



Oxford City Council’s draft Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019  
Building a world class city for everyone

**Contents**

Foreword from the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive .....	2
Chapter 1 Vibrant, Sustainable Economy .....	10
Chapter 2 Meeting Housing Needs.....	18
Chapter 3 Strong, Active Communities.....	24
Chapter 4 Cleaner, Greener Oxford .....	34
Chapter 5 Efficient, Effective Council .....	39
Chapter 6 Spending Plans 2015–19 (to be inserted once the budget is approved)	

## **Foreword from the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive**

Welcome to Oxford City Council's Corporate Plan for 2015–2019.

The Corporate Plan is Oxford City Council's key strategic document. It sets out:

- the links between the demographic needs of the city and the Council's priorities
- progress on delivering our priorities
- high-level details of the budget through which these priorities will be funded.

As a result of the financial austerity regime, public sector organisations across the country are facing severe challenges. The Corporate Plan 2015-19 sets out how Oxford City Council is mitigating the effects of austerity and is working to shape a prosperous future for our city and its communities.

### **Introduction**

For many of its residents, Oxford is a thriving city with many opportunities for work and leisure. However, there are also major inequalities in life chances and life expectancy in our city.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 places Oxford in the top half of the most deprived local authority areas in England. Twelve areas, in the south and east of the city, are among the 20% most deprived areas in England. People from these areas can expect on average to live seven 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.

Oxford is facing a housing crisis. According to Cities Outlook 2014, Oxford has overtaken London as the UK's least affordable city in terms of housing. The city's housing crisis is causing increasing hardship for people and families. Poor and overcrowded housing - with increasing instances of 'beds in sheds' - is impacting on some of the most vulnerable in the city. The housing crisis is also threatening Oxford's position as the focus of a world-class knowledge economy and one of the most important concentrations of high-value businesses in Europe. Local employers are finding it difficult to attract people to the city.

This Corporate Plan 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 through five corporate priorities which directly address the needs of our city:

- A vibrant and sustainable economy
- Meeting housing needs
- Strong and active communities
- Cleaner greener Oxford

- An efficient and effective council.

### **Managing austerity**

Between 2010 and the end of the 2015/16 financial year, the City Council will have lost 47% of its government grant and further cuts are inevitable in the future. The government has decided as a matter of policy that reductions in public expenditure will now continue into the future, with the intention to deliver a “leaner, more efficient state” on a permanent basis. The Council’s Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan is based on the assumption that government grant to local authorities will disappear by 2018-19.

The City Council’s approach to financial management is based on prudent, long-term planning and a rigorous commitment to increasing efficiency year on year. Over the past four years alone we have generated approximately £8.5 million in efficiency savings. The Council’s high level of efficiency has enabled us to manage the impacts of austerity.

More importantly, it has enabled us to make progress on delivering our long-standing policy commitment to safeguard the vulnerable from cuts in the services that they require, to narrow the gap between rich and poor in our city, and to avoid compulsory redundancies in the Council’s front-line workforce. It has also enabled us to pay a Living Wage of £8.36 per hour to all our own staff and requiring the same of our contractors and suppliers.

The Council’s approach has served the city well and we will continue with it. We have reviewed our medium term financial strategy and we will achieve a further £7 million revenue expenditure reduction by 2018/19 on an annualised basis. The total savings and increased income proposed over the next four years is £22.5 million. These increased efficiencies will continue to fund the initiatives set out in this Corporate Plan.

Further efficiency savings will include:

- reducing management costs
- reducing administration costs
- increasing income from trading
- reducing annual general fund capital spend
- improving management of our assets.
- generating further efficiencies in our ICT service
- improving our procurement and business management processes
- increasing income and external funding.

### **Investing for growth**

The Council is providing long-term investment, growth and positive opportunities for our city. As a result of the Council’s initiatives, around £2 billion is being invested into Oxford’s economy.

Key investments included in the City Council's budget are:

- spending up to £101 million to implement our *Council Housing Ambition* initiative to build new council homes and improve existing housing stock over the next four years, with an additional £96 million of new investment over the next 10 years
- putting resources in place for large scale regeneration projects which will provide substantial long-term investment in Oxford:
  - building nearly 900 new homes and community facilities at BartonPark
  - developing to 500 homes and 90,000 sqm of employment space at the Northern Gateway
  - building 300 new homes and providing 1,000 jobs through the Oxpens redevelopment
  - providing 2,000 jobs plus 1,000 in the construction phase as a result of the Westgate redevelopment.
- investing £700,000 to improve our community centres and sports pavilions
- investing £500,000 to improve cycling and the public realm
- investing £200,000 in addition to the £600,000 already included in the Council's Capital Programme to fund energy saving projects which will reduce fuel bills for our tenants
- refurbishing and improving our car parks.

Taken together, these initiatives represent a radical re-shaping of our city centre and neighbourhoods. These developments will vastly improve the physical environment in which we all live and also improve the city's leisure and retail offer. In terms of physical regeneration, we are literally building a world class city for everyone.

### **Shaping the future of our city**

As the Council's capacities and capabilities have grown, so too has its realization that Oxford – if its long-term prosperity is to be secured – must increasingly become a place-shaper, able to influence county-wide and regional partnerships, strategies and plans. The Council has made good progress in partnership working in areas such as housing, physical regeneration, community safety, education, culture, and youth ambition. In recent months significant work with the two universities and with neighbouring councils has taken place to promote our vision for the city and agree the approach to implementing the City Deal for economic growth and the infrastructure which is required to support it.

Oxford is one of the oldest centres of knowledge in the world and the knowledge economy in its various manifestations - education, health, bioscience, information technology, publishing and the motor industry - underpins the prosperity of our city. However in a global economy, Oxford's continuing position as the focus of a world-class knowledge economy cannot be taken for granted.

Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council have been working with the four Oxfordshire district councils, the Local Enterprise Partnership, the universities and the science facilities at Harwell and Culham, to implement a City Deal for Oxford and Oxfordshire. The City Deal builds on the research activities of the two universities and the potential of the area to deliver world-leading technology and business innovation.

As a result of the City Deal, around £95 million of public money will be invested in Oxford and the surrounding areas, creating more than 18,000 long-term jobs in high-tech areas, in addition to the likely 30,000 construction jobs needed for the area's development. It will also accelerate the delivery of 7,500 new homes by 2018. The delivery of the City Deal will underpin the continued prosperity of the Oxford city region, and make a major contribution to the wider south-east region.

At a national level the Council has met with Lord Adonis and supported the Lyons review, both of which are aimed at encouraging national support for growing cities like Oxford in terms of changes to the spatial planning framework and devolution to cities.

The Council has also joined the Key Cities alliance, working with cities such as Norwich and Cambridge to lobby for these changes and to raise our profile nationally as a key city which can contribute to national economic growth.

Growth and the benefits that arise from this has to be planned carefully and be truly sustainable. A key element of this has to be our commitment to contributing to tackling climate change both through reducing the city's use of fossil fuels and in preparing to mitigate the now inevitable impacts of climate change.

The City Council will continue to facilitate Low Carbon Oxford, a pioneering city-wide programme of collaboration involving around 35 private, public and non-profit organisations with the aim of ensuring Oxford's future as a sustainable and low carbon city. The Low Carbon Oxford charter commits its signatories to collaborate to reduce their carbon footprints in Oxford by an average minimum of 3% every year, for at least the next ten years. Community groups from around the city are also part of the Low Carbon Oxford initiative.

Flooding is the major risk for the city arising from climate change and the city council will work through strategic partnerships to combat the increased incidence of and potential impact of flooding within the city. Activities to reduce flooding include:

- implementing flood alleviation measures at Northway and Marston, in partnership with the Environment Agency at a cost of £1.7 million
- investing £100,000 to fund advice on the Thames Water catchment study. Parts of the city have major problems with the foul water network and it is essential that the Thames Water study provides a satisfactory long-term solution to these problems.
- working with partners to secure funding and implement the Oxford and Abingdon Flood Relief Scheme.

## **Shaping our neighbourhoods**

The most important place for many people is their local neighbourhood. The Council is working with local people to make our neighbourhoods and facilities among the best in the country.

### Building more affordable homes

As part of our Council Housing Ambition initiative, 485 affordable new homes will be built. This means that, with the 354 new homes already funded and approved for the Barton Park development and the 113 affordable homes being built during this 2014/15 financial year, Oxford will have a total of 952 new council homes over the next 10 years.

In addition to building more homes, the Council is also improving the quality of our estates. We will be refurbishing existing council homes to standards above the national average. This includes carrying out a free energy audit for every council tenant, to improve insulation and reduce heating bills. We will also be remodeling the city's estates to improve parking and street cleaning.

### Providing high quality community facilities

The Council spent over £3 million refurbishing play areas across the city and is committed to providing high quality community facilities that are easily accessible by people in all our neighbourhoods. We have invested heavily in improving the quality of leisure facilities and sports pavilions across the city. The new competition-standard swimming pool in Blackbird Leys will help increase participation in swimming, as well as contributing to the ongoing regeneration of the Leys.

We are investing over £4 million to build a new community centre in Rose Hill and investing significantly to 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

### Investing in our young people

Oxford City Council aims to reduce the extent of inequality and to improve the lives of the most vulnerable. Many young people from our more deprived areas leave school without the levels of educational attainment or the confidence to find employment in the increasingly competitive local environment. We particularly want to help young people in our more deprived areas open the doors to positive life opportunities.

Oxford City Council has invested significantly over the last three years in a range of targeted interventions to drive up ambition and attainment in the city's schools.

The Council is also investing £240,000 annually to improve out-of-school-hours activities for young people in areas of the city where need is greatest and expand youth activity to some areas which currently have no provision. Working with partners such as Fusion Lifestyle, the City Cultural Partnership, and Oxfordshire

Sports Partnership we are co-ordinating an innovative programme to encourage our young people to expand their opportunities and build their skills by participating in high-quality sporting and cultural activities.

#### Preparing people for work

The Council is using its procurement processes to help young people from the city gain apprenticeships and employment. We require Council contractors to create apprenticeship opportunities as part of any large construction project. Our joint venture with Grosvenor on the Barton West development will involve a training and apprenticeship programme. We are providing apprenticeships at Oxford City Council which will help young people from Oxford to get experience and qualifications. We are also 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.

In 2013/14 Oxford City Council was part of a pilot to show how a local authority can support people affected by welfare reform. This work has continued and has been supported by a successful bid for European Social Fund money. This work forms an important part of our aspiration to mitigate the impact of welfare reform on local people. Up until November 2014, the Welfare Reform team had worked intensively with 266 people of whom 93 have been supported into work. In addition the team provides housing or work related advice to anyone who requires it.

#### Protecting the quality of our neighbourhoods

The private rented sector in Oxford provides essential accommodation for key workers, and others who are unable to access social housing or purchase homes on the private market. One in five of Oxford's population lives in a house in multiple occupation (HMO). We know that the private rented sector can cause problems for those who live in HMOs and for the local neighbourhood. That is why the Council has taken measures to improve standards in the private rented sector. Since the introduction in 2011 of the HMO licensing scheme around 3,000 HMOs have been improved and made safe for occupants.

Oxford City Council now requires planning permission for 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. We are working with Oxford Brookes University and the University of Oxford to tackle issues relating to student housing, particularly in East Oxford. We are also using targeted noise enforcement as part of a programme of assistance for neighbourhoods whose character is being adversely affected by HMOs and entertainment venues.

#### Improving community engagement

We are working with our communities – through Area Forums and community partnerships, voluntary and community associations, and other networks – so that local people can play a key role in shaping their local communities. This is particularly important in our more deprived areas, where people are sometimes less well able to make their voices heard than those in affluent areas.

The Council is piloting an approach to neighbourhood management in Rose Hill, the Leys and Barton which we hope will strengthen the abilities of local people to shape the places in which they live. The Council's Chief Executive and Directors are working directly with councillors and community organisations to help manage the challenges in our local communities. We want to ensure that:

- the quality of local services improves and the work of Council teams is co-ordinated
- an action plan for the area is developed which addresses the social, economic and environmental needs of the location, that local people are involved in its development, and that it is realistic and prioritised
- effective work is being undertaken to grow community capacity and involvement
- other agencies are fully involve in work addressing deprivation and community priorities, particularly around health, the County Council, the Police and the voluntary sector
- harder to reach groups are actively involved.

Oxfordshire County Council is happy to work with the City Council in its new approach to neighbourhood management in the most deprived communities.

### **The future**

The financial challenges that confront Oxford City Council and the public sector generally should not be understated.

In Oxford we are building on a strong base. Oxford City Council is now recognized as being one of the most efficient, effective, and ambitious councils in the country. The progress that we have made in recent years has been reflected in the high number of external awards that the Council is now winning. Winning the MJ award for Highest Achieving Council of 2014 and accreditation for Investors in People Gold were the crowning achievements of the year. However the Council is also achieving recognition for its work across a wide range of its services.

Referencing the awards that we have received should not be mistaken for self-congratulation or complacency. We hope that the external recognition that the Council is receiving will give the people of Oxford confidence that the Council's high aspirations for the city in difficult times are matched by its capacity and capability to deliver high quality results.

This Corporate Plan is underpinned by a budget that has been structured so that it is in balance for the next four years. We are continuing to invest in our communities so that we can help bring economic growth, jobs, and more decent homes to our city. Oxford City Council does all that it can to make Oxford a fairer, more equal place and delivering the priorities set out in this Corporate Plan will play a very important part in this.

Oxford City Council's approach to delivering its ambitions has been characterised by:

- strong financial management



- partnership between councillors, council managers and staff, and trade unions
- long term planning, which helps to keep us from being knocked off course by external events.

These strengths will be essential if we are to continue managing our way through the challenges facing us for the foreseeable future.

Bob Price  
Leader  
Oxford City Council

Peter Sloman  
Chief Executive  
Oxford City Council

## **Chapter 1 Vibrant, Sustainable Economy**

**Our ambition: a strong local economy, supported by effective education and training.**

### **Some facts**

Oxford is a global centre 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 4,000 businesses provide 106,000 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. Oxford is the sixth most visited city in the UK by international visitors. Approximately 9.5 million visitors per year generate £770 million of income for local Oxford businesses and support around 13,000 jobs.

During the banking crisis and subsequent recession, the buoyant economy of the Oxford city region suffered less than other parts of the UK.

A frequently-used 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. As of July 2014 the number was 1,100 - significantly below the pre-recession average of 1600 claimants. The most recent estimate of Oxford's unemployment rate is 5.4% for the period Apr 2013-Mar 2014; this is below the national average of 7.1%.

While this suggests a 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. Nationally, the increase in jobs has been in the part-time and self-employed sectors. Other figures show that the number of long-term claimants and claimants aged over 50 remains 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**

Half of Oxford's jobs are in the public sector, the largest proportion of any UK city, with 50% of jobs in public administration, education and health. The distribution of employment is a cause for concern in the light of the government's deficit reduction measures. A large number of jobs in Oxford that are directly or indirectly linked to public spending might be vulnerable.

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)
- implementing the City Deal
- 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 arrived in Oxford, and BMW have committed substantial new investment into the MINI plant in Cowley)
- co-ordinating the activities of the various skills providers in Oxfordshire
- overseeing the development of a strategy to build on the advantages that the arts, culture and the creative industries bring to our area.

### Implementing the City Deal

Oxford City Council is working with the County Council, the other four Oxfordshire district councils, the Local Enterprise Partnership, the universities and the science facilities at Harwell and Culham, to implement a successful City Deal for Oxford and Oxfordshire. The City Deal is a bespoke agreement between the government, Oxford and Oxfordshire to deliver new investment and infrastructure to ensure continued growth and prosperity in our area. Around £95million of public money will be invested in Oxford and the surrounding areas to boost local growth.

The Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal builds on the academic and research excellence led by the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University and focuses on the potential of the area to deliver world-leading technology and business innovation.

The City Deal aims to:

- develop four innovation hubs in Harwell, Culham, Headington and Begbroke
- create more than 18,000 long-term jobs in high-tech areas, in addition to the likely 30,000 construction jobs needed for the area's development
- create around 500 new apprenticeships, many of them in hi-tech sectors such as advanced engineering
- accelerate the building of 7,500 homes by 2018 through the combined Oxfordshire Housing Programme
- provide improvements to both local roads and public transport in order to better connect Oxford's universities with its major industrial and research areas. This includes improvements to the A34 and the A40 Northern Gateway.

### Improving Oxford's infrastructure

Oxford City Council is:

- directly investing over £134 million into the local economy. This investment will improve the city's infrastructure and create over 900 new jobs
- spending up to £101 million to deliver new council homes and improve existing housing stock over the next four years, with an additional £96 million of new investment over the next 10 years as part of its *Council Housing Ambition*
- in an innovative joint venture with Grosvenor Estates to build a new community of nearly 900 homes at Barton Park, including a new primary school, community facilities and parks. The Council is also building 113 new homes on other sites in the city
- contracting with GreenSquare to build 100 new homes and new community facilities in Northway and Cowley
- working with partners to progress the redevelopment of the Westgate Centre. It is estimated that the development will create over 2000 jobs and be open in time for the 2017 Christmas season
- continuing to promote the regeneration of the West End in partnership with the County Council and other key stakeholders. The Oxpens site Supplementary Planning Document has now been adopted and a Master Plan is being prepared to replace the existing Oxford station with a new integrated station and office/retail development. Oxfordshire County Council is actively supporting place shaping initiatives such as those at Barton, Westgate, Northern Gateway, Headington, Oxpens and Oxford Station
- 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. Following extensive consultation, a draft Area Action Plan was sent to the Secretary of State in October 2014, and an Examination in Public is to be held in January 2015. This site is crucial to the growth of Oxford's knowledge economy and it is the only major site left within the city
- using its Community Infrastructure Levy to secure funding to support new growth
- 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 (now under construction), and the preparation of an Oxford Transport Strategy by the County Council, with public consultation in Spring 2015.

- continuing to support business start-ups and enable businesses to realise more benefit by improving access to ultrafast broadband. As a result of the award of up to £5 million from the Urban Broadband Fund we are building on already delivered commercial upgrades in Oxford to ensure that ultrafast broadband is available to 96% (up from 76%) of businesses and 89% (up from 84%) of residents. The funding is enabling the development of wireless broadband across the city centre. This 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
- continuing to improve our leisure facilities. The new competition-standard pool at Blackbird Leys will play a major role in encouraging swimming as a sport and in the on-going regeneration of the Leys
- upgrading the Council's tower blocks
  - improving environmental and parking measures on Oxford's council estates as part of the *Council Housing Ambition* initiative
  - investing £2million to extend the Seacourt Park and Ride and £87,000 to provide additional parking spaces at the Leys Health Centre
  - investing £1.3 million to resurface car parks.

#### Boosting tourism

Oxford City Council is:

- working through Experience Oxfordshire – a joint venture partnership with private-sector partners – to improve the quality of our 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 and the creative arts 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 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 tourism offer.
- Supporting the LEP's initiative to develop a county-wide strategy to maximize the economic value that arts, culture, and the creative industries bring to our area.

#### 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 have been successful in retaining the city centre's Purple Flag status, which recognises the city centre's low crime rates, good cleanliness standards, and the quality and range of public spaces and visitor attractions
- investing £90,000 of capital funding to improve the quality of city centre toilets and a further £35,000 annually to extend opening hours from 5pm to 8pm
- making business locations, tourist attractions and other places of interest more obvious to visitors and increasing footfall on less well-used routes through a

web-based pedestrian way-finding system. This system has won an award from the Oxford Preservation Trust.

- working in partnership with the traders to make effective use of the findings of the Retail Group's report on the Future of the Covered Market. Our shared aim is to increase footfall in the Market, and to ensure it plays a key role in the city centre retail offer
- investing £32,000 to extend our successful City Centre Ambassadors scheme. This scheme helps keep the city centre safe and welcoming by employing wardens to patrol the city centre and police street trading, environmental enforcement, begging, anti-social behaviour and related activities.

### Supporting local businesses

Oxford City Council is:

- supporting city centre traders by appointing, jointly with the County Council, a city centre manager who is working with the newly established Town Team to strengthen the city's retail offer
- supporting the Covered Market by appointing a specialist manager who is working with the traders to deliver improvements and investment
- 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 sectors 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:

- leading the OxFutures project which is mobilising large-scale investment to develop renewable energy and energy efficiency projects across the city and county. Kick-started by a grant from Intelligent Energy Europe, OxFutures aims to leverage investment of £15 million into local energy projects over the next three years. The aim is to achieve a 40% reduction in local carbon emissions by 2020 and to mainstream low carbon economic development. The project builds on the success of the City and County Councils in carbon reduction and energy efficiency
- developing the Low Carbon Oxford Project on behalf of the Oxford Strategic Partnership. Around thirty-five organisations from private, public and non-profit organisations are now collaborating to create a sustainable, low-carbon economy in Oxford
- allocating £25,000 per year to ensure that Low Carbon Oxford is able to continue its pioneering work and attract further funding
- 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
- encouraging local take up of government incentives schemes such as Green Deal to reduce energy and carbon from homes and businesses

- stimulating the local market for appropriate renewable and low carbon energy technologies such as solar, biomass, and heat networks energy production by:
  - installing technical solutions such as solar PV and biomass boilers in our own buildings
  - seeking funding for local feasibility studies for heat networks,
  - working with key strategic partners including the Universities
  - sharing knowledge and experience with Low Carbon Oxford partners, and across Oxford.

### Supporting an ethical economy

Oxford City Council is:

- paying its own employees a 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. We have increased the Oxford Living Wage from £8.13 per hour to £8.36 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**

While 43% of Oxford residents have degree-level qualifications or above 14% have no education or skills qualifications at all. Attainment levels of pupils in state schools especially in the more deprived areas of the city, remain lower than the regional and national averages.

The 2011 Oxfordshire Skills Needs Analysis suggested that a lack of education, qualifications and 'employability' skills prevented a significant number of young residents from entering the local job market.

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. As of December 2012, 7.3% of young people in Oxford were NEET compared with 4.9% across Oxfordshire. Oxford City Council welcomes the County Council's commitment to the coordination of schemes and initiatives around schools, NEETs and apprenticeships.

Oxford City Council has invested significantly over the last three years in an attempt to improve educational opportunities for our young people. Our education attainment programme includes a range of targeted interventions to drive up ambition and attainment in the city's schools.

The programme has brought about significant achievements including:

- narrowing the achievement gap for particular groups e.g. children on free school meals and children not on free school meals
- engaging 75 senior and middle leaders engaged on a year's Leadership for Learning Programme, run by Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University
- improved confidence in middle leaders in leading change in their schools, including learning the best ways of improving the teaching quality
- reaching up to 35 students in three secondary schools who did not have broadband access through a digital inclusion programme
- partnering all Oxford secondary schools with a business on the Business Class Programme.

There have, however, been difficulties in recruiting and retaining senior and middle leaders and teachers with experience of working the most challenging schools. This is linked to the poor availability of affordable housing.

Oxford City Council is:

- investing £150,000 into the educational attainment initiative in 2015/16 to fund the final contractual commitments. There will also be a modest program supporting a small number of schools, costing £43k in 2015/16 and £23k in 2016/17
- 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 gain apprenticeships and employment. We require Council contractors to create apprenticeship opportunities as part of any large construction project. Our joint venture with Grosvenor on the Barton West development will involve a training and apprenticeship programme.
- providing apprenticeships at Oxford City Council which will support young people from Oxford in getting experience and qualifications
- 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.

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

Land in Oxford is scarce, as a result of constrained boundaries, flood plains, and the need to protect green spaces. 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.

## Chapter 2 Meeting Housing Needs

### **Our ambition: more affordable, high-quality housing in Oxford.**

#### **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 164,000 by 2021.

There is a housing crisis in Oxford. Demand is high and availability is scarce, as a result of the city's constrained boundaries and other factors such as flood plains and areas important for bio-diversity. This results in very high house prices.

According to Cities Outlook 2014, Oxford has overtaken London as the UK's least affordable city in terms of housing. 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.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment in 2014 estimated that between 1,280 and 1,600 new homes per year would have to be built in the city if demand is to be met. This low level of affordability puts severe strain on social housing provision. Oxford City Council is a landlord responsible for 7,724 homes. Around 2,700 households are on the Housing Register for social housing.

In spite of our work to prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households, demands on our service are high. The impact of austerity measures, including changes to the welfare system, are putting downward pressure on real incomes and contributing to a growth in the number of homeless families across the country. This is exacerbated by housing shortages. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Crisis indicates that homelessness has increased for three consecutive years with an estimated 185,000 people a year now affected in England.

The Council has 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.

The city's housing crisis is causing increasing hardship for people and families. Poor and overcrowded housing - with increasing instances of 'beds in sheds' - is impacting on some of the most vulnerable in the city. Census 2011 data shows that 6.2% of households in Oxford are classed as overcrowded compared with an Oxfordshire average of 3.3%.

The housing crisis is also threatening Oxford's position as the focus of a world-class knowledge economy and one of the most important concentrations of high-value businesses in Europe. Local employers find it difficult to attract people to the city. More affordable housing is essential not just for the health and well-being of residents but also for the vibrancy of the local economy.

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

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. 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 – have reduced 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 its funding for the voluntary and charitable bodies which provide this advice, particularly in areas of the city where need is greatest.

#### Oxford City Council's approach

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

1. Implementing Council House Ambition
2. Working with partners
3. Reviewing the Green Belt
4. Improving standards in the private rented sector
5. Reducing homelessness
6. Changes to welfare

#### 1. Implementing Council House Ambition

Oxford City Council has committed to building 10,200 new homes over the 20 years from 2006.

The Council is committed to using its own resources to provide new affordable housing wherever possible. As a result of changes to the way in which housing finance is managed, the Council was able three years ago to take full responsibility for managing its own housing stock. Efficiency and effectiveness in the service has improved significantly and, partly as a result, the Council is now in a position to invest heavily in building new homes through its new *Council Housing Ambition* initiative, the boldest step in a generation on housing in our city.

Oxford City Council is:

- spending up to £101 million to deliver new council homes and improve existing housing stock over the next four years
- investing an additional £96 million of new investment over the next 10 years to fund the construction of 485 new homes, refurbish existing dwellings to standards above the national average, and redevelop the city's estates
- conducting a free energy audit for every council tenant, to improve insulation and reduce heating bills
- investing £17 million to upgrade the external and communal areas in our five tower blocks, extending their lives for a further 30 years
- investing £13.6 million to upgrade kitchens and central heating
- investing £3.8 million to fund aids and adaptations to council dwellings for the disabled
- investing over £1 million per year to improve environmental and parking measures on Oxford's estates
- improving our arrangements for involving tenants and leaseholders in decision-making.

## 2. Working with partners

Our approach is to promote housing development within the city wherever possible, and to use our planning policies to encourage developers to provide affordable housing.

This has resulted in a significant increase in the quantity of affordable housing. About 1,400 new affordable homes were built in the city from 2004 to the end of 2012 and planning permission was granted for a further 614 affordable homes in Autumn 2013. Despite a reduction in house building following the recession, we are currently on course to meet our new homes target.

Oxford City Council is:

- working through an innovative joint-venture company, formed with Grosvenor Estates, to build nearly 900 new homes, a new school and community facilities, and commercial development on land at Barton Park. The first homes should be ready for occupation by 2015
- building 113 new homes on Council-owned sites throughout the city, supported by around £2.4 million from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The Council will fund the balance of the cost of £16 million
- building on council land at Cowley and Northway, in partnership with GreenSquare Housing Association. This project will deliver new affordable and

market-rate homes, new community facilities, and a new home for the Emmaus Furniture Store, which provides training and accommodation to formerly homeless people.

### 3. Reviewing the Green Belt

Last year, all the district councils in Oxfordshire, supported by the County Council, commissioned a technical study to determine the region's housing need between 2011 and 2031. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) showed that Oxford needs between 24,000 and 32,000 new homes over the same period to ensure housing demand is met.

Clearly it is not possible for all of these houses to be built within Oxford's current constrained boundaries. The City Council has published a 'Growth Strategy Route Map' summarising the planning challenges it faces in meeting housing demand to ensure economic growth. It sets out the process and strategy the Council is following to address these issues. Amongst the solutions which need to be considered and assessed are the current Green Belt boundaries.

The Council is suggesting a balanced approach to the identification of land for housing to meet Oxford's needs. An area equivalent to less than 1% of the existing Green Belt in the county might be needed, and there may be no net loss if Green Belt land is swapped or extended in areas elsewhere in the county.

We have initiated the debate about how the housing crisis affecting Oxfordshire can best be met for all of Oxfordshire's residents and businesses and we believe that locating the homes near or adjacent to Oxford is the most sustainable location. The alternative could see significant growth in towns like Thame and Henley, with large-scale commuting back into Oxford.

Oxford City Council is:

- seeking to work with neighbouring authorities under the Duty to Co-operate to bring forward sustainable locations for the homes that Oxford needs but is unable to develop within its own administrative boundaries
- demonstrating that the option of Green Belt review and urban extension would be sustainable and deliverable
- arguing that it should take no longer than 12-18 months to identify spatial options for addressing the unmet Oxford need.

### 4. Improving standards in the private rented sector

The private rented sector in Oxford provides essential accommodation for key workers, young professionals, students and others who are unable to access social housing or 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. Since the introduction in 2011 of the HMO licencing scheme around 3,000 HMOs have been improved and made safe for occupants.

Oxford City Council is:

- reducing HMO Licence Fees for accredited landlords while increasing charges for those who fail to apply for a licence. We want more landlords to sign up for the accreditation scheme so that we can continue to improve standards
- enabling more proactive enforcement of standards in the private rented sector
- managing the impact of private rented housing on communities and neighbourhoods by enforcing 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 targeted 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
- adapting private dwellings to make them suitable for those with disabilities.

#### 5. Reducing homelessness

Over the last decade the City Council has 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 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 lead to an increase in the number of people at risk of homelessness.

Oxford City Council is:

- limiting the number of people living in temporary accommodation
- Investing £3.5 million in 2014-15 and 2015-16 to purchase dwellings to house families in temporary accommodation if required
- 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
- supporting the No Second Night Out campaign.

#### 6. Changes to welfare

The changes that the government has made to welfare are significant. The Benefit Cap, for example, restricts the amount of money a family without work or working under 24 hours per week can receive in state benefits to £500 per week and is particularly likely to affect households with several children or in the private rented sector. As at November 2014, 193 households in total had been affected by the

## Benefit Cap.

Universal Credit 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 arrears and bad debts could increase if Housing Benefit is paid directly to tenants in social housing who are then responsible for making rental payments.

In 2013/14 Oxford City Council was part of a pilot to show how a local authority can support people affected by welfare reform. This work has continued and has been supported by a successful bid for European Social Fund money. This work forms an important part of our aspiration to mitigate the impact of welfare reform on local people. Up until November 2014, the Welfare Reform team had worked intensively with 266 people of whom 93 have been supported into work. In addition the team provides one off housing or work related advice to anyone who requires it.

The need for this support is likely to continue due to the combination of high levels of deprivation in parts of Oxford, and very high housing costs.

Oxford City Council is:

- seeking ways to improve the financial awareness of tenants and minimise the financial risks of direct payments for landlords
- providing advice and support to vulnerable people
- working with customers affected by the Benefit Cap and the under-occupancy rules, known as the 'Bedroom Tax', with the aim of helping them move into work.
- supporting funding for the voluntary and charitable bodies which provide debt and welfare advice, particularly in areas of the city where need is greatest. This will help to mitigate Government cuts to Legal Aid
- 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.

## **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 origin being Poland, USA, India, Germany and Pakistan. 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 around 10 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, focusing particularly on 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. Engaging our communities
4. Promoting healthy living
5. Building safe communities
6. Celebrating culture and community events

#### 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. We particularly want to help young people 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. We are, therefore, significantly increasing our own investment in areas that impact directly on young people. We want to stimulate partnership working and voluntary action around this important agenda.

The City Council welcomes the County Council's commitment to joint working in this area. The commitment of the two councils is evidenced through the Working Together agreement that has recently been signed.

Oxford City Council is:

- investing £240,000 annually to improve activities for young people in areas of the city where need is greatest and expand youth activity to some areas which currently have no provision. 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
- working with partners such as Fusion Lifestyle, the City Cultural Partnership, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Sports Partnership, the voluntary sector, Oxford University, Experience Oxfordshire and Public Health Oxfordshire. We are coordinating an innovative programme to encourage our young people to expand their opportunities by participating in high-quality sporting and

cultural activities and providing clear pathways into clubs and organisations. We believe that engagement with these activities from an early age can:

- develop technical skills, discipline, and the confidence necessary for future success
  - expand young people's horizons and generate a sense of ambition
  - offer opportunities for young people to share their experiences with others, and help to build social cohesion
  - 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
- developing Youth Voice – a programme to support children and young people between the ages of 15 and 21 (25 where there are special educational needs) to influence the services that affect their lives. Youth Voice will:
- develop a more pro-active approach to gaining and acting on the feedback of young people
  - provide more and better personal and professional development opportunities so that young people can engage effectively with decision makers
  - increase young people's access to decision makers in their local communities – the City and County Councils and other key stakeholders – so that they can influence decisions, processes and services that will affect their transition into adulthood.

## 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.

An Older People's Needs Assessment has been carried out. This work will help inform the Council about longer term support that is needed for older people. In particular, we are exploring ways in which they can be supported to live in their homes and local communities for as long as possible.

The Council is:

- co-ordinating the Ageing Successfully Partnership, which provides a partnership approach to improving wellbeing, addressing isolation, and increasing engagement with older people
- working with other agencies – Oxfordshire County Council, Age UK and the Over 50s Group – to improve services for older people
- working closely with the 50+ Network, a volunteer-run community group whose aim is to increase engagement with older people. This group is represented on the Ageing Successfully Partnership.
- involved in on-going discussions 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.

### 3. Engaging with our communities

#### Our guiding principles

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.

Community engagement is about ensuring that elected councillors are aware of the views 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.

#### Defining community

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
- 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.

People will 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 to which they best relate, e.g. Friends of parks, 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 Community Partnerships
- tenants and leaseholder engagement
- supporting the community and voluntary sectors
- community development.

### Consultation and other forms of community engagement

The Council has a formally approved process which sets out how and when it will seek views from individuals and communities. Consultation occurs when the Council is seeking the views of members of the public in order to influence decisions.

Oxford City Council also involves members of the public by:

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

### Area Forums and Community Partnerships

Area Forums consist 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 meet its own needs.

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

Oxford City Council is:

- supporting communities to get involved in the planning process through a new process called neighbourhood planning
- 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 have the opportunity to engage with issues that affect them.

As part of its commitment to neighbourhood working, the Council is piloting an approach to neighbourhood management in three areas with large social housing estates - Rose Hill, the Leys and Barton. The aim of the approach is to ensure that the Council's corporate centre – including the Chief Executive and Directors – is working directly with members and community organisations to help manage the challenges in our local communities. An officer working party for each area is chaired by a Director. We are aiming to ensure that:

- the quality of local public services improves and the work of Council teams is co-ordinated

- an action plan for the area is developed which addresses the social, economic and environmental needs of the location, that local people are involved in its development, and that it is realistic and prioritised
- effective work is being undertaken to grow community capacity and involvement
- other agencies are fully involve in work addressing deprivation and community priorities, particularly around health, the County Council, the Police and the voluntary sector
- harder to reach groups are actively involved.

#### Tenant and leaseholder engagement

Oxford City Council's model of engagement has been developed with the national Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). Tenants and leaseholders co-exist in areas of mixed tenure and problem solving, and the driving of initiatives, cannot be delivered successfully without the involvement of all groups concerned.

Oxford City Council is:

- creating a structure which provides 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.

#### Supporting the community and voluntary sectors

The Council is keen to support the community and voluntary sectors, as well as individual volunteering activity. Volunteering brings benefits to both Oxford and the individual volunteer. It makes important contributions, economically as well as socially. Not only does it develop a more cohesive society by building trust and respect among our residents, recent studies have shown that people who volunteer improve their health and wellbeing.

Oxford City Council is:

- investing over £4 million to build a new community centre in Rose Hill
- investing £700,000 to 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
- 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
- using its grants programme to invest around £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 as contributing to the achievement of the Council's 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
- aiming for Investor in Volunteering accreditation. This will initially be undertaken as a pilot within the Leisure, Parks and Communities service area where a framework in which we will work with volunteers will be developed.

#### Community development

Within any community, there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which can be channelled to achieve desired outcomes. Community development involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to decisions that affect their lives.

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 Park
- promoting 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, e.g. planning, housing, social cohesion, and employment. 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 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. Oxford is now in the top quartile for adult activity in Oxfordshire, from being one of least active areas in 2006. Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, Ferry Leisure Centre, and Hinksey Outdoor Pool have all achieved a rating of 'good' from Quest, the national quality award for sport and leisure.

We are continuing to build on 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. As part of its contribution to the 2014 Commonwealth Games, the Council hosted the Queen's Baton Relay Event.

Oxford City Council is:

- continuing to improve our leisure provision by:
  - opening a new competition-standard swimming pool in Blackbird Leys. 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 from the facilities that it will replace will substantially meet the cost of the capital investment involved
  - refurbishing sports pavilions across the city
  - investing £70,000 on a new skate park in Northway
  - investing more than £300,000 to encourage cycling, with improved cycle lanes and better signage
  - continuing to provide free swimming for under 17s, particularly for those from areas of greatest need
  - further developing leisure/school partnership activities, particularly in areas of greatest need
  - investing £174,000 to improve tennis courts across the city
  - providing an annual cricket festival for players from all backgrounds in Cowley Marsh park at a cost of £2,000 per year
  - 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
  - improving the quality of the city's outdoor sports offer. The Council's StreetSports programme has achieved the prestigious StreetMark accreditation, a national recognition of quality
- working in partnership to deliver the Active Women programme within the city
- providing opportunities to improve mental and physical well-being, as well as encouraging physical activity and better diet by supporting 36 popular allotments across 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.

However, improved reporting and a national focus on anti-social behaviour has seen reported cases to the City Council increase. These range from environmental problems such as fly-tipping, waste in gardens, and litter offences to cases of neighbour dispute. The Oxford Community Safety Partnership invests a significant proportion of its resources in protecting victims from domestic abuse, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Oxford City Council is:

- participating in the NightSafe scheme to tackle alcohol-related disorder in the night-time economy. NightSafe's success helped enable Oxford to retain its Purple Flag accreditation
- providing a seamless Anti-social Behaviour Service to tackle all forms for nuisance, ranging from environmental offences to disputes between neighbours
- using our consultation processes to survey people's opinions on a range of anti-social behaviour issues. The results, along with information from the Police and other partnerships, enables us to set our priorities in our Community Safety Rolling Plan
- investing in the Youth Ambition and Positive Futures Programmes 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 our successful Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGS)
- applying resources specifically to tackle abuse and trafficking.

The Council is providing a coordinated approach to the delivery of safeguarding services for vulnerable children and adults. As part of its clear ambition to improving outcomes for vulnerable children, families and vulnerable adults the City Council is also:

- seconding an officer to be part of the KingfisherTeam, the joint team set up by Thames Valley Police, Oxford Health, and Oxfordshire County Council's joint team in November 2012 to tackle child sexual exploitation
- seeking to become an integrated part of the Oxfordshire's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) as a pilot scheme for other district councils
- raising the confidence and resilience of young people through our youth ambition and educational attainment programmes,
- working with contractors and the voluntary sector to strengthen and ensure their compliance with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board Policy and Procedures.

## 6. Celebrating culture and community events

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, to break down barriers and increase our sense of local identity and belonging. The events staged in the city to celebrate the Olympics brought people from all of the city's communities together in a common cause and we are continuing to build on this legacy.

In addition to managing the annual May Morning celebrations, the Council contributes significantly to other community festivals. We are contributing £30,000 annually to support the popular Cowley Road Carnival, attended by around 45,000 people last year. We are contributing £20,000 annually to support the Alice Day celebrations. This year's Christmas Light Festival – sponsored by the Westgate Alliance - featured an exciting programme of free events filling the entire festival weekend. Events included a Festival Hub in Gloucester Green, the Young People's Light Installation outside the Museum of Natural History and Pitt Rivers Museum, and hundreds of choral performers across the city as part of the Day of Song.

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 high-quality cultural experiences
- improving opportunities for young people to participate actively in high-quality cultural activities
- 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
- implementing clear service level agreements with organisations that we fund to ensure that our investment delivers maximum value for our communities

## Chapter 4 Cleaner, Greener Oxford

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

### Some facts

The need to improve and maintain the cleanliness of our city is an issue of abiding concern for Oxford's citizens.

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.

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

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. Domestic carbon emissions have fallen despite a rise in the total population and number of dwellings over the period.

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

### Oxford City Council's approach

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

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. The first year of this programme is complete and a further £398,264 will be spent over the next two

years completing the project. On completion the food waste collection service will have been delivered to the 15,000 flats in the city currently not included in the scheme

- 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 recycling bins in the city centre, around the ring road, at Templar's Square Shopping Centre and other retail locations around the city
- providing a garden waste collection service to which over 14,000 customers have subscribed to so far
- 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 customer recycling sites around the city to include general recycling, textile and clothes recycling and new WEEE banks (small electrical items)
- providing a programme of recycling education and events to support individual customers, school, college and university students and local businesses
- 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 46% currently. This makes us one of the top-performing city areas. We will reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill year on year
- working in partnership with OxClean to carry out the annual spring clean of 'grot spots'

## 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, although this is backed by the use of environmental enforcement where necessary. Oxford City Council is:

- tackling inappropriate refuse disposal, fly-tipping, littering, dog-fouling, and graffiti
- investing £33k per annum to remove graffiti from private buildings
- 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 powers to control litter caused by leafleting
- targeting rolling clean-up campaigns in our neighbourhoods
- working in partnership with the Oxford Mail on an on-going publicity campaign
- spending an additional £12,000 per year on a door-to-door campaign of encouragement and enforcement

- investing an additional £15,000 per year to improve litter-picking and maintenance in our parks, reflecting the increased use of these facilities in recent years
- ensuring that the city's play areas, recently improved as a result of a £3.1 million investment programme, remain in top condition
- using dog control orders to encourage responsible dog ownership, control dogs in parks and play areas, and prevent dog-fouling.

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

Reducing the Council's own carbon footprint has been a high priority in recent years. As a result of the 'Getting our own house in order' programme, we implemented measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from our buildings and operations by 25% in the three years to March 2011. The Council is now implementing measures to deliver 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:

- investing £800,000 to fund energy saving projects which will deliver a revenue saving on reduced fuel bills.
- 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
- 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 to improve thermal efficiency
- 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 from Salix, a financial organisation that empowers public sector organisations to take a lead in increasing 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
- 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

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

A key element in reducing carbon emissions and poor air quality involves reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car, and to encourage more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling, and public transport. The City Council

uses its planning policies to ensure that new development is located in areas close to existing facilities such as shops, transport hubs and bus routes.

Low Carbon Oxford is a pioneering city-wide programme of collaboration involving around 35 private, public and non-profit organisations with the aim of ensuring Oxford's future as a sustainable and low carbon city. The Low Carbon Oxford charter commits its signatories to collaborate to reduce their carbon footprints in Oxford by an average minimum of 3% 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:

- leading the OxFutures project which is mobilising large-scale investment in developing renewable energy and energy efficiency projects across the city and county. Kick-started by a £1.3 million grant from Intelligent Energy Europe, OxFutures aims to leverage investment of £15 million into local energy projects over the next three years. The aim is to achieve a 40% reduction in local carbon emissions by 2020 and to mainstream low carbon economic development. The project builds on the success of the City and County Councils in carbon reduction and energy efficiency
- using £310,000 awarded by the Department of Energy and Climate Change to help local low carbon community groups and develop the Warming Barton pilot project, which is helping to save energy and create warmer homes in the city's most deprived area
- investing £54k over 2 years to upgrade homes with the lowest energy efficiency standards in the city, and using this to lever in national Energy Company Obligation and external funds of about £150k for the Warming Barton pilot
- leading the Low Carbon Oxford initiative for the city and investing an £25,000 per year to ensure that Low Carbon Oxford is able to continue its successful work
- investing £54,000 over two years to ensure take-up of the Green Deal opportunities for home energy efficiency improvements, particularly by households on low incomes
- 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
- working through strategic partnerships to combat the adverse effects of climate change, including the increased incidence of flooding within the city. Activities to reduce flooding include:
  - implementing flood alleviation measures at Northway and Marston, in partnership with the Environment Agency at a cost of £1.7 million
  - investing £100,000 to fund advice on the Thames Water catchment study. Parts of the city have major problems with the foul water network and it is essential that the Thames Water study provides a satisfactory long-term solution to these problems.
  - working with partners to secure funding and implement the Oxford and Abingdon Flood Relief Scheme.

- investing £22,000 per year to deal with the growing problem of illegal riverbank moorings by providing a targeted programme of proactive enforcement.

## 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 Barton Park
- 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 bicycle and we will promote these forms of travel further. More Oxford residents cycle or walk to work than those who drive.
- Oxford experiences high levels of air pollution in some locations and there is 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 carbon emissions.

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
- supporting the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) launched in 2014, which places restrictions on the types of engines that can be used in buses operating within central Oxford.
- investigating jointly with the County Council how freight emissions and traffic can be reduced
- 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.

## Chapter 5 Efficient, 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 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 ambition to build a world-class city for everyone.

In 2013-14 we achieved or exceeded more than 77% of our corporate targets.

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, with one phone number for all Council services, deals with nearly 263,000 calls annually. We answered 92% 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 41% as a result of robust performance management.

The Council has been awarded the prestigious MJ Award for Highest Achieving Council 2014, Investors in People Gold Champion accreditation for the whole Council and Customer Excellence accreditation. The Council has also 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 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, we are moving the Council from being good to great through our GOLD programme - Greater Outcomes, Leaner Delivery. We are doing this through our on-going efficiency programme and by working with new and increased income streams.

We are reviewing our medium term financial strategy and are committing to achieving a £7M revenue expenditure reduction by 2018/19 on an annualised basis. The total savings and increased income proposed over the next four years is £22.5M

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

1. Strong financial management

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

1. Strong Financial management

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the assumptions on which our financial planning is based.

Key themes underpinning our financial planning are:

- Managing the implications of on-going reductions in central government funding. The Government's programme of reductions in public expenditure is now planned to continue into the next Parliament, with the intention to deliver a "leaner, more efficient state" on a permanent basis. Our future planning is based on the assumption that Formula Grant will be cut by an estimated 53.60% over the life of the strategy and that, by 1/4/2020, revenue support grant will be reduced to zero.
- Managing the implications of other central government initiatives. Changes to welfare provision, for example, are likely to lead to increased expenditure on homelessness and housing benefit.
- Managing the knock-on effects resulting from central government reductions in the budgets of other organisations and inadequate investment by other organisations in key city priorities. The Council has been investing in programmes which will improve the quality of teaching in primary schools in some of our deprived areas. The Council believes that there is a need for a significant coordinated response to prevent lasting damage to our young people and our communities as a result of reduced direct spending on services for young people outside the school environment.
- Managing the Council's capital programme. The Council has a capital strategy of disposing of underused assets and making significant revenue contributions annually. All of the new money being received has been reinvested to improve community assets such as leisure facilities, play areas, community centres and park pavilions.
- Managing the Council's Invest to Save programme. The Council has a number of areas where it plans to invest to save over the term of the MTFs, including:
  - Employing additional officers in business rates and council tax on debt recovery and appeals
  - Purchasing equipment for bin washing facility to raise external income streams
  - Spending £5 million on a new park and ride extension
  - Purchasing food waste collection vehicles in order to collect food waste from council flats.

Managing the delivery of ongoing efficiency savings. The financial strategy for 2015-19 sets new initiatives which are intended to generate significant efficiencies, as



opposed to traditional 'salami-slicing' approaches where savings can result in disabled services. These include:

- Reducing management and staffing costs in order to save £200,000 per year
- Rationalising administrative support and encouraging more generic working and automation of procedures to save £350,000 per year
- Generating further efficiencies in our ICT service to save £220,000 per annum
- Improving processes around business improvement to save a further £158,000 per year
- Improving management of assets to save £300,000 per year.

## 2. The Customer First programme

Our Customer First programme has created a single approach to managing customer contact. A multi-skilled workforce resolves the majority of enquiries – whether they are received through telephone, face-to-face or online channels – at the first point of contact without handover to the back office. A customer relationship management system captures these enquiries and integrates with our key IT systems. These improved business processes have resulted in more consistent standards of service, higher levels of customer satisfaction and greater efficiencies.

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

Oxford City Council is:

- investing £110,000 to upgrade our website to enable residents to carry out more transactions online and to improve mobile access, including an online repairs system for our housing tenants and a corporate mobile app.
- using a new call-handling system, which includes customer call-back facilities, to deal with customer calls more efficiently
- investing £35,000 to roll out our Customer Service Excellence accreditation across the organisation
- surveying our residents to gain insight into their views about council services and how they can be improved.

## 3. Improving our processes

The Council reviews and improves service delivery through fundamental, whole-service reviews (such as waste collection and housing benefits) and smaller, process reviews within services. Rigorous benchmarking is at the heart of both approaches. The Council uses 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:

- rationalising administrative support across the organisation, and encouraging more generic working and systems automation
- using 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
- 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
- rationalising and improving our ICT systems architecture and reviewing the Council's licensing arrangements.
- implementing improvements in our planning service. We want all planning development in our city to be of the highest quality. We also want to expand the scope and effectiveness of our consultation arrangements and to put collaboration at the heart of our planning processes. Improvements include:
  - a clearer audit trail of information relating to planning applications
  - more systematic evaluation of applications against relevant planning policies
  - allowing more time between project inception and commencement dates as a way of improving consultation with all interested parties
  - more extensive use of external design review panels. The Council is investing £50,000 in 2014/15 and £25,000 in 2015/16 to appoint an independent panel (6 members including specialists as required) to review major applications
  - better use of IT systems to help visualise and interpret design

#### 4. 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.

In order to deliver maximum value for money we are shifting from a focus on individual procurement exercises to better management of suppliers and training staff in all service areas to increase skills and knowledge to manage our large corporate contracts.

Oxford City Council is:

- reviewing management of our assets in order to generate on-going revenue savings
- reviewing our investments in property funds in order to achieve higher overall returns while protecting the Council from adverse variations in value
- developing a corporate approach to managing contracts and developing supplier relationships
- introducing training for key officers within the Council's service areas, enabling them to become accredited with a professional procurement qualification.

## 5. 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 as a way of funding services and safeguarding jobs.

Oxford City Council has a clear preference for in-house provision – public enterprise - where it can match or exceed the market. Where many other councils have been entering into strategic partnerships with the private sector, this Council has been carrying out rigorous and prioritised Fundamental Service Reviews, investing to improve management competence and efficiency, and encouraging trading with external customers.

A Fundamental Service Review of our waste management service resulted in our in-house service delivering better cost and quality than private sector competitors and this service was the Council's first entry into the market. Developing a flexible, customer-focused approach has been the key to the service's success. The service operates six days a week, including an evening sack collection in the city centre. It offers a full range of containment options, and tailored solutions including pre-paid sack collection labels for cardboard collections from premises with limited space. The Council is continuing to grow its core services - now including fleet and vehicle maintenance, grounds maintenance and landscaping, and food hygiene advice

Oxford City Council is:

- exploring the most effective ways of bringing in additional revenue from the provision of services to other external organisations
- making good progress on establishing markets for some of the Council's services, e.g. building, engineering, motor transport, commercial waste, grounds maintenance/landscaping and legal services.

## 6. Organisational development

The Council's staff are its key asset and ensuring they are equipped to deliver to high standards in times of rapid change is vital. To this end the Council is investing not only in on-going performance management initiatives, but also in a variety of development and well-being initiatives.

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 are also increasingly necessary. Leadership, team-building, business acumen (including the ability to interpret and respond to customer intelligence) and the ability to think outside the box, are all critical. Increasingly, coaching and mentoring are at the heart of our approach to management. High levels of employee engagement, where employees connect with exactly what the Council is trying to achieve for the city, will enable us to continue our success.

Oxford City Council is:

- integrating and aligning teams with a similar purpose and identifying career and development pathways to facilitate succession planning
- embedding an organisational development strategy which:
  - defines our organisational values and shapes our behaviours framework
  - develops, retains and attracts a high-performing and motivated workforce, where excellence in people-management and development is recognised
  - ensures 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
  - champions innovative thinking and proactive engagement with staff and customers in service redesign
  - delivers a comprehensive learning and development programme to bridge any gaps in employee capability
- improving recruitment
- implementing a talent management strategy that enables career growth, workforce and succession planning
- embedding an employee well-being programme to improve fitness, resilience, encourage healthy lifestyles and develop a better work/life balance in order to improve staff attendance
- delivering an affordable pay deal with Unison and Unite which gives staff an annual 1.5% cost of living increase for the next four years and secures the council's budget provision
- continuing the partnership payment, which enables staff to earn a bonus based on high levels of attendance and performance
- continuing to pay its staff the Oxford Living Wage of £8.36 per hour and requiring our contractors to do the same.