

To: Cabinet
Date: 17 April 2024
Report of: Head of Corporate Strategy
Title of Report: Oxford City Council Annual Business Plan 2024-2025

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To seek approval for Oxford City Council's Annual Business Plan Priorities 2024-2025 and to provide an update on delivery of the 2023-2024 Business Plan.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships
Corporate Priority:	All Council Strategy Priorities
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-2024 and draft Council Strategy 2024-2028

Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Agree the draft Oxford City Council Annual Business Plan Priorities 2024-2025 which set out the Council's priority work for the financial year beginning 1 April 2024;
2.	Delegate authority to the Head of Corporate Strategy in consultation with the Leader to make any further minor amendments to the draft Business Plan priorities before implementation, provided that such amendments do not materially affect the substance of the Business Plan; and
3.	Note the progress made in delivery against the actions set out in the Annual Business Plan 2023-2024.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxford City Council Business Plan Priorities 2024-2025
Appendix 2	Oxford City Council Business Plan 2023-2024 Performance Update
Appendix 3	Risk Register
Appendix 4	Equality Impact Assessment

Introduction and background

1. Oxford City Council's (Council) [draft Council Strategy 2024-2028](#) will be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting in June 2024 and will succeed the existing [Council Strategy 2020-24](#).
2. The draft Council Strategy 2024-2028 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. The Council's Business Plan 2024-2025 (Business Plan) is an annual document that sets out publicly the Council's priority work programme activities for the year.
4. The Business Plan:
 - a) sets out the first year of activity toward achieving the outcomes set out in the draft Council Strategy 2024-2028
 - b) was developed in conjunction with, and is supported by, the annual budget and medium term financial plan (MTFP) that will allocate resources against the agreed priorities
 - c) will inform the actions laid out in each department Service Plan.
5. Progress in delivery of the actions set out within the Business Plan will be tracked through the year 2024-2025, alongside adopted corporate key performance indicators.

Development of the Business Plan 2024-2025

6. The process for development of the draft Business Plan 2024-2025 has tracked alongside the process for developing the Council's draft Council Strategy 2024-2028.
7. This included a series of workshops and meetings with a number of key strategic stakeholders and anchor institutions who have provided inputs for the draft Council Strategy. These include:
 - The Oxford Strategic Partnership - the Council's senior multi-stakeholder partnership
 - Council officers:
 - Corporate Management Team
 - Operational Delivery Group
 - Equalities Steering Group
 - Organisational Change Board
 - Policy Officers Group
 - Locality Learning Session
 - Let's Talk Session
 - The Cabinet
 - The Liberal Democrat Group
 - The Green Group
 - 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'

- 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.
8. The Business Plan sets out key actions that typically take the form of projects or new initiatives rather than ‘business as usual.’ It is not an exhaustive list of such actions.
 9. It should be noted therefore that there are many important areas of activity that are not captured within the Business Plan but will nonetheless be identified within individual departmental Service Plans.
 10. During 2024-2025, the number of key actions under each corporate priority has been consistent or reduced when compared with last year 2023-2024 - to help improve the prioritising in the Business Plan.

Document structure

11. The Business Plan activities sit against the Council’s five draft Council Strategy 2024-2028 priorities:
 - i. Good affordable homes
 - ii. A strong, inclusive economy
 - iii. Thriving Communities
 - iv. Zero Carbon Oxford
 - v. Well-run council.
12. Many activities within the Business Plan are cross-cutting in their nature, however each activity has been allocated against one of the five strategic priorities to avoid repetition (Appendix 1).

While the Business Plan 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 draft Council Strategy 2024-2028 prior to its final adoption by the full Council in July 2024. If revisions materially affect substance of the Business Plan, a further report may need to be considered by the Cabinet.

Business Plan 2023-2024 update

13. Significant progress has been made in delivery of the 2023-2024 year’s Business Plan (Appendix 2).
14. Highlight achievements include:

Inclusive Economy

- Work with landowners and developers on the Council’s allocated employment and mixed-use sites to bring forward high quality employment space - with some large scale applications receiving planning consent in 2023-2024 including:
 - Oxford Science Park, Clarendon Centre

- Oxford Corridor- Phase 2, Ellison Institute
 - Mission Street Development – Botley Road.
- ODS Ltd continued to expand its services across the city and county, securing both new public and commercial contracts and providing strong dividend returns to the Council which helped underpin service delivery.
- 1 million more people visited Oxford city last summer compared to 2022 – and August’s footfall was above pre-pandemic levels – spending more money locally.

Affordable Housing

- Since the selective licensing of private rented properties scheme started, there have been over 11,400 applications received, nearly 6,000 draft licences have been issued leading to nearly 5,000 final licences being sent.
- The work of the Council’s Tenancy Relations Officers continues to prevent illegal eviction, in the year 2023-2024 146 cases resulted in homelessness being prevented in the private rented sector.
- Ox Place:
 - Delivered a further 84 genuinely affordable homes for the people of Oxford
 - Finished three major developments – The Curve, Bridges Cross, and Warrens Crescent

Support thriving communities

- A new operator, Serco Leisure, was successfully appointed to manage Oxford's leisure facilities from 30 March 2024. This will enable the facilities to remain open and will bring in significant investment, making the sites more modern and accessible.
- Good progress has been made in 2023-2024 on the refurbishment and extension of East Oxford Community Centre, and the project will be delivered as planned in 2024-2025 to create an inclusive well-used centre.
- Face-to-face service provision was formalised in the Westgate Library alongside Citizens Advice Oxford and extended to deliver housing services for two days per week.

Zero Carbon Oxford

- All OX Place developments are meeting the target of energy efficiency at 40% below national standards other than one historic site; those at planning/ design stage will be electrically heated unless the required grid capacity is not available.
- Work continues through the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership to extend decarbonisation activities with two new programmes initiated during 2023-2024 with significant external funding.

- Statutory reporting of air quality was completed in June, showing an 8.3% fall in pollutants.

Well run council

- Local Government Chronicle Awards 2024 – shortlisted for 4 categories
 - **Council of the Year**
 - **Housing:** Oxford City Council with Ox Place – The Curve
 - **Environmental Services:** Electric vehicles dynamic purchasing system
 - **Future Places:** Electric vehicles dynamic purchasing system.
- Retained Customer Service Excellence accreditation enhancing accessibility to services - including the 11 compliance plus ratings awarded in the last assessment and been awarded another two, increasing the Council's total to 13 compliance plus ratings.
- Designed and implemented an updated Council website that supports increasing and simplifying digital access to a wider range of Council services.

Financial Implications

15. The Business Plan 2024-2025 sets out the high level activities and milestones that are supported in the Council budget 2024-2025. It does not contain additional or specific expenditure commitments.

Legal Implications

16. There are no legal issues arising directly from this report.

Level of Risk

17. Delivery of the Business Plan 2024-2025 is linked with the Budget 2024-2025 and the financial and operational health of the Council.
18. This is a high level strategic document that does not include risks associated with each of the measures it sets out, however failure to deliver the Business Plan carries a reputational risk to the Council.
19. If the Business Plan priorities are not delivered there may be an adverse impact on some of the most vulnerable citizens in the city.
20. There are no proposed alternatives to the Business Plan.
21. A risk register is provided in Appendix 3.

Equalities Impact

22. The Business Plan 2024-2025 is concerned with high level activities and milestones. It contains specific actions that will support the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives.

23. Equality, diversity, and inclusion are together a key focus for all the Council’s work. They form a core part of all of the Council’s policies and partnerships, for its citizens, staff, and elected members.
24. An Equality Impact Assessment is provided in Appendix 4.

Carbon and Environment Implications

25. The Business Plan 2024-2025 sets out the first year plans for delivery of the draft Council Strategy 2024-2028 corporate priority: Zero Carbon Oxford.
26. 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.
27. Continuing to prioritise Zero Carbon Oxford significantly contributes to helping the Council to achieve its goals of being net zero carbon by 2030 and net zero citywide by 2040.
28. There are no strategic decisions being made that will have a direct or indirect impact on carbon and environmental considerations arising from this report.

Report author	Lucy Cherry
Job title	Policy and Partnerships Officer
Service area or department	Corporate Strategy
Telephone	07483 010 323
e-mail	lcherry@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers:	
1	Draft Council Strategy 2024-2028
2	Council Strategy 2020-2024