

To: Cabinet
Date: 24 January 2024
Report of: Chief Executive
Title of Report: Draft Corporate Strategy 2024 to 2028 for Public Consultation

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To seek Cabinet approval to publicly consult on the Council's Draft Corporate Strategy 2024 to 2028
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
Corporate Priority:	All Council priorities
Policy Framework:	Corporate Strategy

Recommendation: That Cabinet resolves to:

1. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Strategy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any changes to the draft Corporate Strategy 2024-28 as may be required following its consideration by the Scrutiny Committee and then publish the draft Corporate Strategy 2024 to 2028 for public consultation.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxford City Council Draft Corporate Strategy outline 2024 to 2028
Appendix 2	City-wide Conversation Forum
Appendix 3	Risk Register

Introduction and background

1. The Oxford City Council's ('the Council's') draft Corporate Strategy outline 2024 to 2028 (draft Corporate Strategy) succeeds the existing [Council Strategy 2020-24](#).
2. The draft Corporate Strategy (Appendix 1) updates the Council's objectives to achieve sustainable priorities for people, communities and stakeholder groups in Oxford that create a welcoming, safe and supportive place for people from all backgrounds to work, live and visit.

3. To underpin the delivery of the draft Corporate Strategy, the Council will continue to produce an [annual Business Plan](#) that will set specific priorities for the year ahead and report on progress against adopted key performance indicators.
4. In turn, the Business Plan will be complemented by the Council's annual Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that will allocate resources against the priorities set.
5. This report sets out the rationale behind the draft Corporate Strategy, and the aim to publish it for public consultation as soon as possible following the meeting of the Cabinet on 24 January 2024.

Strategy Scope

6. In shaping the proposed approach, officers reviewed the corporate strategies of other councils, strategies already adopted within the Council's current policy framework, and others that the Council has chosen to adopt.
7. The Council's Corporate Risk Register was also reviewed with any relevant or fundamental themes reflected in the "well run council" priority of the draft Corporate Strategy.
8. Feedback and recommendations from the Council's Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Review (July 2023) were also considered. Where appropriate these are also reflected in the draft Corporate Strategy.
9. The separation of a short high-level Corporate Strategy and a more detailed series of actions captured in an annual business plan reflects current best practice.
10. It offers the public an accessible overview of what the Council is seeking to do, and how and why particular areas are prioritised, while at the same time providing a set of clear operational objectives to guide the work of officers.
11. Work on the Business Plan for 2024-25 will progress from December 2023 and will be aligned to the emerging Corporate Strategy 2024-28.
12. While the Business Plan 2024-25 will be in delivery from April 2024, it may be subject to some subsequent revision as a result of any changes that the Council chooses to adopt in the Corporate Strategy 2024-28 prior to its final adoption by the full Council in July 2024.
13. The draft Corporate Strategy sets out high level aims and outcomes that the Council seeks to have achieved to guide decision-making over the period 2024 to 2028. It should act as a route-marker towards delivery of the Oxford 2050 vision and the Oxford Local Plan 2040.
14. The draft Corporate Strategy's greater emphasis is on what the Council is seeking to have changed for people, communities and stakeholder groups in Oxford in four years' time, rather than on describing 'business as usual' activities.
15. Key strategic milestones for developing the final Corporate Strategy 2024 to 2028 are demonstrated in the following timeline, which also reflects the existence of a pre-election period for local elections in May 2024:



Engagement and consultation to date

16. Officers held a series of workshops and meetings with a number of key strategic stakeholders and anchor institutions who have provided inputs for the draft Corporate Strategy. These include:

- The Oxford Strategic Partnership - the Council's senior multi-stakeholder partnership
- The Council:
 - Corporate Management Team
 - Operational Delivery Group
 - Equalities Steering Group
 - Organisational Change Board
 - Policy Officers Group
 - Locality Learning Session (due 13 January 2024)
 - Let's Talk Session (due 16 January 2024)
- The Cabinet
- The Liberal Democrat Group
- The Green Group (due 21 December 2023)
- The Oxford Socialist Independents Group
- Oxford Economic Growth Steering Board – including business representatives
- A city-wide conversation forum 'working together to support Oxford's citizens and Communities to thrive' (Appendix 2)
- Oxford's Children and Young People Partnership – including children and young people representatives
- Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership Steering Group – including major institutions and businesses
- Parish Councils Forum (due 8 January 2024)

Document Structure

17. The draft Corporate Strategy is cross-cutting through all areas of the Council's operations. The draft strategic priority aims are currently set out as:

Draft Priority	Draft Area of focus
Good affordable homes	We will improve existing housing and increase the number of new homes for social rent and to buy, and speed up housing homeless people and rough sleepers in the city.

A strong, inclusive economy	We will support economic growth, including significant new business and housing developments that provide good quality jobs for people in Oxford.
Thriving communities	We will focus on areas of highest inequality to improve health, wellbeing, skills and employment opportunities and equal access for everyone.
Zero carbon Oxford	We will prioritise climate change goals to cut carbon emissions from buildings, and cut traffic pollution by providing more electric vehicle infrastructure and promoting active travel.
Well run council	We will be more efficient with our resources by offering better digital services, prioritising our activities and balancing spending with income growth.

Public Consultation

18. Officers aim to go out to publish the draft Corporate Strategy and engage with public consultation for a period of eight weeks beginning as soon as possible following the Cabinet meeting on 24 January 2024.
19. Officers will contact key statutory stakeholders, such as the neighbouring county and district councils, the universities, health system and the police force.
20. In addition to the public consultation process, during February and March 2024, officers aim to consult with the Oxford Residents Panel, Oxford City Council Tenants', Leaseholders and Shareholders Group, and those set out in paragraph 16 of this report to ensure they each have opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Corporate Strategy.
21. Once the consultation period closes, the consultation findings will be reviewed against the draft Corporate Strategy document and amendments may be made where there is strong feedback to indicate the approach needs adjusting.
22. In some instances, it may not be possible to make changes, for example where contracts are in place or where regulation or legislation prevents taking a preferred course.
23. A final version of the Council Strategy 2024-28 will be presented to the Cabinet for approval in June 2024.

Risks

24. There are no proposed alternatives to the draft Corporate Strategy 2024-28.
25. A risk register is attached to this report (Appendix 3).

Financial implications

26. The draft Corporate Strategy sets out high level outcomes and is not linked specifically to expenditure commitments.
27. All strands within the draft Corporate Strategy will need to align with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan utilising existing resources and capacity.

Legal issues

28. The Local Government Act 1999 places a duty of Best Value on councils to continuously improve and requires that, in making arrangements to secure continuous improvement, the Council consults with people who are likely to use services or have an interest in the area. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill 2007 develops this requirement and places a 'Duty to Involve' upon all BV authorities from April 2009. The duty on the Council is to take steps it considers appropriate to involve 'representatives of local persons' in the exercise of any of its functions, where it considers that it is appropriate to do so. There would be a legitimate expectation that the Council consulted with stakeholders on its draft Corporate Strategy.

Equalities impact

29. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) will be completed for all of the Council's policies or strategies during the period that the draft Corporate Strategy will cover, 2024 to 2028.
30. Engagement has also been completed with the Council's internal Equalities Steering Group.
31. The draft Corporate Strategy is concerned with high level strategic aims and outcomes. While the draft Corporate Strategy identifies tackling inequality as an underpinning strategic theme for all the Council's work, it does not specify how the aims and outcomes will be achieved and these may change over time.
32. No strategic decisions are being made that will have a direct or indirect impact on people or services. An EqIA is not necessary for the subject matter of this report.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

33. The draft Corporate Strategy includes five strategic aims, one of which is to pursue a zero carbon Oxford. The aim relating to Zero Carbon Oxford is to ensure that climate change goals prioritise cutting carbon emissions from the Council's buildings and that traffic pollution is reduced by providing more electric vehicle infrastructure and greater opportunities for active travel.
34. Continuing to prioritise Zero Carbon Oxford as a corporate objective significantly contributes to helping the Council to achieve its goals of being net zero carbon by 2030 and net zero citywide by 2040.
35. There are no strategic decisions being made that will have a direct or indirect impact on carbon and environmental considerations arising from this report.

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Background Papers: None

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