

Oxford City Council Corporate Plan 2011–2015

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Foreword from Group Leaders and the Chief Executive

Welcome to Oxford City Council's Corporate Plan for 2011–2015

This Corporate Plan reaffirms the Council's ambition – developed with our partners, including business, community organisations, the health and education sectors and the County Council – to make Oxford a world-class city for everyone. It also reaffirms our plans for transforming the way that the Council performs. We intend to be an efficient and effective council, delivering high quality services and excellent value for money for all our citizens.

Over the last three years we have made significant steps toward realising our ambitions. We have made efficiency savings of around £4m a year. We have improved performance across nearly 70% of our indicators. We have made good progress in delivering our broader aspirations for the city, especially for its more deprived communities. We have delivered the first new council houses in over 20 years, more than halved the number of homeless people in temporary housing and initiated an ambitious partnership scheme to develop 800 new homes in Barton. The City Council has also been awarded the role of Regional Single Homelessness Champion, with £120k of funding in recognition of our work in the field of single homelessness, rough sleeping and youth homelessness. This Corporate Plan sets out details of the progress that we have made across all areas of the Council's work.

Oxford City Council's ambitions remain unchanged. However, the new government has significantly changed the policy and financial contexts in which we are attempting to realise these ambitions.

Policy

The government policy framework that has been in place for the last thirteen years is being dismantled.

Over that period, a national framework of standards for public services was gradually built up, monitored through the independent Audit Commission. The framework was based on the awareness that high national and local standards could only be delivered through strategic partnership working. This is because most of the issues that contribute to poor service and inequality are beyond the control of individual local authorities and public bodies. Planning in these areas needs to cross administrative and sector boundaries and be co-ordinated at a level that is wider than local. Regional Spatial Strategies, for example, were established to set regional priorities for the location of new development, house building targets, economic growth, transport and other infrastructure, and the natural environment.

The new government has abolished regional partnerships and nationally agreed targets. It has also abolished the Audit Commission.

The government is setting out to reduce the role of local governance and to recast the relationship between the individual and the state. The Localism Bill, published in December 2010, sets out the key principles underpinning the Government's thinking. This Bill aims to shift power from local government to local neighbourhoods. The Bill aims to give communities more control over planning and housing decisions. It envisages key areas of service delivery being taken over from local government and run instead by community groups and the voluntary sector.

It is proposed that, as part of the localism agenda, local communities should develop and monitor their own delivery targets across the whole range of services.

Finance

In October, the Chancellor published his Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) for the period 2011-15. The CSR set out a major programme of public spending cuts and local government has been hit hardest of all areas. The full impact of government policy on jobs and services in our city is not yet clear. In terms of the broad picture, though, the CSR has serious implications for Oxford City Council and for the services that we provide to the community.

Oxford City Council's net budget for 2010-11 was £29.1m. As a result of the cuts required by government, the budget agreed by Council in February will reduce the Council's net annual expenditure for 2011-15 to £24.1m. During this time there will be cost increases that we cannot avoid such as salaries, pension costs, and inflation. As a result of these cost increases, the reduction in expenditure will amount to more than £9m by 2014-15.

Preparing the budget for 2011-2015 has been the toughest challenge that this Council has ever faced and the budget that we have produced is not one that any of us - staff, managers, trade unions, or councillors - would have chosen to deliver. In order to achieve the level of budget reduction required by the loss of government grant we have had to make significant savings across all services, increase fees and charges, and refocus service delivery. We have also had to plan for a reduction of around 10% of posts across the Council by the end of 2015.

Our guiding principles in constructing the budget were to:

- protect vulnerable communities, e.g. by improving the quality of Council housing and houses in multiple occupation in the private rented sector; and reducing the numbers of people in temporary accommodation.
- Invest in Oxford's future, e.g. by building new houses; and improving leisure facilities by building a new competition pool at Blackbird Leys.
- Strengthen local democracy, e.g. by developing area committees into more inclusive neighbourhood forums; and ensuring that the Council is open and transparent.
- Provide leadership to the city, e.g. by supporting proactive partnership activities such as the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to create the right environment for economic growth in our area; and the transition to a low carbon economy.

In the light of the circumstances that we face, Oxford City Council has produced a positive four-year budget that protects our core services, particularly those that serve the most vulnerable in our community. The increases in fees and charges that we have levied are modest, and those on income related benefits are exempt from them. We have also minimised redundancies.

We have thought radically about efficiency and how to deliver more with less. Provided that the Government does not impose further cuts in future years, this budget will provide a stable basis for continued progress in service provision for our city.

The way forward

The hallmark of the Council's approach to delivering its ambitions has been effective management, focus, consistency, and a refusal to be knocked off course by external events. We are sticking with this approach.

We remain committed to our core ambition of building a world class city for everyone. We have refocused the priorities that underpin our core ambition in the light of the needs of our city in this changed environment and the budget adjustments that we have had to make. The City Council's priorities for the next four years are:

- A vibrant and sustainable economy
- Meeting housing need
- Strong and active communities
- Cleaner greener Oxford
- An efficient and effective council.

Within these priorities, we will be focusing on the following key deliverables. We will:

- Complete the construction of a competition standard pool
- Reduce our city centre office footprint by 25%
- Complete our playground modernisation project
- Open a new Customer Services Centre in St Aldate's that deals with enquires about all Council services
- Complete the Old Fire Station project in order to encourage skills development by homeless people and to improve the City's cultural offer
- Be open and transparent in all our activities.

Conclusion

The Government's policy is still evolving as it works out the details of its announcements on localism, planning, housing, and housing finance.

This Corporate Plan sets out some of the opportunities and challenges that will face our city over the next four years and our plans to ensure that Oxford continues on its path to becoming a world class city for us all.

Please read this plan and let me know what you think about our plans for the future. Your views are very welcome.

Our City

Oxford is one of the most photographed, filmed, and written about cities in the world. The enduring images are of historic Oxford and these images are vital to our flourishing tourist industry because it is historic Oxford that tourists visit in millions. It is, however, only one part of our city's story. Oxford at the beginning of the 21st century, while still with an historic core and remarkable green spaces, is a far cry from its media stereotype.

Contemporary Oxford is also an economic hub in a world-class knowledge economy in central Oxfordshire. Our sub-region underpins the prosperity, not just of Oxfordshire, but of the south east of England and beyond. In addition to being a major tourist destination, Oxford is also a health and retail hub and the cultural centre of the region.

In marked contrast to other parts of the county, Oxford is ethnically and culturally diverse with the third highest minority ethnic population in the south east. It is not just diverse but also— because it has the highest proportion of students in England and Wales—youthful, mobile and self-renewing.

Dynamic urban environments provide great opportunities and also difficult challenges. Oxford is no exception. The city is a densely packed urban space— covering only 29 square miles—with very high levels of housing density. There are severe pressures on housing stock, with large concentrations of homes in multiple occupation and significant numbers of homeless and other vulnerable groups. The recession has increased the number of people waiting for social housing from 4,500 to nearly 6,000. Despite a slight fall in house prices, the ratio of wages to prices remains very high. The challenges appear set to intensify as capital funds for social housing have been cut and housing benefits are being reduced. As a result there are likely to be more people homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Some areas of the city suffer multiple levels of deprivation—low skills, low incomes, and poor housing. It is also these areas which have been hit hardest by the rise in unemployment during the recession and where the cuts in public services will be felt most. Other challenges remain - central Oxford in particular suffers from traffic congestion and pollution. This dynamic mix of opportunities and challenges is at the heart of contemporary Oxford.

Your Council: who we are and what we do

Oxford City Council is the democratically elected body for Oxford. In partnership with others, we provide a wide range of services for approximately 150,000 residents, 83,000 people who work in Oxford, and around nine million people who visit the city every year.

Oxford City Council is a District Council, with responsibility for running local planning, housing, Council Tax collection, housing benefits, business rates, environmental health, licensing, electoral registration, refuse and recycling collection, leisure services and parks, economic development, social inclusion, community cohesion, street wardens and park rangers, markets and fairs, tourism and cemeteries.

The Council is composed of 48 Councillors, representing 24 wards (two Councillors for each ward), with half elected every two years. Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their ward. The overriding duty of Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their Ward constituents.

Oxford City Council has a constitution that sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made, and the procedures that are followed to ensure that the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

Oxford City Council's current political make-up is as follows:

Party	Number of Seats
Labour	26 seats
Liberal Democrat	16 seats
Green	5 seats
Independent Working Class Association	1 seat

The Labour Group form the political administration on the City Executive Board.

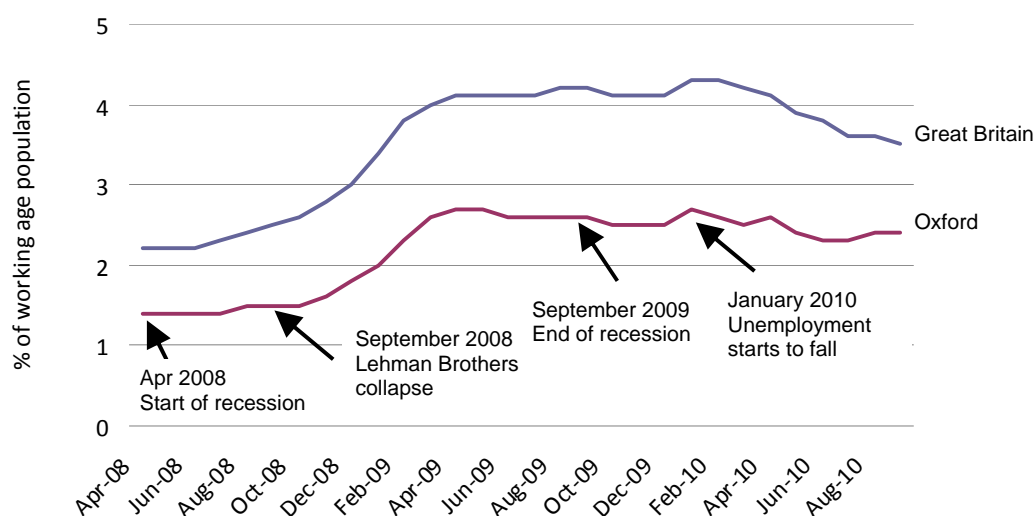
A vibrant, sustainable economy

A strong local economy, supported by innovative and effective education and training, and accessible by all is at the heart of vibrant and sustainable communities. Oxford is a global brand for education, health, bioscience, information technology, publishing, the motor industry and tourism. Around 3,400 businesses provide 108,000 jobs and seven of the ten largest employers in the Oxfordshire sub-region are within Oxford.

Local employment

For all its strengths, Oxford has not been able to escape the impact of the 2008/09 recession, as is illustrated by the number of people claiming unemployment benefit or Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

% of working age population claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, Oxford and GB

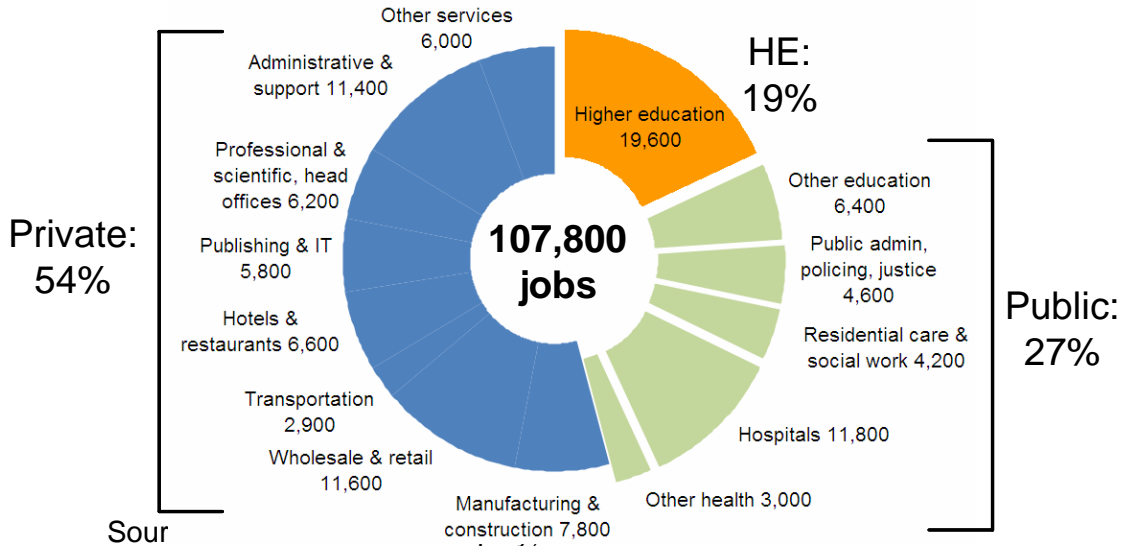


Source: Department for Work and Pensions

At the start of recession in April 2008 around 1,600 people were claiming JSA in Oxford. During the recession the number of people claiming rose to nearly 3,000 before falling back to around 2,600 at the time of writing. This means another 1,000 people are out of work as a result of the recession. Although unemployment has not risen as high or for as long as in previous recessions, there is evidence that part-time employment has been growing at the expense of full-time employment and that incomes from employment have been falling. However, Oxford has the unusual distinction of being one of the only cities where the number of new cities created during the recession was greater than the number of business closures.

The city – in common with all other English cities - now has to face the effects of severe public spending cuts over the next four years. There has been little change in the total number of jobs in Oxford over the last 30 years. As manufacturing has declined, these jobs have been replaced by employment in the health, education and service sectors. 89% of employees now work in services, including 46% in public administration, education and health. This chart shows the breakdown of Oxford's jobs by industry.

Employee jobs in Oxford 2008 by industrial classification



The distribution of employment in Oxford is of particular concern in the light of the government’s Comprehensive Spending Review. The cuts announced in that review mean that a large number of jobs directly or indirectly linked to public spending will disappear over the next five years.

Rebalancing the local economy

The challenge for Oxford in returning to the number of pre-recession jobs, let alone generating new employment, cannot be underestimated. To achieve this there is need for significant business development and growth within our constrained boundaries. It is important that the local authorities work in partnership with the business community to promote the growth of private sector jobs.

The Government has supported the creation of a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for Oxfordshire. LEPs are intended to be private sector led partnerships involving local authorities, education, and the business community. A total of 56 bids were made and Oxfordshire was one of the 24 that were successful. Oxfordshire's bid was built around the unique concentration of high-tech businesses and academic input from the universities. The LEP’s ambition is to set out a clear vision for the longer-term future of Oxfordshire’s economy, setting the framework in which local authorities will operate. Its initial work priorities are to: address skills deficiencies; support innovation and growth; provide business support; and to secure investment for infrastructure. The City Council will be an active participant in the LEP on behalf of its local businesses and residents.

We will continue to promote the regeneration of the West End, in partnership with the County Council and other key stakeholders and we will engage with the new owners of the Westgate Centre to support an appropriate expansion. Working with the County Council, we will seek external funding to bring forward improvements to the rail station and Frideswide Square.

The Government's White Paper on Local Growth published in October 2010 and the Localism Bill published in December 2010 provide potential opportunities for the Council to support the local economy. The Government proposes new borrowing powers against predicted growth in locally raised business rates that could enable investment in major infrastructure and regeneration projects. It also proposes changes to business rate rules that could be used to support local businesses. These opportunities will be explored over the coming months.

Oxford City Council has a long-standing commitment to small and medium-sized businesses and over the next twelve months we will be aiming for 40% of the Council's total spend to be with this sector. We are fast-tracking payment of invoices to this sector and we have set a target of 10 days. Our procurement team also works proactively with Business Link, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and the voluntary and community sector to encourage better engagement with the public sector. The team works with the small business community so that they are better able to understand public sector tendering requirements. The City Council's Meet the Buyer events are always well attended.

Tourism

It is estimated that over nine million tourists visit the city each year and – whatever the exact figure – it is clear that tourism plays a key part in the local economy. We are aiming for the future to improve the value rather than the quantity of tourism. In order to facilitate this we have set up with partners a Destination Management Organisation, *Visit Oxfordshire*, to improve the management and marketing of our tourism offer in Oxford and throughout Oxfordshire. This will include improving the physical environment, increasing the number of hotels, and working in partnership with tourism businesses and other stakeholders. The new company will merge with Oxford Inspires, Oxfordshire's cultural partnership to ensure that there is a close link between the city's exciting cultural offer and the development of tourism.

The UK cultural and creative industries are the most successful in Europe. They now make up 7.3% of the UK economy and are growing at 5% per year – almost twice the rate of the rest of the economy. Oxford is known throughout the world as a city of culture and one of the key aims of *Visit Oxfordshire* is to maximise the role that culture can play in Oxford's tourism offer.

The City Council is planning to install a new pedestrian wayfinding system in the city centre. This will support the development of the city centre economy by making the many attractions in the city centre more obvious to visitors and thereby increasing footfall on less obvious routes. Destinations to be signposted will include business locations, tourist attractions and other places of interest. The new signage will be implemented during 2011-12.

City Centre

The city centre is at the heart of Oxford's vibrant night-time economy and the City Council has been working to improve the city centre experience. In November 2010, the Association of Town Centre Management awarded the prestigious Purple Flag to Oxford. This award is based on an assessment of crime rates, hygiene standards and the quality and range of public spaces and visitor attractions. It also requires evidence of a strategy for the management of the area based on research and a successful multi-sector partnership. Oxford is one of only six towns and cities to win the award this year.

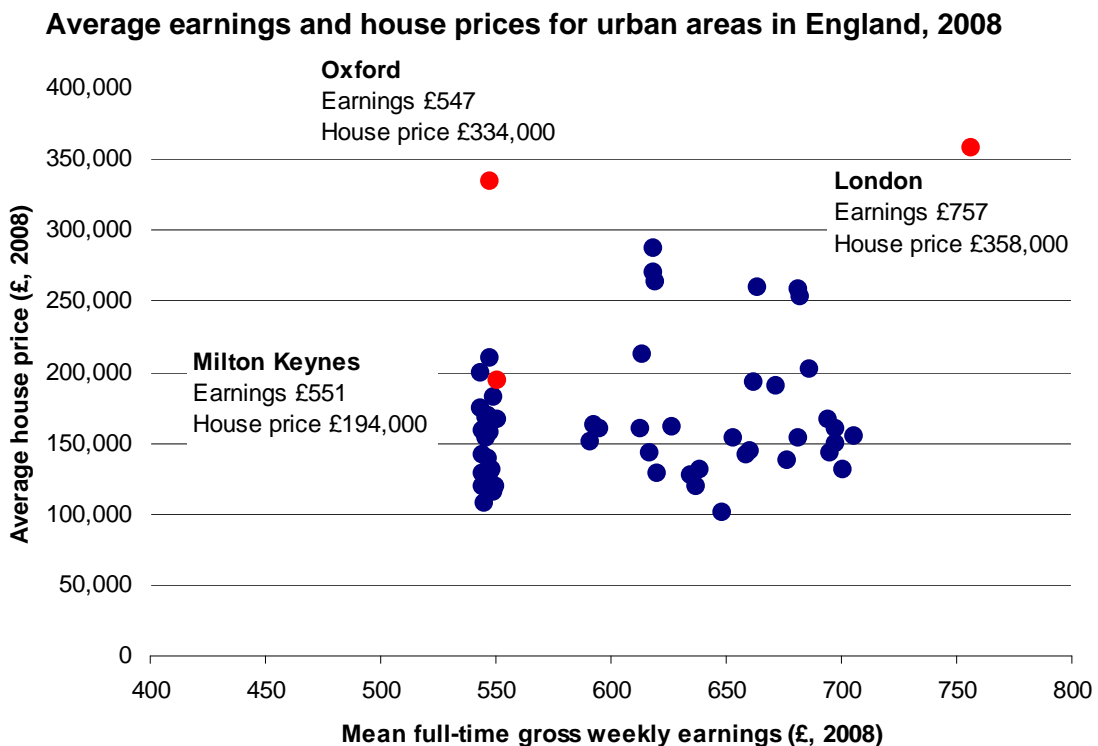
More than 40,000 readers of Conde Nast's *Traveller* magazine recently voted Oxford the second best tourist destination in the country after Edinburgh. They also voted Oxford as the country's cleanest city.

Measures	2011/12	2015/16	Notes
Number of visitors to the TIC.	500,000	500,000	Our aim is to improve the quality rather than the quantity of tourism. This measure will enable us to track peaks and troughs and their causes.
% of spend with local business.	40%	42%	
% of top 20 employers who agree that the Council is business friendly.	75%	80%	Top 20 list currently being compiled.
Number of training places and jobs created through Council apprenticeships and capital investment projects.			Baseline currently being established

Meeting housing need

There is a growing housing crisis in Oxford and working to increase the provision of affordable, high quality housing is a key priority for the Council and its partners.

The population is growing, as is the number of households requiring housing (up from 45,000 in 1991 to 54,000 in 2008). Oxford is the least affordable city in the UK in terms of housing. Average house prices are much higher in Oxford (£374,000 in September 2010) than nationally (£250,000 in September 2010) and owner-occupied housing is increasingly out of the reach of people on lower incomes. Average house prices (in Oxford) are now more than twelve times higher than annual incomes. This poor affordability puts severe strain on the social housing sector, with over 6,000 households in need on the housing register, and homelessness - though much improved - is over twice the national average.



Source: Department for Communities and Local Government

Building new houses

Over recent years, we have increased both the quantity and quality of affordable housing. 1300 new affordable homes were built in the city from 2004 to the end of 2010. As a result of our strong track record, the Council was successful in winning government funding of £4m to complete construction of 58 new Council houses in Rose Hill and Littlemore. We are building on the findings of our innovative affordable housing select committee to improve the pace of change with partners. As a result of the Council's strong local leadership and influencing skills, we have delivered the first new council homes in over 20 years and started the process of finding a partner to develop 800 new homes in Barton. Future funding from the Housing and Communities Agency to support genuinely affordable housing is less likely.

Future housing grant is to be targeted through Housing Associations, and will be useable only on properties let under the government's proposed new 'affordable rent' model where rents are set at 80% of the local market rent and tenancies are for a set period rather than the traditional social rent/lifetime tenancies model. This is not a model that will meet the needs of families on the Council's waiting list.

Improving housing standards

We are improving the quality of existing homes. As at December 2010, the Council has brought all of its own homes up to the national Decent Homes Standard. We are also committed to improving housing in the private rented sector. Oxford has one of the highest proportions of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) in the country – with more than 1 in 5 of the population living in an HMO. The private rented sector is a valuable source of housing for many people who are vital to our economy, including students, young professionals and migrant workers. It can, however, be open to abuse from poor landlords.

For this reason the Council has been one of the most active in the country in taking enforcement action where the regulations for HMOs are breached. This strong enforcement stance will continue. As a result of concerted lobbying by a number of councils, including Oxford, the Government in April 2010 agreed to amend existing legislation so that local authorities can introduce compulsory HMO licensing schemes. In the next twelve months and beyond, the City Council will be making full use of these new powers and will be encouraging landlords and agents to become accredited. We aim to ensure that houses in multiple occupation are managed safely and responsibly and that the character of neighbourhoods is protected. We are also aiming over the next twelve months to bring the change of use of a normal house to a house in multiple occupation within planning control.

Reducing homelessness

We have continued to reduce homelessness. The number of people in temporary housing has plummeted from 1,100 in 2004 to 162 in December 2010. We continue to focus on preventing homelessness and helping people who are sleeping rough to get into settled accommodation. The City Council has been awarded the role of Regional Single Homelessness Champion, with £120k of funding in recognition of the work that we have been carrying out in the field of single homelessness, rough sleeping and youth homelessness.

Proposed changes to Local Housing Allowance, which will come into force from April 2011, are likely to place additional pressures on housing and homelessness in the city. Government plans to restrict the maximum Local Housing Allowance that can be paid to properties in the cheapest 30% of the local market will severely restrict the housing options for many households. As the 'local' housing market includes much of the lower rental cost housing across rural Oxfordshire, many low income households may be forced to consider moving out of Oxford in order to meet their rent obligations. This pressure will be most severe on households needing a five bedroom property or larger.

In addition, welfare and benefit changes outlined in the government's July 2010 budget and in the Comprehensive Spending Review – for example, reductions in benefit for those claiming Jobs Seekers Allowance for over 12 months - will reduce the available income of many low income households. These pressures will increase over time, as the changes impact on a growing number of households, and as housing costs rise faster than benefits increase.

These changes are likely to increase the demand for housing and homelessness assistance, and also debt and welfare advice services. At the same time, the ability of the Council to respond to this demand - for example, by assisting people into the private rental market - will be further restricted. There is a risk that the downward trend of reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation might not be maintained.

The City Council has used its discretionary powers to make additional top-up housing payments to those at risk of losing their homes. The demands for this additional financial support are likely to increase.

Core Strategy

In December 2010, the Planning Inspectorate approved Oxford City Council's Core Strategy. The Core Strategy sets out and balances the planning and development needs of Oxford up to 2026. It takes forward the Council's commitment to meet housing needs in the city. Approval of the strategy means that Oxford City Council can press ahead with plans for the development of a modern mixed-use employment site at the Northern Gateway (Wolvercote) and the regeneration of some of the city's housing estates. In Barton we are aiming to develop more than 800 houses as well as new community facilities and wider regeneration of the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Measures	2011/12	2015/16	Notes
% of Council tenants satisfied with landlord services.	84%	86%	Last measured by Status Survey in 2008/09 at 82%
Number of individual HMOs subject to agreed licence provisions.	1400	4000	
Delivering a programme of new homes at Barton.			Measurement will be against programme action plan/milestones. These are being developed
Number of households in Temporary Accommodation.	130	50	

Strong, active communities

Oxford City Council is working with a wide range of our citizens and community groups in the city to build strong and active communities. This means communities that are socially cohesive, safe, and free from inequalities. It means citizens who are actively engaged in pursuing their own well-being and that of their communities.

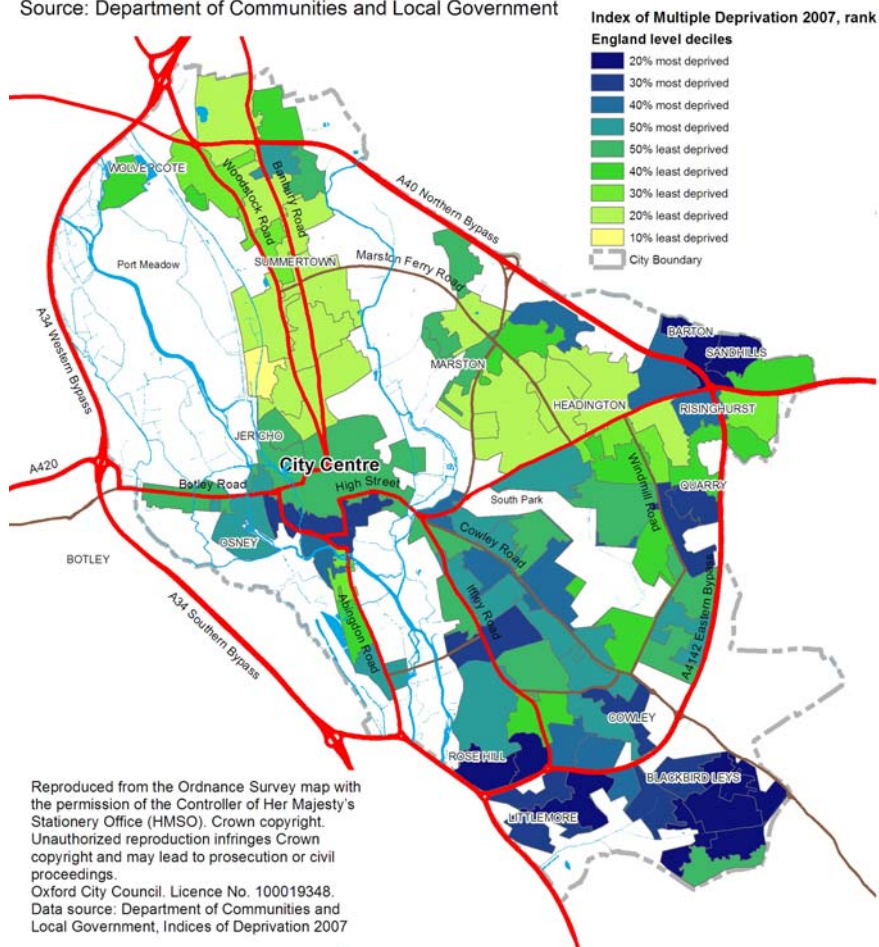
Tackling inequality

In marked contrast to other parts of the county, Oxford is ethnically and culturally diverse, with the third highest minority ethnic population in the South East. Diversity is one of our city's strengths and social inclusion and community cohesion are key goals for the city and the Council.

There are major inequalities in life chances and in life expectancy within our city. Relative to the rest of Oxfordshire, Oxford has high levels of deprivation. The Indices of Deprivation 2007 rank Oxford 154th out of 354, placing it amongst the top half of most deprived Local Authorities in England. Ten of Oxford's neighbourhoods are amongst the 20% most deprived in England. Citizens living in the most deprived areas can expect to live ten years less than those in the wealthiest areas. In some areas, half of all adults have no qualifications and this tends to be linked to lower incomes, poor health and child poverty. There are geographic and demographic pockets of high unemployment in the City. Oxford has over 10,000 working age residents claiming benefits – the highest percentage in the county.

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007, rank

Super Output Areas ranked across England
Source: Department of Communities and Local Government



Our ambition is to reduce the extent of inequality and to improve the lives of the most vulnerable members of our society, particularly young people. 5,800 Oxford children - nearly one in four - live in deprived households and child poverty is a key concern in eight neighbourhoods which feature among the 10% worst affected in England. We strongly support the ambitions set out by the Children's Trust in the Children and Young People's Plan to improve outcomes for young people.

Many of the issues that contribute to inequality in our city are beyond the remit and control of the City Council. Our challenge, therefore, is to encourage our partners in local government, education, and health – despite the decision by the government to abolish the formal partnerships devoted to these issues - to work with us in a co-ordinated way to tackle these deep-seated issues.

The City Council has set out a Regeneration Framework to help shape this work. The Framework focuses on strengthening the economy as a whole and providing training and jobs; regenerating particular geographical areas both physically and socially; and targeting and improving mainstream services so that they meet the needs of disadvantaged groups and communities. Poor levels of attainment in Oxford's schools need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Delivery against the Framework is supported by our work with partners to 'Break the Cycle of Deprivation'. This is a two-year programme aimed at supporting vulnerable families, improving employability and reducing health inequalities in the county.

Engaged communities

The City Council has been a national leader in terms of the innovative ways in which it engages local people in the decisions that impact on their lives. We introduced Area Committees – six across the city - in 2001. Over the next twelve months we will be extending community engagement further by developing our Area Committees into Neighbourhood Forums. Neighbourhood Forums, attended by representatives of key service providers and charities relevant to the neighbourhood will enable problems in the area to be identified and effective solutions developed.

The Government's Localism Bill includes measures to strengthen the role of neighbourhoods in helping to plan new developments in their areas. The City Council will take advantage of these new opportunities for community engagement where it can and will support local residents who wish to get involved.

Consultation with the community is also at the heart of our approach to tackling crime and the fear of crime and Oxford has been a national leader in its approach to community policing. We will continue to build on the huge successes of our Neighbourhood Action Groups through our partnership with the Thames Valley Police.

Volunteering has the potential to benefit those who volunteer as well as the wider community. Oxford City Council will work with its partners to increase the quality, quantity, and accessibility of volunteering in our city. For example, we will be hosting a Volunteers' Fair in the Town Hall in 2011 where different groups will be able to publicize their work.

Over the next twelve months, the City Council will be diversifying the ways in which it communicates with our communities. By making effective use of social media we aim to encourage more interaction with people, about not just their service needs by also about issues of wider concern.

Healthy communities

Our ambition for our leisure services is to deliver the quality of service found in private clubs at an affordable price. We have made significant steps in this direction over the last twelve months.

Following public consultation, our leisure centres at Barton, Blackbird Leys and Ferry have all been revamped as part of a £2.2 million pound make-over. The improvements include a new cycling spinning studio at Blackbird Leys, a brand new gym at Barton and a large extension to the gym at Ferry. The centres have also benefited from refurbished changing facilities and upgraded reception areas. These improvements have been funded from the savings created from transferring the management of leisure facilities to Fusion Lifestyle, a charitable trust. There has been an increase of around 5% in leisure centre membership over the last twelve months.

These developments have helped drive the significant improvements in adult participation in sport in the city. Oxford now has the second highest activity rate in the county, from one of the lowest just four years ago. 27.6 per cent of adults are now taking part in 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport or active recreation three days a week which is a 6.9 per cent increase from 2005 when it was just 20.7 per cent. The Council's ambition is to get even more people involved in physical activity.

To further improve our leisure offer, the City Council is planning to build a high quality competition standard pool in Blackbird Leys. Our ambition is to develop an excellent facility which will help increase participation in swimming within the community, as well as providing a venue where county-standard swimming competitions can be held. The new facility will include an eight lane, 25 metre pool with moveable floor, a teaching pool, the possibility of fun water with jets and sprays, and new changing facilities. The new pool would adjoin the existing Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre. It would replace Temple Cowley Pools and Blackbird Leys Pool, both of which are now in poor condition and are very costly to run. The new pool will further improve our leisure offer and also contribute to the ongoing regeneration of Blackbird Leys.

The government is proposing to increase local democratic involvement in health delivery and in local public health improvement functions. The City Council will contribute actively to these developments.

Creative communities

Oxford City Council believes that culture is a key driver of regeneration in our city. Our aim - working with our partners in the cultural sector - is to increase access for all our communities to vibrant cultural opportunities and events, at affordable prices, in a range of venues and locations. The Old Fire Station – with a new Crisis Skylight Centre at its heart – will open in 2011. It will combine a range of inspirational spaces and facilities for young people and the arts community, training and support for employment in creative enterprises. Pegasus Theatre, Oxford's youth theatre in East Oxford has re-opened after a £4m rebuild. *Dancin' Oxford*, our successful annual dance festival, continues to receive enthusiastic public support and participation and significant funding from the Arts Council.

Oxford's Town Hall is increasingly making its own contribution to the city's cultural offer. This iconic Victorian Grade II* listed building is being successfully remarketed and is now a popular venue for concerts from a diverse range of performers, and events including the Annual Folk Festival and the annual Beer Festival. Oxford Philomusica's regular concerts for children have become sell-out events. In 2011, the

Town Hall will be the main site for Oxford's internationally acclaimed Jazz Festival. Improvements over the next twelve months and beyond will include integration with the Museum of Oxford and the addition of a quality retail facility and cultural information point.

Safe communities

Crime and the fear of crime have an adverse effect on the well-being of all our communities. As a lead member of the Oxford Community Safety Partnership, Oxford City Council has made significant progress in reducing the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour that are of most concern in the city. Between April and December 2010, total crime fell by 3%, compared to the same period in 2009. Burglary of people's homes fell by 15% and car crime by 11%; they are now at their lowest levels since the 1980s. We have also been successful in stemming the annual increases in violent crime with a reduction last year of 21%.

Our NightSafe scheme tackles the problems of alcohol-related disorder in the night-time economy and its success is one of the key factors that enabled Oxford to obtain the national Purple Flag accreditation for the quality of our city centre. We are also improving co-ordination of the street warden, park ranger, and PCSO (Police Community Support Officers) teams in order to provide more efficient support for our communities.

We use Talkback - our citizens' panel – to survey people's opinions on a range of anti-social behaviour issues. In our 2008 survey young people hanging around the streets was cited as an important concern by respondents. The results of our most recent survey show that we have made progress with this problem which has dropped from second to seventh in terms of people's concerns. This is due in part to our Positive Futures Programme and successful Street Warden Service providing positive activities for young people in deprived areas. The programme diverts young people from crime and anti-social behaviour by providing projects that improve their well-being. The City Council will continue to work with partners to provide free holiday activities for up to 1,000 young people between 5–19 in the most deprived areas of Oxford.

Oxford continues to deliver a highly regarded Neighbourhood Policing Programme. Consultation with our communities remains at the heart of our approach and we address their concerns through our Neighbourhood Action Groups.

The partnership faces challenges in the coming years. The government has made significant cuts to a number of community safety grants. The partnership will also have to respond to the new National Crime Strategy and the introduction of directly elected police commissioners.

Measures	2011/12	2015/16	Notes
Satisfaction with our neighbourhoods.	90%	92%	Place survey result (2008/09) was 83%, the talkback panel (December 2010) gave 89% .
% of the population of Oxford volunteering.	27%	30%	26.60% did unpaid work in Oxford according to the 2009 place survey. The Citizenship Survey for 2008-09 shows that 26% of the national population volunteered formally – through clubs, groups or organisations – at least once a

			month. Formal volunteer numbers have been dropping since 2005.
% increase in the number of adults taking part in sport as measured by Sport England's Active People Survey.	1%	4% (increase of 1% per year)	
Number of young people attending our Holiday Activity programme.	1000	Over 1000	.

A cleaner, greener city

Survey after survey makes it clear that Oxford's citizens place a very high priority on the quality of the local environment. The City Council's objective is to maintain and develop a cleaner, greener Oxford – in the city centre, in our outer neighbourhoods and in all public spaces.

Recycling and refuse collection

The city has made significant improvements in recycling and refuse collection over the last twelve months. In 2009-10, we market tested our recycling and waste service in order to make the service more efficient and to improve customer satisfaction. The city presents particular challenges due to the diverse nature of its population, its high population churn - 25% per annum and –and the large number, (5000) of houses in multiple occupation.

As a result of this market testing exercise, the Council has changed the way it delivers these services. A change in the collection rounds is saving over £200,000 every year. We have expanded our popular weekly food waste recycling programme across the whole city. We are giving householders choice about containers. Wheeled bins, boxes and sacks are all available in order to reflect the different kinds of housing stock in the city. Our improved citywide recycling scheme, based on the collection of commingled recyclables, started in October 2010. The blue wheeled bins that were introduced in October make recycling easier for residents as nearly all recycling materials can be placed into one container. We have also introduced recycling bins into the city centre and ring road.

Our aim is to achieve the best recycling rate for an urban authority and we are making progress in achieving this. Between 2005 and 2006 we recycled just 20% of our domestic waste in Oxford; our recycling rate is now 50%. We are working to further reduce waste and to maximise reuse, recycling and composting, with a long-term goal of reducing land-filled waste to zero. The changes that the Council has implemented will result in savings of over £1m per annum.

Clean streets, neighbourhoods and open spaces

Our Cleaner Greener Oxford campaign – a groundbreaking partnership between the City Council and the *Oxford Mail*, our local daily newspaper - has celebrated its first birthday and has delivered strong outcomes in terms of street cleanliness. We are tackling inappropriate refuse disposal, fly-tipping, littering, dog-fouling, and graffiti through a mix of education and enforcement. We have refocused resources so that we can keep the city centre clean. In 2010 we also issued over 250 Fixed penalty Notices to people caught littering in the city centre. Over 40,000 readers of Conde Nast's *Traveller* magazine recently voted Oxford as the country's cleanest city. In the coming year, we will continue to focus on the city centre but we will also aim to raise street cleaning standards in East Oxford and other neighbourhoods.

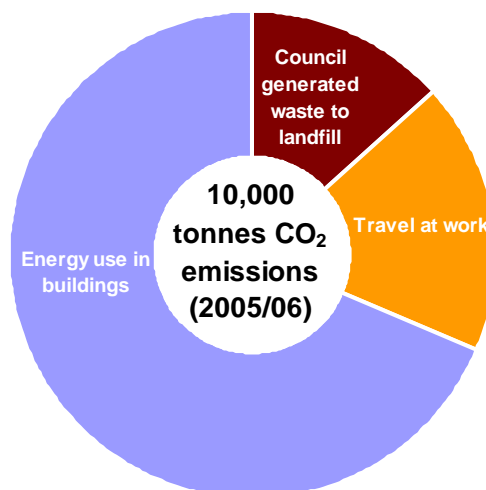
We are working to make our parks and green spaces even safer and cleaner. We are spending £2.5m to improve the quality of the majority of our 92 play areas. By April 2011 we will have refurbished over 50 play areas.

Reducing the Council's carbon footprint

Over the past three years the Council's focus has been on its internal carbon management programme. In the last year, we have put measures in place to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from our buildings and operations by over 800 tonnes per year. This represents an 8% reduction on 2005/06 levels. We aim to reduce emissions by a challenging 25% by the end of March 2011 and then 3% year-on-year

thereafter. We are on track to achieve this. This will deliver potential savings to the Council of around £1.24 million over five years.

City Council carbon dioxide emissions by source, 2005-06



Source: Oxford City Council

The City Council's fleet now includes electric vehicles and we are actively involved in the local Mini E trial. We have won the Energy Saving Trust Fleet Hero Awards for 'Smarter Driving', resulting in a 6% reduction in fuel use across our whole fleet. We won the Carbon Trust Innovation Award 2009: Innovative use of Technology (Public Sector). In 2010 we were runners-up in the Guardian Public Sector award for Innovation on sustainability issues.

Sustainable housing

Oxford City Council's commitment to the principles of sustainability is reflected in the work that we are doing with our housing stock. The Code for Sustainable Homes is an environmental impact rating system for housing in England and Wales which sets standards for energy efficiency and sustainability. The standards for energy efficiency are higher than those in current building regulations. The standards for sustainability are not mandatory under current building regulations but represent important developments towards limiting the overall environmental impact of housing. The code works by awarding new homes a star rating from 1 to 6. One star is entry level above building regulations and six stars is the highest, reflecting exemplary developments in terms of sustainability.

The development in Rose Hill – including bungalows, flats and townhouses - is being built to Sustainability Code level 4 and includes air source heat pumps to each home. A second site, a sheltered housing scheme in Littlemore, includes new sheltered flats and refurbishment of the existing units. The new units are being built to Sustainability Code 4 and the refurbished units are to EcoHomes 2010 standards. This scheme has a biomass boiler - the second that the Council has installed - which will supply heat and hot water to all of the sheltered units and communal areas. Both schemes use Solar Photo Voltaic panels to provide cheaper electricity and feed surplus electricity into the National Grid.

Proposed future schemes are being designed to Sustainability Code level 5 and

will utilize Passive House techniques to provide a comfortable, thermally efficient, economical internal environment for our tenants to live in. The term Passive house refers to rigorous, voluntary standards for energy efficiency in a building, reducing its ecological footprint.

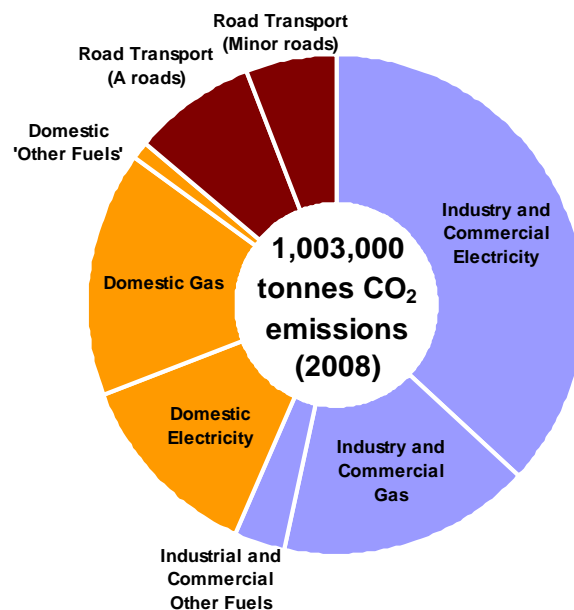
As part of the Decent Homes programme, water saving devices are fitted to the existing housing stock in bathroom and kitchen refurbishments and energy saving controls are fitted to new heating installations. In addition, solar hot water systems have been installed on a number of homes and solar PV panels fitted to two sheltered housing units.

As part of an Energy Savings Trust study to assess the effectiveness of carbon reduction techniques on difficult to treat properties, we are transforming a solid walled property in Jericho into an eco-friendly home. Brookes University will monitor energy usage over two years. This project is also being used as an educational tool for local school children and the wider community.

Reducing the city's carbon footprint

In 2010, the City Council launched the Low Carbon Oxford Charter on behalf of the Oxford Strategic Partnership, bringing together organisations from across the City to tackle climate change and its impacts. This pioneering approach brings together private and public sectors bodies, the universities and community groups in a collaborative approach to creating a sustainable, low carbon economy in our city. Each organisation has committed to a 3% reduction in CO₂ emissions, creation of green jobs, and to report on progress annually. Low Carbon Oxford has already attracted over £250K to invest in projects across Oxford and in 2011/12 will seek to secure further funding to benefit communities and businesses in Oxford directly. Signatories include Oxford City Council, University of Oxford, Oxford Brookes University, Oxfordshire County Council, Mini Plant Oxford, Unipart, Stagecoach, Marks & Spencer, B&Q, Buildbase, Serco, a2dominion, 2degrees, Blake Laphorn and community groups such as Low Carbon West Oxford

Carbon dioxide emissions by source, Oxford 2008



Source: Department of Energy and Climate Change

From 2014, the City Council will be implementing a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) which will place restrictions on the types of vehicle engines that can operate within central Oxford. This has particular implications for public service buses. The introduction of the LEZ – along with the desire of the main bus companies to play their role in making Oxford cleaner and greener – has led the Oxford Bus Company and Stagecoach to upgrade their fleets replacing many of the old polluting vehicles with new diesel electric hybrid double decker buses, funded through the Green Bus Fund. These hybrids have extra-low NOx emissions.

In 2009, Oxford became the first council in England and Wales to sign agreements with Partnerships for Renewables (PfR) to develop community scale wind turbines on Council land. Funded by PfR, it is hoped that the project will make significant contributions to national renewable energy targets. It will also provide additional revenue to the Council that can be recycled back to other important community projects.

The Council has implemented a planning requirement for 20% on-site renewable energy production for all large developments. Our award winning *Oxford is my World* initiative is also supporting and encouraging sustainable and low carbon approaches for householders, community groups and local businesses.

The Energy Bill, published in December 2010, includes the Green Deal – the government's flagship energy efficiency programme. The Green Deal will enable householders and businesses to install energy efficiency measures, such as insulation, which will be funded through a system of low-interest loans. It is hoped that Green Deal customers will then be able to repay the cost of installation work through savings on their energy bills. Local Authorities will be involved in rolling out this programme to tenants, residents and businesses. We will be working with private sector partners to ensure that we are ready for the launch of the first Green Deals due in Autumn 2012.

We are also working through strategic partnerships to combat the adverse effects of climate change, including the increased incidence of flooding within the City. We will be implementing a broader strategy for dealing with the management of natural resources through a strengthened sustainability strategy.

Low Carbon West Oxford (LCWO) was set up after the summer floods of 2007 by residents concerned about climate change and local flooding. LCWO is a community-led initiative which aims to combat climate change by cutting our community carbon dioxide emissions by 80 % by 2050, encouraging residents to live more sustainably, and contributing to a more cohesive and resilient community. LCWO volunteers have helped plant 600 new trees on the edges of Botley and Oatlands park to help absorb Co2 and reduce local flooding and attract wildlife.

Measures	2011/12	2015/16	Notes
Reduction in the city's carbon footprint.			Measurement to be against milestones as agreed by Low Carbon Oxford partnership

Kg of waste sent to landfill per household per annum.	412	390	
Satisfaction with our street cleaning.	70%	75%	54.4% in last place survey, 69% in talkback panel
Number of enforcements carried out as a result of environmental offences.	660	730	

Efficient and effective Council

Oxford City Council aspires to be an efficient and effective Council. This means being a flexible, fit-for-purpose organisation, delivering high quality services and excellent value for money for all our citizens.

The Council's efficiency and effectiveness has improved significantly over the last three years. By the end of 2010-11 it is projected that the General Fund will have seen a reduction in spend of £4.9m (16%) over a 3 year period (2008/9 – 2010/11). Further General Fund reductions of £9.5m are planned over the period 2011/12 – 2014/15. £5.9m of the total savings relate to the delivery of efficiencies across the organisation

We have significantly improved our performance against our targets. In 2007/08 we achieved 49% of all Council targets. In 2008/09 this had increased to 53%. In 2009/10, we were achieving 69% of our targets. In March 2009 we were achieving 59% of targets set out in our corporate plan. By year end of 2009/10, this figure had increased to 76%.

In the face of the financial circumstances that it faces, the Council has two broad options. The first is to balance the budget through service cuts and reductions in investment, which would lead to an impoverished organisation susceptible to unplanned cuts and redundancies. The second option – the option that we have chosen – is to speed up our pace of improvement so that we can protect and improve our front-line services with reduced resources.

Council 2012

Council 2012 is the engine for driving these changes which will transform the ways in which we manage our people, processes and systems. Through Council 2012 we aim to achieve a 20% improvement in efficiency and a 20% increase in performance. These targets must be achieved by 2012 if we are to meet the financial challenges that face us.

Four principles underpin the Council 2012 programme:

- One Council: one vision, shared policies and procedures, no more silos.
- Rationalise our buildings and sweat our assets: make more efficient use of our buildings and offices and dispose of those that are surplus to requirements.
- Simplify, standardise and automate our processes: Eliminate duplications in systems and processes and e-enable wherever possible, both internally and externally.
- Modern and flexible working practices: enable staff to work more flexibly and more productively in order to reduce the Council's cost and carbon footprint.

The Council 2012 programme consists of five corporate projects.

1. Customers First

- introduce a 'one number' approach for all Council services
- combine the contact centre operations currently within Oxford City Homes with those in Customer Services to create one generic front of house and call centre service
- channel migration
- provide a 'get it right first time' service to all our customers.

2. Offices for the Future

- improve working conditions for our staff and will enable us to reduce our office footprint and cut costs
- increase productivity
- reduce the Council's office and carbon footprint by 25% by moving staff out of Ramsay House and Blue Boar Street and selling these properties

3. Corporate Services Modernisation

- rationalise and centralise back office functions and processes
- rationalise systems architecture

4. Direct Services

- set up a Direct Services Team which will bring together front-line services currently delivered by City Works and Oxford City Homes. The new team will include: recycling and waste; street scene; highways and engineering; and building maintenance. All services will report through trading accounts overseen by a Commercial Services Board reporting to the Executive Director for City Services.
- set up a single depot and stores operation to support the Direct Services team. Moving from the separate depots currently maintained at Horspath (Oxford City Homes) and Cowley Marsh (City Works) will combine stores operations and make better use of space. The new depot may be at either of the two existing depot sites or a new site, preferably with good access to the ring road.
- set up a commissioning unit for Environmental Services.

5. Reformed Housing Function

- transfer the non-maintenance delivery elements of the housing landlord function to a new combined Housing and Communities Team. This will enable us to address the changing nature of issues on our estates which are increasingly characterised by mixed tenure. We will form a strong, easily recognised landlord function which relates to tenants and which tenants can relate to.
- make our asset management function more efficient by transferring the maintenance and property related functions currently delivered by Oxford City Homes to the corporate Asset Management team.

People and equalities

Staff are our key asset and it is essential that we continue to invest in staff in all aspects of their employment. We recruit good employees through an improved recruitment process and have significantly increased the number of trainee and apprenticeship roles, to help secure the long-term future of the Council's skills base. Increasing the diversity of our workforce is an important part of this. How we manage and develop people is fundamental to the delivery of better services and value for money and to do this our managers must know how to manage people well. We have provided training in this area and results are positive.

Communicating with staff, managing their performance and giving feedback are all essential parts of the employment relationship. We expect our managers to fulfil these aspects and employees also have their role to play, as laid out in our Employee Charter and Behavioural Framework. We expect to achieve the Investors in People accreditation in summer 2011 which will reflect the improving level of engagement we have with staff.

We have more work to do in improving attendance rates, but it is encouraging that levels of sickness absence are reducing as we continue to focus on this important area.

Working relationships between management and trade unions remain strong and we continue to work together across a range of employment issues, including responding constructively to budget pressures.

Enterprising council

As the City Council becomes more efficient and effective, it is increasingly well placed to deliver services on behalf of others. Oxford City Council already manages a collaborative procurement hub that operates across all the councils in Oxfordshire. A dedicated procurement officer ensures that the majority of procurements undertaken benefit all the partners in the hub.

In 2010, Legal Services entered into a shared services arrangement with the other Oxfordshire councils. The Oxfordshire Legal Hub is coordinated by the City Council. The purpose of the Hub is to share legal resource and expertise between the authorities, increasing the resilience of each partner and providing an alternative to placing work with the private sector. The partner authorities have already collaborated on the joint procurement of legal research facilities and external legal advice.

Our Direct Services team – providing services such as building maintenance, street scene, engineering, recycling and waste collection – are well placed to market a wide range of operational services to other organisations.

Developing this approach to partnership working will be of increasing importance over the next four years.

Measures	2011/12	2015/16	Notes
Satisfaction with customer contact by those who have used Council services over the last 12 months.	65%	77%	64% from Talkback in 2007
Cost per resident for delivering Council services.	tbc	tbc	
Delivery of efficiency savings.	£6m	£10m	
Achievement and retention of IIP.	Achieve IIP	Achieve silver level IIP	

Working with others

Many of the challenges that face Oxford – or any other major city – cannot be solved by the Council alone. The Council, therefore, works with other organisations at many levels to provide services for the residents of Oxford. This will become increasingly important as financial constraints increase if we are to continue delivering effective and accessible services to all sectors of the community.

Since coming into power the new government has made announcements on a range of policies and guidelines which affect the statutory functions of public bodies and which will impact upon how the public sector will deliver services. Of particular importance is the Localism Bill which was published in December 2010.

The public sector in Oxfordshire (councils, police and primary care trust) have been reviewing the impact of these changes on the existing partnership arrangements but it is premature to undertake a detailed review at this stage as the arrangements are still unclear. Partnerships are in a period of transition and the changes that they are going through are set out below.

Local Strategic Partnerships

There has been a requirement for the last six years for each local authority area to have a Sustainable Community Strategy and by implication a Local Strategic Partnership to oversee the development and delivery of the Strategy. These partnerships bring together key organisations from the public, business, community and voluntary sectors to develop and implement long-term visions for their areas.

For each upper tier of local authority there was a Local Area Agreement (LAA) between central government and the Local Strategic Partnership. This agreement set out the priorities for the area, and targets for delivering them. In Oxfordshire the delivery of the LAA was overseen by the Oxfordshire Public Service Board. However, the Government has abolished the Local Area Agreement and has announced that it is the choice of the local authorities whether or not they wish to maintain their Sustainable Local Strategic Partnerships.

Oxford City benefits from a vibrant Local Strategic Partnership and the City Council is committed to maintaining it. The Partnership takes a lead on flagship issues for the city. These include:

- Affordable Housing
- Health and Social Inclusion
- Climate Change
- Quality of the Public Realm
- Safer, Stronger and more Cohesive City
- The Economy of the City

More recently the Partnership has taken on the role of overseeing the delivery of the City Regeneration Framework and Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation programme.

Oxfordshire County Council has expressed a commitment to maintaining the Oxfordshire Partnership as a county wide information sharing and consultative body that helps to set high level strategic objectives for joint action. It is proposed that the Oxfordshire Public Service Board will only meet if future circumstances require it to do so.

Spatial Planning and Infrastructure

This partnership currently oversees infrastructure development, economic development spatial planning and housing development across the county.

The government has abolished Regional Development Agencies and there are no longer regionally imposed local housing targets but local authorities still need to set their own identified 5 year housing targets. There are changes proposed for the planning system with the possibility for Neighbourhoods to prepare their own plans within certain parameters .

The government invited areas to bid to become Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP). LEPs cover a functional economic area and are business driven. They are aimed at setting a clear vision for the area's longer term future, removing barriers to economic growth and creating new markets and employment, particularly in hi-tech and green technologies.

Oxfordshire County Council put in a bid to become an Oxfordshire City-Region LEP with the support of Oxford City Council. This bid was successful and the LEP is now supporting bids to the Regional Growth Fund to support infrastructure developments in Oxfordshire which are aimed at creating sustainable economic growth.

The inter-relationship between the Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership, the Local Strategic Partnership and the LEP is currently being considered .

Environmental and Waste Partnership

This partnership currently oversees work across the county on reducing carbon, climate change and adaptation. It also oversees the waste reduction and encourages recycling, improved street cleanliness and the public realm.

The government has announced its commitment to reducing carbon and the introduction of the Green Deal, aimed at providing resources for householders to improve energy efficiency.

The delivery of waste services and waste reduction is currently under review in order to see if there are opportunities for budget savings.

The partnership itself is also in the process of reviewing its remit and functions.

The Children's Trust

The Oxfordshire Children's Trust currently oversees the delivery of the Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Plan. The Plan covers education, health and social exclusion, reduction of child poverty and the provision of play, leisure and cultural activities for children and young people. The Plan is delivered through a number of agencies, such as the county council, schools, health service and police and these agencies are all represented on the Trust.

There is also a Central Area Children's Trust which is currently in the process of developing the priorities and a Delivery Plan for children's services in the City.

The government have announced that there is no longer a statutory requirement to have a Children's Trust or Children's Plan for an area. Schools no longer have a duty to cooperate with a Children's Trust. However guidelines on alternative arrangements are unclear and the County Council have proposed that the existing structure be maintained until government guidance is clearer.

Health and Well-Being Partnership

This partnership is aimed at reducing health inequalities and the gap in rates of premature deaths. It encourages people to choose healthier lifestyles. It oversees the delivery of a number of strategies, including: Adult Social Care, Aging Successfully, Supporting People, Obesity and Mental Well Being.

The Supporting People Commissioning Body currently reports to the Health and Well Being partnership. This partnership provides funding for adults who need housing related support to live independently in communities, including supported and sheltered housing, community alarms and floating support. The funding for these services are expected to be significantly reduced over the next few years.

There have been a number of government announcements, including abolition of the existing Primary Care Trusts with services being delivered by the National Health Service, GP Commissioning and by local authorities. There are also proposals around public scrutiny the pooling of budgets and the joint commissioning of services.

It is proposed that the existing structure is maintained until government guidance is clearer.

Safer Communities Partnership

There is an Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership and an Oxford City Safer Communities Partnership. Between them they aim to make Oxford a more cohesive city to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour, fear of crime and domestic violence.

The government has made significant cuts to a number of community safety grants. Thames Valley Police is currently undergoing a restructure. There are proposals for directly elected police commissioners. There are currently discussions on the future functions and remits of both the Oxfordshire and Oxford City Community Safety Partnerships.

Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Sector

The City Council works closely with the Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Alliance, which aims to strengthen the role of the voluntary and community sectors and increase the number of volunteers in the city.

The City Council provides funding to a range of voluntary and community groups who help deliver the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan.

The Council continues to work with Oxford Inspires, the city's partnership-funded cultural development agency, and other partners to ensure that Oxford's rich cultural scene continues to improve and is accessible to all.

The government's Big Society concept is likely to have significant implications and potential opportunities for the voluntary and community sector. However, there are also significant budget cuts in the public sector which are likely to lead to groups losing grants and / or contracts for services that they deliver. The City Council is working closely with the Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Alliance to analyse the potential impact of these changes in the City and to support the development of a business plan which will prepare them for the anticipated changes ahead.

Procurement

The procurement team actively engages with Business Link, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and the voluntary and community sector. The team regularly supports the work of these groups by giving talks to members and offering training. They also work with local professional services such as banks, solicitors and accountants who provided free advice to businesses.

Oxford City Council manages a collaborative procurement hub that operates across all the Councils in Oxfordshire. A dedicated Procurement Officer ensures that the majority of procurements undertaken benefit all of the partners in the hub.

This area of work will be of growing importance given the budget reductions required from the public sector and the potential to make savings through the joint purchasing of goods and services.