

Appendix One

FINAL DRAFT

Oxford City Council strategy 2024 to 2028

Introduction

Key statistics and trends

The following data reflects some of the key issues which have informed the areas of focus for our strategy.

[to be presented as infographics]

About Oxford

Population - 162,100, with 34,945 students c.22%

Educational attainment - 19% of adults have no or low educational qualifications, 48% are graduates

Economic value - generated £6.1bn in 2021 (Centre for Cities)

Deprivation - 10 out of 83 neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived places in England

Good, Affordable Homes

No of homes - 55,238 (census 2021)

social housing – over 12,000 homes

Private rented housing - 32.2% of households, up 14% since 2011

House price – average house prices are 15 times the average salary (Centre for Cities 2023)

A strong, fair economy

No of jobs - 117,000 employee jobs

No of businesses - 4,950

Key sectors – Education 23.4%, health & social work 19%, professional, scientific, technical – 9.4%

Thriving communities

Ethnic minorities - 29% of residents are from a black or minority ethnic group (census 2021)

Children in poverty % - 1 in 4 children live below the poverty line, after housing costs covered

Life expectancy – life expectancy for men is 13 years less, and for women 9 years less, in most deprived areas compared to most privileged

Physically active 71.6%

Zero carbon Oxford

NO2 trends – 8% down year-on-year in 2022, 33% down on 2019
City Council carbon emissions - TBA
Oxford carbon emissions - TBA
Waste & recycling trends - TBA

Well run council

Council funding cuts – government funding for councils fell 21% from 2010 to 2021 (Institute for Government)
Workforce data – around 770 direct employees, 14.2% from an ethnic minority
Customer services: 156,184 Calls, 4,121 visits, 29,618 on-line transactions

Our ambition

For Oxford to continue to be a city that is a world-leading centre of research, innovation and science and a thriving place for independent businesses. We will nurture strong, inclusive communities and be a welcoming and supportive place for people from all backgrounds to work, live and visit.

Areas 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 for homeless people and rough sleepers in the city
- **Strong, fair 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 develop low carbon infrastructure and support households, businesses and institutions to save energy and cut emissions
- **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

Cross cutting issues

We have four core priorities that provide the focus for our work, and to deliver these effectively we must also prioritise being a well-run council. There are some issues that cut across more than one area of work and require joined up thinking by different teams and partnerships to achieve overarching goals:

- Enabling more sustainable transport and active travel helps achieve our goals for health, sustainability and economic activity

- Increasing the amount of affordable housing opens up more economic opportunities, lifts families out of poverty, benefits health and helps create thriving communities
- Providing safe, accessible and enjoyable public spaces supports local businesses, leisure and community wellbeing

Good affordable homes

- Good quality, genuinely affordable housing is one of the foundations of a good local economy, strong communities and good health
- Oxford has long been one of the least affordable places to live in the UK, with a chronic housing shortage reflected in a waiting list of over 3,000 people for council houses
- Unaffordable housing increases the risk of homelessness, forces people into hardship, overcrowded, or substandard conditions, or drives them out of Oxford altogether
- To address Oxford's housing issues we must drive up standards for existing housing alongside a focus on providing new homes, working in partnership across the housing sector

Strengths – the Oxford Model where OX Place build and ODS maintain council homes; we have kept ownership of our council housing

Challenges – narrowing the affordability gap; securing suitable sites for new housing within the city; improving standards; rising homelessness

Opportunities – housebuilding combined with net zero standards; improve and retrofit quality of housing to meet landlord and net zero standards; selective licensing powers

Priorities:

- Delivering more affordable homes
- Preventing and tackling homelessness
- Good quality homes for all

Commitment	Deliver ourselves	In partnership	influence
Deliver more genuinely affordable housing, including council housing, through our own building programmes, working with Registered Providers and setting clear expectations for private developers	X	X	
Work to increase standards in Oxford's private rented housing, using our regulatory powers and property licensing for the whole private rented sector	X	X	
Put the prevention of homelessness at the heart of Council services and our work with partners	X	X	
Work to reduce the numbers of people sleeping rough, providing safe accommodation with access to support services to help with complex issues	X	X	

Be a good landlord and continue to invest in improving the quality of council homes	x		
Continue our work with neighbouring councils to enable people on our housing list access to new housing developments adjacent to Oxford's administrative boundary	x	x	
To lobby central government for local authority powers to introduce rent controls and controls around the short-term let market, to address spiralling unaffordability in the private rented sector	x		x
As part of the planning process, secure funding from major developments that can go towards improving infrastructure and benefitting the community	x		

Measuring progress

In order to measure progress we will report annually on three key measures. These will be finalised in a separate report to follow in the next few weeks.

Strong, fair economy

- Oxford plays a significant role in some of the world's most important economic sectors and technologies
- Our aim is to support sustainable economic development, ensuring that our city remains an attractive and thriving place for everyone, whether they live, work, or visit here
- Growth is already underway in many local businesses, both small and large, as well as new and established ones
- Our challenge and opportunity lie in strategically harnessing this growth for the benefit of all

Strengths – world leading science research base, particularly in medical science; innovation particularly in tackling climate change; highly educated population

Challenges – ensuring valuable jobs for the 40% non-graduate workforce; creating the space for entrepreneurial businesses

Opportunities – Large regeneration projects; international investment in medical and biotech research; our own local spending power

Priorities

- Secure, fairly paid, local jobs for Oxford's residents and access to skills and reskilling training
- Using Oxford's unique strengths in a global economy to attract high quality investment
- Supporting development to boost economic activity and deliver benefits for all

Commitment	Deliver ourselves	In partnership	influence
Harness Oxford's economic growth from science and innovation to create valuable local jobs and make sure everyone in the city has better opportunities	x	x	x
Focus efforts on the needs of the most disadvantaged places, through local economic development and connecting to citywide opportunities and skills training	x	x	
Increase the number of people paid the Oxford Living Wage to improve the minimum standard of living	x	x	
Use Council spending, and work with major employers (anchor institutions) and trade unions to support local businesses, strengthen local supply chains and provide wider social value such as apprenticeships or better public spaces	x	x	
Help local people to access training, education and apprenticeships so they can make the most of new job opportunities being created in the city	x	x	
Enable high quality and sustainable business development on land already designated for employment, with a focus on supporting life sciences,	x	x	

technology, low carbon and knowledge driven businesses			
Maximise the local benefit from investment in a new station for Oxford, and continue to work for the Cowley Branch line extension	x	x	x
Support all forms of businesses, including start-ups and small and medium sized businesses, and help them grow by signposting training and resources and using vacant business space and Council-owned markets	x	x	

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Thriving communities

- Thriving communities are built on the foundations of good health, strong social connections, embracing diversity, and active community involvement, including volunteering
- Despite its many strengths, Oxford is one of the least equal places in the UK, and we must collectively address this issue
- To have the greatest impact it is vital that we work with partners and communities and we will have a special focus on households facing the greatest need

Strengths – strong voluntary sector; resilient community cohesion; investment in leisure and community centres, a welcoming city

Challenges – financial pressure on council, the public and voluntary sector and local families; connecting people with opportunities through active travel/good public transport

Opportunities – locality focused approach; integrated health prevention approach

Priorities

- Working in partnership with communities, organisations, and agencies to reduce inequalities and create thriving communities
- Championing diversity and inclusion in our own work and community partnerships
- Helping people live healthily by providing services, support, and facilities to prevent and manage physical and mental health conditions

Commitment	Deliver ourselves	In partnership	influence
Make Oxford a fairer city where everyone feels welcome, included and connected by working with partners at all levels to tackle inequalities, champion diversity and inclusion and support access to jobs, skills and cultural activities	X	X	X
Reduce health inequality by working with health services and communities to help residents identify and prevent health problems or manage them well	X	X	
Provide sustainable leisure services, linking with community facilities where possible, that support health and wellbeing	X	X	
Help people to move around the city more easily by supporting walking and cycling as healthier ways to travel, and advocating for better, more affordable public transport	X	X	X
Continue and expand our community wellbeing programmes targeted at those who are most inactive or in need	X		

Manage our public places and green and blue spaces to support health and wellbeing, where people feel welcomed, safe and inspired	x	x	
Support partners and community groups in arts, culture, sport and community activity to promote opportunities for everyone, using our facilities, grants and external funding	x	x	
Manage and reduce anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and drug dealing, by working with the police and community partners and using our statutory powers	x	x	
Enable Oxford to play its part in supporting refugees in the UK, which includes work to achieve Local Authority of Sanctuary status by 2025	x	x	

Measuring progress

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Zero carbon Oxford

- Achieving net zero will require a citywide effort, involving local and national government, businesses, institutions and citizens
- While Oxford City Council itself is responsible for around 1% of the city's emissions, it has the potential to influence up to 66% of all emissions in Oxford
- We have set ambitious targets for ourselves to be a zero carbon council by 2030 and a net zero city by 2040

Strengths – pioneering approaches/UK firsts; partnership working

Challenges – encouraging behaviour change and investment from residents, businesses and institutions; scale of investment needed

Opportunities - retain beacon status to attract additional funding

Priorities

- Decarbonising homes and other buildings
- Maintain and improve parks, green spaces, biodiversity and access to nature
- Develop low carbon infrastructure and support households, businesses and institutions to save energy and cut emissions

Commitment	Deliver ourselves	In partnership	influence
Ensure all new homes and other buildings are built to high standards with good energy efficiency, to meet Oxford's 2040 net zero targets and reduce energy costs.	X	X	
Secure external funding to retrofit Council houses and other council buildings	X		
Actively engage our communities, promote grants and use planning and licencing powers to help others adapt their homes and buildings to use less energy and cut carbon emissions	X	X	X
Maintain and improve biodiversity in our green spaces and access to nature in the city; ensure building projects support biodiversity by providing land for OX Place and other developers to use for Biodiversity Net Gain ¹ locally when exceptional circumstances mean it cannot be delivered on the building site itself.	X	X	
Work with partners to deliver a Local Area Energy Plan for Oxford to support decarbonisation and infrastructure development.	X	X	

¹ Biodiversity net gain is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

Continue to design and deliver pioneering projects in Oxford that act on climate change, leading the way for the UK	x	x	x
Work with communities and organisations to increase the levels of reuse and recycling and make Oxford a clean, litter-free city	x	x	
Support design and delivery of a countywide climate adaption plan, including the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS), water infrastructure and actions on living with higher temperatures.	x	x	
Work with businesses of all sizes to support their net zero transition	x	x	x

Measuring progress

In order to measure progress we will report annually on three key measures. These will be finalised in a separate report to follow in the next few weeks.

Enabler

Well run council

- In order to deliver these priorities for the city we must also be a well-run organisation. We will improve the ways we work, recruiting the right people, providing the right tools and training, and delivering services efficiently for residents
- As a well-run council, we will deliver the maximum benefit for all Oxford's residents, businesses and communities within the resources available
- We will harness technology to deliver better services for local residents, to work more effectively across teams and in external partnerships
- We will focus on the experience people have when they interact with us, and always aim to make that easy and effective
- To achieve this, we need financial resilience and a diversity of experiences and ideas. This will require securing new funding to keep our high service levels, and robust technology to meet residents' needs effectively and efficiently

Strengths – Oxford Model²; high staff commitment

Challenges – financial risks; working with fewer resources and becoming a smaller council

Opportunities – digitisation; citizen-centred approach

Priorities

- Be easy, engaging and efficient to deal with
- Support citizens through value for money services
- Maintain good, accountable governance
- Recruit and retain a motivated and diverse workforce that reflects the city it serves

Commitment	Deliver ourselves	In partnership	influence
Support and encourage residents to use digital first for our services, so we can prioritise our non-digital help for people with most need	x		
Balance our budget through a focus on efficiency, maintaining and developing funding streams, and making difficult decisions on service prioritisation when needed	x	x	
Set clear priorities and ensure we have the right skills and resources to deliver on them	x	x	

² The Oxford Model is our policy of generating significant income from our companies ODS and OX Place which provide valued services in our city, and from our commercial property portfolio, to help fund our services for residents.

Recruit and retain an effective, highly skilled and diverse workforce so we can deliver the right services in the right way	x		
Work in partnership with Trade Unions to provide a good employment offer and experience, to recruit, motivate and support a strong local workforce	x	x	
Give elected members the tools to provide clear political and community leadership	x		
Understand the aspirations and needs of residents and communities, by working together with communities and using the right data, to continually improve the services we offer	x	x	
Ensure staff, partners and service users are clear about responsibilities and accountability within the council and have clear standards of behaviour	x		
Take appropriate opportunities to provide residents with support that goes beyond immediate issues	x	x	
Use the Oxford Model to bring in money that can fund services, to reduce the impact of government funding cuts on residents	x		
Improve how we work with anchor institutions and communities to have open and honest conversations about shared aspirations for Oxford's future		x	x

Measuring progress

In order to measure progress we will report annually on four key measures. These will be finalised in a separate report to follow in the next few weeks.

Terms we have used

Affordable homes: this refers to homes at social rent, affordable rented, and intermediate housing (including shared ownership). Oxford City Council recognises that the government definition of affordable rent (80% of market rent) is unsustainable

for many households in Oxford, and has set its own definition that affordable rent should not be more than Local Housing Allowance Rates.

Anchor institutions: businesses and institutions that are tied to the local area and have a significant employment, economic or cultural influence on the area, such as the universities, hospitals, bus companies or BMW.

Biodiversity Net Gain: Biodiversity net gain is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

Blue spaces: waterways including rivers, canals and lakes

Housing list: the waiting list of people registered for council housing

Local Area Energy Plan: this will set out the change needed to transition our energy system in Oxford to Net Zero within a set timeframe.

Local Authority of Sanctuary: Local Authorities can gain this recognition from the [City of Sanctuary](#) organisation by implementing policies and approaches that create a welcome and safe place for refugees and asylum seekers, where they feel safe, valued and included.

Net zero: reducing carbon emissions and increasing carbon absorption and storage so that all the carbon emissions can be absorbed and stored.

Oxford Living Wage: The [Oxford Living Wage](#) is an hourly minimum wage designed to provide liveable earnings in Oxford, recognising the city's high cost of living. It is set annually at 95% of the London Living Wage

Oxford Model: The Oxford Model is our policy of generating significant income from our companies ODS and OX Place which provide valued services in our city, and from our commercial property portfolio, to help fund our services for residents.

Registered providers:

Retrofit: Retrofit refers to any improvement work on an existing building to improve its energy efficiency, making them easier to heat, able to retain that heat for longer.

Social rent: homes rented from the Council or registered providers at controlled rates, typically 40% of renting a similar property privately