Corporate Plan

2010/11 – 2014/15

Foreword from Keith / Joanna

About Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is the most rural part of the South East but has grown rapidly in recent years. The population is currently 635,000 and will continue to increase in the next 15 years, with the growth distributed largely in and around Oxford City, Bicester and Didcot.

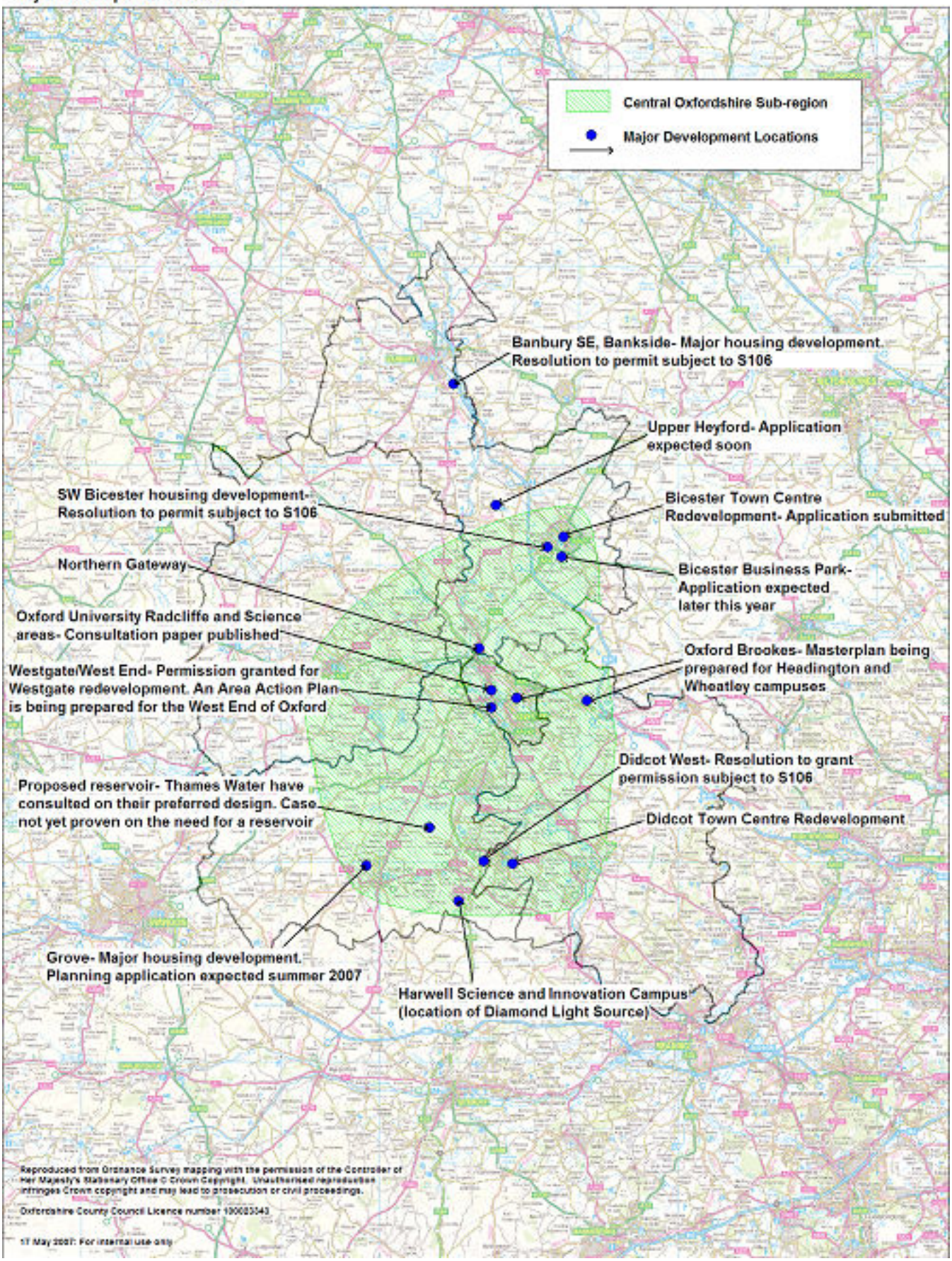
The county has tremendous assets: people like living and working here because the environment is attractive; there are good links to other parts of the country; we have a very successful economy built around the universities and related high tech industries and businesses; we enjoy good public services and the population is more healthy and prosperous than virtually any other county in the UK. Of course there are downsides:

- The recession continues to challenge local businesses, put jobs at risk and reduce resources for public services
- Traffic congestion and pollution is growing
- Housing availability and affordability remain a problem despite the recent dip in house prices
- There are pockets of disadvantage and a cycle of deprivation, which need to be broken.
- There are skills shortages and particular concerns about young people 16-25 years who are not in education, training or employment.

We are working with national regional and local partners to address the problems but overall Oxfordshire is a success story.

More information is available in 'This is Oxfordshire 2009', the key facts about Oxfordshire document produced by R&I / the Oxfordshire Data Observatory and available at XXXXX

Major Development Locations



Our Strategic Objectives

World Class Economy	Healthy and Thriving Communities	Environment and Climate Change	Better Public Services
Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation (cross-cutting theme)			

This Corporate Plan is in two parts:

Part 1 – summarises our broad strategic direction

Part 2 - sets out examples of our short and medium term delivery commitments.

More detail about specific services can be found in directorate plans and service business plans at **www.oxfordshire.gov.uk**

Our strategic objectives are also consistent with Oxfordshire 2030, the county's long term plan which has been agreed with partners following extensive public and stakeholder engagement. Details of Oxfordshire 2030 can be found at:
www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk

Our Principles

We are committed to:

- **Low tax** - reducing year-on-year the annual increase in council tax.
- **Real choice** - providing services to meet the requirements of residents, not making residents' needs fit our services. This supports our commitment to providing services in ways that best suit the differing circumstances of the various parts of our diverse county.
- **Value for money** - streamlining service delivery and improving cost effectiveness year on year.

Our Values

In delivering services we will be guided by these six underpinning values:

- **Customer focus –**putting the needs of our customers first, and improving opportunities for local people to have their say and get involved with council decision-making.
- **Honesty –** being prepared to admit where we need to do better, and communicating the reasons if we are not able to meet the needs of local communities.
- **One team -** working collectively as a county council and valuing and developing our staff to perform to the best of their abilities and deliver excellent services.
- **Involvement –** providing opportunities for our communities, our stakeholders and our staff to help shape our services, and feeding back so that people know how local views influence decision-making.
- **Can-do –** seeing problems and issues as opportunities and looking for solutions, rather than viewing difficulties as obstacles to what we want to achieve.
- **Efficient and effective -** making the best use of our resources, skills and experience to deliver services to the community, learning from our successes and constantly challenging ourselves to do better.

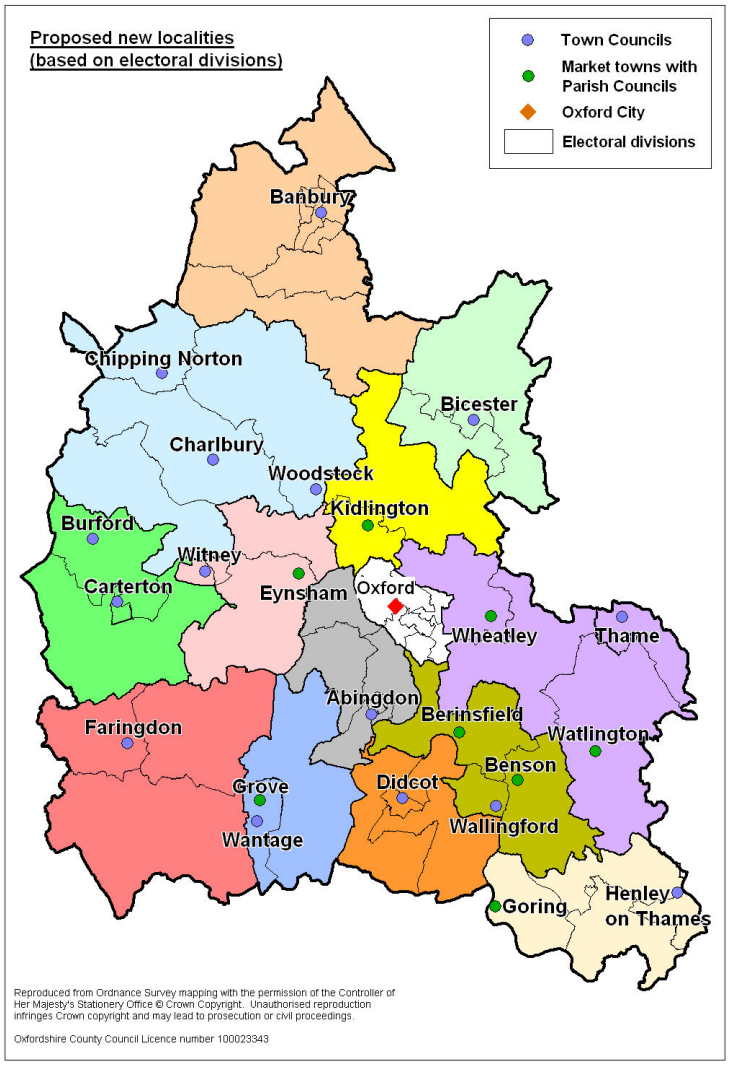
Focus on Communities

Oxfordshire is a diverse county and the challenge for the County Council and its partners is to deliver its strategic objectives in a way that fits with the needs of local people and local communities. We are determined that a 'one size fits all' approach should be avoided wherever possible, as our 'real choice' commitment implies.

To facilitate this we have identified 14 localities across Oxfordshire, (see map below) which are centred on the city and our market towns. We will work with partners to join up services in each of these areas and to connect and engage with local people.

However we recognise that some areas face more significant challenges in terms of development, regeneration and inequalities than others. In consequence we will place particular emphasis in six localities – Oxford City, Banbury, Bicester, Didcot, Abingdon and Carterton - where there will be significant development and/or a need to address inequalities.

In our Delivery Plan you will see examples of how our strategic objectives are reflected in action in particular localities, although this does not provide comprehensive coverage of all our work.



World Class Economy

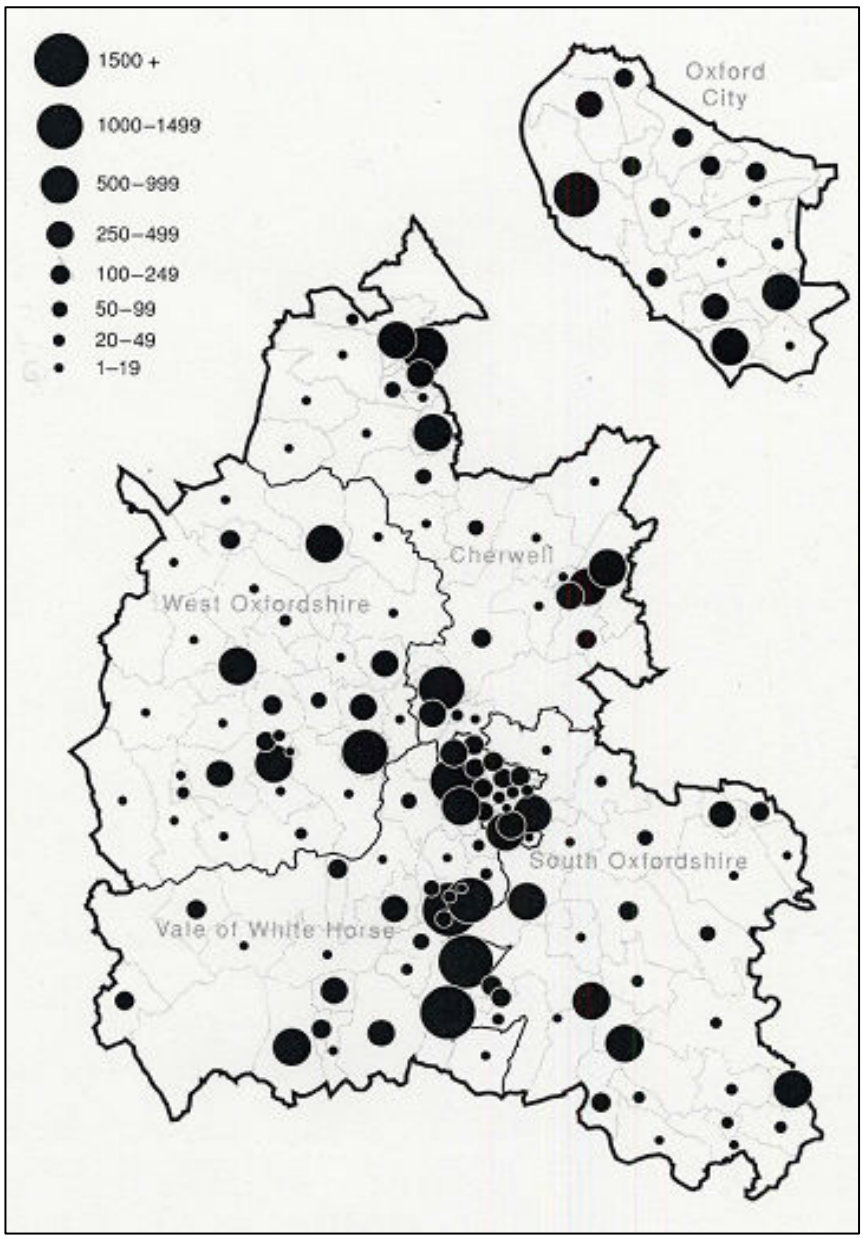
Despite the recession, Oxfordshire has one of the strongest economies in the South East, which is itself the powerhouse of the national economy. It also has the greatest concentration of research and development in Western Europe. Oxfordshire is globally competitive in areas such as high performance engineering, bioscience, medical instruments and publishing. Maintaining this competitiveness is central to the long-term prosperity of the county. At the same time, it is an attractive county, much of it rural, with an outstanding built environment.

The combination of a good environment and a thriving economy should not be a surprise: many employers cite the quality of Oxfordshire's environment as a key factor in the success of their businesses. This also suggests that maintaining a very high quality environment will be key to Oxfordshire's future success and our aspiration is achieve this whilst fostering further economic growth. More broadly we want to see the South East region amongst the top 10 high performing regions in the world, with Oxfordshire contributing significantly to achieving this ambition.

Oxfordshire's economy has been one of the fastest growing in the country, particularly in terms of gross value added. Employment structure has changed significantly, notably in the dramatic decline in the numbers employed in the motor industry over the last 25 years. However the number of cars produced by BMW at the Cowley plant is greater than was achieved by British Leyland in the past, when employment was much higher.

Tourism is a major sector of the local economy, but remains under exploited. While Oxford is understandably the main magnet for visitors, many tourists are also drawn to the more rural parts of the county and notably to the Cotswolds. Our aim is to increase the length of time visitors stay in the county, and to encourage them to spend on goods and services provided by local businesses.

The growth of hi-tech companies and employment has been one of the most marked features of the Oxfordshire economy. Their distribution is shown in the **figure below** [source: 'Enterprising Oxford', Oxfordshire Economic Observatory]



Challenges facing the County Council

- **Infrastructure** – improvements are needed to the county's arterial roads, schools and other public buildings. We will work with partners to secure investment in priority schemes over the longer term
- **Traffic congestion** - impacts adversely on Oxfordshire businesses as well as its residents. It is a priority to make it easier to get around the county, by car, rail and other forms of public transport.
- **Educational achievement** – performance in Oxfordshire schools reflects the national average and is continuing to increase each year. However we think our schools should do better and our aim is to be in the top 25% of areas nationally.
- **Young people** - the recession has impacted adversely on our efforts to make sure all 18-25 year olds are in education, employment or training. With our partners we will work even harder ensure that every young person gets the help they need to gain and maintain employment.
- **Skill levels** - need to continue to improve, both for the benefit of individuals and Oxfordshire's businesses which need high quality, skilled employees

Healthy and Thriving Communities

87% of residents think Oxfordshire is a good place to live (based on responses to the recent Place Survey), and levels of crime are low. However, people lead more and more pressured lives and making time to enjoy and participate in community life is a challenge for many. Yet without local people joining in community affairs and supporting local projects our city, towns, villages and neighbourhoods will become less attractive places in which to live and the vulnerable (the old, the sick, those living on limited incomes) will feel increasingly isolated.

This will be especially true in rural areas, where there are already communities suffering 'dormitory town syndrome'. These are not the kind of communities Oxfordshire people want to live in and we will work to provide community leadership, encourage volunteering and support the voluntary, community and faith sector in our communities. We will also seek to reflect the diverse needs of these communities in our planning and in our service delivery.

We have an increasingly diverse population which has major implications for education, the economy and social cohesion and we will be tackling inequalities through our partnership projects aimed at breaking the cycle of deprivation. We also have an ageing population – an advantage and a disadvantage. There are likely to be increased pressures on public services particularly health, social care and transport services but an increasing older population may also produce economic benefits and help sustain and enhance community life.

We will support and protect the vulnerable, including older people and those with disabilities. However we want to help people maintain their independence, and give them choice in the way they lead their lives and secure the services they need to support them.

Crime and anti-social behaviour are at relatively low levels but still give cause for concern for local people. As well as working with the police and other partners to tackle crime we want to focus on providing activities to help young people enjoy their leisure time in positive ways.

The County's population is generally healthier than elsewhere with longer than average life expectancy, although there are variations in life expectancy across the county. Work to break the cycle of deprivation will address these inequalities. We will also promote healthy lifestyles for young people and older people.

Challenges Facing the County Council

- **Health inequality** - there are pockets in Oxfordshire where life expectancy and general health is lower than elsewhere. For example mortality rates reveal a variation in life expectancy of over 15 years between the best and worst areas and the prevalence of mental illness in some parts of the county is double the county average. Work to promote healthy lifestyles, to support the vulnerable and tackle the cycle of deprivation is designed to address these health inequalities.
- **Demographic change** - significant growth in older people (particularly the over 85s) and people with learning disabilities will put pressure on public services in the medium term. The Council is providing additional resources to meet these challenges. It will also be important to encourage more community self help.
- **Crime and Anti social behaviour** – crime is generally low in Oxfordshire but fear of crime is disproportionately high. This is of particular concern to older people and is often associated with anti social behaviour. We are working to provide positive activities for young people, notably through the youth service. We also recognise that activity generated in local communities can help to bring people together and reduce anti social behaviour
- **Community Self Help –** expectations of public services grow ever higher whilst resources are increasingly rationed. Community self help can help the council to maximise the use of our resources. Many communities have good neighbour arrangements, community transport and other similar schemes, and we will support and promote this activity across the county. In particular we would like to mobilise the resource of retired, fit and skilled older people in our communities.
- **Closer to Communities –** we have defined 14 'localities' across the county based on our market towns and the city of Oxford (see map on page 6). Six of these 14 areas (Abingdon, Banbury, Bicester, Carterton, Didcot and Oxford) will be given priority attention because of the development and/or regeneration pressures they face.
- **Independent living** – the population is ageing and there are an increasing number of older people and people with disabilities to be cared for and supported. Our aim is to help people to maintain their independence and to have control over their lives. We will increase the availability of Extra Care Housing and Supported Living arrangements as an alternative to residential or institutional care.

Environment and Climate Change

Oxfordshire has an attractive environment with beautiful countryside, including many nature reserves, sites of scientific interest and conservation. The county also has outstanding architecture, including the Blenheim Palace world heritage site near Woodstock and over 1,000 listed buildings. Despite our ambitions to develop a world class economy, we will protect Oxfordshire's natural environment and its built environment.

The world's climate will probably change as much in the next 20 years as in the last 100. Whilst this is a global issue, it is also very much one for Oxfordshire. The county's carbon emissions are equivalent to those of a sizeable country in the developing world. In common with the rest of the South East region we will need to adapt in the face of significant and unavoidable local impacts, such as flooding and higher temperatures.

The council, our partners and local businesses need to achieve considerable reductions in carbon use under the new carbon taxation system. We can also expect changes in travel and lifestyle patterns as individuals adjust their behaviour. Precise impacts will be unpredictable, but our programmes and policies need to respond to and facilitate these changes.

Challenges Facing the County Council

- **Carbon management** - there is national and international pressure to respond to climate change. The council has already committed to reduce its carbon footprint and the introduction of carbon tax will further incentivise action to reduce energy use.
- **Flooding** – the risk of flooding is a particular concern, and a range of mitigation measures have been put in place since the summer floods in 2007. Latest estimates from the Environment Agency indicate that there are approximately 21,000 existing properties at risk of flooding in Oxfordshire, with around 8,500 at significant risk.
- **Waste management** - waste is a contributor to global warming and needs to be reduced. We are working with partners to increase recycling and composting as well as investing in new waste disposal facilities which will convert waste to energy.
- **Transform Oxford** – Oxford is one of the most beautiful cities in the world and we need to protect and enhance its environment. The Transform Oxford project is one example of the County Council's commitment to the improvement of the visitor experience in Oxford.

Better Public Services

People rightly expect accessible, high quality and responsive public services. To achieve this we need to join up effectively with other public service providers. The public also expect us to spend their money wisely and they will judge value for money not simply by the level of council tax, but by whether our services are visibly efficient and effective.

The Council has a proven track record for delivering value for money, achieving efficiency savings and meeting our pledge to keep council tax low. Since 2007 the council has delivered over £50 million in year-on-year efficiency savings but more will be needed in the medium term.

The council also has a strong commitment to partnership working to ensure that the customer receives a seamless service. Our partnership with NHS Oxfordshire is amongst the best in the country in terms of pooled budgets to achieve shared goals. We are also involved in innovative partnerships such as the Science Vale UK

Our increasing focus on locality working means we communicate and engage actively with local residents and communities. The Audit Commission praised us in the recent Comprehensive Area Assessment for the effectiveness of this engagement, particularly in setting the budget and consulting with young people.

In the medium term local government funding will tighten and over the next 5 years the Council will need to make efficiency savings of over £100m. To achieve this we will need to:

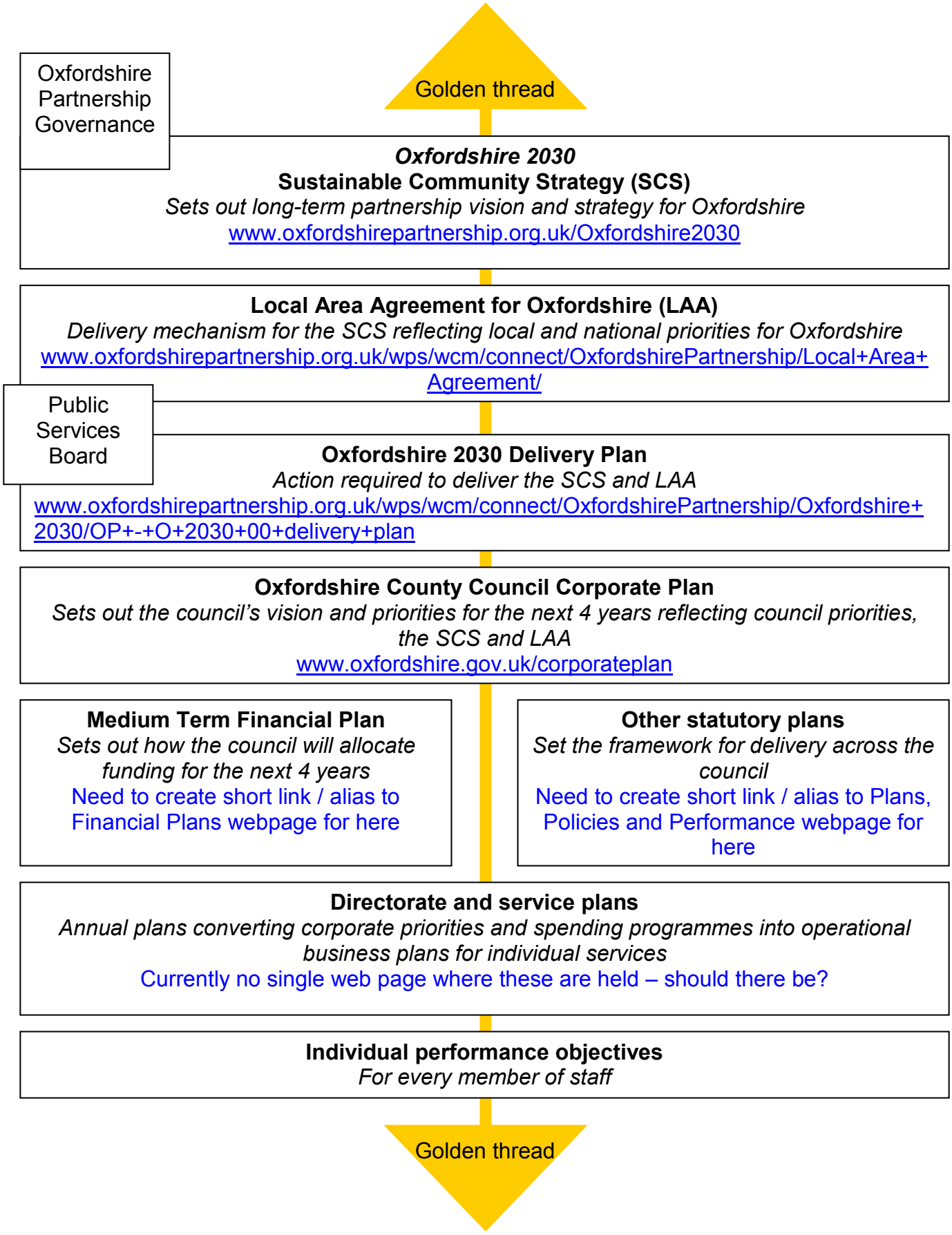
- Protect key public services
- Innovate to improve customer responsiveness
- Streamline service delivery to further improve value for money

Challenges Facing the County Council

- **Improve customer service** – we will further enhance online services and develop a contact centre so that more enquiries can be dealt with at the first point of contact.
- **Keeping council tax low –** our business efficiency strategy commits the Council to 'lean working', reducing management costs, joining up with partners, reducing bureaucracy and rationalising our assets. This strategy will enable the Council to reduce spending and keep council tax increases low.
- **Total place –** There is increasing recognition that in every community huge resources are deployed by central government, local government and other public sector organisations. The Council is keen to work with others to develop the 'Total Place' approach, which could lead to better solutions and improved use of resources by reducing the risk of inefficiency and duplication.

Further information

This Corporate Plan can only provide a high level summary of the strategic issues facing the council and the organisational responses planned for the medium term. It does not provide details of the ongoing service commitment across more than 100 activities for which the county council is responsible. For more information see the Delivery Plan and the following documents which complement this Corporate Plan.


Oxfordshire Partnership Governance
Golden thread
Oxfordshire 2030
Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)
Sets out long-term partnership vision and strategy for Oxfordshire
www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk/Oxfordshire2030
Local Area Agreement for Oxfordshire (LAA)
Delivery mechanism for the SCS reflecting local and national priorities for Oxfordshire
www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk/wps/wcm/connect/OxfordshirePartnership/Local+Area+Agreement/
Public Services Board
Oxfordshire 2030 Delivery Plan
Action required to deliver the SCS and LAA
www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk/wps/wcm/connect/OxfordshirePartnership/Oxfordshire+2030/OP+-+O+2030+00+delivery+plan
Oxfordshire County Council Corporate Plan
Sets out the council's vision and priorities for the next 4 years reflecting council priorities, the SCS and LAA
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/corporateplan
Medium Term Financial Plan
Sets out how the council will allocate funding for the next 4 years
Need to create short link / alias to Financial Plans webpage for here
Other statutory plans
Set the framework for delivery across the council
Need to create short link / alias to Plans, Policies and Performance webpage for here
Directorate and service plans
Annual plans converting corporate priorities and spending programmes into operational business plans for individual services
Currently no single web page where these are held – should there be?
Individual performance objectives
For every member of staff
Golden thread

Targets and Monitoring

a. Performance management / balanced scorecard

b. LAA targets

Finance / Budget

To insert relevant links to Medium Term Financial Plan here – to include capital spending (map etc)?

Annexes

a. **Delivery Plan**

b. **Data / Evidence / profile – 'This is Oxfordshire'**

c. **Supporting Strategies – 'Policy framework'**

d. **Structure of Council? Cabinet?**

e. **Partnership governance diagram?**