

## Oxford City Council’s Draft Corporate Plan 2014-18

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## **Introduction: Foreword from the Leader and Chief Executive**

Welcome to Oxford City Council's Corporate Plan 2014–18. The Corporate Plan is Oxford City Council's key strategic document. It sets out the Council's strategic direction over the next four years and the links between the demographic needs of the city and the Council's priorities and actions.

Oxford appears to be a thriving city with many opportunities for work and leisure and, for many residents, this is the daily reality of their lives. However, there are major inequalities in life chances and life expectancy in our city.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 ranks Oxford 131st out of 354, placing it in the top half most deprived local authority areas in England. Of 85 areas in Oxford, 12 are among the 20% most deprived areas in England. These areas, in the south and east of the city, experience multiple levels of deprivation - low skills, low incomes and high levels of crime. People from the more deprived areas can expect to live six years less than those in the more affluent areas. While 43% of Oxford residents have degree-level qualifications or above 14% have no qualifications at all.

The Corporate Plan 2014–18 updates and takes forward the main themes agreed by the Council in recent years. It reaffirms the Council's ambition – developed with our partners, including local businesses, community organisations, the health and education sectors and the County Council – to make Oxford a world-class city for all its citizens.

We are turning this ambition into reality by delivering five corporate priorities:

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

Within these priorities, we have been focusing on five key themes:

1. Investing in the city in order to improve infrastructure for our communities and to create new jobs
2. Working with our partners to build on the city-region's knowledge economy and attract inward investment
3. Helping to overcome some of the problems around skills that restrict access to jobs
4. Building a low carbon economy

5. Working with others.

The delivery of our programmes in these areas is already well advanced.

**1. Investing in the city's infrastructure and creating new jobs**

Over the last year, the Oxford City Council has:

- Approved an outline planning application for the new Barton development. This opens the way for a new community of nearly 900 homes integrated with the existing Barton estate and including a new primary school, community recreation facilities, parks and a small supermarket. The first homes should be ready for occupation by 2015. 40% of these homes will be affordable.
- Granted planning permission to enable the building of a minimum of 112 new homes, 44 of which will be provided at affordable rent.
- Continued to improve the quality of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in the private rented sector. Since the introduction in 2011 of the HMO licencing scheme around 3,000 HMOs have been improved and made safe for occupants.
- Encouraged commercial development on the few key locations that are available, e.g. the Northern Gateway and the Churchill site
- Worked with partners to progress the new Westgate development. It is estimated that the development will create over 2000 jobs and will be open in time for the 2017 Christmas season
- Continued to promote the regeneration of the West End in partnership with the County Council and other key stakeholders. There has been consultation over the summer on the Oxpens site and work is underway to prepare a Master Plan to replace the existing Oxford station with a new integrated station and office/retail development
- Started work on the City Council's new swimming pool complex at Blackbird Leys
- Started work to upgrade 12 sports pavilions across the city
- Been working through Experience Oxfordshire to improve the quality of the Oxford city region's tourism offer, in particular by maximising the role that contemporary culture and the arts can play
- Continued its long-standing support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by committing to spend more than 40% of its budget in this sector.

**2. Building on the city-region's knowledge economy**

Over the last year, the Oxford City Council has:

- Continued working with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to build on the strengths of the knowledge economy and encourage inward investment

- Been working with the County Council, the other four Oxfordshire Districts, the Local Enterprise Partnership, the universities and the science facilities at Harwell and Culham, on a City Deal bid to the government. We expect to learn whether the City Deal bid is successful by the end of the year.

Oxford is now in the final stages of negotiating a City Deal with the government that will see greater local decision making given to our city. A City Deal is a bespoke agreement between the government and a local area on how best to ensure that area's growth and prosperity.

Our City Deal proposal recognises Oxford and Oxfordshire's great potential to deliver world-leading technology and business innovation, building upon our academic and research excellence led by the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University. Our aim is to work in partnership with government, universities and private sector businesses to:

- Kick-start investment to support our major economic growth centres: Bicester, Oxford and Science Vale Oxford Enterprise Zone (Harwell Oxford and Milton Park)
- Implement a package of transport infrastructure proposals
- Accelerate the delivery of 7,500 homes through the combined Oxfordshire Housing Programme by 2018, 36% of which will be affordable

### **3. Improving skills**

Over the last year, the Oxford City Council has:

- Made good progress in delivering its educational attainment programme. There are four elements to the programme:
  - a leadership programme delivered by Oxford University Education Department and Oxford Brookes University for middle and senior leaders in 12 Oxford Primary Schools. In 2013, 41 leaders took part in this programme and a new cohort of leaders from 13 schools will start the second round in January 2014
  - an instructional programme called KRM in seven schools. This is an intensive training programme for all teachers that assists them in teaching children to read, write, spell and do mathematics. Two schools are undertaking the reading and writing programme, three schools are undertaking the reading programme and two schools are undertaking the mathematics programme. Children on the programme are making very good progress, with some of the fastest gains being seen in children with special educational needs or who have free school meals. In two schools which were early adopters of the reading programme, children have made 12 months' progress in 6 months
  - an assisted housing scheme to improve recruitment when schools are advertising for leadership posts. Two schools have made reference to

the scheme when advertising vacancies and other schools advertising for senior leaders are also likely to refer to this scheme

- a digital inclusion project. The City Council is working with the schools, Oxford University Education Department and the Internet Institute to offer a laptop and broadband to all students in year 9 without internet access. All the secondary schools in the city have engaged with the project. The project will provide the students with support and also monitor the impact of home access on their self-esteem and educational attainment.
- Been expanding the options and opportunities available to young people - particularly in the more deprived areas of the city - through our youth ambition programme. Oxford City Council is spending close to £500,000 per year to improve youth provision and promote the ambition of our young people. Greater involvement in sporting and cultural activities are helping to develop the technical skills, discipline, and confidence necessary for future success.
- Been working with customers affected by the Benefit Cap and the under-occupancy rules, known as the 'Bedroom Tax', with the prime aim of helping them move into work:
  - 613 customers have been supported or referred for advice
  - 163 customers have been supported on an on-going basis
  - 24 of these customers have moved into work.

#### **4. Building a low carbon economy**

Over the last year, Oxford City Council has:

- continued to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from its own buildings and operations
- been working with the Low Carbon Oxford Project – including private and public sectors bodies, the universities, and community groups – to create a sustainable, low-carbon economy in Oxford
- been investing funding awarded from Intelligent Energy Europe for our £1.3 million OxFutures programme
- been investing £310,000 awarded by the Department of Energy and Climate Change to boost energy efficiency projects in the city. The funding will help householders save energy and create warmer homes in one of the city's most deprived areas through the Warming Barton pilot project.

#### **5. Working with others**

Many of the challenges that face Oxford cannot be solved by Oxford City Council on its own. Partnership working is at the heart of the Council's approach and we work with the County Council and other organisations at many levels to deliver and enable services for the residents of Oxford.

We are providing leadership to the city by working proactively within the key local partnership organisations such as the Oxford Strategic Partnership, Low Carbon Oxford, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP). We have been working with the County Council, district councils, Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University to develop a new strategy for growth in the Oxford city region. The Oxford Economic Growth Strategy has now been agreed and adopted by the Oxford Strategic Partnership, and an action plan has been agreed and is being implemented.

In particular, we are working with our communities – through Area Forums and Neighbourhood Boards, voluntary and community associations, and other networks – to build community capacity and cohesion and to ensure that Oxford moves forward confidently as one city.

### **Efficient and effective council**

The City Council has been able to continue to invest in the city and its communities because it is, increasingly, an efficient and effective organisation. The Council has achieved £8.5 million of efficiency savings over the last four years and is on track to make a further £1.3 million savings this year, without the need for compulsory redundancies.

At the same time as it has achieved these efficiencies, it has continued to improve its services.

- The Council's state of the art Customer Services Centre in St Aldate's helps more than 8,500 each year, while the Customer service centre at Templar's Square helps more than 6,770 people each year.
- Our corporate call centre, with one phone number for all Council services, deals with nearly 263,000 calls per year. We answered 89% of calls received and improved the customer experience by resolving 90% of queries at the first point of contact.
- In 2012/13 we achieved or exceeded 79% of our corporate targets.
- Sickness absence has been reduced by 25% as a result of robust performance management.
- Investors in People accreditation for the whole Council has been achieved, as has Customer Excellence accreditation. The Council has been awarded the Equalities Framework for Local Government accreditation.
- The Council's rigorous approach to efficiency is at the heart of its programme. It means that we:
  - have more resources available to invest in services that impact on the daily lives of our citizens
  - have been able to deliver a ground-breaking pay deal with Unison and Unite the Union which gives staff an annual 1.5% cost of living increase for the next four years and secures the council's budget provision
  - have also been able to maintain our Living Wage policy for directly employed staff and contractors.

## **The future**

Oxford City Council's drive to simultaneously increase efficiency and investment in the city and its communities has been carried out against a backdrop of severe spending cuts by central government. There are more challenges to come.

Austerity now looks certain to continue well into the future, with the government stating its intention to forge a "leaner, more efficient state" on a permanent basis. The government now has no intention of resuming spending once the structural deficit has been eliminated.

The following have been at the heart of Oxford City Council's approach to delivering its ambitions:

- strong financial management
- partnership between councillors, council managers and staff, and trade unions
- focus
- a commitment not to be knocked off course by external events

We intend to maintain this approach.

This Corporate Plan sets out Oxford City Council's proposals for bringing economic growth, jobs, prosperity, and more decent homes to our city. It is about making a difference in difficult times.

Please let us know what you think of our plans for the future.

Bob Price  
Leader  
Oxford City Council

Peter Sloman  
Chief Executive  
Oxford City Council

# Chapter 1 – A Vibrant, Sustainable Economy

**Our ambition:** a strong local economy, supported by effective education and training which is accessible to all.

## **Some facts**

Oxford is a global brand for education, health, bioscience, information technology, publishing, the motor industry and tourism.

The University of Oxford and its colleges are the largest employers in Oxford, supporting 18,000 jobs, followed by the Oxford University Hospitals Trust and the County Council.

Around 4,100 businesses provide 107,000 jobs, and seven of the ten largest employers in the Oxford city-region are within Oxford. The University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University between them inject an estimated £800 million annually into the regional economy.

Tourism plays a key part in the local economy, largely as a result of the city's rich architectural heritage and the appeal of the Ashmolean and other museums. Over nine million tourists visit the city every year, spending £602 million annually and supporting around 13,000 jobs.

During the banking crisis and subsequent recession, the buoyant economy of the Oxford city region has suffered less than other parts of the UK, but has suffered nonetheless. The most commonly quoted figure for measuring economic growth is Gross Value Added (GVA). GVA is a measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area. Latest estimates show that while Oxfordshire's GVA declined in 2009 as a result of the recession, it has grown by £1 billion in the last two years to £15.5 billion in 2011 – a rate of growth which compares favourably with other areas of the country. The city economy is estimated to be worth around £5 billion a year of this. The Centre for Cities in 2009 calculated that Oxford had the fifth-highest UK GVA per capita, only just behind London.

The most timely indicator of the health of the economy is the number of people claiming out-of-work benefits, in particular unemployment benefit (Jobseeker's Allowance, or JSA). The number of claimants peaked at nearly 3,000 in 2009, but in October 2013 came below 2,000 for the first time since 2008. While this suggests some revival in the labour market, there is concern about people who may be unemployed but not claiming JSA, and people who may be 'under-employed'. Other figures show that the number of long-term claimants and claimants aged over 50 remain relatively high.

## **Oxford City Council's approach**

We are addressing three key issues as we continue to build a vibrant, sustainable economy:

1. Promoting the growth of enterprise, the knowledge-based economy, and jobs
2. Improving the skills of the workforce



### 3. Increasing the availability of land for commercial development

#### **1. Promoting the growth of enterprise, the knowledge-based economy, and jobs**

Nearly half of Oxford's jobs are in the public sector, the largest proportion of any UK city (where education is included in the public sector), with 49% of jobs in public administration, education and health. The distribution of employment is a cause for concern in the light of the government's austerity measures. A large number of jobs in Oxford that are directly or indirectly linked to public spending will be vulnerable over the next five years.

There is, therefore, a strong need to rebalance the local economy by promoting the growth of important sectors such as: manufacturing, health, scientific research, tourism, publishing, retail and the city centre, and the low-carbon economy.

Oxford City Council is doing this by:

- working with the private-sector-led Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
- negotiating a City Deal with the government
- improving Oxford's infrastructure
- boosting tourism
- improving Oxford's city centre
- supporting local businesses
- growing a low carbon economy
- supporting an ethical economy.

#### **Working with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**

The LEP is:

- building on the unique concentration of high-tech businesses and input from the universities
- attracting more investment into the city region (e.g. large world-class businesses including Centrica and SAE have recently arrived in Oxford, and BMW have committed substantial new investment into the MINI plant in Cowley)
- coordinating the activities of the various skills providers in Oxfordshire
- enabling Science Vale UK to become an Enterprise Zone.

#### **Negotiating a City Deal with the government**

Oxford City Council has been working with the County Council, the other four Oxfordshire Districts, the Local Enterprise Partnership, the universities and the science facilities at Harwell and Culham, on a City Deal bid to the government. We expect to learn whether the City Deal bid is successful by the end of the year.

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### **Improving Oxford's infrastructure**

Oxford City Council is:

- investing around £68 million into the local economy by building new houses and improving the city's leisure facilities. This will create up to 900 jobs
- in a joint venture with Grosvenor Estates to build nearly 900 new homes in Barton. Outline planning permission has been granted
- contracting with GreenSquare to build 100 new homes and two new community centres in Northway and Cowley. Full planning permission has been granted
- negotiating to redevelop the Westgate Centre. Negotiations have led to a completed Development Agreement and an Outline Planning Application has been received
- continuing to promote the regeneration of the West End (including improvements to Frideswide Square and the railway station) in partnership with the County Council and other key stakeholders. A Supplementary Planning Document for Oxpens and a draft master plan for a new station and multi-modal interchange have been adopted
- working with developers, local residents and other stakeholders on a plan to develop the Northern Gateway site in north Oxford for mixed-use, employment-led development. This site is critical to Oxford's economy as it is the only major employment site left within the city

- working with the County Council and other partners to unlock transport blockages and promote economic development. For example, we are supporting the Chiltern Railways Evergreen 3 proposals for the fast link north through Bicester to Marylebone, including a new station at the Water Eaton Park and Ride site
- enabling businesses to realise more benefit and support start-ups through the award of up to £5 million from the Urban Broadband Fund in the Super-Connected Cities Programme. This initiative will build on already delivered commercial upgrades in Oxford and will ensure that ultrafast broadband is available to 96% (up from 76%) of businesses and 89% (up from 84%) of residents. The funding will also enable the development of wireless broadband across the city centre. The initiative has been developed in partnership with the County Council and the universities. It includes a proposal to develop an International Hub for Online Learning, in partnership with education organisations in the city.

### **Boosting tourism**

Oxford City Council is:

- working through Experience Oxfordshire – a joint venture partnership with private-sector partners – to improve the quality of the Oxford city region’s tourism offer. We want visitors to stay longer in Oxford and to explore areas beyond the city as well
- working with Experience Oxfordshire and partners in the cultural sector to maximise the role that culture can play in Oxford’s tourism offer. Currently, cultural tourism tends to focus on historic Oxford, as represented by the University of Oxford’s buildings and museums. While the magnificent heritage offer will always be a primary attraction, Oxford also has a thriving contemporary arts and music scene which is currently under-represented in the tourist offer.

### **Improving Oxford’s city centre**

Oxford City Council is:

- working closely with local businesses and the County Council to enhance the city centre’s night-time economy. We are committed to retaining the city centre’s Purple Flag status, which acknowledges the city centre’s low crime rates, good cleanliness standards, and the quality and range of public spaces and visitor attractions
- investing capital funding of £420,000 over three years to improve the quality of toilets in and beyond the city centre
- making business locations, tourist attractions and other places of interest more obvious to visitors and increasing footfall on less well-used routes by providing a new pedestrian way-finding system. The new system has won an award from the Oxford Preservation Trust

### **Supporting local businesses**

Oxford City Council is:

- continuing its long-standing support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by committing to spend more than 40% of its budget in this sector
- fast-tracking payment of invoices by setting a target of ten days
- working with Business Link, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the voluntary and community sector to improve understanding of public-sector tendering requirements and to encourage better engagement with the public sector.

### **Growing a low-carbon economy**

Oxford City Council is:

- developing the Low Carbon Oxford Project on behalf of the Oxford Strategic Partnership. Twenty-five organisations, including private- and public-sector bodies, the universities, and community groups, are now collaborating to create a sustainable, low-carbon economy in Oxford. These organisations account for over half of the city's emissions
- in receipt of funding from the European Union to progress the £1.3 million OxFutures programme to build a low-carbon economy
- allocating an additional £50,000 per year for two years to ensure that Low Carbon Oxford is able to continue its pioneering work and attract further funding
- implementing the 'Green Deal Plus', whereby businesses offer customers energy-efficiency improvements to their homes, community spaces and businesses at no upfront cost. Customers will repay the cost of improvements through savings on their energy bills.
- investing £54,000 over two years to ensure early and full take-up of the opportunities for insulation
- supporting opportunities for local skills and businesses through renewables projects, e.g. by setting up Low Carbon Barton, which led to the installation of a solar photovoltaic roof on the community centre
- stimulating the local market for biomass energy production through the installation of biomass boilers in our own buildings, and through supporting local research and information.

### **Supporting an ethical economy**

Oxford City Council is:

- paying its own employees a minimum living wage which acknowledges the real costs of living in Oxford and which is higher than the national minimum wage. We are requiring Council contractors to do the same. This arrangement has been in place since April 2009. In January 2012, the City Council

reviewed the statistical information on local living costs and set the living wage at a new level of £8 per hour

- working with living-wage campaigners, low-paid workers, trade unions and employers to make Oxford a Living Wage City, in which every worker will earn at least the minimum living wage
- encouraging ethical behaviour in the wider economy through Oxford's Fairtrade City status and its involvement in the Oxford Fairtrade Coalition.

## **2. Improving the skills of the workforce**

Oxford has a highly skilled workforce, in that a very high proportion of residents hold degrees. However there is a significant proportion of residents who have no education or skills qualifications, and attainment levels of pupils in state schools remain lower than the regional and national averages.

In 2011–12, Key Stage 2 results (at the end of primary school) showed 78% of Oxford pupils achieving level 4 and above in English and Maths compared to 82% in Oxfordshire. This is an improvement of 11 percentage points upon the previous year's results.

In 2011–12 only 51.8% of Oxford pupils gained five or more A\* to C grade GCSEs, including English and Maths, compared to a 59% national average. Although this is an improvement on last year the gaps in attainment between pupils in the city and the rest of the county are still significant, especially in the more deprived areas of the city.

This poor attainment at both primary and secondary levels impacts directly on access to the labour market and on economic and social life-chances. For Oxford to become a world-class city for all its people, this situation must be addressed.

The 2011 Oxfordshire Skills Needs Analysis suggested that a lack of education, qualifications and 'employability' skills prevented a significant number of Oxfordshire's residents from entering the local job market – in particular certain groups of young people including teenage mothers, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young people who have offended and young people leaving care.

Anecdotally there are also concerns from employers that they are not able to recruit school leavers and other people from the local workforce who have the right skills or who are 'work-ready' for entry-level jobs.

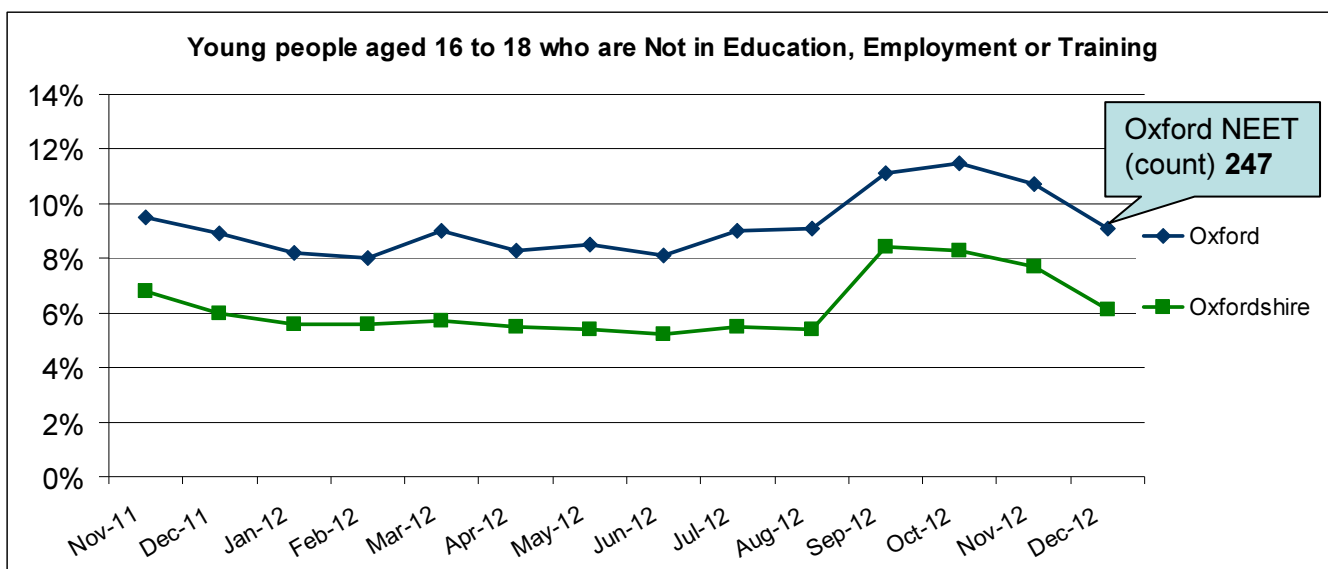
Employers report a shortage in high-level skills, most challenging to businesses in the science, technology and engineering and manufacturing sectors.

Young people in many parts of the city already face significant difficulties in gaining employment because of the lower levels of educational attainment at the school-leaving age. As the growth of high-value jobs is increasingly driven by high-tech businesses and academic spin-off from the universities, there is a clear danger that this exclusion will deepen.

Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who are not participating in education, employment or training (NEET) are a major source of concern. Their circumstances

are predictors of future unemployment, low income, poor mental health and potential involvement in crime.

Oxford remains well above Oxfordshire's average in terms of the percentage of young people not in education, employment or training. As of December 2012, 9.1% of young people in Oxford were NEET compared with 6.1% across Oxfordshire.



Source: Oxfordshire County Council, Education and Early Intervention team. This data is adjusted to take account of "not knowns".

Oxford City Council is:

- working in partnership with the County Council, Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University, on coordinated initiatives to drive improvements in educational attainment
- investing £400,000 annually over the next four years in education and leadership programmes, particularly in the more deprived neighbourhoods. Ten local schools have signed up to these programmes
- working with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to understand the skills needed by businesses in the city
- encouraging local high-tech companies to create new apprenticeships and development opportunities, so that young people can improve their skills and experience
- using its procurement processes to help young people from the city to gain apprenticeships and get into employment. We require Council contractors to create apprenticeship opportunities as part of any large construction project. Our joint venture with Grosvenor on the Barton development will involve a training and apprenticeship programme. The GreenSquare project in Northway and Cowley will create a minimum of 12 new apprenticeships during the construction stage through its '4ward2work' programme

- allocating £50,000 each year for two years to provide ten new apprenticeships within the Council’s own workforce and looking at ways to extend the arrangement into future years
- working with Job Centre Plus and Oxford and Cherwell Valley College to support a Work Club which will help people to find their first job, return to work, or look for a new career direction
- working with the Department for Work and Pensions to explore how, in the face of welfare reform reducing available benefits, local authorities can improve opportunities for low-income households to increase their hours of work.

### 3. Increasing availability of land for commercial development

Land in Oxford is scarce, as a result of constrained boundaries, flood plains, and other issues. In particular, land for commercial uses is scarce. The desirability of Oxford as a place to live, work and study has resulted in increasing house prices, leading to transfers of land from employment to residential use and exacerbating the lack of commercial space. Between 1985 and 2004, the city lost an average of 2.5ha of employment land per annum, with redevelopment for residential and student accommodation purposes driving the majority of this loss. This has slowed to 2ha per annum over the last five years.

Oxford City Council is:

- encouraging commercial development on the few key locations that are available, e.g. the Northern Gateway. The Science Park has a capacity of 27,200m<sup>2</sup> of employment space available. The Business Park has a further capacity of 29,400m<sup>2</sup>
- negotiating about future development with partners outside the city’s constrained boundaries.

### Measuring progress

Measure	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017-18
Percentage of Council spend with local businesses	46%	48%	48%	TBC
Number of jobs supported by Council investment projects and other spend	856	856	900+	TBC
Number of Council apprenticeships created through Council investment for those who live in Oxford	22	24	26	TBC
Percentage of pupils in schools supported by the Council's educational attainment programme achieving level 4 in English and Maths at Key Stage 2	74%	80%	84%	TBC

## Chapter 2 – Meeting Housing Needs

**Our ambition:** more affordable, high-quality housing in Oxford. This is essential for the vibrancy of the economy and the health and well-being of residents.

### **Some facts**

Oxford's population has been growing, as has the number of people requiring housing. Oxford's population reached 152,000 in 2011 and is projected to reach 161,000 by 2021.

There has been a long-term housing shortage in Oxford. Demand is high and availability is scarce, as a result of the city's constrained boundaries, the risk of flooding and other issues. This results in very high house prices.

According to *Cities Outlook 2013*, Oxford has overtaken London as the UK's least affordable city in terms of housing. The average house price in Oxford is £360,000 while the average salary is £27,000. Average Oxford house prices are now thirteen times higher than average annual incomes. Owner-occupied housing is increasingly out of the reach of people on lower incomes.

Oxford is also the least affordable city in the UK for private rented housing. Conditions in some private-sector rented housing are very poor, particularly those in multiple occupation.

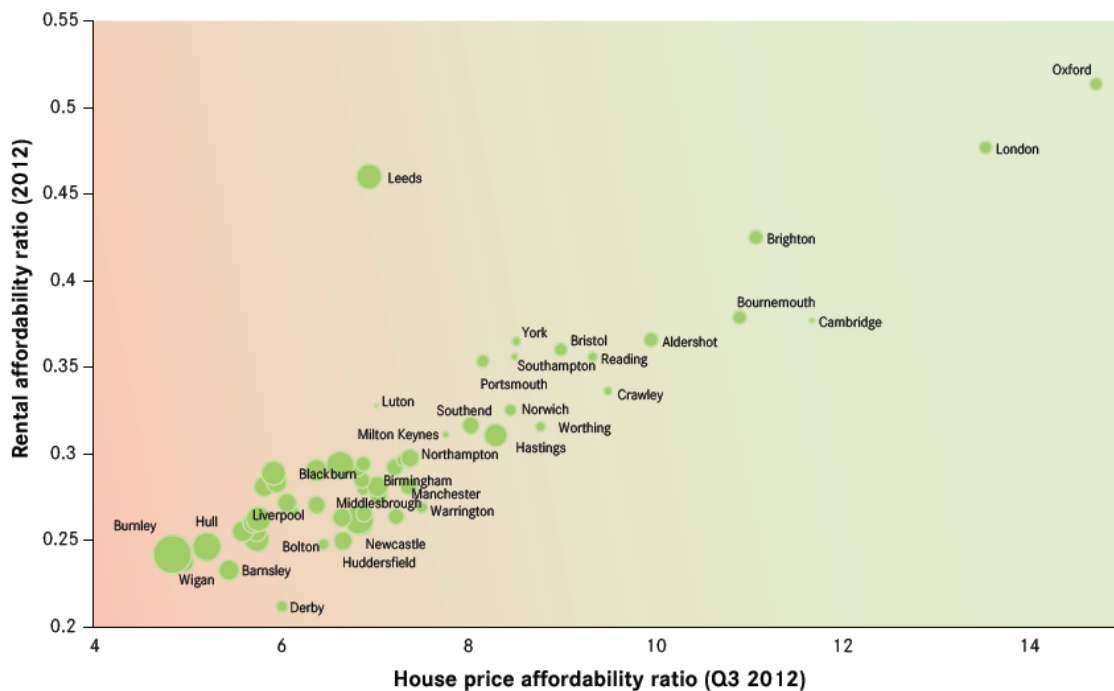
This low level of affordability puts severe strain on social housing provision. Oxford City Council is a landlord responsible for 8,000 homes. Over 6,000 households are on the Housing Register for social housing and, in spite of our good work in preventing homelessness and reducing the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households, demands on our service are high and likely to increase in the future.

This situation means that Oxford residents spend a large proportion of their income on housing costs. It also hampers local employers from attracting people to the city.

50% of people who work in Oxford commute from outside the city, causing significant traffic congestion issues.



**Figure 7:**  
**Housing and rental affordability and vacant properties across UK cities**



Source: DCLG 2012, Live Table 581 and Live Table 584, Q3 2012 data; VOA 2012, Rental Data (Sep2011-12); ONS 2012, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2012; DCLG 2012, Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix, 2011 data.  
 Note: Data available for English cities only.

Oxford City Council’s approach is to promote housing development within the city wherever possible, and encourage developers to provide affordable housing. We also take action to bring empty homes back into use.

Changes to welfare policy are imposing significant additional pressures on housing and homelessness in the city. Changes to Local Housing Allowance, which came into force on a rolling basis from April 2011, mean that the maximum Local Housing Allowance can only be paid to properties in the cheapest 30% of the local market. This has severely constrained housing options in the city for many households. The 'local' housing market includes much of rural Oxfordshire, where rental costs tend to be lower. This will mean that many low-income households may be forced out of Oxford to meet their rent obligations, while the small size of the private rented sector outside the city may restrict the Council’s capacity to re-house Oxford families within the county itself. This pressure will be most severe on households needing a five-bedroom property or larger.

In addition, welfare and benefit changes – for example, reductions in benefit for those claiming Jobseeker’s 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.

The changes to welfare overall are likely to increase the demand for housing and

homelessness assistance, and also debt and welfare advice services. The City Council has maintained and increased its funding for the voluntary and charitable bodies which provide this, particularly in areas of the city where need is greatest.

### **Oxford City Council's approach**

Oxford faces serious challenges with regard to housing in the coming years.

The economic situation and the impact of austerity measures, including welfare reform, are putting downward pressure on real incomes and contributing to a growth in the number of homeless families across the country. We have so far limited the increase in the city to below national average levels but Oxford will not be exempt from this trend. The ability of the Council to respond to demand – for example, by assisting people into the private rental market – is likely to be further restricted. There is a strong risk that the downward trend in the number of households in temporary accommodation will not be maintained.

We are addressing five key issues to meet housing need in Oxford:

1. Building new homes
2. Providing a high-quality landlord service
3. Improving standards in the private rented sector
4. Reducing homelessness
5. Piloting Direct Payments and Universal Credit

#### **1. Building new homes**

The Housing Market Assessment in 2007 showed that 1,700 new homes per year would have to be built in the city if demand is to be met. Oxford City Council, in the light of the constraints imposed by the city's boundaries, has committed to building 8,000 new homes over the 20 years from 2006. Most of the new homes built over the last five years have been one- or two-bedroom properties.

Our approach is to promote housing development within the city wherever possible, and encourage developers to provide affordable housing. We are also bringing empty homes back into use. Despite a reduction in house building following the recession, we are currently on course to meet our new homes target. A large proportion of the homes built in the next five years will result from the West Barton development.

As a result of changes by central government to the way in which social housing is financed, the Council now has full financial responsibility for its housing stock.

Oxford City Council is:

- significantly increasing the quantity of affordable housing. About 1,400 new affordable homes were built in the city from 2004 to the end of 2012
- committed to using its own resources to provide new affordable housing wherever possible

- building on council land at Cowley and Northway, in partnership with GreenSquare Housing Association. This project will deliver new affordable and market-rate homes, two new community centres, and a new home for the Emmaus Furniture Store, which recycles good-quality, used furniture while giving skills training and accommodation to formerly homeless people. Planning permission granted for this development
- working through a new joint-venture company, formed with Grosvenor Estates, to deliver 800 new homes, a new school and community facilities, and commercial development on land to the west of Barton. Outline planning permission has been granted for this project
- in receipt of around £2.5 million from the Housing and Communities Agency (HCA) to build 112 new homes on Council-owned sites throughout the city. HCA funding is conditional on homes being let at 'affordable' rents, with limited exceptions. The Council will fund the balance of the cost of £16 million.

## **2. Providing a high-quality landlord service**

The Council is currently responsible for around 8,000 homes and aims to build and maintain high-quality estates with very high standards of service.

Oxford City Council is:

- maintaining all its own homes at or beyond the national Decent Homes Standard
- investing £8.25 million to improve the external and communal areas in our five tower blocks. This will extend their lives for a further 30 years. The apartment interiors are already at Decent Homes Standard.
- investing £700,000 each year over the next three years to fund adaptations to Council homes to ensure that they are suitable for people with disabilities
- improving cleanliness on our estates as part of our cleaner, greener Oxford campaign
- working with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), one of the first organisations to specialise in tenant and resident involvement at a national level, to improve our arrangements for involving tenants and leaseholders in decision-making. Tenants and leaseholders co-exist in areas of mixed tenure, and problem solving, or the driving of initiatives, cannot be delivered successfully without the involvement of all groups concerned.

## **3. Improving standards in the private rented sector**

The private rented sector is important in Oxford. It provides essential accommodation for key workers, young professionals, students and people who are unable to access social housing or to purchase homes on the private market. It accounts for 28% of the city's housing stock, with one in five of Oxford's population living in a house in multiple occupation (HMO). The combination of exceptionally high demand and high rental values has created an environment where landlords can charge high rents for poorly managed and badly maintained properties.

Oxford City Council is:

- improving the management and condition of HMOs by requiring every HMO in the city to be inspected and licensed
- investing £60,000 per year to enable more proactive enforcement of standards in the private rented sector
- managing the impact of private rented housing on communities and neighbourhoods by implementing planning controls requiring planning permission for the change of use from a family or single unit dwelling into an HMO. There is a presumption against new HMOs in areas which already have a significant concentration
- working with Oxford Brookes University and the University of Oxford to tackle issues relating to student housing, particularly in East Oxford
- using more targeted and effective use of noise enforcement as part of a programme of assistance for neighbourhoods whose character is being adversely affected by HMOs and entertainment venues
- using our Home Improvement Agency to improve private homes of the elderly and vulnerable
- investing £640,000 every year over the next three years to fund adaptations to private dwellings to make them suitable for those with disabilities.

#### **4. Reducing homelessness**

Oxford has historically had a problem with homelessness. The Council has been recognised as a centre of excellence in dealing with the challenges of homelessness, and is proud of its innovative work in this area. Over the last decade we have been able to substantially reduce the number of homeless families living in temporary accommodation. We have done this through prevention work, based on advising families about the housing options available to them. We have also worked in partnership with others, including private landlords, to help to secure accommodation for those threatened with homelessness. However, changes to the benefit system, along with increasingly high demand and costs of housing in Oxford, may increase the number of people at risk of homelessness over the next five years

Oxford City Council is:

- reducing the number of people living in temporary accommodation
- funding services to assist single and rough-sleeping homeless people
- supporting the Crisis Skylight centre, which gives single homeless people access to training and other opportunities
- investing over £150,000 into funding that will allow tenants in private rented properties to meet the cost of their rent where Housing Benefit levels are too low.
- supporting the No Second Night Out campaign.

#### **5. Piloting Direct Payments and Universal Credit**

The proposed introduction of the Universal Credit in October 2013 will replace a number of existing sources of welfare benefit, including Housing Benefit, with a single payment to individuals and families. Currently, Housing Benefit is paid directly to the landlord. There is a risk that, if Housing Benefit is paid directly to tenants who are then responsible for making rental payments, arrears and bad debts could increase

Oxford City Council is:

- one of a small number of local authority and housing associations who are working with the Department for Work and Pensions on a demonstration project, to test the effects of paying monthly Housing Benefit payments direct to tenants in social housing. The project took place from June 2012 to June 2013 and tested how claimants manage monthly Housing Benefit payments, and the kinds of safeguards needed to prevent tenants from falling into arrears
- seeking ways to improve the financial awareness of tenants, and minimise the financial risks of direct payments for landlords
- using findings from the demonstration project to supplement and improve existing income management policies, and inform our work providing advice and support to vulnerable people
- maintaining funding for the voluntary and charitable bodies which provide debt and welfare advice services, particularly in areas of the city where need is greatest
- working with the County Council to address the consequences of welfare changes, in particular the relationship between the County Council's social care responsibilities and homelessness.

### Measuring progress

Measure	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017-18
Number of individual HMOs subject to agreed licence provisions	3,540	3,890	4,100	TBC
Number of new rough sleepers spending more than one consecutive night on the streets each year	0	0	0	TBC
Number of households in Oxford in temporary accommodation	120	120	120	TBC
Number of affordable homes for rent delivered	200	100	150	TBC
Capital investment in Council housing	£19.12m	£12.88m	£20.12m	TBC
Tenant satisfaction with their estates	77%	79%	81%	TBC

## Chapter 3 – Strong, Active Communities

**Our ambition:** communities that are socially cohesive and safe, and citizens who are actively engaged in pursuing their own well-being and that of their communities.

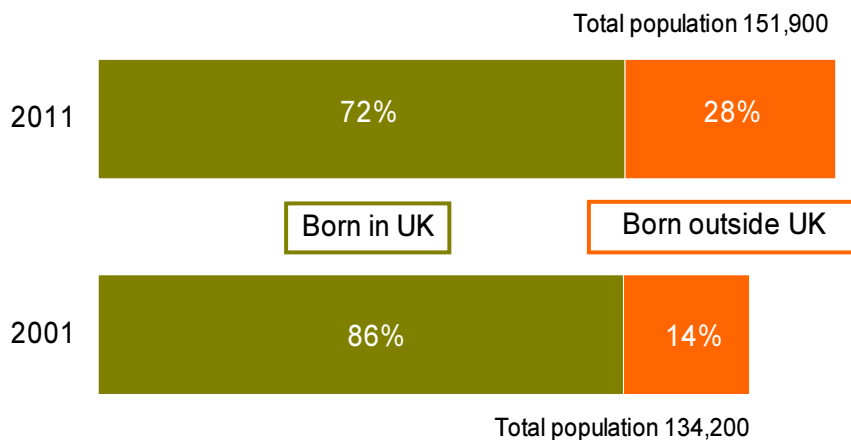
### Some facts

In contrast to other parts of the county, Oxford is ethnically and culturally diverse, with the third-highest minority ethnic population in the south-east. In 2011, 22% of the population were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with an England average of 15%. The largest non-white ethnic groups represented are of Indian, Pakistani and Black African origin. There are also large numbers of people of white non-British ethnic origin, including increasing numbers of new migrants from EU accession countries. This means that newer communities tend to be made up of many diverse groups rather than a small number of larger blocks.

Oxford's population is constantly changing. People come to Oxford to live, to study and to work, coming from both within the UK and from other countries. There are over 30,000 students studying full-time at the two universities. Around 6,000 people arrive from overseas to live in Oxford each year, about half of these being students and a quarter being migrant workers.

More than one in four of our residents were born outside the UK – the most common countries of birth being Poland, USA, India, Germany and Pakistan.

### Growth in Oxford's international diversity, 2001–11



Relative to the rest of Oxfordshire, Oxford has high levels of deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 ranks Oxford 131 out of 354, placing it in the top half of the most deprived local authority areas in England. Of 85 areas in Oxford, 12 are among the 20% most deprived areas in England, with one area in Northfield Brook ward among the 10% most deprived.

Around 22% of Oxford's under-16s live in low-income households, and child poverty is a key concern in eight neighbourhoods which feature among the 10% worst-affected in England.

In some areas, half of all adults have no education or skills qualifications and this is linked to lower incomes, poor health and child poverty. Oxford has over 10,000 working-age residents claiming benefits – the highest percentage in Oxfordshire.

Life expectancy in the most deprived areas is up to ten years less than in the wealthy areas.

### **Oxford City Council's approach**

There are major inequalities in life chances and life expectancy in our city. The City Council is using its own powers and its partnerships with others to open up access to those opportunities which have been denied to people living in the most deprived areas of our city.

We are addressing six key issues as we continue to develop strong, active communities:

1. Promoting youth ambition
2. Supporting older people
3. Involving our communities
4. Promoting healthy living
5. Building safe communities
6. Celebrating One City Oxford

#### **1. Promoting youth ambition**

As part of its commitment to building a world-class city for everyone, Oxford City Council aims to reduce the extent of inequality and to improve the lives of the most vulnerable members of our society. We particularly want to improve outcomes for young people, to help them open the doors to positive life opportunities.

Funding cuts from central government have resulted in reduced direct spending on services for young people outside the school environment. They have also reduced local government budgets and the capacity of local government to spend in these areas. In the light of these challenges, Oxford City Council believes that there is a need for a significant coordinated response to prevent lasting damage to our young people and our communities. Oxford City Council is therefore significantly increasing its own investment in areas that impact directly on young people. We want to stimulate partnership working and voluntary action around this important agenda.

We believe that engagement with a wide range of sporting and cultural activities from an early age can:

- offer opportunities for young people to share their experiences with others, and help to build social cohesion
- expand young people's horizons and generate a sense of ambition
- develop technical skills, discipline, and the confidence necessary for future success

- improve educational attainment
- encourage healthy living. The UK has the highest rate of obesity in Europe. In Oxford, 19% of year-six children are classified as obese
- open up possibilities for employment of talented and committed young people, including in the creative and sports industries.

Oxford City Council is:

- working with partners such as Fusion Lifestyle, the Cultural Partnership, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Sports Partnership, the voluntary sector, Oxford University, Experience Oxfordshire and Public Health Oxfordshire. We are coordinating an innovative and inspiring programme to encourage our young people to expand their opportunities by participating in sporting and cultural activities
- investing £400,000 annually over the next four years so that we can play our role in improving educational attainment in the city, particularly in the more deprived neighbourhoods
- investing £500,000 over the next four years to improve youth provision generally. We will strengthen the links between improved educational attainment, access to positive life choices, and engagement with cultural and sporting experiences. Our focus will be on areas with the lowest levels of provision and the highest levels of need. This level of investment in positive activities should be contrasted with the cost of negative activities. Placing one young person in custody for a year costs £45,000 and the national cost of responding to antisocial behaviour is £3.4 billion per year. The health cost of inactivity in Oxford is £2.1 million per year
- encouraging young people to be more active and engaged, by developing diverse, high-quality cultural and sporting activities, with clear pathways into clubs and organisations
- diverting young people from crime and antisocial behaviour by engaging them in positive, creative activities which broaden their horizons
- helping to get young people into work by developing confidence, skills and opportunities, and an awareness of positive life chances rather than life limitations.

## **2. Supporting older people**

Despite its youthful age profile, Oxford has more pensioners living alone than any of the surrounding districts. Of 6,000 single-pensioner households in Oxford, 3,400 were people who reported suffering from a limiting long-term illness.

Oxford City Council aims to respond more effectively to the needs of vulnerable older people and is exploring ways in which they can be supported to live in their homes and local communities for as long as possible.

The Council is:

- investing £20,000 per year for the next two years to encourage new initiatives to support isolated older people in the community



- initiating a £10,000 per year project with Age UK Oxfordshire to promote home sharing by older and younger people
- Working with other agencies – Oxfordshire County Council, Age UK and the Over 50s Group – to improve services for older people
- involved in on-going discussion with GPs on the Oxford Clinical Commissioning Group, the new Shadow Health and Well-Being Board, the Adult and Social Care Board and the Health Improvement Board to improve the quality of life for older people in the city
- supporting the development of extra care and supported housing for older people.

### **3. Engaging our communities**

Communities take many forms. They can be:

- communities of place: people living in geographically distinct areas of the city
- communities of identity: people from black and ethnic minority groups, older people, younger people, people with disabilities, religious groups, and gay and lesbian groups. The Council has prioritised black and minority ethnic communities, young people and older people as the focus of its work in the current year
- communities of interest: people involved in groups which might intersect with other communities, such as council tenants, allotment holders, cyclists, theatre-goers – or people who come together to use services such as parks, roads, community buildings or transport.

While people often see themselves as belonging to one community of place, but more than one community of interest, we aim to engage with communities primarily through the following routes:

- communities of place – through Area Forums and Neighbourhood Partnerships
- communities of identity – through the work of our community development team
- communities of interest – through the services they best relate to, e.g. Friends of parks and Friends of the Museum of Oxford.

Oxford City Council has developed a range of innovative ways in which local communities can become engaged in decisions that affect them. These include:

- consultation, and other forms of public engagement
- Area Forums and Neighbourhood Partnerships
- resident engagement
- engaging with young people
- engaging with older people
- supporting the community and voluntary sectors

- community development.

#### Clarity about how decisions are made

This is at the heart of Oxford City Council's approach to community involvement. The Council believes that most services are best designed, delivered and reviewed on a city-wide basis. Services will, of course, reflect the different demographics and needs of areas across the city and resource allocation will vary accordingly. For example, street-cleansing outcomes require greater inputs in busier areas. However, these variations should be seen in the context of the Council's vision for the whole city, which is set out in the Corporate Plan and the budget approved by Council.

Community involvement is about ensuring that elected councillors are aware of the views – often very strongly held – of individuals and community groups. It is not intended to enable minority interests to overrule the best interests of the wider community and the city as a whole. Local involvement and participation supports and underpins decision-making. It does not replace it. The final decision on any issue rests with the city's elected councillors.

#### Consultation and other forms of public involvement

The Council has a formally approved process which sets out how and when it will seek views from individuals and communities. The term 'consultation' is often loosely used to cover a wide range of public-involvement activities. Technically, consultation only occurs when the Council is seeking the views of members of the public in order directly to influence options, alternatives and/or decisions.

Oxford City Council also involves members of the public by:

- providing balanced and objective information to assist understanding of issues
- seeking views from members of the public for market-research purposes.

#### Area Forums and Neighbourhood Partnerships

The Council has formed Area Forums consisting of all ward councillors in any given area of the city. These are informal meetings, sponsored and supported by the Council, to engage with the communities in their area. Each area is free to adapt its arrangements to best meet its own needs.

Neighbourhood Partnerships exist in those areas of the city which have been identified as being in greatest need. Area Forums and Neighbourhood Partnerships are not decision-making bodies but provide a focus for local action and engagement on local issues.

The Area Forums:

- identify key issues and priorities to feed into city-wide service and budget planning processes
- enable local councillors to play a central role in drawing up neighbourhood plans, linking service-planning more closely with local needs and aspirations
- provide a space in which residents and community groups can work with mainstream service providers – health, education, police, businesses and the

voluntary sectors – to ensure that local services are responsive to community needs

- comment on planning policy documents and proposals that affect the area
- monitor service standards in the area.

Oxford City Council is:

- providing each Councillor with an annual budget of £1,500 for small projects that link to the priorities emerging from forum discussions and other local consultations
- exploring ways to ensure that all of our communities, including the more ‘hidden’ groups, have the opportunity to engage with them.

### Resident Engagement

Oxford City Council’s work with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) has been referred to earlier in this report. Tenants and leaseholders co-exist in areas of mixed tenure and problem solving, or the driving of initiatives, cannot be delivered successfully without the involvement of all groups concerned.

Oxford City Council is:

- creating a structure which enables broad involvement opportunities across all demographics and geographical areas of the city
- enabling varied involvement opportunities which allow tenants, residents and leaseholders to be involved in ways that suit their needs
- developing training and support opportunities and encouragement for the widest possible audience
- ensuring that structures do not allow one group, issue or process to become dominant
- ensuring transparency so that tenants, residents and leaseholders are able to see the difference that has been made as a result of their engagement.

### **Engaging with young people**

The City Council’s Youth Ambition Strategy details the Council’s approach to engage young people in positive activities and its aim to more fully involve young people in how we develop and deliver services. Youth Voice is a programme to support the children and young people of Oxford City between the ages of 15 and 21 (25 where there are special educational needs) to have influence and power over services that affect their lives.

The Youth Voice plan will work towards the following outcomes:

- For Oxford City Council to have a more pro-active approach to gaining, listening to and acting on the feedback of young people and to influence partners to do the same;
- To engage young people in activities that allow them to make the positive changes they feel are needed in their community;

- For young people to have increased access to decision makers in their local community, the city, regionally and nationally, allowing them to have influence and power over decisions, processes and services that will affect their transition into adulthood;
- To provide more and better personal and professional development opportunities to young people enabling them to effectively engage with decision makers;
- To create a legacy of participation across the city and for young people to become role models and ambassadors for change now and in their adult lives.

### **Engaging with older people**

Oxford City Council co-ordinates the Ageing Successfully Partnership to provide a partnership approach to addressing the needs of Older People in the City to improve wellbeing; address isolation and increase engagement with older people.

An Older People's Needs Assessment has recently been carried out to review the needs of the older population of Oxford. This work will help inform the City Council of the longer term support for older people in the city.

The City Council work closely with the 50+ Network which is a volunteer run community group whose aim is to engage with older people on relevant issues and increase involvement. This group have a representative on the Ageing Successfully Partnership.

### Supporting the community and voluntary sectors

The Council is keen to support the community and voluntary sectors, as well as individual volunteering activity. Volunteering has the potential to benefit those who volunteer as well as the wider community.

Oxford City Council is:

- building a new community centre in Rose Hill and looking at ways to improve community centres across the city
- using its membership of the Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Alliance to strengthen the role of the voluntary and community sectors, and to increase the number of volunteers in the city. We work with Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action to promote partnership working between the City Council and the voluntary sector
- using its grants programme to invest £1.4 million annually into a wide range of voluntary and community organisations that collectively make a significant contribution to the life of the city. The grants programme has two elements:
  - open bidding, where community and voluntary organisations can apply for one-off grants
  - commissioning, where funding is provided for activities that have been identified by the Council as contributing to the achievement of our corporate priorities
- encouraging its own staff to volunteer and working with its partners to increase the quality, quantity, and accessibility of volunteering. Oxford City Council hosts the annual volunteers' awards and Volunteers' Fair where different groups publicise their work

- ensuring high-quality community-centre provision across the city, with particular focus on our priority areas. The Council supports well-managed community centres which provide open access to all sectors of the community and encourage involvement.

#### Community Development

Community development involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can contribute to decisions that affect their lives. It starts from the principle that, within any community, there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which can be channelled into collective action to achieve desired goals.

Oxford City Council is:

- supporting community development through its own activities and through working with voluntary groups and local communities
- targeting its work in the priority areas of the city and advising other communities who want to engage in community planning
- applying community development principles to projects such as the community centre refurbishment programme and the development at Barton
- promoting a partnership with voluntary managers of local allotments, through regular meetings with the Oxford and District Federation of Allotment Associations.

#### **4. Promoting healthy living**

Oxford City Council is responsible for a range of functions that affect people's health and well-being. Some of these – planning, housing, social cohesion, and employment – have already been referred to in this plan. The Council will use its powers to improve these and the other wider determinants of health, such as environmental health, air quality, and green spaces.

Our ambition for our leisure services is to deliver the quality of service found in many private clubs, at an affordable price. Over the last four years we have invested over £4 million in improving our facilities. These improvements have been funded from the increased income resulting from a management partnership for leisure facilities between Oxford City Council and Fusion Lifestyle, a charitable trust. Over the same period we have received a quarter of a million more visits annually and are predicting 1.4 million visits in total this year. Oxford is now in the top quartile for adult activity in Oxfordshire, from being the second least active area in 2006. Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, Ferry Leisure Centre, and Hinksey Outdoor Pool (Oxford's public heated outdoor pool – have all achieved a rating of 'good' from Quest, the national quality award for sport and leisure.

We are using the legacy of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic programmes to encourage people of all ages and levels of fitness to embrace healthy and physically active lifestyles.

Oxford City Council is:

- Continuing to improve our leisure provision by:

- building a new competition-standard swimming pool in Blackbird Leys. This facility will help increase community participation in swimming, as well as providing a venue where county-standard competitions can be held. The new pool will replace Temple Cowley Pools and Blackbird Leys Pool, both of which are in poor condition, very costly to run, and major contributors to the Council's carbon footprint. The large savings in running costs over the facilities that it will replace will substantially meet the cost of the capital investment involved
- refurbishing the popular ice rink, a regional facility
- investing just under £1 million over the next year in refurbishing sports pavilions across the city,
- investing more than £300,000 over four years to encourage cycling, with more cycle lanes and better signage
- investing £174,000 to improve tennis courts across the city
- working in partnership to deliver the GO Active programme to get more people active in the city. The Oxford Health Walks scheme, which encourages walking, particularly in the city's beautiful parks, is exercise for those unaccustomed to physical activity. This accredited scheme provides health professionals with another avenue to promote healthy living through the Exercise on Referral scheme.
- improving the quality of the outdoor sports offer in the city. The Council's StreetSports programme has achieved the prestigious StreetMark accreditation, a national recognition of quality
- providing opportunities to improve mental and physical well-being, plus encouraging physical activity and better diet by supporting 36 popular allotments across the city
- working in partnership to deliver the Active Women programme within the city
- protecting public health by carrying out over 700 inspections of food premises a year, and displaying the results of food hygiene inspections on the 'Scores on the Doors' website
- acknowledging the diversity of Oxford's communities by delivering food hygiene training courses in different languages as well as providing foreign-language exam papers. Nearly 50% of all the people trained on our food hygiene training courses do not have English as their first language.

## **5. Building safer communities**

Crime and the fear of crime have an adverse effect on the well-being of our communities. As a leading member of the Oxford Community Safety Partnership, Oxford City Council has made a significant contribution to the reduction in levels of crime and antisocial behaviour in the city.

Over the last twelve months, total crime fell by 10%, compared to the same period in 2011. The total number of stealing offences (including domestic burglary, theft of or from a vehicle, and robbery) fell by 10.1%. There has also been great success in

reducing violent crime. Violence against the person decreased by 19.5% compared to the same period last year. The relatively low level of crime in the city is no consolation for victims and the partnership remains committed to maintaining tight control on crime. The Oxford Community Safety Partnership is also committed to protecting young people from sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking.

The Police and Crime Commissioner now takes responsibility for funds to support community safety partnerships – funds which previously came to local authorities. This could impact on local neighbourhood programmes.

Oxford City Council is:

- participating in the NightSafe scheme to tackle alcohol-related disorder in the night-time economy. Its success helped enable Oxford to obtain its Purple Flag accreditation
- improving coordination between our Community Warden service and our Crime and Nuisance Action Team, specialists in the investigation of antisocial behaviour
- using our citizens' panel to survey people's opinions on a range of antisocial behaviour issues. Young people 'hanging about around the streets' was often cited as an important concern by respondents. This issue has dropped from second to seventh in terms of people's concerns.
- Investing in the Positive Futures Programme to offer alternative activities to young people who might otherwise be drawn into various forms of antisocial behaviour
- engaging with the community on safety issues, through the successful Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGS)
- applying resources specifically to tackle abuse and trafficking.

## **6. Celebrating One City Oxford**

Oxford City Council and its partners believe that access to high-quality cultural experiences is the right of all our citizens. It can play a vital role in enriching and energising the lives of individuals and regenerating communities.

Culture, the arts and community festivals have the potential to bring together people from all areas of life, breaking down barriers and increasing our sense of local identity and belonging, celebrating what unites us as well as our differences. The popular events staged in the city to celebrate the Olympics, along with our local torch-bearers, brought people from all of the city's communities together in a common cause.

Oxford City Council is:

- leading a partnership-based approach to developing and improving the cultural life of the city, so that more people can have more access to quality cultural experiences
- improving opportunities for young people to participate actively in high-quality cultural activities. Active participation is a means of developing young people's

technical skills and discipline, and building confidence. It can also expand their horizons and generate ambition

- improving opportunities for the diverse range of communities and faith groups in the city to participate actively in high-quality cultural activities that reflect their own identities and that can be shared with the whole community.

### Measuring progress

Measure	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017-18
Number of young people accessing youth engagement projects and activities outside school hours	5,500	5,775	6,000	TBC
Percentage of adults participating in sport (as measured by the Annual Sport England Active People Survey)	27%+	27%+	27.5%+	TBC
Satisfaction with our neighbourhoods	90%	91%	92%	TBC



## Chapter 4 – A Cleaner, Greener Oxford

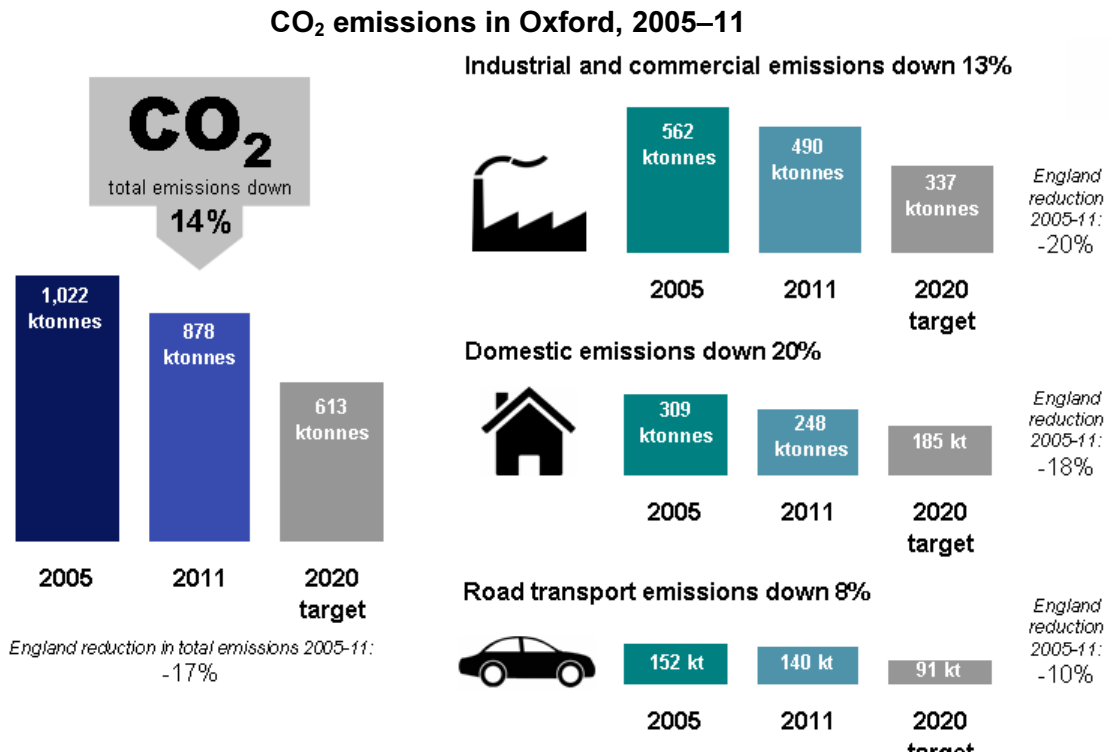
**Our ambition:** a cleaner, greener Oxford – in the city centre, in our neighbourhoods and in all public spaces.

### Some facts

Around 900,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide are emitted as a result of activity in Oxford every year. This equates to 5.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide per person.

Carbon emissions generated by industrial and commercial uses account for over half the total emissions, followed by domestic uses at a little over a quarter. Compared to the national averages, Oxford has lower per capita emissions from households and transport but higher emissions from industry and commerce.

There have been reductions in each of these three emissions sources over the period from 2005 to 2011, resulting in a reduction in the total level of emissions from 1,022 kilotonnes (kt) in 2005 to 878 kt in 2011. Domestic carbon emissions have fallen despite a rise in the total population and number of dwellings over the period.



Four of the city's parks have achieved Green Flag status.

### Oxford City Council's approach

The need to improve and maintain the cleanliness of our city is an issue of abiding concern for Oxford's citizens. The Council is addressing five key issues as we continue to make Oxford cleaner and greener:

1. Recycling and refuse collection

2. Improving cleanliness in streets, neighbourhoods and open spaces
3. Reducing the Council's carbon footprint
4. Reducing the city's carbon footprint
5. Transport

### **1. Recycling and refuse collection**

The city presents particular challenges due to the diverse nature of its population, its high population churn (25% per annum), and the large number of houses of multiple occupation and self-contained flats, around 19,500 in total.

These challenges apply across the range of issues important to the Cleaner, Greener campaign in that there is a continual need to reinforce positive attitudes and behaviours in relation to the public realm. However, they particularly impact on recycling and refuse collection.

Oxford City Council is:

- operating a recycling and waste service which, as a result of a market-testing exercise, is highly efficient and committed to improving customer satisfaction
- operating a weekly food-waste recycling programme across the whole city
- 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
- making recycling easier by enabling nearly all recycling materials to be placed into one container
- providing a programme of recycling education and events to support individual customers, school, college and university students and local businesses, to increase their recycling efforts
- continuing to be at the forefront of new initiatives to improve recycling from waste streams such as food waste, small electrical items and batteries
- providing recycling bins in the city centre, around the ring road, at Cowley Centre and other retail locations around the city providing a garden waste collection service to which over 123,000 customers have subscribed to so far
- providing customer recycling sites around the city to include general recycling, textile and clothes recycling and new WEEE banks (small electrical items)
- continuing to adapt and improve recycling facilities and bin stores at city council owned flat sites
- working with social housing and private landlords to increase recycling at their flat sites
- recycling or re-using 100% of the green waste from our parks and countryside sites and from the green open spaces of our estates

- consistently improving its recycling rate – from 20% in 2005–6 to nearly 45% currently. Our goal continues to be the reduction of waste sent to landfill year on year.

## **2. Improving cleanliness in streets, neighbourhoods and open spaces**

Achieving permanent improvements in cleanliness levels also requires continual reinforcement of positive public attitudes and behaviours. Ongoing education is at the heart of the campaign for cleaner streets, neighbourhoods and open spaces, but this is backed by the use of environmental enforcement notices where appropriate.

Oxford City Council is:

- tackling inappropriate refuse disposal, fly-tipping, littering, dog-fouling, and graffiti
- continuing to target resources so that we can keep the city centre clean and retain our Purple Flag accreditation
- carrying out a programme of street washing and chewing gum removal at key retail locations in the city centre and other retail centres around the city
- using new powers to control litter caused by leafleting
- targeting rolling clean-up campaigns in our neighbourhoods enabling the Community Response Team to play a bigger role in environmental enforcement
- working in partnership with the *Oxford Mail* on an on-going publicity campaign
- spending an additional £12,000 per year for the next three years on a door-to-door campaign of encouragement and enforcement
- investing an additional £15,000 per year for three years to improve litter-picking and maintenance in our parks, reflecting the increased use of these facilities in recent years
- investing £1.1 million on a major refurbishment of park pavilions, including those in Blackbird Leys, Barton and Quarry Fields.
- completing a £3.1 million programme to improve the majority of our 92 play areas
- using dog control orders across the city, to prevent dog-fouling and control dogs accessing park play areas
- carrying out intelligence led campaigns, at hot spot locations around the city, to educate and enforce responsible dog ownership regarding dog-fouling on our streets and open spaces.

## **3. Reducing the Council's carbon footprint**

Reducing the Council's own carbon footprint has been a high priority over the past four years, through the 'Getting our own house in order' programme. We put

measures in place to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from our buildings and operations by 25% by March 2011. The Council is now planning 5% yearly reductions through a new, expanded carbon management programme - 'Carbon reduction is at the heart of everything that we do'.

Oxford City Council is:

- improving energy efficiency in our housing stock by installing efficient gas boilers, improving insulation, and installing water-saving devices
- applying external cladding to our tower blocks, which will improve thermal efficiency in over 400 homes
- using solar photovoltaic panels to provide cheaper electricity and feed surplus electricity into the national grid
- requiring a 20% on-site renewable energy production for all large developments
- drawing on a revolving loan fund through Salix, a financial organisation that empowers public sector organisations to take a lead in tackling climate change by helping to increase their energy efficiency. Salix have provided £405,000 to spend on energy-saving technologies, e.g. by installing pool covers in our leisure centres. This has reduced energy loss and saved around £250,000 per year
- including electric vehicles in the Council fleet
- using tracker and telematics systems, which re-route operational vehicles to save mileage and report on vehicle emissions and fuel consumption
- using route optimisation software to plan the most efficient routes for our waste and recycling rounds
- reducing energy consumption in the St Aldate's Chambers offices. Energy efficiency measures such as improved lighting and motion sensor controls have improved the building's energy performance rating from an E to a C
- using our procurement strategy to support suppliers who are taking action to reduce their environmental impact. This means, for example: using local suppliers, buying only recycled paper, using only FSC certified wood as building material
- the first UK local authority to achieve the new British Standards Kitemark for Energy Reduction Verification
- recognised as a leader in this field, e.g. Highly Commended in the Low Carbon Council category, 2012 LGC awards; The Carbon Trust; The Energy Saving Trust; Guardian Public Service Award; 2012 Green Apple Environment Award, for the Council's ReFashion event.

#### **4. Reducing the city's carbon footprint**

Low Carbon Oxford consists of 31 organisations including private- and public-sector bodies, the universities, and community groups. These organisations have agreed to

work together to create a sustainable, low-carbon economy in Oxford and to reduce its carbon footprint. These organisations account for over half of the city's emissions. The Low Carbon Oxford charter commits its signatories to collaborate to reduce their carbon footprints in Oxford by a minimum of 3% average, every year, for at least the next ten years.

Community groups from around the city are also part of the Low Carbon Oxford initiative.

Oxford City Council is:

- progressing our work to build a low-carbon economy through the £1.3 million OxFutures programme which receives European grant funding
- using £310,000 which has been awarded by the Department of Energy and Climate Change to help expand the Warming Barton pilot project, which is helping householders save energy and create warmer homes in the city's most deprived area
- leading the Low Carbon Oxford initiative for the city
- Investing an additional £50,000 per year to ensure that Low Carbon Oxford is able to continue its pioneering work
- investing £54,000 over two years to ensure early and full take-up of the Green Deal opportunities for home energy efficiency improvements, particularly by households on low incomes
- working through strategic partnerships to combat the adverse effects of climate change, including the increased incidence of flooding within the city
- implementing a sustainability strategy in order to deal more effectively with the management of natural resources
- continuing to support allotments, recognizing their contribution to reducing Oxford's carbon footprint by producing an estimated 500 tonnes of vegetables to the value of £1.25 million each year.

Low Carbon Oxford is running a number of Pathfinder Projects organised around the four themes of industrial and commercial, domestic, transport and food. These include: follow up to its successful Foodprinting report and running Low Carbon Oxford Week in June 2014.

## **5. Transport**

The transport network is highly constrained, with very limited potential to increase traffic on roads in particular. Operational capacity has already been reached or exceeded on much of the road network, resulting in frequent congestion and delays. The limited platform and line capacity of Oxford's railway station results in a significant bottleneck on the rail network.

There are a number of future pressures to consider:

- The city's population will continue to grow, not only within existing settlements but also at new developments such as West Barton
- The role of Oxford as a workplace – one-third of the county's jobs are in the city – is important in supporting economic growth, but leads to a high level of in-commuting and therefore congestion at peak times
- Compared to most cities, Oxford has particularly high proportions of people travelling by bus and by bicycle and we will promote these forms of travel further. More Oxford residents cycle or walk to work than those who drive.
- There is also a need to reduce the environmental impact of travel, and to promote health and safety,.

Oxford City Council is working proactively with the County Council and other partners to deliver the Oxford Transport Strategy and planned development across the city, to reduce traffic congestion and promote carbon reduction.

Oxford City Council is:

- using its Economic Development and Growth Strategy to encourage new housing developments and other growth initiatives in areas already linked to Oxford's transport infrastructure
- implementing a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) from 2014, which will place restrictions on the types of engines that can be used in buses operating within central Oxford, leading to reductions in emissions of nitrogen dioxide
- supporting joint bus ticketing and other partnership initiatives which will reduce congestion, including:
  - Oxford-Marylebone rail link, including Water Eaton station
  - Oxford railway station development
  - East-West rail extension
  - Frideswide Square redevelopment
- investing more than £300,000 over four years to encourage cycling, by providing more cycle lanes and better signage as part of the Oxford Cycle City initiative.

## Measuring progress

Measure	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017-18
Satisfaction with our street cleansing	75%	76%	77%	TBC
Reduction in the Council's carbon footprint	5%	5%	5%	TBC
Number of enforcements carried out as a result of environmental offences (e.g. noisy parties, dog-fouling, littering)	1,100	1,200	1,300	TBC
Amount of waste sent to landfill per household	430kg	430kg	430kg	TBC
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling, composting or anaerobic digestion	50%	51%	51%	TBC

## Chapter 5 – An Efficient and Effective Council

**Our ambition:** a flexible and accessible organisation, delivering high-quality, value-for-money services.

### **Some facts**

Oxford City Council has achieved £8.5 million of efficiency savings over the last four years and is on track to make a further £1.3 million savings this year, without the need for compulsory redundancies. Our ability to continually improve the way we do things means we have been able to invest in new projects and infrastructure which are critical to delivering the Council's vision: building a world-class city for everyone.

In 2012–13 we achieved or exceeded 79% of our corporate targets.

Oxford City Council won the silver award in the Council of the Year category of the Improvement and Efficiency South East annual awards.

Our state-of-the-art customer service centre in St Aldate's is helping more than 8,500 people each year, while the customer service centre at Templar's Square helps more than 6,670 people each year..

Our corporate call centre has been established, with one phone number for all Council services deals with nearly 263,000 calls per year. We answered 89% of calls received and improved the customer experience by resolving 90% of queries at the first point of contact.

Sickness absence has been reduced by 25% as a result of robust performance management.

Investors in People accreditation for the whole Council has been achieved, as has Customer Excellence accreditation. The Council has been awarded Equalities Framework for Local Government accreditation.

### **Oxford City Council's approach**

The financial constraints which government has imposed on local authorities present us with the significant challenge of doing more with less while still ensuring that our residents receive a world-class service. In spite of the financial constraints within which we operate, our ambition is to take the Council from being good to great – through GOLD (Greater Outcomes, Leaner Delivery). We will do this through our ongoing efficiency programme and by delivering new and increased income streams, requiring a more commercial and innovative approach from all employees.

The Council is focusing on five key areas to drive further efficiency:

1. The Customer First programme
2. Improving our processes
3. Better procurement and contract management
4. Trading and business development
5. Organisational development.



## **1. The Customer First programme**

Our Customer First programme has been successful in creating a single approach to managing customer contact through telephone, face- to-face and online channels. A multi-skilled workforce resolves the majority of enquiries at the first point of contact without handover to the back office, using a customer-relationship management system to capture these enquiries and integrate with our key IT systems. This has resulted in greater consistency in standards of service, improving levels of customer satisfaction and greater efficiencies through improved business processes.

We now need to build on this success and achieve even higher standards of performance – seeking to get more customer contact ‘right first time’, thereby reducing the need for customers to contact us more than once about the same issue. We also need to encourage customers to use more convenient and lower-cost channels such as the website.

Oxford City Council is:

- improving our website to better enable residents to carry out more transactions online at their convenience. We will continue to expand the range of services that can be provided or paid for online, and integrate these with our back-office systems to improve efficiency and reduce cost
- continually testing customer satisfaction and using customer feedback to inform how we deliver our services and learn from our customers’ experiences
- carrying out a major survey of our residents to gain insight into their views of council services, and of Oxford as a place to live, to help us meet customer needs in future years
- installing a more modern call-handling system, which includes customer call-back facilities, to ensure that customer calls are dealt with more efficiently.

## **2. Improving our processes**

Oxford City Council’s Performance Improvement Framework sets out how the Council plans to review and improve service delivery both through fundamental, whole-service reviews (such as waste collection and housing benefits) and smaller, process reviews within services, following benchmarking activity.

We have rationalised and centralised our back-office functions by bringing together finance and ICT staff from across the Council into centralised teams.

The Council has introduced a single integrated performance reporting tool, CorVu, which captures risk, performance and finance data at both a corporate and service level in an accessible and user-friendly way. The iTrent system is providing similar benefits for human resources management processes.

Oxford City Council is:

- using a quality-management system (ISO:9001) in our Corporate Property team, and using the learning from this pilot to roll out quality systems more widely across the Council
- implementing the outcomes of our review of Housing Benefits to enable people to make their claims online from the comfort of their own home, or with assistance from our customer service staff (by telephone or in person), rather than using lengthy and confusing paper forms. We are also introducing a new risk-based verification approach to determine claims, which will significantly reduce the amount of additional information the majority of claimants are required to provide, and speed up processing times, as well as deliver efficiency savings of £110,000 per year.
- rationalising and improving our ICT systems architecture and reviewing the Council's licensing arrangements.

### **3. Better procurement and contract management**

Currently, £23 million of Oxford City Council's £40 million annual supplier spend is covered by corporate contracts. The 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 the partners in the hub.

We are shifting from a focus on individual procurement exercises to better management of our contracts to deliver the maximum value from them through improved supplier relationships. We are also introducing new technology to improve the way we order and pay for goods and services

Oxford City Council is:

- implementing a 'purchase to pay' system to ensure that orders take advantage of existing corporate contracts, to eliminate the need for most paper orders and streamline invoice authorisation
- developing a corporate approach to managing contracts and developing supplier relationships
- developing a greater commercial focus
- supporting and developing effective contract management through the introduction of training for key officers within the Council's service areas, enabling them to become accredited with a professional procurement qualification
- delivering contract savings through supplier development and offering services to other councils beyond the Oxfordshire Hub initiative.

### **4. Trading and business development**

In an environment of reducing central government funding, it is vital that the Council does all it can to grow external sources of revenue. Good progress has already been made through establishing markets for the Council's building services, engineering, motor transport, commercial waste, grounds maintenance/landscaping and legal

services. There is a requirement to deliver new and increased income streams that will require a more commercial and innovative approach to be adopted.

Oxford City Council is:

- implementing a strategy and framework to support its aspirations to grow external revenue
- seeking to bring in additional revenue from the provision of services to other external organisations.

## **5. Organisational development**

The Council's ambitions are high. We are lifting our service from good to great by producing greater outcomes through leaner delivery (GOLD), and we are doing this in a climate of significant financial constraint. The Council's staff are its key asset and ensuring they are equipped to undertake the roles we require them to fulfil is vital. To this end the Council is investing not only in a new performance management scheme, but also in a variety of development and well-being initiatives to support performance improvement.

The challenges that the Council faces, together with its high ambitions, mean that it must continue to develop the attitudes, skills and competencies of its employees.

Effective people-management skills driving high performance, sound project and programme management methodologies, and business improvement tools will continue to play an important role. However, new skills will also be necessary: leadership, coaching and team-building skills, business acumen (including the ability to interpret and respond to customer intelligence) plus the ability to 'think outside the box', will all be critical. High levels of employee engagement, where employees 'connect' with exactly what the Council is trying to achieve for the city, will set us apart and enable us to succeed.

Oxford City Council is:

- restructuring its services to integrate and align teams with a similar purpose and identifying career and development pathways to facilitate succession planning
- implementing an organisational development strategy which will:
  - define our organisational values and shape our behaviours framework
  - develop, retain and attract a high-performing and motivated workforce, where excellence in people-management and development is recognised
  - ensure our values are aligned closely with corporate objectives and that staff are clear about how they contribute to the delivery of the Council's vision
  - champion innovative thinking and proactive engagement with staff and customers in service redesign
  - deliver a comprehensive learning and development programme to bridge any gaps in employee capability

- training managers in more effective recruitment
- developing a talent management strategy that enables career growth, workforce and succession planning
- piloting an employee well-being programme to improve fitness, encourage healthy lifestyles and develop a better work/life balance in order to improve staff attendance
- aiming to achieve IIP Gold in 2014.

### Measuring progress

Measure	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017-18
Percentage of customers satisfied at their first point of contact	80%	85%	85%	TBC
Delivery of the Council's savings and income targets	£1.887m	£1.183m	£0.906m	TBC
Level of self-service transactions that are carried out using the Council's website	23%	28%	37%	TBC
Achievement and retention of IIP Gold	Gold	Gold	Gold	TBC

**Chapter 6 Spending Plans 2014–18 (to be inserted once the budget is approved)**

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