

To: Cabinet

Date: 18 March 2026

Report of: Emma-Louise Jackman, Director of Law Governance and Strategy and Mish Tullar, Transition Director

Title of Report: Oxford City Council Annual Business Plan 2026 to 2027

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	A report to seek approval for the Council's annual Business Plan priorities 2026 to 2027; and to provide an update on delivery of the 2025 to 2026 Business Plan.
Key decision:	Yes - notice of proposed decision first published, 1 February 2026
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown - Council Leader, and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working and Inclusive Economic Growth
Corporate Priority:	Good, affordable housing; Strong, fair economy; Thriving communities; Zero Carbon Oxford; Well-run Council
Policy Framework:	The Council Strategy 2024 to 2028

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Agree the draft Oxford City Council annual Business Plan priorities 2026 to 2027, which set out the Council's priority work for the next financial year beginning 1 April 2026;
2.	Delegate authority to the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy and Transition Director in consultation with the Council Leader to make any further minor amendments to the Business Plan priorities before implementation, provided that such amendments do not materially affect the substance of the Business Plan;
3.	Note the progress made delivery against the actions set out in the Business Plan 2025 to 2026.

Information Exempt From Publication

State in here what information is to be exempt from publication – where it is, attach it as an appendix and name the appendix as you describe It here	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
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Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
Appendix 1	Oxford City Council Business Plan priorities 2026 to 2027	No
Appendix 2	Oxford City Council Business Plan 2025 to 2026 performance update	No
Appendix 3	Risk Register	No
Appendix 4	Equality Impact Assessment	No

Introduction and background

1. The [Council Strategy 2024 to 2028](#) (Council Strategy) details 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.
2. The Council’s Business Plan 2026 to 2027 (Business Plan) sets out publicly the Council’s priority work programme activities for the coming municipal year to contribute towards achieving the outcomes set out in the Council Strategy.
3. The Business Plan:
 - a) 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
 - b) takes into account the changes required as part of Local Government Reorganisation. This means the Business Plan supports a smooth transition to new unitary local government, protects essential services, and helps prepare the organisation for future ways of working
 - c) will inform the actions laid out in each department Service Plan.
4. Progress in delivery of the actions set out within the Business Plan will be tracked through the year 2026 to 2027, alongside adopted corporate key performance indicators.

Development of the Business Plan

5. The process for development of the Business Plan has tracked alongside the Council Budget.
6. Officers provided input to an extensive list of proposed activities for the Business Plan. A Corporate Leadership Team and Business Lead's workshop was completed in December 2025, which collectively and collaboratively filtered priorities down to activities.
7. An additional Corporate Leadership prioritisation step was introduced to further refine the Business Plan and ensure organisational capacity and resources are focused on the most critical priorities. This step:
 - strengthened alignment between strategic objectives and delivery plans, enabling the Council to respond effectively to emerging Local Government Reorganisation requirements
 - added a layer of prioritisation, freeing some resources, supporting more agile decision making and helping to safeguard continuity of essential services ahead of the Governments decision for Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire.
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.

Document structure

10. The Business Plan activities sit against the Council's five Council Strategy objectives:
 - a) Good, affordable homes
 - b) Strong, fair economy
 - c) Thriving communities
 - d) Zero carbon Oxford
 - e) Well-run council.
11. Many activities within the Business Plan are crosscutting in their nature, however each activity has been allocated against one of the five strategic priorities to avoid repetition (Appendix 1).

Business Plan 2025 to 2026 update

12. Significant progress has been made in delivery of the 2025 to 2026 year's Business Plan (Appendix 2).

13. Highlight achievements include:

Good, affordable homes

- There are 1,571 completions forecast from April 2025 to March 2029, against a target of 1,600 over these four years. Including over 1,000 expected to be delivered at the most affordable rent tenure (in excess of the 850 programme target), and significant direct delivery through the Council and OX Place.
- Strong partnership work with Housing Associations continues, with over 600 affordable homes in their pipeline and 186 households rehoused through cross-boundary agreements supporting unmet need.
- Homelessness prevention remains effective, with nearly 200 households prevented from becoming homeless this reporting year and major expansion of temporary accommodation to reduce hotel use.
- Transformation of services for single homeless residents continues, including specialist accommodation and rapid rehousing models, and work has begun on a new countywide homelessness strategy for 2026 to 2028.
- The Council is improving services for tenants and leaseholders, with a new improvement plan, stronger oversight, and a refreshed area-based tenancy management model.
- Resident involvement is being strengthened through a new Tenant and Leaseholder Board, updated engagement strategy, and tenant led policy reviews shaping future service priorities.

Strong, fair economy

- Major regeneration projects are progressing well. Ongoing construction of housing at Knights Road and Blackbird Leys (first handovers expected by March 2026), and completion of the East Oxford Community Centre refurbishment.
- New Community Employment and Procurement Plans' (CEPP) service are active, with eight live plans, exceeding the target and supporting local jobs, apprenticeships, local spend and social value commitments.
- Following extensive work led by Oxford City Council, the Government has confirmed £120m investment to reopen the Cowley Branch Line, with work underway to secure the remaining £35m local funding and to plan local infrastructure links to the new stations.
- The Council is leading work with national partners on short- and long-term solutions for sewage treatment capacity and working with the Oxford Growth Commission to bring together parties to address wider infrastructure challenges such as energy supply.
- Strong progress has been made with the tourism accommodation task groups, developing actions to manage impacts of tourism and explore options such as an Accommodation Business Improvement District.
- The place-based Business Support Programme is providing tailored assistance to local businesses, beginning with a pilot in East Oxford. Building on this, the programme will adopt a phased approach from Spring 2026, extending delivery to Templar Square and Blackbird Leys. In parallel, work is

underway to develop the emerging East Oxford Business Association into a sustainable cooperative model.

Thriving communities

- Local action plans have been refreshed and shared with Ward Members, with funding directed to health activities, food system projects and wayfinding improvements, alongside strong participation in programmes such as Move Together, You Move and leisure initiatives.
- Community centres continue to strengthen their offer, with a new rents policy, updated business plans, and active partnership working including NHS colocation opportunities, Youth Hub delivery and plans for a new integrated face-to-face customer service offer by March 2026
- The Council's 2026 to 2029 Antisocial Behaviour Policy was approved following development with tenants.
- Significant investment in community and leisure facilities is progressing, with improvements at Leys Pools and Leisure Centre, Ferry Leisure Centre, and new or upgraded community hubs including Leys Youth Hub and East Oxford Community Centre.
- Partnership work with national and local bodies continues to strengthen physical activity, wellbeing and culture, including collaboration with Active Oxfordshire, Sport England, Serco Leisure, and Arts Council England on future regional cultural planning.
- A programme is underway to attract larger scale events at South Park and Cutteslowe, focusing on streamlined consultation, improved promotion, updated agreements and better use of digital tools.

Zero carbon Oxford

- The Council has completed the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund 2.1 council house retrofit programme and is updating its understanding of housing energy performance through new stock surveys.
- Support for households in fuel poverty continues, including promotion of Warm Homes grants, outreach at community events, training for NHS social prescribers, and direct guidance for landlords and tenants on improving energy efficiency.
- Partnership work with Oxfordshire County Council remains strong, including input to the Oxfordshire Retrofit Strategy, joint funding of Better Housing Better Health, and rollout of the Homewise Tool to provide tailored retrofit advice from early 2026.
- Baseline work for the Local Area Energy Plan has been completed, with district-level plans and community engagement to follow ahead of final completion in Autumn 2026
- Development of Heat Network options is progressing, with specialist consultants appointed and partners agreeing success factors; current work focuses on the City Centre and Headington.
- The Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership has expanded to a countywide programme, with a two-year action plan in development, while the Council advances its own 2030 Net Zero work through new groups focused on fleet and assets.

Well-run council

- A proposal for the creation of three new unitary councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire was developed by the Council following extensive engagement with residents, businesses and stakeholders and submitted to Government – alongside competing LGR proposals - for its decision by July 2026.
- Safeguarding practice is firmly embedded across the organisation, supported by 19 Safeguarding Champions, compulsory staff training, and active membership of countywide safeguarding partnerships.
- Workforce development continues to strengthen through updated recruitment and positive action policies, new management and career development programmes, expanded data and AI apprenticeships, and improved workforce diversity.
- A new governance structure for the Council and ODS partnership is in place, with quarterly performance meetings, nearly finalised KPIs, and a jointly planned review to shape the 2026 to 2027 partnership action plan.
- Significant investment in ICT and digital capability has improved equipment, connectivity, and service reliability, including 600 laptop replacements, community centre connectivity upgrades, new telephony, and rollout of 100 Microsoft Copilot licences to support innovation.
- Citizen experience continues to improve, with a 10.9% increase in online service usage, new digital portals, implementation of the Channel Management Plan, and retention of external Customer Service Accreditation.

Implications of Local Government Reorganisation

14. The development of the Business Plan has taken account of the Government's planned Local Government Reorganisation and the Government's guidance on [Financial decisions before local government reorganisation – GOV.UK](#).
15. In line with this guidance, the Business Plan focuses on essential activity that supports the Council's existing statutory responsibilities, maintains service continuity, and protects value for money for Oxford citizens and communities.
16. No proposals rely on long term financial commitments that would unreasonably restrict the flexibility of any successor authority.
17. Where actions extend beyond the current Council's lifetime, they relate either to ongoing programmes already agreed through the Council's budget and Medium Term Financial Plan or to transition work required to support the creation of new unitary structures. These activities are necessary to ensure orderly preparation for successor arrangements and to minimise risk to services, staff and communities.
18. On balance, the approach taken is considered proportionate, supports stable financial stewardship during the transition period, and ensures Oxford's interests are appropriately represented as Local Government Reorganisation progresses.

Financial implications

19. The Business Plan sets out the high-level activities and milestones for the Council's priorities for 2026 to 2027, the financial implications of which are contained within the Council's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan agreed at Council in February 2026.

Legal issues

20. There are no legal issues arising directly from this report.
EJ/81313/13002026

Level of risk

- 21. Delivery of the Business Plan is linked with the Budget 2026 to 2027 and the financial and operational health of the Council.
- 22. 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.
- 23. If the Business Plan priorities are not delivered there may be an adverse impact on some of the most vulnerable citizens in the city.
- 24. The alternative would be to not produce a Business Plan however it is crucial to underpinning the delivery of the Council Strategy.
- 25. A risk register is provided in Appendix 3.

Equalities impact

- 26. The Business Plan is concerned with high level activities and milestones. It contains specific actions that will support the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives.
- 27. Equality, diversity, and inclusion are together a key focus for all the Council's work. They form a core part of all the Council's policies and partnerships, for its citizens, staff, and elected members.
- 28. An Equality Impact Assessment is provided in Appendix 4.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

- 29. The Business Plan sets out the third year plans for delivery of the Council Strategy, 2024 to 2028 corporate priority: Zero carbon Oxford.
- 30. 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.
- 31. 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.

Report author	Lucy Cherry
Job title	Policy and partnerships Officer

Service area or department	Law Governance and Strategy
Telephone	07483 010 323
e-mail	lcherry@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers:	
1	Oxford City Council Strategy, 2024 to 2028