

Oxford City Council

Council Strategy 2020-24

The following content will be added to the draft Strategy before publication in March 2020:

- *Foreword by Council Leader*
- *key statistics and trends that provide a current context in respect of Oxford's economy, housing, communities and environment*
- *Key performance indicators to be tracked over the four year period of the Strategy*

This Council Strategy will be complemented by an annual business plan that will set out the key priorities and actions Oxford City Council will undertake in each of the next four years. This will strengthen the prioritisation of key areas of work and support collaboration among officers and with external partners. The first Business Plan covering the period 2020-21 will be published in March 2020.

Our vision

Building a world-class city for everyone

By creating successful places in which to live and work, supporting our communities and addressing the climate emergency, we will build a fairer, greener city in which everyone can thrive.

Our priorities

We have set four key priorities over the next four years – all of equal importance:

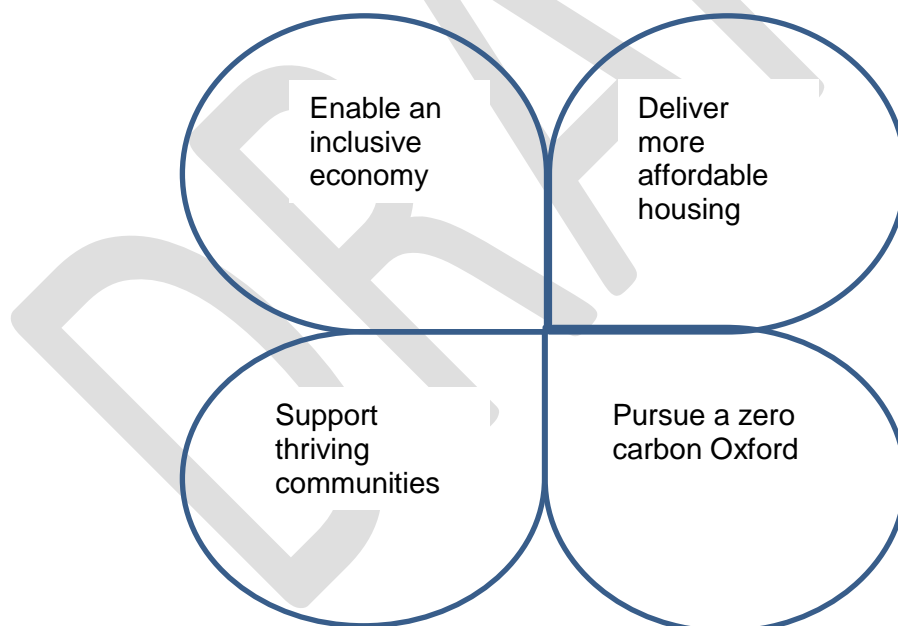
Enable an inclusive economy

Deliver more affordable housing

Support thriving communities

Pursue a zero carbon Oxford

The four priorities are all interconnected, and we will work to achieve them in a joined-up way.



How we work – a “customer-first” approach

We work innovatively and efficiently – we are a flexible and customer-focused team offering high quality services that meet people’s needs.

We work to tackle inequality – our employment practices and the way in which we deliver our services aim to provide equality of opportunity and access for all. Our investments and policy-making are all designed to address the social and financial inequalities across Oxford. We value diversity and seek to build a greater sense of togetherness across the city’s communities. We want to ensure all of Oxford’s citizens, including those who are harder to reach, have fair opportunities and a real share in the city’s future.

We work in partnership with others – we work with other councils, businesses, communities, the voluntary sector, Oxford’s universities, the Government and other public sector bodies to ensure the way we shape our services and direct our investments is joined-up with others.

We use our commercial assets for the benefit of local people – our wholly-owned companies and the commercial properties we own create jobs, support the local economy and provide additional funds that support our delivery of public services. We call this the Oxford Model.

We are a campaigning organisation – we work actively to engage with residents, businesses, stakeholders and Government and use our influence to help achieve the aims set out in this Strategy.

Oxford City Council priorities

For each of our four priorities, we have set out the outcomes we would like to see achieved over the next four years, and some of the headline actions we believe will be required to help deliver this.

To support the delivery of the strategy, we will produce an annual Business Plan that will set specific actions and milestones for the year ahead and report on progress against agreed key performance indicators.

Priority: Enable an inclusive economy

Oxford needs a more inclusive economy in which wealth is distributed across our communities and where all citizens can share the benefits of growth.

Over the next four years we want to see the following outcomes achieved as part of a more inclusive economy:	
We will deliver ourselves	1. Our staff will be more skilled and confident in delivering services our citizens want and our workforce will better reflect Oxford's diverse population
	2. Our Council-owned companies will have increased their profits to help maintain the services we provide and we will have supported more local businesses, including social enterprises and cooperatives, by changing the way we buy our goods and services
We will partner with others to help achieve	3. Oxford's economy will be stronger, with diverse sectors providing a wider range of accessible business and employment opportunities for all
	4. We will have secured different types of new workspace in the city to support business and employment growth
	5. The movement of people and goods into and within the city will have improved, resulting in less traffic congestion, better air quality and faster journey times
	6. The city centre will be relevant to more of our citizens with more accessible public space. The impacts of tourism will be better managed and more of its economic benefits retained locally
	7. The city centre will be expanding to the west. Attractive new areas will be emerging around Oxford station, in Oxpens and Osney Mead, but not at the expense of the health and vibrancy of the existing city centre
We will use our influence to seek to achieve	8. More organisations in Oxford will be socially and environmentally responsible - paying the Oxford Living Wage and adopting practices that deliver clean economic growth which benefits all residents
	9. Oxford will have improved the workforce skills it needs through higher educational attainment and more training for the jobs of the future

To support these outcomes we will take the following actions:

- Implement the Oxford City Council Workforce Equalities Action Plan to boost employee diversity through recruitment and apprenticeships and expand the management opportunities for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff and women.
- Strengthen the Oxford Model under which Oxford City Council uses insourcing – rather than outsourcing to private businesses – to generate income.
- Use Oxford City Council, Oxford Direct Services Ltd (ODS) and Oxford City Housing Ltd (OCHL) purchasing power to increase the reinvestment of money into the local economy by placing an increased emphasis on social value, alongside quality and cost measures.
- Establish a new Asset Management Strategy to guide the diversification of our commercial property investment portfolio, prioritise investment and management of Oxford City Council's non-housing assets, and how we could use our properties to help generate wealth locally and support existing and new small businesses, social enterprises and cooperatives.
- Implement a new inclusive Economic Strategy to tackle inequality and increase the opportunities for disadvantaged groups to have a fair share in the city's economy and reduce its impact on the environment; while also setting out a plan for delivering the types of different employment space needed to support a more diverse economy.
- Build closer partnerships with the universities to boost productivity in the city's economy and extend economic opportunities to a wider range of Oxford's citizens.
- Work with Oxfordshire County Council to implement Connecting Oxford and improve bus and cycle routes into and around the city, better connecting key employment sites.
- Attract investment to build a new Oxford Station and expand its capacity to provide greater connectivity nationally and locally, including securing commitment to the opening of the Cowley Branch line to passengers. Create more accessible public space in the city centre for people to enjoy and reprioritise road space for pedestrians, cyclists and buses.
- Implement a city centre strategy to support independent retailers, enhance the Covered Market, widen the cultural offer, support more temporary uses of empty properties, encourage longer stays by tourists and reduce the impact of coaches and overcrowded streets in the heart of the city.
- Work with partners to create a new mixed housing and commercial quarter in the city centre's west end, alongside infrastructure improvements to create more sustainable transport and movement routes in the area. Encourage investment in new skills and apprenticeships across the local economy to tackle inequality and manage the technology challenge to existing jobs.
- Promote the Oxford Living Wage among Oxford employers including the universities and colleges and seek to double the number that adopt it.

Priority: Deliver more, affordable housing

Intervention is needed to address Oxford’s housing crisis where existing homes are unaffordable for many and demand for good quality homes outstrips what is available.

Over the next four years we want to see the following outcomes achieved to deliver more genuinely affordable housing in Oxford:	
We will deliver ourselves	1. We will have increased the supply of high quality, energy efficient, and affordable housing, including new council housing as well as other types of homes to rent and for sale at different prices
	2. In regeneration areas such as Blackbird Leys, our new housing will be high quality with improved public spaces and served by good public transport, and cycling and walking routes
	3. More Council and private sector tenants will have been supported to stay in their homes where they face the prospect of eviction
We will partner with others to help achieve	4. More developers, housing associations and others will view Oxford as a good place to build a range of different housing types
	5. With other councils we will have an agreed countywide approach to meeting housing need
	6. Working with housing associations we will have delivered more move on accommodation for people housed in homeless hostels
We will use our influence to seek to achieve	7. Working with landlords we will have improved the quality and energy efficiency of privately-rented homes in Oxford
	8. Oxford’s Green Belt will be expanded, allowing some small areas next to the city to be redesignated for much-needed housing. Sites valued by local people for leisure and recreation will be protected.
	9. New housing including new urban extensions will be being built to create strong communities with good local amenities and sustainable transport links into the city

To support these outcomes we will take the following actions

- Accelerate our housebuilding programme using OCHL and ODS to deliver new affordable homes at speed and scale with a range of tenures including new council housing, shared ownership and a below-market level Oxford Living Rent.
- Offer enhanced planning support to developers, social landlords and community-led housing groups to encourage a faster rate of delivery of new homes, including use of factory-built housing and modular construction.
- Ensure all new homes are built to high standards, including accessible design and high levels of energy efficiency consistent with Oxford's journey towards net zero carbon emissions.
- Take a preventative approach to homelessness, working with landlords and tenants to reduce evictions.
- Implement a selective licencing scheme to improve standards in private sector housing.
- Seek re-designation of some of the Green Belt land next to the city for housing, replacing it with additional and higher quality land elsewhere.
- Work with neighbouring councils to address housing need across Oxford's functional economic area to house people close to where they work and in places that enhance a sense of community and wellbeing.

Priority: Support thriving communities

Oxford's diverse communities should be equipped, supported and enabled to tackle inequality and ensure everyone is able to play a full part in the life of our city.

Over the next four years we would like to see the following outcomes achieved to support thriving communities across Oxford:	
We will deliver ourselves	1. Our services, grants, community and leisure facilities, parks and cultural events will have helped reduce inequality, increase cohesion and improve health and wellbeing across Oxford's communities
	2. Children and young people's resilience and confidence will have increased through the educational and recreational activities we offer
	3. As a good landlord, we will have worked with our Council tenants to strengthen local communities
	4. Our parks and public spaces will remain clean, safe, and well maintained, and will be accessible to more people to people to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits they provide
We will partner with others to help achieve	5. Working with neighbouring councils and partners, we will prevent homelessness and ensure that no one has to sleep rough on the streets of Oxford
	6. Individuals and families in temporary accommodation will be moved more rapidly into secure housing with improved health and job prospects
	7. Local voluntary and community groups will be better engaged with, supported and enabled to take a greater role in improving the city and the lives of citizens
	8. Increasing numbers of people will walk and cycle around the city, benefitting their health and wellbeing
	9. Our work with Thames Valley Police will keep communities safe and help reduce hate crime, human trafficking, drugs-related crime and antisocial behaviour
	10. Vulnerable people will continue to be safeguarded against harm
We will use our influence to seek to achieve	11. Oxford's diversity will continue to be celebrated, with a greater sense of togetherness across its communities
	12. Citizens will increase their active engagement in civic and political life

To support these outcomes we will take the following actions

- Implement an Equalities Action Plan that shapes our services and use of our community assets to address inequalities particularly for disadvantaged, hard-to-reach and excluded groups.
- Develop data sources to better understand the strengths and needs of our diverse communities and to target our work to where the gaps are Work with our tenants and other citizens to understand their needs, simplify the way they can engage with us and involve them more in design and decision-making in regard to Council services and facilities in their local communities.
- Modernise our community assets and explore innovative approaches for their operation which encourages engagement and a sense of community ownership.
- Deliver a Thriving Communities Strategy that sets ambitions and actions to reduce isolation and support community involvement, health and wellbeing through active lifestyles, volunteering, cultural engagement, and use of our parks and community assets.
- Join up our service delivery at a local level, improve our landlord services for Council tenants and strengthen our relationships with housing associations to improve the service they provide to their tenants.
- Work with health partners to reduce health inequalities, particularly across disadvantaged communities.
- Work with neighbouring councils and partners in the city to deliver a cross-county approach to early intervention on rough sleeping and providing wraparound to support people moving from rough sleeping to safe and stable living arrangements.
- Develop a “One Council” approach to tackling homelessness.
- Work with Thames Valley Police, other partners and communities to tackle the visible drugs market, challenge racism, Antisemitism and Islamophobia, human trafficking and serious antisocial behaviour.
- Use our grants programme and partnership working to enable local voluntary and community groups to help create resilient communities, improve outcomes for citizens and reduce inequalities across our communities.
- Celebrate diversity by supporting and stimulating a wide variety of events and cultural activities that bring Oxford people together.

Priority: Pursue a zero carbon Oxford

In 2019 Oxford City Council declared a Climate Emergency and held the Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change. The clear message from citizens was that they want the city to continue to take a lead in reducing emissions and increasing biodiversity, while ensuring this does not impact citizens' living standards.

Over the next four years we would like to see the following outcomes achieved as we pursue a zero carbon Oxford:	
We will deliver ourselves	1. Oxford City Council will have reduced the carbon footprint from its own operations to zero
	2. All new building by Oxford City Council will be significantly more energy efficient – moving towards near-zero or zero carbon standards
	3. We will have a significant programme of energy efficiency improvements across of our existing council housing
We will partner with others to help achieve	4. All new building by developers in Oxford will be significantly more energy efficient – moving towards near-zero or zero carbon standards, with some examples of carbon-positive development
	5. Higher energy efficiency standards will have been set for residential and commercial landlords
	6. Oxford will have taken a leading role in the adoption of electric vehicles
	7. Air quality throughout the city will have improved
	8. Our streets, neighbourhoods and open spaces will be greener with more trees and other plants, and increased biodiversity
	9. The city will become more resilient to climate change including improved flood defences
We will use our influence to seek to achieve	10. Government will have introduced more rigorous energy efficiency standards on new build and brought forward the end of petrol and diesel vehicle sales
	11. Citizens, businesses and other organisations in the city will be taking action to reduce carbon emissions and increase biodiversity
	12. Citizens, businesses and other organisations in the city will recycle more and produce less waste

To support these outcomes we will take the following actions

- Reduce Oxford City Council’s carbon footprint from our own activities to zero where we pay the bill – including our buildings and fleet Develop and implement an action plan in response to the recommendations of the Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change.
- Work with tenants to agree and implement a programme of retrofitting our council housing to significantly reduce emissions.
- Work in partnership across the county to coordinate our response to the climate emergency.
- Use our influence with government, partners, businesses and citizens to lobby, inform, convene, educate and campaign to help respond to the climate emergency.
- Engage all commercial and residential landlords to level up energy efficiency standards towards B rating, with information provided and enforcement action where necessary.
- Create a citywide network of electric vehicle charging points to encourage the take-up of electric vehicles.
- Implement a Zero Emissions Zone - initially in the city centre and eventually citywide - to improve air quality and encourage further take up of ultralow emission vehicles.
- Encourage and enable further innovation and investment in green technology in Oxford, moving from pilot to full deployment wherever possible.
- Use our planning system to ensure the natural environment is enhanced and carbon emissions are reduced through all new development.
- Work in partnership with others to increase the city’s resilience to climate change, particularly flooding.
- Encourage and enable public access to nature and support a significant programme to increase biodiversity and tree-planting.
- Reduce amount of waste we collect and increase the proportion we recycle.
- Review our People Strategy, ways of working and use of technology to reduce Oxford City Council employees’ overall travel to work impact on the environment.

Our organisation

To achieve our aims, we need to be responsible, reliable, adaptable and innovative as an organisation. We need to think and act strategically and at pace, actively engaging citizens in helping us make the decisions that impact them. We need a diverse workforce that is representative of Oxford and offers opportunities to under-represented or disadvantaged groups. We need a supportive and motivating environment that brings out the best in our staff. We need the right structures in place including wholly-owned businesses, joint ventures and partnerships to maximise the resources we can bring to bear. We need strong governance, robust processes and efficient systems to ensure our people are equipped and empowered to deliver their best for Oxford.

Our vision for our organisation

A skilled and confident team, with clear roles and responsibilities, delivering flexible services for citizens that respond to continuing change.

Our values for our organisation

Excellence – engage, delight and inspire. We take pride in our work and go the extra mile. We ensure high standards and do our best every day.

Ownership – step up, drive it and deliver it. We collaborate, communicate and we're accountable. We do what we say we'll do.

Inclusion – be yourself, bring your own perspective and you'll belong. We aim to be real, honest, approachable and work together to make a difference.

Challenge – do things differently and change the environment. We ask why, we challenge the status quo, and we innovate at every turn.

The external context for our strategy

Like all organisations we need to be prepared for, and responsive to developing trends, new challenges and change that emerge at a local, regional, national and global level. These include both threats and opportunities for Oxford. Over the next four years we expect this to include:

- The need to significantly accelerate actions to combat climate change while managing increased risks of flooding
- Managing and mitigating the impacts of Brexit on Oxford's citizens and businesses
- Responding as necessary to the agenda set out by the new national Government elected in December 2019
- Opportunities to apply innovations in technology and big data to improve the productivity of public services, alongside the task of managing the disruption to jobs that is likely to accompany this
- Harnessing the Oxford-Cambridge Arc growth opportunity to ensure we deliver inclusive and clean growth for Oxfordshire
- The high cost of housing in Oxford putting ownership out of the reach of many, and insecure tenancies preventing families setting down roots
- Rising levels of obesity and an ageing population that puts increasing pressure on many public services
- The increasing impact of cybercrime

How we'll use this strategy

This strategy is designed to be used as a framework to guide our thinking and decision-making and resource allocation, and help ensure that everything we do takes us closer to achieving our vision. It succeeds Oxford City Council's Corporate Plan 2016-20 and updates our objectives, while maintaining the same overarching aims to achieve sustainable systematic change for Oxford.

The strategy is underpinned by the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2020-2024 that sets out our financial priorities and commitments over the next four years. To support the delivery of the strategy, we will produce an annual Business Plan that will set specific priorities for the year ahead and report on progress against agreed key performance indicators. In turn the Business Plan will be complemented by Oxford City Council's annual Budget that will allocate resources against the priorities set.

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