

To: Cabinet
Date: 10 July 2024
Report of: Head of Corporate Strategy
Title of Report: Draft Council Strategy 2024 to 2028

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To receive the feedback from the public and stakeholder consultation on the Council Strategy 2024 to 2028 and seek approval for the draft strategy.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	This is a policy framework document

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Note the public and stakeholder consultation on the draft Council Strategy 2024 to 2028.
2.	Agree revisions made to the draft Council Strategy 2024 to 2028 in response to the consultation.
3.	Delegate authority to the Head of Corporate Strategy in consultation with the Council Leader to make further minor amendments before adoption by Council; and
4.	Recommend to Council to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A) Adopt the Council Strategy 2024 to 2028 as attached as Appendix 1 to the report; B) Delegate authority to the Head of Corporate Strategy in consultation with the Council Leader to make any further amendments to the Council Strategy 2024 to 2028 before implementation and publication, provided that such amendments do not materially affect the substance of the Council Strategy 2024 to 2028.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	The revised and updated version of the Council’s draft Strategy 2024 to 2028
Appendix 2	City-wide Conversation Forum
Appendix 3	Summary of Citizen Space feedback
Appendix 4	Summary of feedback from young people
Appendix 5	Risk Register
Appendix 6	Equalities Impact Assessment

Introduction and background

1. Oxford City Council’s (the Council) draft Council Strategy 2024 to 2028 (the Council Strategy or Strategy in this document) succeeds the existing Council Strategy 2020 to 2024.
2. The draft Strategy 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. We will measure progress through strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), based on current benchmarks and annualised targets towards 2028 goals. We expect the KPIs to be submitted to Cabinet for approval in August.
4. Following an extensive programme of stakeholder input, a draft Council Strategy 2024 to 2028 was issued for [public consultation](#) between 25 January 2024 and 21 March 2024.
5. This paper sets out the consultation approach, feedback received, and changes recommended to the draft Council Strategy 2024 to 2028 following the consultation. It also highlights the main areas of focus in the responses.
6. A revised and updated version of the Council Strategy is shown in Appendix 1.
7. To underpin the delivery of the Council Strategy, the Council will produce an annual Business Plan that will set specific priorities for the year ahead and report on progress against agreed key performance indicators,
8. In turn each 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.

Scoping the Council Strategy 2024 to 2028 and the document structure

9. 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.
10. 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 Strategy.
11. 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 Strategy.

12. The draft Council 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.
13. The draft Council 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.
14. The strategic priority aims are currently set out as:

Draft Priority	Draft Area of focus
Good, affordable homes	Improve existing housing and increase the number of new homes for social rent and to buy, and speed up housing for homeless people and rough sleepers in the city
Strong, fair economy	Support economic growth, including significant new business and housing developments that provide good quality jobs for people in Oxford
Thriving communities	Focus on areas of highest inequality to improve health, wellbeing, skills and employment opportunities and equal access for everyone
Zero carbon Oxford	Prioritise climate change goals to cut carbon emissions from buildings, and develop low carbon infrastructure and support households, businesses and institutions to save energy and cut emissions
Well-run council	Be more efficient with our resources by offering better digital services, prioritising our activities and balancing spending with income growth

Internal and External Consultation Approach

15. Officers held a series of workshops and meetings with a number of key strategic stakeholders and anchor institutions that have provided inputs for the draft Council Strategy. These include:
 - The Oxford Strategic Partnership – the Council's multi-stakeholder partnership
 - Council Officers:
 - Corporate Management Team
 - Operational Delivery 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 citizen and communities to thrive’ (Appendix 2)
 - Oxford’s Children and Young People Partnership – including children and young people representatives
 - Zero Carbon Partnership Steering Group – including major institutions and businesses
 - Parish Council Forum.
16. The above consultation and engagement meetings fed back into a revised Strategy that was then used to consult with the following:
- An online Citizens Space public consultation ran from 25 January 2024 and 21 March 2024, supported by communications on social media. This resulted in 214 questionnaires being completed (c34% increase in responses to consultation undertaken for the draft Council Strategy 2020 to 2024), with a large number of free text comments that further expanded on participants views
 - The Council’s Oxford Resident Panel was invited to respond to the online public consultation
 - Responses were also received directly from individual stakeholders
 - The Council’s Youth Ambition Team held a session to get feedback from young people.

Citizen Space Feedback

17. Across the 214 feedback responses received, there was support for the five priorities and the 45 commitments identified in the draft Strategy. (Appendix 3)
18. Rank of the Council’s five priorities

Item	Ranking
Good, affordable homes	3.59
Strong, fair economy	3.04
Thriving communities	2.93
Well-run council	2.89
Climate action	2.54

(1 being the highest and 5 the lowest)

19. Around 75% of respondents provided additional comments in the free-text boxes provided under each priority area, and in overall summary. At the headline level the highest number of comments received covered the following broad areas, in addition to comments in specific sections:
- a) Traffic and transport issues, in particular LTNs and public transport, which are the responsibility of the Oxfordshire County Council
 - b) Getting the basics right and not being over-ambitious

c) Listening to residents, engaging with them and feeding back responses.

20. Taking each priority area in turn, more detailed comments were provided, typically urging greater prominence, or action in a particular area.

Good, affordable homes

- building on brownfield sites in the city
- tackling unaffordability, in private rents, properties to buy, and being clearer on what affordability means
- building more council homes
- tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

A strong, fair economy

- balancing support for economic growth with action to increase housing and improve transport
- rebalancing the dominance of the university in the local economy
- improving a 'scruffy' city centre and reducing poor quality retail/hospitality offer.

Thriving Communities

- affordable local sports and community facilities and groups, including council grants for these activities
- actions that support good health, in particular mental health
- tackling transport issues that are limiting people's ability to access services and activities.

Zero Carbon Oxford

- concern that LTNs create emissions and access issues and support for better public transport
- ensuring green spaces are retained and not built on, including greenbelt land
- concerns over the cost to benefit ratio of low carbon measures, both for residents and the council.

Well-run council.

- listening to residents and adapting to their feedback
- Improving customer service, including ensuring there are good non-digital ways to contact the council
- recruiting the right staff is more important than diversity targets.

Feedback from young people

21. The Council's Youth Ambition team worked with twelve young people from the postcode areas of OX3, OX4 and OX5, aged between 11 and 18 years of age to gain their views on the draft Council Strategy 2024 to 2028. (Appendix 4)

22. The young people were asked which areas of focus were most important to them out of good affordable homes, strong fair economy, thriving communities, zero carbon Oxford, and efficiency and stability.
23. Young people rated each area from 1 – 5, 1 being the most important to them. A summary of the young people’s views is shown below:

The most to least important of the five priorities:

1. Good affordable homes
2. Strong, fair economy
1. Well-run council
4. Thriving communities
5. Zero carbon Oxford.

Feedback received directly from Oxfordshire County Council

24. The Oxfordshire County Council provided a corporate response to the draft Strategy. This agreed that the draft Strategy broadly highlights the right areas and priorities for the Council to be focusing on.
25. The Oxfordshire County Council noted it would welcome steps to work in partnership with the Council to deliver the actions in the draft Strategy particularly where issues mentioned extend beyond the responsibilities of the Council, for instance those related to transport.
26. The Oxfordshire County Council also recognised it is positive to see clear linkage to the new Oxfordshire-wide Health and Wellbeing Strategy that the Council was a key partner in developing and has signed up to.
27. Feedback was provided on each section, with significant focus on housing. These detailed comments at the level that is addressed in Service Plans and annual Business Plan and have not warranted changes to the draft Council Strategy.

Recommended changes to the Council Strategy 2024 to 2028

28. The responses to the consultation showed overall agreement with the draft Strategy. There are no significant changes proposed to the draft Strategy following public consultation.
29. Many of the comments made reflect priorities that are already in the draft Strategy, such as providing genuinely affordable homes, or priorities already captured within existing subsidiary strategies such as the Thriving Communities Strategy, Economic Strategy or Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. These documents and other Council policies and strategies should always be considered in association with the Council Strategy, which is a short, high-level document to aid ease of reading.
30. There were a high number of comments relating to traffic, transport and LTNs, which fall within the responsibility of the Oxfordshire County Council as the Highways Authority. Therefore, the Council’s draft Strategy does not contain detailed actions on transport. Nevertheless, the Council is committed to using its influence to improve

public transport and supporting cycling and active travel, which aim to reduce car emissions and congestion on Oxford's roads.

Measuring performance

31. To measure progress, the Council is finalising 16 key performance indicators (KPIs), which will be reported on annually. We expect these to be finalised and submitted to Cabinet for approval in August.

Financial implications

32. The Strategy sets out high level outcomes and is not linked specifically to expenditure commitments so there are no financial implications.
33. All strands within the Strategy will need to align with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan utilising existing resources and capacity.

Legal issues

34. There are no legal issues arising directly from this draft Strategy.

Level of risk

35. A risk register is provided in Appendix 5.

Equalities impact

36. Due consideration has been given to Public Sector Equalities Duty, which is to foster good relations, advance equal opportunities and prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
37. Officers have collaborated with and taken into account the draft Strategy in conjunction with the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Lead for Community Services.
38. Officers also engaged with the Council's internal Equalities Steering Group when developing the draft Strategy.
39. The draft Strategy is concerned with high level strategic aims and outcomes. While the draft Strategy identifies 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 times.
40. The draft Strategy is a thematic summary of top-level actions and the most important measures for the Council's success only. Appendix 6 gives a high-level equalities impact analysis. It is recommended that Equality Impact Assessments should be carried out and monitored for specific actions and proposals on a case by-case basis.
41. A council approved designer will be briefed to produce the public Strategy document to meet accessibility requirements.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

42. The draft Strategy includes five strategic aims, one of which is to pursue a zero carbon Oxford. The draft Strategy sets out the plans for delivery of the Council Strategy 2024 to 2028 priority: Zero Carbon Oxford.
43. 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.

44. 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 city-wide by 2040.

45. 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	
1	Corporate Strategy 2020 to 2024
2	Cabinet report – Draft Council Strategy 2024 to 2028 for Consultation