

Business Plan 2026-27

Local Government Reorganisation

Since the 2025-26 Business Plan was agreed, Government has published The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, which outlines a process for Local Government Reorganisation. All councils in two-tier areas, including all those in Oxfordshire, will be replaced by new unitary local authorities. This will see a merging of those functions currently delivered by Oxford City Council (eg. housing, planning and bin collections) – with those delivered by Oxfordshire County Council (eg. social care, transport and libraries) into a single council. Work is underway to design these new unitary authorities, and Government’s decision on the boundaries for new council(s) in Oxfordshire is expected in summer 2026, with the new authorities taking over in April 2028. Merging services, systems and workforces will take a considerable amount of time and resource from our workforce. The business plan reflects the need to balance delivering essential services, programmes and projects for residents with the need to work with other councils and service providers across Oxfordshire to ensure transition to the new authorities is effectively planned and resourced.

Priority 1: Good, affordable homes

We will improve existing housing and increase the number of new homes of all tenure types, especially affordable housing with priority given to homes for social rent, and work to prevent homelessness and reduce rough sleeping in the city.

- a) Delivering more affordable homes
- b) Preventing and tackling homelessness
- c) Good quality homes for all

2026/2027			
31	P1	Deliver our pipeline of new affordable homes and acquisitions, to be owned and managed by the Council.	Regeneration, Economy & Sustainability (Affordable Supply)
	P2	Ensure that the Council meets the Regulator of Social Housing’s Consumer Standards: Safety and Quality; Transparency, Influence and Accountability; Neighbourhood and Community; Tenancy and Rent: ensuring the safety and sustainability of our homes, improving services to our tenants as well as resident engagement and transparency, and ensuring well run estates.	Housing Services
	P3	Undertake work and consultation on the new Local Plan 2045 to help ensure the delivery of the additional homes Oxford needs. Once adopted, the Local Plan will remain in force for the area of the city of Oxford until the successor unitary authority has a new Local Plan for its geography approved.	Planning & Regulatory
	P4	Work more closely with providers of social housing in Oxford, seeking to maximize the delivery of affordable homes, collaborating on estates, and influencing the services provided to their tenants.	Regeneration, Economy & Sustainability (Affordable Supply) Housing Services
	P5	Continue to meet the challenges of increasing homelessness and temporary accommodation use through the delivery of a wide range of mitigations focussed on homelessness prevention, investment in new temporary accommodation stock and move-on options.	Housing Services
	P6	Bring down rough sleeping numbers, by renewing the Countywide Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Strategy with partners, progressing the transformation of the Homelessness Alliance, and investing in Housing First and Housing-Led provision.	Housing Services
	P7	Improve the quality of accommodation in the private rented sector and enforce the new Renters Rights Act to protect tenants.	Planning & Regulatory Housing Services

Priority 2: Strong, fair economy

We will support economic growth, including significant new business and housing developments that provide good quality jobs for people in Oxford.

- a) Secure, fairly paid, local jobs for Oxford's residents and access to skills and reskilling training
- b) Using Oxford's unique strengths in a global economy to attract high quality investment
- c) Supporting development to boost economic activity and deliver benefits for all
- d) Work to ensure the economic and housing needs of the city are embedded into any future unitary council design

2026/2027		Lead directorate/s
P1	Support inclusive growth of Oxford's strategically important economy, creating the evidence base and strengthening the partnerships needed to realise to the city's full potential in the context of a new unitary council and devolved strategic authority across the Thames Valley region.	Regeneration, Economy & Sustainability
P2	Continue to tackle city inequality and promote economic inclusion through delivery of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an Affordable Workspace policy for the Local Plan 2045; increasing contract spend with city based VCSEs and SME businesses; and a strengthened package of skills and employment support for council tenants 	Regeneration, Economy & Sustainability
P3	Support strategic infrastructure investments in the city: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Oxford West End and Station development utilising funding from landowners, including exploring feasibility for funding through implementation of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) • Support the cross-service delivery of the Cowley Branch Line, its two stations and associated infrastructure • Deliver the Oxpens River Bridge 	Regeneration, Economy & Sustainability
P4	Continue to deliver a place-based approach to city regeneration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree key priorities with Oxfordshire County Council for the Central Oxfordshire Movement and Place Framework, including review of bus movements, modal shifts, reduced congestion and a better visitor experience • Improve the usage, look and feel of the city centre by helping to reduce the number of empty units, changing public realm uses, and increasing cleanliness 	Regeneration, Economy & Sustainability

Priority 3: Thriving Communities

We will work to improve health, wellbeing, skills and employment opportunities and reduce inequality in our city.

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

2026/2027		Lead directorate/s
P1	<p>Improve the safety and environment in the city by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tackling anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and hate crime and environmental crime such as fly-tipping and littering; delivering against the RSH's Neighbourhood Standard. • Improving our response and management of high-risk individuals that we house, ensuring staff welfare, risk management and trauma-informed approaches are embedded in our working practices • Developing a CCTV Hub arrangement with the police to extend hours of coverage and enhance technology. 	Community Safety Service
P2	Develop proposals for an integrated neighbourhood offer, aligning localities, landlord services, place-based working and community assets with future LGR configurations, the Government's emerging neighbourhood framework and parallel changes in Neighbourhood Health services.	Communities and Citizen Services
P3	Improve health and wellbeing outcomes through working with Sport England and health partners to re-position our leisure facilities as active wellbeing centres that include co-location opportunities linked to the NHS 10-year plan; delivering the Oxford Playing Pitch Strategy; and delivering the City Food Action Plan.	Communities and Citizen Services
P4	Continue to develop strong, cohesive and independent communities through supporting delivery of the Pride in Place Programme; delivery of the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) campaigns; and delivery of a new booking and payment system for our community facilities.	Communities and Citizen Services

Priority 4: 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

- a) Decarbonising homes and other buildings and securing the additional funding required to meet the 2030 and 2040 targets
- b) Maintain and improve parks, green spaces, biodiversity and access to nature
- c) Develop low carbon infrastructure and support households, businesses and institutions to save energy and cut emissions.

2026/2027		Lead directorate/s
P1	Continue to make progress towards achieving the Council's energy efficiency target for its housing stock of 95% EPC C by 2030; and secure high energy performance standards for all new builds.	Housing Services
P 2	Support the deployment of critical low carbon infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead a citywide collaboration to further develop options and opportunities for a heat network for key areas of Oxford, to reduce building emissions of carbon and airborne pollutants to support resident well-being. • Build detailed Local Area Energy Plans for the city, feeding into the Oxfordshire-wide plan. 	Environmental Services
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help communities in fuel poverty: support residents' access to Warm Homes and other available grants • Work with private rented sector landlords and other landlords to increase energy efficiency in existing buildings. 	Environmental Services
P4	Explore areas of innovation that accelerate the City's Net Zero ambitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a mechanism and fund to support carbon reduction for institutions that would not otherwise be able to achieve this • Maximise sustainability ask within tender documents to support off-setting fund development 	Environmental Services
P5 314	Deliver Waste & Environmental Services improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the Waste and Environmental Services Transformation Programme (WESP) with partner councils to create collaboration and efficiency opportunities that are aligned with the LGR timeline, and informed by the new unitary council geographies • Focus on improvements to existing waste and recycling services for residents, particularly improving household recycling. 	Environmental Services
P6	Continue to work with colleagues to build on the programme of prioritised Council decarbonisation projects including for buildings and property services	Environmental Services

Priority 5: 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.

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

2026/2027		Lead directorate/s
P1	<p>Develop and deliver a full transition programme for Oxford City Council as part of Local Government Reorganisation to prepare for a move to new unitary structures in 2028, that provide the best possible outcome for Oxford's residents, businesses and communities.</p> <p>Pre-Government decision, workstreams include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to Government consultation and ongoing stakeholder engagement • Joint council governance and PMO across 7 councils to gather data needed for design of new councils <p>Post Government decision, workstreams include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial design of new unitary council(s); preparation for shadow elections to new unitary council(s) in May 2027 	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>All</p>
P2	<p>Develop and implement an LGR People Strategy and Plan to support recruitment, retention and succession planning and prepare people for change. There will be support for managers and employees through the change process and transition to the new unitary arrangements through change readiness programmes, development opportunities and career planning.</p>	<p>People Services</p>
P3	<p>Work with the Oxfordshire and other Thames Valley councils to develop detailed proposals for the creation of a Strategic Authority, with powers devolved from Government; and support the creation of a Spatial Development Strategy for the Thames Valley geography.</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Planning & Regulatory</p>
P4 15	<p>Strengthen cyber security posture and resilience: Complete cyber security upgrades; ensure and test robustness of Cyber Incident Response Plan (CIRP); and ensure staff training.</p>	<p>ICT</p>
P5	<p>Improve timeliness and ease-of-access to services for our residents through application of Robotic Process Automation and AI to streamline transactional processing and simplify digital self-service.</p>	<p>ICT</p> <p>Financial Services</p>
P6	<p>Strengthen protection of residents' data and ensure compliance with forthcoming legislative updates.</p>	<p>Information Governance</p>

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