

## **2016 Oxford City Council Corporate Plan Annual Statement** **Building a world-class city for everyone**

Our Corporate Plan for 2016-2020 sets out the City Council's vision for our city and for the quality of life of its residents, and our plans for how we will achieve our objectives in the five key priority areas:

- A successful and sustainable local economy
- Meeting the city's housing needs
- Building strong and active communities
- A clean and green city
- Delivering the Council's services efficiently and effectively

This annual statement describes the achievements of the past year in each of these areas of activity, and identifies where we will be focusing our priorities in 2017/18.

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### **Introduction – Leader of the Council, Councillor Bob Price**

The result of the EU referendum was a seismic event for the UK. The prospect of being outside the European single market and customs union brings new challenges as we seek to secure a prosperous future for all our residents. The success of the city's economy stems from our position as a global centre for higher education, research, health, biosciences, publishing and car manufacturing; from the ethnic and cultural diversity and strength of our communities, and from our architectural and environmental heritage and cultural assets that attract millions of visitors each year. In the context of the uncertainty about the future development of the national economy that has been created by decision to leave the European Union, the City Council will continue to work with our partners to protect and build on these features to ensure that Oxford remains a welcoming and outward looking international city.

With our neighbouring district councils, the County Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and other partners, we are currently seeking greater local control over finances and decision making through a devolution proposal to central government. This aims to secure the investment in transport, housing and jobs that is needed to reach the city and county's economic potential, and would involve a new combined authority, bringing all six councils together to deal with strategic issues, and an elected mayor to lead that authority.

Despite the challenging national context, the City Council achieved much in 2016 to deliver our ambition, as set out in this report. We delivered £1 million of efficiency savings in year on top of the £1.9 million delivered over the previous two years. We secured investment for major development and regeneration schemes across the city, entered into a new joint venture company with Nuffield College to deliver a mixed use development that will transform a major part of the west end of the city and established a Local Housing Company to deliver new affordable homes. We have continued to invest in our community facilities including sports pavilions at Cutteslowe and Quarry, and a new sports complex at Horspath. We have hosted or supported over 300 cultural events across the city. We have worked with the voluntary sector and public sector partners to accommodate refugee families from Syria, and improve to support for refugees in the City. We have once again achieved national recognition for excellence in many of our services including the Customer Service Excellence Award for all council services.

The financial pressures affecting people on low incomes are increasing as the government's austerity programme and reductions in social security payments take effect. Homelessness has increased in Oxford as it has elsewhere in the country, and at the same time, the County Council has reduced funding for homelessness services. The City Council has responded by working with the other district councils in Oxfordshire and the health services to pool funding that will maintain a smaller number of hostel places. We are investing £10m in acquiring homes for homeless families. We have also been successful in bidding for nearly £800,000 for homelessness prevention.

Looking to the future, we will continue to pursue the aspirations that we have for the city despite the increasing financial pressures. The revenue support grant that we receive from government has reduced from over £9m in 2013/14 to just £1.5m next year and will disappear altogether by 2019/20. The impact of the government's declared policy of devolving more business rate income to local authorities is unknown, making forward financial planning very difficult to do with confidence. People in Oxford will inevitably feel the effects of reductions in the County Council's support for the homelessness hostels, the open access children's centres, and culture and the arts. At the same time, we know that demand for our services is increasing, particularly for those low incomes affected by Government's welfare reforms and the reduction in the household benefit cap.

The City Council's approach of prudent long-term financial management continues to stand us in good stead to manage these challenges without reductions in services. We will need to continue to build on our achievements in delivering efficient customer-focused frontline services, especially for the most vulnerable; investing in our assets, and in our workforce.

Over the next four years, we will deliver £12.3m of efficiencies and increased income to support vital services in the city without reductions to services. We will invest over £123 m in regeneration projects in the city including regenerating council estates, upgrading and improving council homes, £4 million funding for improvements to our community centres, improving our car parks, including a proposed extension of the Seacourt Park and Ride site in preparation for the opening of the new Westgate Shopping Centre in 2017.

The Council's will continue to tackle the major challenges facing the city: providing an environment in which businesses can grow and invest; building more homes for people at all income levels, protecting and enhancing our environment, supporting vulnerable people and safeguarding people at risk, and investing in our communities, tackling inequalities. We are committed to making Oxford a good place to live for everyone – fair, harmonious, and supportive of those most in need through well managed and accessible services.