



Business Strategy

2011/12 – 2014/15

Social and Community Services - Community Services



Directorate Statement: Service Area Community Services

Directorate	Social & Community Services: Community Services
2010/11 Gross Budget	£15.183m (includes Community Development, Village Hall Grants and Cogges)
2010/11 FTE	334.7 fte

Year on year	2011/12 £m	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m	2014/15 £m
Net Savings (£m)	-0.694	-2.574	-3.164	-3.196

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	TOTAL
Planned FTE savings	-39.19	-43.71	-6.4	-2.0	-91.3

The Social & Community Services vision is to: support and promote strong communities so that people live their lives as successfully, independently and safely as possible.

The directorate therefore has two primary functions:

- the delivery of targeted services to the most vulnerable members of the community of Oxfordshire to keep them safe and well
- the delivery of universal community services to the whole population in Oxfordshire.

Community services brings together a number of services focused on cultural services. As part of the council's corporate business strategy these service areas will be incorporated within the new cross directorate Community Service (with Children, Young People and Families) from April 2011. In view of the imperative to encourage community self-help, no proposals are being put forward for a reduction in the level of village hall grants (£87k). The staffing and budget (£533k) for the other area of the service, community development will be included within the Adult Services Scrutiny Meeting.

There are four key elements of our overall Social & Community Services strategy which Community Services work towards:

- Prevention "keeping people well"

Through targeted investment in support for example reading for health schemes and heritage reminiscence work we will reduce the need for more intensive and expensive services later on. Creativity and cultural opportunities for engagement and participation: demand currently outstrips our ability to respond.

- **Personalisation** “promote choice and control”

Through Self Directed Support we will allocate people – a personal budget – to exercise choice and control, and to arrange and purchase their own care and support to meet their assessed eligible needs.

Personalisation is also about developing universal community services that are available to the whole population and that support the development of communities and ensure opportunities for meaningful occupation e.g. library services providing reading and information services; day opportunities; support to carers; volunteering and opportunities that can improve quality of life through cultural and community activity. Older people are choosing to access cultural services rather than traditional day care services and recognise the value and benefits of creative activity.

- **Protection** “keeping people safe”

We have to ensure that people do not have to worry about becoming vulnerable and that they can live a life free from both abuse and the fear of abuse and can have care and support in accordance with their needs. We will treat people as individuals with dignity and respect and take action to protect people where appropriate. Cultural and creative projects and services provide positive activities for young people – diverting from otherwise possible negative behaviour. Intergenerational work breaks down barriers that exist between younger and older people and promotes greater understanding, respect and builds cohesive communities.

- **Partnerships** “working together”

We will achieve our overall strategy through working in partnership with service users and the wider community alongside our key partners e.g. in health with the book gifting scheme, Bookstart; parish, town, city and district councils e.g. in providing museum services, the voluntary sector e.g. with the WRVS delivering home library services; and the independent sector . Many of the heritage and arts partnerships are longstanding and have been built up through mutual trust, hard work and commitment – and in many cases they are examples of the ‘Big Society’ already in action.

Activity Area - Heritage and Arts Management

2010/11 Gross Budget	£0.109m
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	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Savings (£m)	-0.051	-0.102	-0.102	-0.102

Current service activity

Heritage and Arts Management provides strategic leadership, management and support across a range of heritage and arts activities:

- Oxfordshire County Museums Service
- Oxfordshire History Services (Oxfordshire Record Office and Oxfordshire Studies)
- Oxfordshire Victoria County History
- Oxfordshire County Music Service
- The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury
- Partnerships with arts organisations

The Heritage and Arts Office includes the full-time post of County Heritage and Arts Officer (CHAO), and part-time management assistance and secretarial support.

Statutory minimum

None

Proposals to deliver efficiencies

Closing the office completely: this achieves the maximum saving. The likely reduction in scale of heritage and arts services and activities reduces the value of the heritage and arts office. Service managers will in future report to another senior manager within the new 'Communities' function.

Impact of the proposal on service users and communities

Indirect – the office does not provide any services direct – although it does administer the partnership with the arts organisations.

Impact of the proposal on other council services

The heads of each service would be required to report to another senior manager within the ‘Communities’ portfolio; there are significant synergies with learning and raising achievement in schools, and (through outreach services) with building confidence and promoting independence for older people.

Capital implications of proposed change

None; the office occupies two rooms on the top floor of The Oxfordshire Museum.

Activity Area - Museum Services

2010/11 Gross Budget	£1.052m
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	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Savings (£m)	-0.078	-0.277	-0.377	-0.377

Current service activity

The core responsibility of the County Museums Service is the long term care and preservation of the County collection of Oxfordshire archaeology and history material – these collections are unique and represent the material culture of Oxfordshire over the last 5,000 years. These collections are held in trust for the people and communities of the county – and for future generations. The collection is housed at the Museum Resources Centre, Standlake. The collections are used throughout the county in museums provided by Oxford City Council (Museum of Oxford), Cherwell District Council (Banbury Museum), Abingdon Town Council (Abingdon Museum), the Vale and Downland Museum Trust (V&D Museum), as well as at The Oxfordshire Museum, owned and managed by Oxfordshire County Council, and at other independent museums. The Oxfordshire Museum, founded in 1964, has been rejuvenated in recent years with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, investment from the County Council and support from the Friends organisation. The museum site currently attracts about 170,000 visitors per year (cost per head £1.17). There is a learning and outreach service which uses heritage and arts collections in schools and with community groups – its work with older and vulnerable adults, stimulating creativity and promoting independence – has been particularly valued. Since 1995 the museums service has worked closely with an independent group now known as Soldiers of Oxfordshire – representing all the armed forces. In 2008 Oxfordshire County Council agreed to provide a site within The Oxfordshire Museum site for Soldiers of Oxfordshire to build a major new museum. Soldiers of Oxfordshire has launched a major fund raising campaign and has raised over £4 million – enabling the new museum to be built.

Statutory minimum

Oxfordshire County Council assumed responsibility for museums in 1974 under the powers of the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964. There is no statutory minimum service. However the Council has acquired museum collections over the last 45 years (initially under a joint provision with the City Council) and these are held in trust for present and future generations; the council has a responsibility to care for these collections.

Proposals to deliver efficiencies

- a. To restructure the museum service: aiming to maintain basic collection care; continue partnership arrangements with other museums throughout Oxfordshire and maintain/increase income for those services; retain a learning and outreach service (including that for Oxford Castle) and services to schools and target groups (in partnership with other providers and particularly with the emerging Oxfordshire Local Heritage Partnership – this partnership, with Oxford University and other local authorities, aims to establish Oxfordshire as a ‘core’ museum to receive funding, possibly £2 million per year, direct from government to meet County Council objectives (raising achievement in schools, stronger communities and promoting independence for older people). There will be a heavy reliance on volunteers to maintain basic services.
- b. To maintain the Oxfordshire Museum, with a small core staff (3fte), and with a significant increase in the role of volunteers in partnership with Soldiers of Oxfordshire and the Friends of the museum. The staff will include a part time volunteers’ coordinator.

Other options considered and rejected:

- a. Close the Museums Resource Centre entirely and ‘mothball’ the collection: this would create major problems for the partner museums; deny the public access to their heritage; and mothballing costs would be considerable.
- b. Seek a new partnership with external community groups to operate the Oxfordshire Museum as an independent organisation (possibly with grant aid). This was rejected on the grounds that it is unlikely any external organisation would take on the museum without a substantial revenue grant; the risks involved and the likely lengthy negotiations create a level of uncertainty which could undermine the Soldiers of Oxfordshire capital programme.
- c. Closing the Oxfordshire Museum entirely has been considered: this would seriously jeopardise the reputation of the County Council by breaking the agreement with Soldiers of Oxfordshire. It might lead to a claim for repayment of (part of) the Heritage Lottery Fund investment in the museum (50% of £2.8 million), and similarly of the Viridor investment (£80,000) and Soldiers of Oxfordshire (£100,000).

Impact of the proposal on service users and communities

The aim of these proposals is to minimise the impact on service users and communities whilst making the necessary savings. The emerging Oxfordshire Local Heritage Partnership with the University Museums and other local authorities could provide an opportunity to build on the learning and outreach. The involvement of volunteers throughout the service will increase community engagement.

Impact of the proposal on other council services

Other local authorities in Oxfordshire providing or supporting museums are reliant on access to the county council's collections at the Museums Resources Centre. The learning and outreach team provide important opportunities for creative learning in schools and help to promote confidence and independence in older people. There could be opportunities to develop the learning and outreach services in a new partnership with Oxford University museums, funded by central government.

Capital implications of proposed change

The Cabinet has agreed in principle to the development of a site within the grounds of The Oxfordshire Museum by The Soldiers of Oxfordshire for a new museum illustrating the story of the armed services and their families in Oxfordshire. Soldiers of Oxfordshire has raised £4 million to enable that new museum to be built and aims to start work on site in the New Year.

Activity Area - History Services

2010/11 Gross Budget	£0.717m
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	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Savings (£m)	-0.077	-0.163	-0.209	-221

Current service activity

History Services are currently provided from Oxfordshire Record Office at St Luke's, Cowley, and Oxfordshire Studies on the top floor of Central Library. The service acquires, cares for and provides public access to the documentary and printed heritage of the county – it includes one of the largest county photographic archives and a significant collection of oral history recordings. There are already plans to merge the services on the St Luke's site (with £285,000 capital funding towards increasing storage capacity and other adaptations).

Statutory minimum

Oxfordshire County Council is obliged to run an archives service under the Public Records Act (1958) and the Local Government Act (1972). These Acts require the care of and provision of public access to public records (records of public bodies, health records and court records), and the records of local authorities (County, District and parish councils). Oxfordshire Records Office is the designated Diocesan Record Office for Oxfordshire under the Parochial Records and Registers Measure (1978), and has an explicit legal agreement with the Diocese to preserve and make available Church records. The Council is obliged to run a "comprehensive library service" under the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964); this has always been held to include provision of a professionally managed local studies service.

Proposals to deliver efficiencies

Combining the services on one site at St Luke's enables savings to be made whilst retaining the public services, with a view to extending opening to 5 days per week, and continuing to care for the collections in secure conditions meeting BS5454 environmental standards. Public access to the unique history resources can be managed in one public 'search room' under the supervision of specialist staff. Essential cataloguing and documentation processes can be maintained and some digitisation work continues, though at a lower level. The capital funding, already agreed, allows the creation of sufficient additional storage space.

Combining the service at Central Library was considered, but rejected as it is not possible to house the Oxfordshire Records Office collection of records (5 kilometres of shelved archives) on the Central Library site; and transporting archives to and from St Luke's to the Central Library was rejected as inefficient, costly and potentially damaging to the records.

The Central Library will retain a broad reference collection of local and family history secondary sources integrated with its general reference collections on the top floor of the library; the space vacated by the unique collections of Oxfordshire Studies can be used by Central Library to expand its study space.

Impact of the proposal on service users and communities

These plans will concentrate access to the unique and rare history resources on one site at St Luke's. This will improve the conditions in which the collections are housed, preserving them for future users; provide facilities for historical research on a single site, avoiding duplication and establishing clarity on where to access this material for users; and enable the services to maintain their full range of collections. There may be some criticism from some users for whom the central Oxford location of Oxfordshire Studies is convenient, but consultation with local and family history societies has shown unanimous support for the St Luke's plan.

Impact of the proposal on other council services

The release of some space on the top floor of Central Library provides an opportunity for the library to relocate its reference collections to that floor following the reconfiguration of the ground floor to allow for library self service and to offer desperately needed increased study space for users.

Capital implications of proposed change

£185,000 has been found externally, but a further £285,000 is required to increase storage capacity at St Luke's. This has been agreed and released by Cabinet and work is due to start in December 2010. The joint service could be operational by June 2011.

Service Area - Victoria County History

2010/11 Gross Budget	£0.183m reducing to £0.101m in 11/12 (this budget includes external salary recharges. Actual budget will be £0.035m)
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	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Savings (£m)	-0.112	-0.112	-0.112	-0.112

Current service activity

The Victoria County History is part of a national project co-ordinated by the University of London to research and publish an accessible history of every community in England. In Oxfordshire 15 volumes have been published to date; work is proceeding on two further volumes for publication in 2011 and 2012. The published volumes, and the Victoria County History website, are the starting point for any local history project – invaluable to schools, in further education, and to individuals and communities seeking to understand their histories. The Victoria County History is supported by the Oxfordshire Victoria County History Trust which has raised more than £50,000 per year for the last ten years – allowing the employment of additional researchers to speed up the research process. The Trust is committed to increasing that support – in response to the funding cuts already planned which will reduce County Council expenditure on the project to £35,000 per year.

Statutory minimum None

Already agreed proposals to deliver efficiencies

In February 2010 the county council agreed to fund the Victoria County History at the reduced level of £35,000 per year from 2011 to 2015, and to continue to act as the employer for the remaining staff following lengthy negotiation with the University of London and the Victoria County History Trust. The funding reduction from April 2011 involves compulsory redundancies and voluntary pay cuts for remaining staff. The Victoria County History Trust is working hard to make up some of the shortfall through intensive fund raising, in order to maintain the project's momentum and ensure completion of plans to 2015

Impact of the proposal on service users and communities

With the continuing support of the Trust, which has mitigated the effects of budget reductions, it will be possible to continue the planned programme of research on Oxfordshire communities and the Victoria County History project can be completed in Oxfordshire.

Impact of the proposal on other council services and Capital implications of proposed change: None

Activity Area - Partnerships with arts organisations

2010/11 Gross Budget	£0.259m
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	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Savings (£m)	-0.010	-0.153	-0.153	-0.153

Current service activity

100% of this budget is provided to arts organisations

Partnerships are maintained with key strategic arts organisations providing professional services across Oxfordshire. The level of funding support to arts organisations varies. The partnerships have supported these organisations to enable them to meet County Council objectives – strengthening communities through creative cultural opportunities; raising achievement in schools through participation in cultural events; and encouraging independence for older people by offering a choice of activities in localities Pegasus, previously part of the County Council, has moved to independence alongside a major capital programme to rebuild its theatre and workshop spaces; core funding continues to be provided to support its innovative work with young people and educational programmes.

Statutory minimum None

Proposals to deliver efficiencies

A reduction of 60% of the budget would allow the continuation of support to three countywide organisations (Oxfordshire Theatre Company, Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership and Oxfordshire Visual Aids Development Agency) which would be very likely to collapse without County Council funding and continuing support to Pegasus Theatre (with a 40% reduction). All of these partners make significant contributions to County Council objectives

Consideration was given to cutting the fund completely. This was rejected on the grounds of seeking to maintain choice, supporting organisations that work countywide and meet County Council objectives through their work.

Although they are accustomed to a level of financial uncertainty, it is good practice that any significant budget reduction from a primary funder should be subject to a period of notice of at least one year – to allow the organisations time to seek alternative funding sources.

Impact of the proposal on service users and communities

Any budget reduction will have an immediate impact on the arts partners. We have assessed the level of funding we contribute to the organisations we are proposing to cease funding which in itself should not impact on the viability of these organisations. The proposal aims to maintain the range of arts providers in Oxfordshire, by supporting those that are most vulnerable. The implications of reduced support for Pegasus are notable as the Arts Council has recently announced its decision to reduce its support from 2011/12

Impact of the proposal on other council services

Any loss of cultural services will have an impact on other services. For young people, participation in constructive leisure-time activities helps improve attitudes at school; builds social skills and improves self-confidence. Lack of creativity and stimulus for older people will lead to inactivity, increased dependence on drugs (including alcohol), and depression.

Capital implications of proposed change

None

Activity Area - The Mill Arts Centre

2010/11 Gross Budget	£0.224m
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	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Savings (£m)	0	0	-0.090	-0.090

Current service activity

The Mill is a major cultural and community resource for Banbury and North Oxfordshire. As well as offering a wide range of arts and learning opportunities, the Centre is home to many groups and organisations. The Mill is open for 100 hours a week for 50 weeks a year attracting over 120,000 visitors, students and audience members per annum. The Mill's operation is based upon a "mixed economy" with a partnership approach including the Mill Management Committee and the District Council as well as the County Council. Under this arrangement the Mill Management Committee takes responsibility for the Mill's main trading and operational functions, employing some of the staff and generating significant income to support the overall work of the Centre. The Mill also has a service level agreement for Adult Learning which produces income for the County Council through the contract with the Skills Funding Agency.

The current financial model sees the value of the County Council's investment considerably increased through other fund raising.

Statutory minimum

None

Proposals to deliver efficiencies

A 40% reduction in funding to the Mill from the county council would present the need to move to a greater self financing model for the Mill. There are plans to redevelop the Mill as part of the Banbury cultural quarter but capital funding is unlikely to be available in the life of this strategy so cannot be relied on to bring savings linked to these proposals.

Savings can only be achieved through the loss of staff and a reduced cultural offer should it not possible to provide learning opportunities, workshops and community events on a self financing basis. A reduction in County Council support might also increase the risk that Cherwell District Council may decide to reduce or cut its entire annual grant to the Mill of £38,443.

Increasing fees and charges has been considered – the Mill already raises c70% of its gross budget from such sources – but further increases would exclude the individuals and groups the Mill has succeeded in reaching, and reduce audiences to those who can afford to pay higher prices.

An alternative strategy of transferring The Mill to a new independent status could be considered though would be more likely to succeed if there were to be capital development.

Impact of the proposal on service users and communities

The proposed budget reduction will have an immediate impact on the range of cultural, learning and community activities that can be provided to young people, adult learners (including those with learning disabilities) and the community. The reduction will impact on customers by reducing their choice of activities and opportunity for positive creative activity. A reduction in opening hours will leave many individuals and groups in the Banbury area with no premises to host their activities.

Impact of the proposal on other council services

A reduction in capacity to deliver the Service Agreement for Adult Learning may lead to lower income from the Council's contract with the Skills Funding Agency. The loss of specialist educational opportunities for people with learning disabilities, mental health users and disaffected young people would increase demand on other providers

Capital implications of proposed change

The capital programme to relocate Banbury Library alongside the Mill and to refurbish the Mill creating a greatly enhanced asset as the centrepiece of the Banbury Cultural Quarter provides an opportunity to review governance, management and funding arrangements, increase income and benefit from economies of scale and increase collaboration. However this funding is not likely to be available within the life of this strategy.

Cherwell District Council has made a firm commitment to the development of The Mill and has set aside a contribution of £2 million towards the capital costs together with provision of land and a new access bridge.

Activity Area - Music Service

2010/11 Gross Budget	£2.736 m
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	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Savings (£m)	-0.057	-0.120	-0.220	-0.220

Current service activity - Music Service

- Provision of individual, small and large-group instrumental lessons; management and delivery of Government programmes and initiatives, including the national *Wider Opportunities Programme*, *Sing-Up* etc.
- Management and delivery of programmes funded by charities and other organisations in schools and with other organisations.
- Delivery of curriculum teaching in Primary Schools. Performances for and with Primary Schools and concerts for same.
- Delivery of school-based ensemble leadership and teaching purchased directly by schools from the Music Service. Support for GCSE and A level work in schools.
- Management and delivery of partnership programmes with other organisations and institutions. These are often focused on areas of greatest social and economic need.
- Management and delivery of programmes for the most able young musicians (Gifted and Talented) and those with special needs.
- Management, organisation and delivery of progressive, graduated, ensemble and musicianship opportunities for young people and (some) adults via the network of Saturday Music Schools, including the Centre for Music, and weeknight activities.
- Management, leadership and implementation of holiday courses and tours. Representation of the young musicians of Oxfordshire at national and international level.
- Advice, support and consultation for Headteacher, specialist music staff, senior LA officers and elected members.

Statutory minimum The Service is not currently statutory.

Proposals to deliver efficiencies

Government ring-fenced grant funding for the music service has been removed and the service in Oxfordshire may need to move to a self financing model in future years. Proposals below are being assessed and will help to support a move towards self financing should this be required.

- Introducing charges for access to Oxfordshire Youth Music Activities – i.e. Saturday mornings etc.
- Introduction of charges for schools participating in Wider Opportunities programmes
- Restructuring of the management of the service
- Elimination of uneconomic visits to schools and very small groups – replaced with ‘centre’ provision
- Development of new areas of business (e.g. Saturday morning large-group lessons for young children)
- Elimination of areas of ‘free’ provision (e.g. public examinations in music performance)
- Rationalisation of transport provision and reduce subsidies for transport
- Significantly increasing bought-back provision from schools
- Introduction of new learning courses etc. to promote retention of pupils.
- Increasing level of financial support from charities and other third parties.
- Negotiation of introduction of flexible contracts or actual reduction of middle management posts by a further 2 fte.

Impact of the proposal on service users and communities

It is difficult to assess the impact of the proposal at this stage, as it depends on the ease with which the music service can, if necessary, move to be self funding. Steps will be taken to minimise the impact of these changes on those in living in areas of deprivation and to ensure that we continue to provide support to schools and have a sustainable music service.

Capital implications of proposed change None

Service Area - Cultural Development

2010/11 Gross Budget	£0.119m
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	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Savings (£m)	-0.034	-0.034	-0.034	-0.034

Current service activity

Oxford Inspires is Oxfordshire's cultural development agency. Its role is to encourage culture throughout Oxfordshire, ensuring that more people have more opportunities to enjoy great cultural experiences more often. To date it has leveraged £2m into the county to support cultural activity. The vast majority of this funding has been passed on to other arts organisations to help deliver projects. Oxford Inspires has been commissioned to support and co-ordinate work for the Oxfordshire 2012 Partnership. This includes setting up an Oxfordshire 2012 website to signpost the public and businesses to information about what is happening in the county in the run up to 2012. It has worked with partners to develop and submit proposals with a view to securing the torch relay passing through the county. Oxford Inspires has also been working to develop plans for major mass community celebrations as part of the Cultural Olympiad and hopes to be able to announce a major project that will deliver significant benefit to Oxfordshire early in 2011.

Oxford Inspires is also co-ordinating the bid on behalf of a steering committee which includes the County Council for Oxford to be World Book Capital in 2014.

The Cultural Development Officer (part-time) has supported the development of the County Council's Cultural Strategy and the ongoing consultation and working in partnership with both external organisations and within OCC to develop a strategic approach to cultural development in Oxfordshire. This post has also been supporting Oxford Inspires in the development of Oxfordshire 2012.

Statutory minimum: None

Proposals to deliver efficiencies

There is a proposal to integrate Oxford Inspires and the newly formed Destination Management Organisation which aims to make Oxford and Oxfordshire a thriving and sustainable world-class destination for visitors, residents and local businesses by building an infrastructure that can develop and support Oxfordshire's tourism industry and the wider visitor economy. A single organisation, developing and communicating a common vision for Oxfordshire, will deliver economic and social benefits - a greater pride of place for residents, an attractive proposition for prospective employees and a consistent, compelling message to potential visitors.

Such, a combined organisation, sharing resources, is more likely to grow efficiently in the future than two separate organisations and could offer the potential for the County Council to withdraw its contribution to Oxford Inspires at some point in the future. It is proposed that no reduction in the funding for Oxford Inspires be considered until the Destination Management Organisation has become established.

It was agreed in the 2010/11 budget process to cut the cultural development budget of £15,000 with effect from April 2011, and it is therefore proposed that the role of the Cultural Development Officer could be deleted from 2011/12.

Impact of the proposal on service users and communities and on other council services

There will be a loss of support for consultation and working in partnership with both external organisations and within the County Council to develop a strategic approach to cultural development in Oxfordshire

Capital implications of proposed change: None

Service Area - Library Service

2010/11 Gross Budget	£8.660m
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	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Savings (£m)	-0.275	-1.613	-1.867	-1.887

Current service activity

The Library Service provides access to books, information and knowledge, to support the recreational, cultural and educational needs of those who live, work, and study in Oxfordshire. Our customers are all those who live, work, visit and study in Oxfordshire. The core service provides a universal network of library buildings (43) and vehicles (7); a comprehensive countywide collection of books, online resources and other items, accessible to all, and exploited to support: reading and literacy; learning; economic wellbeing; community cohesion and healthy living; targeted work to support children's and adult's reading, learning and digital skills; online and telephone based remote services; public access computers, deployed across the building network, used to provide access to online information; help people develop digital and information skills; and combat digital exclusion. The service provides and manages the Rural Children's Centre on behalf of Children, Education and Families and two prison libraries on behalf of HM Prison Service.

Statutory minimum

Extract from the legislation:

The County Council's general statutory duty, laid down in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, is:

"to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof "

In fulfilling its general duty, the County Council should:

"in particular have regard to the desirability — of securing,that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other...materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children....; and

of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it; "

The legislation does not set minimum specific minimum standards. The most recent challenge to a library authority under the legislation (Wirral Inquiry 2009), indicated that to ensure it meets the general duty, an authority should identify the specific and local needs of adults, children and young people of all ages and demonstrate that having done so, it provides services to meet these needs in the best way possible, within the resources available.

Proposal to deliver efficiencies

This is an opportunity to restructure our library service for the 21st century. Our vision for the library service of the future is :

- Library hubs - in our main towns and in key rural areas to ensure coverage across each locality.

These library hubs will be situated in areas which have strong transport links to hinterland communities or in areas which can provide a focus for rural communities. We have identified that 82% of library visits (excluding mobiles) currently occur at the libraries presently selected as our hubs.

The proposal includes seven day opening at central library in Oxford.

Oxford Central	Bicester	Didcot	Wantage
Abingdon	Carterton	Faringdon	Thame
Banbury	Cowley	Henley	Witney
Kidlington	Wallingford	Chipping Norton	Burford,
Eynsham	Goring	Hook Norton	Watlington
Wheatley	Woodstock	Wychwood	

- Interactive library network

Each hub will be supported by an interactive library network. We will use technology to modernise and enhance our service so that all Oxfordshire residents can access the books they want. We will extend our library loan service to include e-books and e-audio downloads, so people can get the books they want direct to their home PCs, i-pads

In addition to delivering books, mobile libraries will also continue to provide support to our more vulnerable residents; older people or those in isolated rural communities.

The mobile libraries will provide the ‘spokes’ to our library hubs. We will review the mobile library so that it is used to greatest effect.

- Big Society

There are a number of areas where we will look to develop Big Society solutions. Whilst we will no longer fund the provision of a traditional library service in some communities, we will instead work with that community to help explore alternative ways of providing the services its residents want and need.

We will look for opportunities to develop Big Society solutions in the following areas:

Adderbury, Bampton, Benson, Berinsfield, Blackbird Leys, Botley, Charlbury, Chinnor, Deddington, Grove, Headington, Kennington, Littlemore, Neithrop, North Leigh, Old Marston, Sonning Common, Stonesfield, Summertown and Woodcote,.

The model proposed incorporates the following principles:

- Library provision is focused on centres of population and evenly spread geographically
- Library provision reflects regular shopping and travel patterns from local communities (to be confirmed by data analysis which is underway).
- Library provision reflects key patterns of current use
- Access to library services is targeted in areas of socio-economic need (to be confirmed by data analysis)
- The core library offer includes universal and targeted services.

Impact of the proposal on service users and communities

A high level assessment of the impact of this proposal identifies that the main groups affected are children and adults who are less mobile for whatever reason (e.g. older people, people without their own transport, people with disabilities). These groups would be less well served than currently, as would some rural communities and Oxford city residents, workers and students who do not have cause to travel regularly to the city centre.

The majority, (at least 82% of current visitors and 79.5% of borrowers using branch libraries) will continue to receive a high level of conventional library service. At most, 18% of current users may find it more difficult or impossible and/or more time consuming to access library services.

The risks will be mitigated by the:

- Introduction of eBook and eAudio loan services
- Extension of home library services provided by volunteers, targeted at older people and others who are unable to leave their homes
- Use of mobile libraries to serve sizable rural communities acting as a hub for these communities, working in partnership with other services and enabling people to drop off, reserve and collect books
- The provision of resources to support the development and maintenance of community initiatives to extend library services.

Impact of the proposal on other council services

The closure of library buildings will have an impact on Property Services in terms of over property costs, maintenance requirements, leasing arrangements and overall asset management considerations.

Capital implications of proposed change

An initial assessment of liabilities or difficulties in disposing of any of the libraries owned by the County Council has been carried out. Libraries occupying space on school premises, such as Littlemore are unlikely to generate any capital receipt and others could conceivably continue in community use.

The reduction of the core building network to 23 libraries, places the greatest emphasis of service provision on Oxford Central Library and the main towns. The case for capital investment in the town libraries, therefore, becomes even stronger from both a community and a service perspective.