b>	<b>3740</b>	<b>4060</b>	<b>4250</b>

Source: ONS claimant count with rates and proportions

## Working Age Benefits

### Oxford April 2009

The Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) is payable to people under pensionable age who are available for, and actively seeking, work of at least 40 hours a week.

	Oxford	Oxford	South East	Great Britain
	(numbers)	(%)	(%)	(%)
	2,914	2.7	3	4.1
Males	2,247	3.9	4.2	5.8
Females	667	1.3	1.7	2.2

Source: ONS claimant count with rates and proportions

### Oxfordshire April 2009

The Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) is payable to people under pensionable age who are available for, and actively seeking, work of at least 40 hours a week.

	Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire	South East	Great Britain
	(numbers)	(%)	(%)	(%)
	9,633	2.4	3	4.1
Males	7,116	3.4	4.2	5.8
Females	2,517	1.3	1.7	2.2

Source: ONS claimant count with rates and proportions

## Appendix 3

The City Council's relief that can be applied to Business Rates are:

### **Empty Property Rate Relief**

Business Rates are not payable on properties for the first 3 months that they are unoccupied.

After the initial 3-month exemption, or 6-month exemption in the case of Industrial or Warehouse accommodation, the empty property will be liable for 100% of the basic occupied Business Rate.

### **Small Business Rate Relief**

The Small Business Rates Relief Scheme is available to ratepayers with either:  
One property in England with a rateable value of less than £15,000; or  
One main property in England together with one or more additional properties where the additional property has a rateable value of less than £2,200 and the total rateable value of all the properties is less than £15,000

### **Hardship Relief**

Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 gives the City Council the authority to grant Hardship Relief to remit or reduce the payment of rates for any ratepayer. The billing authority should be satisfied that the ratepayer would sustain hardship if it did not award Hardship Relief, and it is reasonable to grant the relief having regard to the interests of its council taxpayers. There is no budget for Hardship relief, however it would probably only be a minority of businesses that would meet the criteria.

### **Discretionary Relief**

Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, gives the billing authority the power to award Discretionary Relief providing one or more of the following conditions are satisfied:

- i. The property is occupied by an organisation not established or conducted for profit and is mainly used for charitable purposes (whether of that charity or of that and other charities);
- ii. The property is mainly used for philanthropic, religious, educational, social welfare, science, literature or fine arts purposes;
- iii. The property is used for recreation where the occupier is a non-profit club, society or other organisation;
- iv. The property is not an excepted hereditament. An excepted hereditament is one in which all or part is occupied by a billing or precepting authority.

The City Council is required take into account the contribution the organisation makes to the local community and should be satisfied that the organisation is working to meet an identifiable social need.

Rating Authorities have discretion to allow "top-up" relief up to 100% of the full rate bill. 75% of any such relief granted must however be borne by the Authority. Up to and including 2006/07 this Authority did allow 20% top up relief (on top of the 80%). Due to the financial implications to the City Council of granting "top-up" relief, Executive Board in December 2005 agreed that all such relief should be cancelled. 12 months termination of the relief was required to be given, so ratepayers who previously were awarded this relief have had to pay 20% of the net rates since April 1st 2007.

In the savings exercise the Discretionary relief budget for 09/10 was reduced by £30,000. This savings was based on what had been granted in 08/09.

### **Flexibility on NNDR Collection**

A national non-domestic rate payment deferral scheme was announced by the Chancellor on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, for which the legislation is expected in late July 2009. In the spirit of this impending legislation and in common with other local authorities Oxford City Council is offering businesses that are experiencing financial difficulty a 12 month period to pay rather than the statutory 10 monthly instalments. The criteria we are using to make this decision is:

1. no previous history of late payment/non payment
2. makes payment by Direct Debit.

# COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2009

## **64. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The Head of City Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended). Mel Barrett (Director of City Regeneration), Steve Daniels (Economic Development Officer, Oxford City Council) and Bianca Curley (Job Centre Plus) introduced the report and gave further details of both the City Council's and the Job Centre's strategies for dealing with the current economic downturn.

Key issues discussed included the following:-

- The City Council had an innovative scheme to help retailers with their cash flow;
- The City Council provides £1.6million in grant aid to the community and voluntary sector, including a contribution to OCVA to enable it to assist other groups;
- Advice Centres reported that there had been a big increase in bankruptcy cases. It would be helpful if a one stop shop providing a full range of advice, and involving several agencies, could be created;
- Job Centre Plus worked with local colleges to try to match training courses to vacancies. It had observed a worrying upward trend in the number of managerial and skilled people becoming unemployed. Bianca Curley explained how the New Offer would work, and what additional measures had been taken to assist the newly unemployed and encourage employers to recruit new staff. Job Centre Plus was notified of any redundancy involving more than 20 people and was able to offer support via the employer if asked;
- There was concern about workplace skills in Oxfordshire and a likely shortage over the next few years. "Train to Gain" was to be re-launched in an effort to raise its profile;

- The City Council had no flexibility to reduce business rates , however the Head of Customer Services would be asked by Mel Barrett to prepare some advice on payment of business rates;
- Oxford was the 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest growing city in the UK. The challenge was to deal with housing whilst making sure that there was adequate employment to match it. There had been county-wide discussions recently, and it was agreed that new companies needed to come in to Oxfordshire. However, there was no control over the investment decisions of companies;
- The City Council was working with various bodies to explore how the “Learning Communities” work could continue now that the SEEDA funding had ended.;
- Oxford was still in the fortunate position to have many employment opportunities including the University, the Science Park and BMW, and there was a need to grasp opportunities and find the way through the economic downturn.

**RESOLVED that the Committee:--**

- (1) Needed to receive regular information on sectors in which unemployment was growing;
- (2) Would like more information concerning “Train to gain”, including an update on the re launch;
- (3) Requested information on the Oxford Learning and Skills Partnership, and the skills gap;
- (4) Thanked Bianca Curley for he attendance and informative presentation.