

## Strategy and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

17 January 2013

### Draft Corporate Plan 2013/14-2017/18

#### Purpose

This report and Annex sets out progress on delivering an updated Corporate Plan for 2013/4-2017/18.

The Strategy and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the latest draft of the plan (Annex 1). These comments will be provided to Cabinet at the meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

#### Background

As part of a range of documents which set out objectives and activities ahead, Oxfordshire County Council produces a Corporate Plan, covering a four-year period, and refreshed on an annual basis. It is a useful tool for highlighting key current priorities and direction of travel.

The new edition of the plan represents a factual update, a refreshed statement of the Leader and council's priorities and good practice case studies showcasing recent successes.

Work continues on gathering data for section 10 (Finance). This information will be included in the Plan when it is considered by Council in February.

#### Communications

The Plan will be published on the Oxfordshire County Council website and on the intranet once it has been approved by Council.

At that stage around 250 copies of the Plan will be printed and sent to a list of key stakeholders and interested parties. The distribution of the plan will have to be completed before the pre-election 'restricted period' (i.e. by 25 March).

#### Key Dates

The timeline for signoff of the Plan is as follows:

- 29 January Formal Cabinet
- 19 February County Council

Report by Assistant Chief Executive  
January 2013

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**Annex 1**

**Corporate Plan 2013/14 – 2017/18  
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## About Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is home to a diverse population of over 653,000 people<sup>1</sup>.

As South East England's most rural county, Oxfordshire is an area of outstanding natural beauty. Its growing population benefits not only from its beautiful scenery but also from a modern Oxfordshire which is a thriving place to both live and work.

The county is conveniently located in the heart of England: close to London, Bristol and Birmingham with excellent transport links connecting Oxfordshire to the rest of the UK, Europe and other global destinations.

Oxfordshire's rich historical and cultural environment is complemented by a prospering knowledge-based economy, world-renowned universities and industries, and the largest concentration of research and development activity in Western Europe.

These benefits have helped contribute to Oxfordshire being recently rated the UK's top destination for economic success and well-being<sup>2</sup>. In total our economic success contributes £15.4 billion to the national economy.

Oxfordshire is able to support both a diverse range of industries and communities. We are home to globally recognised brands like BMW Mini, Oxfam and Oxford University Press. The county is a key location for 8,400 military personnel and is home to RAF Brize Norton, the military's single air movement base in the UK. This year 11,500 students came from around the world to study at our world-famous Universities.

This strength is underpinned by a highly-skilled work force (over 40% are educated to above A-Level standard) and low unemployment (fewer than 2% of residents claim job seekers allowance).

Our strong knowledge economy is internationally recognised for its expertise in advanced engineering, cryogenics, motorsports, space innovation and life sciences. That economic potential is being boosted by the recent addition of our enterprise zone at Science Vale.

From Bicester Village to Blenheim Palace, around 25 million<sup>3</sup> visitors come to Oxfordshire each year to enjoy the attractions, retail, museums, market towns and festivals.

As well as turning world changing ideas into world changing businesses, Oxfordshire's strong civic society underpins communities within the county with over 3,800 individual volunteer and community organisations giving their time to good causes in the county.

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<sup>1</sup> Oxfordshire's population is 653,798, ONS estimates and projections, Census 2011

<sup>2</sup> PwC & Demos, good growth report 2012

<sup>3</sup> Economic Impact Report, Visit Oxfordshire, 2010

More key facts about Oxfordshire are available on the Oxfordshire Insight website: [insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/](http://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/)

## **1. Leader's foreword**

This is the county council's first corporate plan since I became Leader in April 2012. These are not easy years for local government but having talked with frontline council staff it is clear that, from top to bottom, we are working as one council to meet these challenges head on for people across Oxfordshire.

I want to start by thanking everyone who has worked and contributed to our continuing achievements this year. I want us to build on those achievements.

The challenges we face are not small: the UK is still recovering from past economic mismanagement and Oxfordshire is still adapting to the continuing need for austerity in public spending. With changing demographics and shifting public expectations, the county council's place in Oxfordshire life needs to evolve to remain relevant.

Ensuring a thriving Oxfordshire remains our overriding ambition: a place where people can achieve a decent life for themselves and their families through hard work; a place alive with vibrant, active communities; where people can enjoy the rewards of a growing economy and where sustainable public services help people improve their lives.

This is where we recognise the importance of our relationships, with our partners in local government and across the wider county, and how they enable us to deliver for all those who live and work here. We are lucky to have a strong network of partners who share our vision and ambition, including some 3,800 voluntary organisations that undertake and support vital work in the county, contributing to our vibrant communities.

A thriving Oxfordshire economy is crucial to a thriving UK. As the home of two world-class universities, world-leading companies and as a hub for cutting-edge innovation, enterprise and the knowledge economy, our success helps us support a successful UK. Encouraging both domestic and international investment in our growing economy is critical to realising a prosperous Oxfordshire for everyone.

Our county has so much potential - I want to ensure that our communities benefit from all the opportunities Oxfordshire has to offer. For the council too, from public health, which is returning to local government, through to broadband investment, I want us to grab every opportunity.

Nowhere is that more important than with Oxfordshire's children. Improving education in Oxfordshire is critical and we have put together a strong strategy to achieve that. Our future depends on raising our children's attainment, helping them fulfil their potential, working to protect them from harm and ensuring they are able to grab all the opportunities our county has to offer. That is why thriving families are central to our thriving Oxfordshire vision. I am proud of the work our Thriving Families Programme has started and of the progress our Reading Campaign is making.

Our ambition for Oxfordshire is matched only by our determination to deliver quality and value for the people who pay for, and rely on, the work we do.

## 2. Executive Summary

At Oxfordshire County Council we are ambitious about what we do as a council, and what we enable individuals, families, communities and businesses in Oxfordshire to do for themselves.

This remains the case even as the financial challenge we face continues to become more acute. We have been highly effective at delivering significant savings over recent years while doing our very best to protect the services people need, and care about, the most.

This situation is not about to get any easier, and although we have already saved £127 million from 2010 to the end of 2012/13, cuts in the grant we receive from Government mean we know savings will have to continue up to 2017 at the very least.

We are focused on helping Oxfordshire continue to lead the way to national economic recovery, and on being at the forefront of public sector efficiency, ensuring the best use of our shrinking budget.

Over the last year we have successfully:

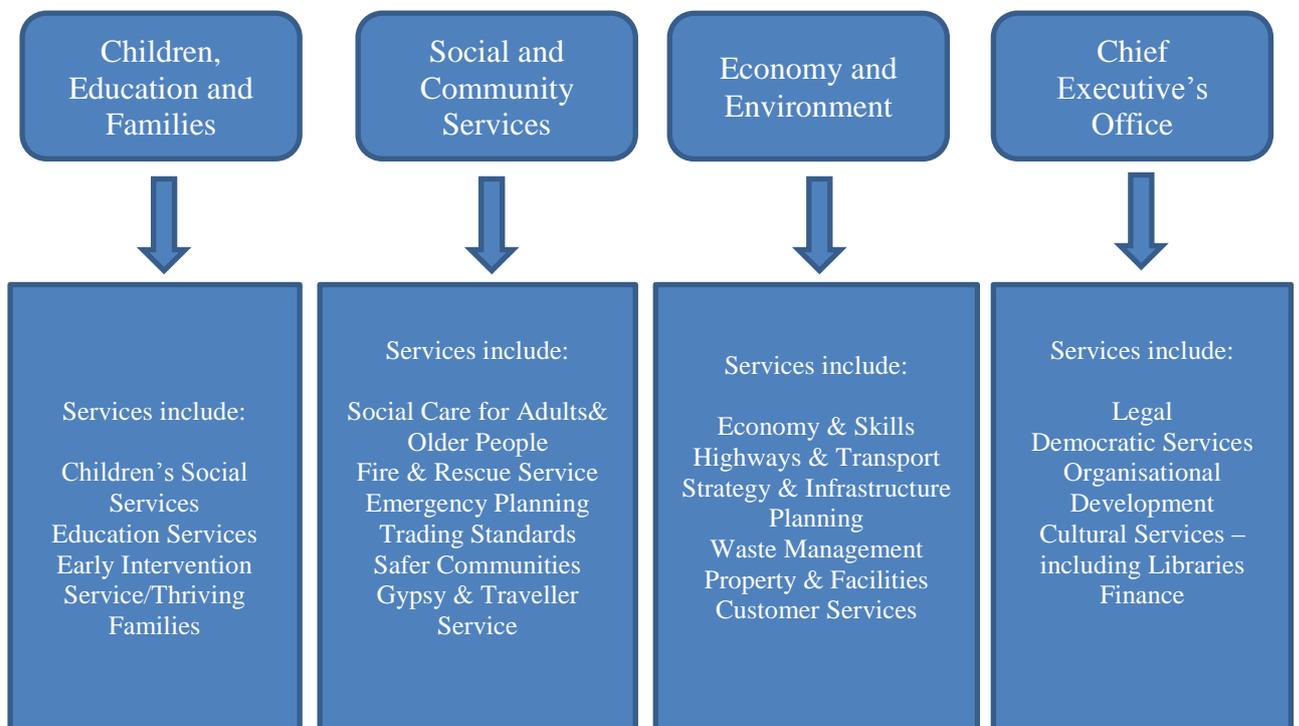
- Delivered further significant savings: in total, we have made savings of £127 million from 2010 to the end of 2012/13
- Reduced the number of staff we employ while integrating staff from partner organisations.
- Worked with the new Local Enterprise Partnership and other partners to support growth via measures such as bringing forward improvement to our road and rail infrastructure, and backing Oxford's successful bid to be a Superconnected City with ultrafast broadband and public wifi.
- Supported schools and parents to deliver a significant improvement in primary school results
- Completed the process of delivering Early Intervention Hubs to support children and families
- Targeted extra resources from the NHS, by working with the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, which have contributed to an increase in the level of adult social care services.
- Worked closely with the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and other partners to prepare for the return of Public Health to local government in April 2013.
- Responded to widespread flooding across the county, minimising risks to life and damage to property.
- Supported the new Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley, setting out the county's key priorities to tackle crime, help victims, and reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Got bus services back up and running after private firms delivering services have found themselves in financial difficulties.

Over the next twelve months we have a range of ambitions - among these we plan to:

- Continue to deliver savings while protecting frontline services as far as possible
- Play a leading role in enabling economic growth, including - continued backing for new rail lines and improved services at Oxfordshire stations; working on delivering fast broadband across the county (including superfast broadband at key locations); and seeking Government approval for the Deal for local growth
- Focus on protection, prevention, and aspiration, keeping young people safe through promoting and coordinating seamless cooperation between agencies
- Support older people living independently for as long as possible, and provide social care service users with more control over their daily lives
- Fully introduce the Public Health Directorate to the county council's structure and integrate it as a core component of our work and priorities.
- Support schools to become Academies and continue to champion further improvements in educational attainment, making sure our schoolchildren have high aspirations, and the best possible chance of achieving them.
- Increase the capacity of the Thornhill Park and Ride site and work to ensure best value for money from transport services we fund, in particular buses.
- Continue to increase our energy efficiency and innovative sources of power, in order to reduce waste and minimise our energy bills.
- Consult on a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy which will give us a clear vision for how flood risk will be dealt with in Oxfordshire.

In this plan you can read about our strategic objectives for the county in more detail, as well find out how we plan to deliver against them, and how we will measure our success.

### What we do



### 3. A Thriving Oxfordshire

Our overall ambition is to deliver "A Thriving Oxfordshire". By this we mean a county where:

- businesses have the opportunity to start up, to succeed, and to expand
- where people are able to access the opportunities they need in education, employment, and leisure to lead happy and fulfilled lives and achieve their ambitions
- communities are healthy, vibrant and active.

We want Oxfordshire to continue to be recognised as a great place to live, and as a county which combines the best of the past with a clear vision for the future. We aim to deliver the best outcomes for today, and for tomorrow. In working towards our overall ambition, we will deliver efficient and reliable services, and help people to help themselves.

We have identified three strategic objectives which make up what we want to deliver.

- Building a world class economy
- Supporting healthy and thriving communities
- Enhancing the environment

Figure x.x (Golden Thread) shows how this Plan fits within the other documents which set out what we hope to deliver, and how we intend to deliver it. The long-term plan for the county is set out in Oxfordshire 2030, which was developed in 2008 with a range of partners including the NHS, police, district and local councils, the Universities, charities, local businesses and others [name if relevant, church groups, race equality council, RCC, MoD, environment agency, Oxford United].

Since this Corporate Plan was initially developed in 2011 things have changed. In particular, the public sector is going to have a great deal less money to spend on directly providing services than many assumed at the time. Despite this, we are ready to take on the challenge - we believe that our overall ambitions remain the right ones for the county, and that close working with partners is the right way to deliver those ambitions.

[Insert Figure x.x Golden Thread]

#### **4. Championing a World Class Economy**

Oxfordshire forms the hub of Britain's knowledge economy with the largest concentration of research and development activity in Western Europe, driven by Science Vale UK, two universities and their many spin-off research centres and start-up businesses.

We continue to have one of the strongest economies in the South East. The key strength of the Oxfordshire economy is its diversity. From space technology to arts and music festivals and from bioscience to banking, Oxfordshire has a rich mix of business sectors, spread across the county, which are helping to drive the UK economy forward.

The on-going success of our economy is fundamental to achieving the county council's broader ambitions for Oxfordshire. Without economic success we will lack the ability to compete in the global market and generate the wealth that will in turn enable investment to be made more widely in society.

##### **Economic Development**

Economic growth has to be delivered by business, but the county council has a vital role to play in providing strategic leadership and facilitating an environment that enables business to flourish. We are key partners in the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and are supporting the delivery of an Enterprise Zone at Science Vale UK.

With the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, we are working actively to deliver programmes and proposals within the 'Oxfordshire Growth Arc' – this comprises three priority areas of economic growth, enterprise and housing development in Oxfordshire over the next twenty years. The three areas are Oxford City, Science Vale UK (which includes the Enterprise Zone) and Bicester (see the 'Place-Focused Growth' section for more on this.)

##### **Infrastructure**

The county council has a key role to play in the leadership of strategic planning and infrastructure provision across Oxfordshire. We want to ensure that infrastructure enables economic growth, and supports residents who live and work in the county. The Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan (LIP) - created in partnership with Oxfordshire's district councils and central Government agencies - sets out a shared vision and priorities for delivering housing growth, economic development, regeneration, and infrastructure, in other words "sustainable place making". Taken together, the schemes within the LIP could deliver 28,550 new homes across Oxfordshire, including 11,500 affordable homes. It could also facilitate the delivery of up to 44,500 new jobs.

It is expected that funding for infrastructure will remain tight. In this context we will continue to work closely with district council colleagues, through the Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership, to identify sources of funding and to maximise and align national and local funding to a common agenda.

### **Place-Focused Growth**

We are working closely with our district council colleagues and other partners to deliver growth in the priority locations of Oxford City, Bicester, and Science Vale.

In Oxford, the aim is to maintain the city's prominence as a first-class regional destination for retail, tourism and leisure as well as business. Priorities to deliver this include: updating the Oxford Transport Strategy to set out a new vision and focus for access and movement over the next twenty years – particularly in light of the development opportunities in the West End of Oxford; and ensuring the investment in the local rail network and Oxford Rail Station acts a catalyst for providing a gateway that befits Oxford's status.

At Science Vale UK, the aim is to build upon its recognised status as a centre for science, innovation and enterprise, establishing a sustainable economic hub. Priorities to deliver this include creating an additional 12,000 jobs, with significant longer term potential for additional jobs on land currently home to Didcot A power station, and providing 14,000 new homes. This growth will be supported by improved access to the national transport network (both the A34 and rail network) as well as within the Science Vale area.

At Bicester, the aim is to build on the town's strengths which include a retail outlet village with in excess of 5.5 million visitors a year, a dynamic further education college, good links to the M40, and rail links to Birmingham and London. Priorities to deliver this include: creating 15-20,000 new jobs on land allocated for economic growth; providing 10,000 new homes at a number of strategic housing sites; and improving the transport network.

### **Transport**

Enabling ease of transport movement remains a key objective. Oxford already has some of the highest use of public transport in the country and we will continue to work closely with local bus companies to build upon this. Parking capacity at the Thornhill Park and Ride will be increased from spring 2013 to meet rising demand for access to Oxford by bus.

Significant improvements are planned for the local rail network, including the opening of a second mainline route between Oxford and London via Bicester with a new station at Water Eaton by 2015. The Government has also given approval for a new East-West rail line linking Reading, Oxford and Aylesbury with Milton Keynes and Bedford. This will put Oxford at the heart of the national rail "electric spine" by 2017.

Further work is also underway with Government agencies to deliver improved road links at pinch points across the County, to support growth. This includes Junction 9 of the M40 at Bicester and improvements to the network around the Science Vale area.

### **Broadband**

Although some areas in Oxfordshire are already taking advantage of high speed broadband, other parts of the county, in particular rural areas, lack access to a basic level of service.

Faster and more reliable broadband is critical for many reasons: it supports economic growth and the business community; enables new ways of learning within our schools, colleges and universities; and facilitates the delivery of public services in new and diverse ways.

The council is working closely with public and private sector organisations and with individual communities to develop the right solutions so that Oxfordshire can reap the many benefits of being better connected.

### **Skills and educational attainment**

Despite the many positives outlined above the county does face a number of challenges, in particular the need to address a skills gap.

A significant factor is Oxfordshire's relatively weak educational attainment performance. The county council has launched an education strategy 'A Strategy for Change - Improving Educational Outcomes in Oxfordshire' designed to help improve our position. It sets out a clear vision for Oxfordshire to be 'a dynamic and forward looking place for education and learning, providing the best quality experiences for children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve'.

Results in 2012 saw steps in the right direction at Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 2. However there is still considerable progress to be made to reach the aspirations the council, pupils, parents and schools hold.

The council also facilitates the Oxfordshire Skills Board and works with them to produce an annual Skills Needs Analysis, which helps us to understand the difference between the number of courses taken up by learners and the number of jobs in each sector. There is evidence that local training providers are adapting their courses in response to this analysis.

We are also extensively involved in Oxfordshire Apprenticeships, which has held "Tell not Sell" events since April 2012 which over 100 employers have attended. Since 2011, the number of all age apprenticeship starts has increased significantly and is now improving at a faster rate than other areas in the South East.

### **Our Priorities for Action**

- Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – we will continue to support the partnership and help deliver its priorities. We will work through the LEP with the private and academic sectors to create the conditions to realise Oxfordshire's economic potential.
- Infrastructure – we will work across the public sector locally and with central government agencies to deliver the priorities identified in Oxfordshire's Local Investment Plan. We will work

with the district and city councils to support the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy and look to develop our innovative approach to funding

- Transport – we will work closely with our partners to ensure that our transport strategy supports the needs of the local economy and realises the opportunity to develop a truly integrated transport system. We will seek to maintain and where possible improve the condition of our roads and to work with communities to focus highway maintenance activity where it is most needed.
- Broadband – we are working with business network providers to develop and implement a broadband solution for Oxfordshire which will improve broadband speeds and reliability by 2015. It will benefit those residents and businesses that would have otherwise been excluded from private sector broadband plans.
- Skills and educational attainment - We will continue to support the Oxfordshire Skills Board and continue to work to increase the availability of apprenticeship training. Through the implementation of the county's Education Strategy we will play a key role in driving forward improvements in attainment.

## Measuring Progress

<b>Future Indicators of Success</b>
Increased employment opportunities, measured by increased business start-ups, the number of jobs created and the number of jobs safeguarded
Road repairs made in accordance with set targets
Broadband rolled out to priority areas
More primary and secondary schools graded good or outstanding by Ofsted
Improved educational attainment at Key Stages 1, 2 & 4
More 'all age' Apprenticeship starts
A reduced percentage of Young People Not in Education Employment or Training ('NEET')

## Success Story

### Keeping the buses running for Oxfordshire residents

In October 2012 one of the county's bus operators, responsible for 14 bus routes and 30 school bus routes across the county, suddenly went into administration.

With the weekend nearing, council leaders were clear that urgent action was necessary. The potential for serious disruption to bus users, school children and residents was high and unacceptable.

Using the county council's close relationship with bus providers across the county, council leaders were able to act quickly and secure the situation, ensuring:

- Delivery of free bus services over that initial weekend across all the affected routes to ensure that bus users did not experience any disruption
- Contracts were renegotiated with alternative bus providers for all the affected routes to ensure they could take over after the weekend and provide a service with no changes to the timetable

That quick action secured bus services along those affected routes providing stability and allowing a proper re-tendering of the contracts for those routes to be planned. The county council ensured that bus users were able to plan their journeys and take the bus without any disruption.

### Oxfordshire Stats

- 36 per cent of Oxfordshire residents have a level 4, or higher, qualification (level 4 qualifications include undergraduate degrees)
- 10 per cent are self-employed
- 43 per cent are in full-time employment – higher than the regional and national averages
- There are over 29,000 active businesses in our county

## **5. Supporting Healthy and Thriving Communities**

According to most of our residents, Oxfordshire is a good place to live. People are generally affluent and healthy, the sense of community is strong and people feel safe in their local areas. However we do have pockets of disadvantage within the county, while demands on both our adult and children's social care services continue to increase. As a council we are determined to face these challenges by supporting the most vulnerable of Oxfordshire's residents and by enabling all residents to thrive through making informed decisions about how they live.

### **Health**

The county's Public Health team joins the council in April 2013 to work across the organization, and with partners, to improve health outcomes. In particular public health has a role in: ensuring access to a range of health improvement services for the whole population; addressing the needs of more vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; preventing long-term illness or the risk of early death; promoting mental wellbeing; promoting healthy lifestyles; tackling obesity and reducing alcohol-related harm; fighting killer diseases; tackling emergencies; and offering public health expertise back to the NHS.

We have a well-established Health and Wellbeing Board in Oxfordshire, and will ensure that new commissioning arrangements are effective in improving health and wellbeing, addressing health inequalities and meeting local need.

### **Breaking the cycle of deprivation**

Overall Oxfordshire is an affluent county and levels of disadvantage are low, but some areas in Oxford City and Banbury fall within the 20 per cent most deprived areas in the country. We will continue to work closely with our partners in these communities to focus on improving health, raising skill levels, ensuring safer communities and reducing unemployment, as dealing with these issues can lead to better outcomes across the board.

### **Thriving families**

The Thriving Families Programme is in place to offer intensive, family-based interventions to 810 families who face multiple and significant difficulties, which persist through the generations. These are some of our most vulnerable and resource intensive families who are a significant cost to the tax payer.

This work forms part of the government's three year 'Troubled Families' programme which aims to turn people's lives around through ensuring: children are in school, adults are in work and crime and anti-social behaviour is reduced. At the county council we are also working with families where parental mental ill health and drugs and substance misuse are impacting their lives and adversely affecting the children.

Our approach is to provide intensive support to the whole family, coordinated by a key worker but delivered through multi-agency teams. In addition, Oxfordshire is taking an innovative approach in developing focused pockets of

work in communities where families with significant challenges are clustered and where there are widespread concerns about particular issues, such as non-school attendance and anti-social behaviour.

We are determined to embed this seamless, multi-agency, approach throughout our early intervention and prevention work so that the benefits of this work are felt in the long-term.

### **Demographic change**

The proportion of older people in the population is increasing rapidly, particularly in rural areas. The number of younger adults with disabilities is also growing. These changes present opportunities, as older people are more likely to be actively involved in their communities, carrying with them a wealth of knowledge and experience. However demand for social and health care services is also increasing. Another contributing factor to the increase in demand is the growing number of older people with dementia who require access to new emerging treatments. We will continue to work closely across the public sector and in our commissioning practices to meet these needs effectively.

### **Supporting and safeguarding the vulnerable**

The council will continue to focus relentlessly on supporting and protecting our most vulnerable residents by effectively targeting resources to those most in need, including children, young people and their families, older people and those with disabilities. We will do everything within our power to keep our most vulnerable children and adult residents safe, and work in partnership with others to identify and mitigate risks.

- **Children and young people**

Children's social care will continue to focus on protecting children at risk of harm or neglect and tackling, as well as preventing, cases of child sexual exploitation. We have made considerable investments in frontline children's social care services to ensure we have sufficient capacity to maintain high standards and ensure children and young people are appropriately safeguarded. A new joint resource (the Kingfisher team) established specifically to focus on child sexual exploitation is a demonstration of our commitment. Working with the police and health – as well as other key partners such as Oxfordshire's district councils and its voluntary sector - to embed the team and continue to strengthen joint working is a key priority during 2013/14.

Engagement and involvement are key principles which underpin the work to support vulnerable children and their families. Our Children in Care Council has been rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted in two separate inspections in 2011/12. The views and experiences of children, young people, parents and carers fundamentally shape and influence service improvement and delivery.

- **Adults**

We will continue to provide information and support to individuals and their carers to ensure people can live a life free from abuse and the fear of abuse

and can have care and support which meets their needs. We will treat people as individuals and with dignity and respect. We will invest in reablement – this means helping people to maintain or regain their independence by learning or re-learning the skills necessary for daily living. Community development, including working in localities with districts and the NHS to support local decision-making about how best to support older people in their community, also remains key.

### **Prevention**

We will, as far as possible, continue to invest in prevention as a cost effective approach leading to better outcomes for people of all ages. For example, giving children a good start in life and promoting healthy lifestyles throughout adulthood is key to public health. This will result in healthier old age, reducing demand on more expensive and specialist service delivery.

- **Children and young people**

Giving children a good start in life will prevent many problems from ever occurring. Where issues do occur we are committed to providing early help in order to avoid problems escalating and family needs becoming more complex. Our early intervention service, provided through hubs and children's centres across the county, is pivotal to our targeted prevention approach. The service brings together previously separate teams to give co-ordinated support to children and young people who are at risk of not having good outcomes. A wide range of partner organisations refer individuals to the service and support its provision of 'whole family', integrated services. Early intervention is closely linked to supporting better educational outcomes and ensuring a good start in life, particularly through targeted work with young and vulnerable parents.

- **Adults**

Prevention is also key to our approach in adult services. We want to keep people well and help them to live at home and remain active in their local communities for as long as possible, and avoid, reduce and delay the need for more complex care or admission to a care home. We will continue to enable people to live at home for longer through investing in equipment and assistive technology. We are working with our district council colleagues, through our Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership, to increase Extra Care Housing, which enables people to live independently with varying levels of care and support on site. Alongside this, our approach towards creating a safer Oxfordshire will be to continue working with vulnerable people, especially around crime, and helping them to live independently at home and feel safe.

This approach is enhanced further by the Fire and Rescue Service being an integrated service within the council and working with adult services, so that key professionals can highlight the safety needs of vulnerable people to each other in a timely and effective manner. Our Fire and Rescue Service continues to be on target, through the '365 Alive' campaign, to save lives, protect property and support the local economy.

From April 2012 all adults eligible for social care support from the council have had their own personal budgets to use to make their own choices and have greater control over the way they live their lives.

### **Empowering Oxfordshire**

The localism agenda aligns well with the importance that the county council places on encouraging volunteering and enabling residents and communities to address for themselves the issues that matter locally. The county has a strong voluntary sector with over 3,800 community and voluntary groups, an above average number of regular volunteers and an increasing number of communities preparing neighbourhood plans.

Our Big Society Fund proved popular as it tapped into this wealth of active communities and supported them in taking the lead with services that mattered to them. Looking to build on that success, the Big Society Fund became 'Councillor Community Budgets' in 2012 which allow even greater local say over how money is spent. Under the revised system each county councillor has a £10,000 budget to support the projects that matter most to their local community. It is up to councillors to decide how to spend their budgets; reflecting the principle that councillors are best placed to recognise and meet the needs of their local communities.

Our work recognizes the role that county councillors have as community leaders and social entrepreneurs. They will continue to work with support organisations and community groups to develop and promote community-led models of service delivery wherever they are viable.

### **Military community**

There is a significant military presence in Oxfordshire with over 11,000 personnel based at six locations across the county including RAF Brize Norton, the UK's repatriation centre. Oxfordshire County Council was the first local authority in the country to pledge support to the Armed Forces Community Covenant and we are fully committed to supporting local military residents and their families. Oxfordshire has had a strong Civilian Military Partnership for a number of years and military partnership working is embedded throughout the organisation. Through productive partnership working there have been real improvements in the lives of military personnel and their families; including improved access to health services and school places, as well as employment opportunities for service leavers. This political commitment was re-affirmed with the appointment of five councillors as military champions which strengthen our relationships with the bases.

Oxfordshire has a genuine desire to help our local armed forces, which is what makes the partnership so dynamic and robust. To date we have secured over £300,000 of funding from the Ministry of Defence Covenant Grant Scheme for projects including Armed Forces Playdays and an RAF themed playground in Carterton.

## Our Priorities for Action

- Public Health – the Public Health, Social and Community Services and Children, Education and Families Directorates will work with the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and other partners to ensure effective commissioning arrangements are in place to improve health and social care outcomes by addressing health inequalities and prioritizing areas of local need.
- Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation – we will continue to work to improve the quality of life in the most deprived areas of the county by: promoting better engagement in education, employment and training; supporting the vulnerable and those with multiple and enduring problems; promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing health inequalities; reducing and mitigating the effects of child poverty.
- Thriving Families - we will work with 365 families in the first year of the three year Thriving Families programme
- Supporting and safeguarding – we will continue to work in close partnership with the police, schools, health service and others to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect, should not have to worry about becoming vulnerable, and can live a life free from both abuse and the fear of abuse.
- Prevention – we will maintain our focus on primary prevention of ill health as well as preventing the need for more specialist services through the targeted early identification of problems and early intervention in adult and children’s services. We will also help reduce the number of fires, those killed and seriously injured on our roads and help prevent crime.
- Empowering Oxfordshire – we will work with elected members, local communities and voluntary organisations to empower communities to take more responsibility for the issues that matter to them.

## Measuring Progress

<b>Indicators of Success</b>
<p>Overall improvement of public health outcomes as defined in the Director of Public Health annual report and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy</p> <p>An increased proportion of people who use social care services who report</p>

they feel safe each year

An increased proportion of people who use services having personal control over their daily life

Improved overall satisfaction of people who use services with their care and support

Improved overall performance in relation to adult safeguarding

Improved overall performance in relation to the safeguarding of children

Delayed and reduced need for care and support from adult social care services

Overall improvement in outcomes for families using Early Intervention Services

An increased proportion of attendances at emergencies by a fire engine sent from the nearest fire station made within target response times

365 more people alive because of a reduction in deaths caused by accidental dwelling fires and road traffic collisions

## Success Story

### **Finding new ways to work with young people**

Oxfordshire's Phoenix Project is a joint initiative between Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue and the Early Intervention Service, engaging young people at risk of becoming excluded from school.

This innovative project, unique to Oxfordshire, gives young people the opportunity to learn practical fire fighting skills combined with classroom-based teaching. The aim is to improve behaviour and engage young people in learning. On completion of the course participants take part in a ceremony marking their achievements. Families are also invited to the ceremony to share in the success, giving all involved a real sense of pride.

As part of Oxfordshire's thriving communities agenda, the project has achieved positive results - increasing self-esteem amongst children taking part and changing the behaviour of many young people no longer considered at risk of exclusion.

One participant, aged 14, said "It was a great experience and I'm so glad I completed it and got my certificate. It taught me to calm down and be politer to people and follow instructions. At first I wanted to give up as it was hard work, but I was determined to get my certificate and prove wrong the people who said I couldn't do it."

### Oxfordshire Stats

- 16 per cent of Oxfordshire residents are over 65 years old
- 19 per cent are under 16 years old
- 9 per cent are from a non-white ethnic group
- 10 per cent provide unpaid care to another person

## **6. Enhancing the Environment**

Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South East of England - almost half of the county's population lives in one of 302 rural parishes. Oxfordshire's rural communities are very active, between them running nearly 300 village halls and around 70 community transport schemes. However pockets of rural deprivation also exist, with fuel poverty and access to services being key problems for many.

As well as having intrinsic value, the natural environment contributes both to the economy and to the health and wellbeing of residents. For example, the county's 1,658 farms generate an estimated £128million of food every year, and support 4,000 jobs. Meanwhile, the county's rights of way and natural environment assets are estimated to be worth £34.7 million through tourism and recreation spend.

As a council we need to manage the tension between our desire for economic growth and the need to enhance and protect our environment. Our plans, therefore, aim for a 'resilient' Oxfordshire, protecting the environment while enabling business to thrive and grow.

### **Historic and Natural Environment**

A county Green Infrastructure Strategy is due in 2014 to help protect our valuable assets and meet the needs of existing and new communities. External funding has also been gained to help us better understand our Historic Landscape. We will continue to deliver on-the ground environmental benefits with communities via our Hosted Projects – where we support community projects on the environment - and with our responsibilities around Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). We will focus on improving the delivery capacity of key partnerships as a means of managing the continued pressure on funding throughout the sector.

### **Countryside Access**

We want our residents to get the most value from all accessible countryside and public rights of way in the county. We will work towards: ensuring the rights of way network is usable and accessible to all; helping people to understand and enjoy the network; increasing public and community engagement; meeting community needs by securing resources and funding from developments and grants.

### **Flooding**

With around 12 per cent of the county lying within the floodplain there will always be a significant risk of flooding in Oxfordshire, as we unfortunately witnessed in November 2012. Since 2010 we have been required to lead the coordination of flood risk management for surface water, groundwater and smaller watercourses in their area. We are in the process of producing a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, and will be consulting on the document in 2013. A final document needs to be published in 2014 and will give a clear vision for how flood risk will be dealt with in Oxfordshire.

Our responses to flooding have been honed since our experience of July 2007's floods, with the fire service, customer service, social care and highways teams working together to deal with the flood water, and to assist and inform residents, particularly the most vulnerable.

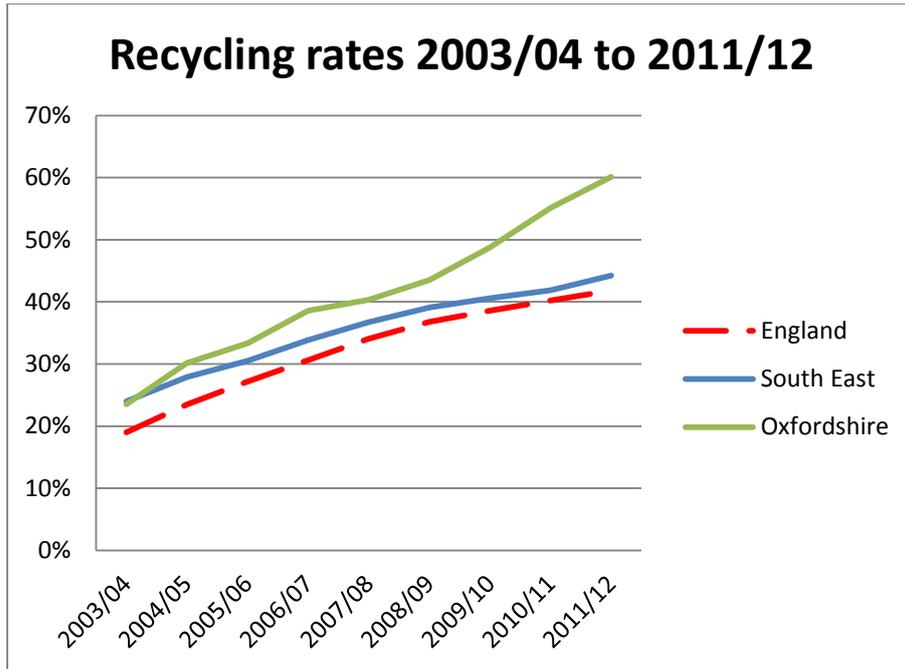
### **Energy**

Energy costs are high and forecast to continue to rise rapidly. In order to achieve financial savings we will continue to invest in energy efficiency measures in our buildings, including schools, and reduce our demand for energy. Through the Oxfordshire Environment Partnership, we are working with all councils across the county to promote the Green Deal – which helps people make energy saving home improvements. As part of this we will also support the development of local supply chains, where tradesmen gain accreditation under the scheme, meaning employment benefits can stay within the county. Through Oxfordshire Total Retrofit – a partnership with Oxford City Council - we are exploring innovative forms of funding for local energy infrastructure.

### **Waste Management**

On-going investment in our services has resulted in very high levels of waste recycling, with over 60 per cent of household waste now recycled or composted county wide. This is the best rate achieved by a county council in 2011/12. We will continue working with partners to build on this progress, further reducing the amount sent to landfill and minimising our costs. We have increased the types of material we can recycle at our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), including mattresses and soft furnishings, and in the future, as well as increasing recycling and composting, we are looking to promote 'reuse' activity, to decrease waste overall.

In 2014/15 our Energy from Waste facility will open, diverting all of Oxfordshire's residual municipal waste from landfill and generating enough electricity to power around 38,000 homes, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 56,800 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.



## Our Priorities for Action

- Historic and natural environment – we will develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy for a ‘resilient’ Oxfordshire where the county’s resources are used as effectively as possible and the impact of economic growth on our environment is minimised
- Access - We will work with partner organisations, volunteers, community groups and local communities to protect the natural environment, and maintain the rights of way network as an important part of the rural economy.
- Flooding – we will consult on a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy which will give us a clear vision for how flood risk will be dealt with in Oxfordshire.
- Energy –We will collaborate with our partners and with community groups to promote energy saving and renewable energy through programmes such as the Green Deal and Oxfordshire Total Retrofit.
- Waste management – We will continue to work with partners to help reduce the amount of waste residents produce, and to increase reuse. We are working with partners and contractors to ensure the opening of the Energy from Waste facility in 2014/15.

## Measuring Progress

### Future Indicators of Success

A reduction in the amount of waste, per head of population

More household waste reused, recycled and composted

An increased quantity of renewable energy supply secured

Less energy consumed corporately, and by schools

More volunteer days given by council staff to support the rights of way network

### Oxfordshire Stats

- Almost 25 per cent of land in Oxfordshire is part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- On average, each Oxfordshire resident produces 7.4 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year - the national average is 6.6 tonnes
- A third of Oxfordshire's carbon emissions come from domestic sources
- Over 60 per cent of our household waste is recycled or composted

## **7. Delivering Efficient Public Services**

The Council has an excellent track record of delivering value for money and we were 'ahead of the game' in preparing for the difficult times in which we now find ourselves. We delivered £127 million of savings from 2010 to the end of 2012/13.

This plan covers the period from 2013/14 to 2017/18. However local government faces a very significant change in how funding is allocated from 2013/14, and we expect that there will be further reductions in national government budgets in the next Spending Review period, which will inevitably have a knock on effect locally.

In addition there are county council elections in May 2013, meaning that there will be different elected councillors sitting on the Council from this point, and they may wish to take different decisions for future years.

This combination of factors means that financial plans beyond 2013/14 can be indicative only and will need further refinement once there is greater clarity from government and elected councillors in Oxfordshire about the new arrangements and their preferred approach.

### **Delivering our Business Strategy**

Although the recent financial situation has presented many challenges and the need for some very tough decisions, it has also provided an opportunity to radically rethink the way we do business and to look again at how we provide value for money for local people.

In 2010/11 we developed Business Strategies, aligned with the Corporate Plan, to outline the changes that were required to achieve our savings. Three years on we find ourselves in a significantly different place; we are a much leaner and more efficient organisation, focused on delivering core services to support the public, particularly those vulnerable residents with the greatest need. We have undergone significant restructuring, reduced the number of senior managers and stripped out management layers throughout the organisation.

We now have very strong foundations to build upon. Our focus for the coming period will be to achieve a new way of working that will:

- Maximise the benefits of new technology – we are already using new technology to help us to work more efficiently and improve the way we provide information, support and access to services. We also have plans in place to further streamline the way we work, so that our staff will be able to spend more time with customers, clients, providers and partners. As this progresses we will be able to free up and reduce office space – helping us to save money.

Our next phase of development for Customer Services is focused on improving direct citizen access to council services by offering opportunities for on-line self-service and streamlining existing processes wherever possible. We also want to ensure that we can provide support when people need and want it – not simply a 9 – 5 experience.

We will place greater focus on our initial contact with customers whether that is face to face, by phone or via the web. Many of our contacts are requests for information, others are requests to access, book or buy a particular service. We know from our customer feedback that getting the right information or help at first contact can make the difference between a good experience and a poor experience of the council. Staff training and our system development will be geared to this.

- Rationalise our assets – the Council owns over 800 buildings, including nearly 300 schools. We know that there is scope to significantly reduce the number of non-school buildings and we will focus particularly on working closely with other public sector organisations to jointly consider our presence in key locations throughout the county. This should improve joined up service delivery across organisations and improve access for customers.

### **Equalities**

As our *Equality Policy 2012-17* sets out, we are committed to making Oxfordshire a fair and equal place in which to live, work and visit. We have identified four key issues that will guide our approach:

- understanding the needs of our customers
- providing accessible, local and personalised services
- supporting thriving and cohesive communities
- promoting a culture of fairness

We are committed to assessing the impact of any service changes on our residents in order to promote fairness, and will be using both our own data as well as the latest census figures to inform such work.

### **Public engagement**

As well as having a say through elections we will ensure that when the council plans to make changes to a service we will continue to involve and consult relevant people (residents, service users, providers and partners), and will endeavor to undertake service and community impact assessments to ensure that the vulnerable and other sections of our communities are not unfairly disadvantaged by any changes.

### **Our Priorities for Action**

- Delivering our savings target – delivering our challenging but achievable programme to meet our savings target of £77 million from 2013 to 2017
- Business Strategy – we will continue to deliver our business strategies. In particular, we will:
  - Improve our use of technology to both streamline staff work practices and improve citizen access
  - Rationalise our property and encourage the co-location of public sector services across the county
- Engagement – we will ensure robust involvement and consultation processes and assess the impact of any changes wherever possible

### **Measuring Progress**

<b>Future Indicators of Success</b>
Budget savings agreed by Council achieved
Costs of the property portfolio reduced, according to targets set in the Medium Term Financial Plan
An increased percentage of customers that are satisfied or very satisfied with overall service for the customer services centre

### **Success Story**

#### **Securing value for money for residents**

In 2012 Oxfordshire County Council decided to look at a range of contracts it had with suppliers delivering a variety of facilities and property management services - everything from capital works to catering for Oxfordshire schools.

We identified an opportunity to achieve a better integrated service and, through that, significant savings for the county council. Through an innovative approach we designed a tender which would bring together the services under one contract.

Following a competitive process the county awarded the 10-year partnership to Carillion; the first contract of its kind to be awarded by a local authority.

As well as achieving revenue savings of £550,000 per year for the council, the partnership has committed to improve quality to all service users by developing the skills of the people at the frontline of service delivery and by transforming the structures of service delivery. Our ambition is that this will develop resilience within council services, protecting against future risks and providing the flexibility to take new opportunities as they arise.

The partnership also allows other participating bodies including health and other public sector organisations, the district councils, schools and further education colleges across Oxfordshire to benefit from similar services without having to undertake further procurement or costs.

The innovative and co-ordinated approach to procurement has ensured that across the whole county we gain from better services and greater savings.

## **8. Providing Leadership and Enabling Partnership Working**

We are all operating in a rapidly shifting world: the changes in funding and the government's broad policy agenda make smarter joint working and effective collaboration between local partners increasingly essential if we are to achieve our aims.

The county council acts as the strategic leader for Oxfordshire and has an important agenda setting role. We have a legacy of successful partnership working in Oxfordshire and excellent joint work is already in place across much of what we do.

This section of the Corporate Plan provides just a few examples of our partnerships, and outlines their priorities over the coming months and years.

We will continue to build on this success and join up our services wherever it means that we achieve better outcomes and value for money for Oxfordshire's residents.

### **Championing a World Class Economy: Bicester Vision**

Bicester Vision is a public/private sector partnership set up in the town to bring together the two sectors to deliver economic growth and promote Bicester as a place to do business.

The partnership is made up of representatives from all three-tiers of local government as well as a number of employers from the town. As Bicester is one of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) strategic priority locations for growth, a representative from Bicester Vision sits on the LEP's Board.

#### *Priorities*

An action plan has been produced to define the priorities for Bicester Vision to enable its three strategic objectives to be met. The objectives are:

- Assisting established businesses and attracting new businesses to the area
- Promoting Bicester as a destination to live, work and do business.
- Influencing government and decision makers

## **Raising Attainment for Children and Young People: The Oxfordshire Education Transformation Board**

The Oxfordshire Education Transformation Board is the body that oversees the delivery of the county council's education strategy 'A Strategy for Change' which was published in 2012. It has 20 members including representatives from primary, secondary and special schools, Oxford Brookes University and the teaching unions and it meets six times a year. As the number of Academies grows, the council will have an increasingly facilitative role in education and we will focus on enabling school-to-school support and working in partnership with schools to safeguard the needs of the most vulnerable learners. The Oxfordshire Education Transformation Board is an important forum where these relationships are managed.

### *Priorities*

- Reviewing progress and actions needed to meet ambitious county-wide targets
- Keeping an overview of quality assurance of the county council's services supporting school improvement
- Being outward looking to find best practice from which Oxfordshire children and young people could benefit

## **Safeguarding Communities (1): The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board**

The Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board's membership includes representatives from Oxfordshire's district councils, Thames Valley Police, Thames Valley Probation Service, the county council's Children Education and Families Directorate, county councillors and the NHS. It quality assures what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Oxfordshire.

### *Priorities*

- Responding to, and learning from, the cases of child sexual exploitation in Oxfordshire
- Keeping all children and young people safer
- Ensuring links with groups such as the Children and Young People's Board, the Oxfordshire Children's Domestic Violence Steering Group, the Drug and Alcohol Action Team and the private and voluntary sector

## **Safeguarding Communities (2): Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership (OSCP)**

OSCP includes representatives from Oxfordshire's district councils, Thames Valley Police, Thames Valley Probation Service, the county's Safer Communities Unit, the Fire and Rescue Service, local Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), service providers, and the voluntary sector. The partnership provides proactive leadership, including the commissioning of services, in the drive to improve community safety across Oxfordshire.

*Priorities*

- Monitoring the delivery of the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership (OSCP) five year Business Plan 2012 – 2017
- Working with the new Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure they recognise and support the community safety and crime reduction priorities identified in Oxfordshire.

**Improving Health and Wellbeing: The Health and Wellbeing Board**

Responsibility for public health will transfer to the county council from April 2013, and through the Health and Wellbeing Board the county council has worked with the Clinical Commissioning Group, district councils and the voluntary sector to identify key priorities and shared commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of local people.

*Priorities*

- Facilitating a seamless transition of public health responsibilities to the council,
- Delivering Oxfordshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012-2016.
- Ensuring better integration of commissioning and service delivery with the NHS, in the context of significant organisational and structural changes in the NHS

**Enhancing the Environment: Oxfordshire Waste Partnership**

Oxfordshire County Council and all the district councils work through the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP) to continuously improve the waste management services within the county. The OWP's achievements to date include rolling out a new collection system across the whole county and the successful procurement of new waste treatment facilities, including energy from waste and food waste treatment plants. As a result, Oxfordshire is the best county council in the country at recycling and composting, with performance of over

60%, and we achieved the lowest residual waste per household of any county council for 2011/12.

*Priorities*

- Improving on our current recycling and composting rates, looking for new material-types to recycle, and encouraging residents to recycle while 'on the go' as well as at home
- Increasing the reuse provision in the county, continuing our campaigns to help residents reduce the amount of waste that they produce

## 9. Delivering this Plan

Our key challenge remains the delivery of better outcomes for local people in the context of significantly reduced resources available to provide or commission services.

This challenge also presents a real opportunity for us to think radically about how we deliver our services across the council, getting the best value out of the resources which remain available to us.

### PRINCIPLES

In delivering the priorities set out in this plan the Council is committed to the following principles:

- **A County that Helps You Help Yourself** - we will provide residents with the choices, information and support they need to live well. Sometimes this will be through services we provide or commission, but more and more often it will be helping them make independent decisions and to find their own solutions.
- **A County of Ambition and Success** - we will help Oxfordshire become a place where whatever your background, whatever your circumstances, and wherever you live there are opportunities to create a better life for you and your family.
- **A County of Collaboration and Dialogue** - the county council will take the lead in bringing together public, private, and voluntary sector partners, with the wider community, to plan ahead and work in an integrated and efficient fashion to deliver the best outcomes for Oxfordshire's residents and businesses.

### VALUES

Our staff work with six principles in mind when putting the actions required to deliver this plan into practice.

- **Customer focus** – putting the needs of our customers at the heart of everything we do and improving opportunities for local people to have their say and get involved with council decision-making.
- **Honesty** – being open and transparent about how we

operate, 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 council and valuing and developing our staff to perform to the best of their abilities.
- **Innovation** – challenging the way that things have always been done, encouraging and embracing new approaches to meeting the needs of customers, making the delivery of services more efficient and effective.
- **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 reduced financial resources by harnessing the skills and experience of our staff to help individuals and communities access or arrange the services they need, learning from our successes and constantly challenging ourselves to do better.

## **MEASURING PROGRESS**

This plan sets out a selection of the range of measures of success we will use to work out how well we are doing. Where possible, these have been included at the end of each thematic section.

Measures against success are regularly reported to the council's Cabinet and Council meetings. If you would like more detail on what we measure and what progress is being made, see the Further Information section of this Plan for links to the relevant reports.

## 10. Finance [Figures to follow in line with budget process]

Like many local businesses and families, the County Council has faced, and continues to face, a challenging financial situation. This is partly because the income we receive from central Government is falling, but also because demand for our services is increasing, particularly those which provide for the growing population of older people, and services to protect vulnerable children and help younger people thrive.

We have worked hard to face that financial challenge head on, reducing layers of management, holding down costs, and delivering services in new ways. This has allowed us to meet the twin challenges of falling income and rising demand.

### Our spending plans

Our Medium Term Financial Plan 2013/14 to 2017/18 is available online at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mtfpsummary](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mtfpsummary) and sets out how resources are allocated in accordance with the Council's priorities.

Our financial planning reflects:

- the allocation of sufficient funding to resource our key strategic priorities
- the need for adequate funding of our core service requirements
- the reducing level of financial support from national Government
- our commitment to council tax payers, and
- our on-going commitment to achieve efficiency savings to ensure improved value for money and service provision.

We plan to spend £x million in 2012/13 on the services set out below.

### *How we Spend your Money*

[Chart to be updated - data below from 2012/3]

Environment & Economy £102.6

Social & Community Services £258.3

Chief Executive's Office £10.2

Costs of Financing Capital & Movements in Reserves £49.6

Children, Education & Families £561.8 (including £412m that goes directly to schools)

### *Our funding*

To deliver our spending plans, we receive money from a number of sources as shown in the graph on [page number].

Funding from the Government totals 60%; other income from fees, charges and interest earned accounts for 10%. The amount to be raised through Council Tax in 2013/14 equates to 30% of our total funding. This means that a

1% increase in the total budget would require a council tax increase of just over 3%, all else being equal.

*Where the Money Comes From*

[Chart to be updated - data below from 2012/3]

Council Tax £284.5  
Income from Government Grants £476.9  
Council Tax Surpluses £4.0  
Other Income and Interest Earned £101.8  
Non Domestic Rates £113.1  
Revenue Support Grant £2.2

## **Capital**

The Council's Capital Strategy sets out the County Council's capital investment plans and explains how the Council intends to make the most of its limited capital resources to support the achievement of a Thriving Oxfordshire and the priorities set out in this plan.

This Capital Strategy, despite the challenging economic and financial environment, emphasises the significant contribution that the capital programme can make in delivering this plan, and improving Oxfordshire for local residents and businesses. It seeks to ensure that resources are used in the most efficient way and that they support the Council's objectives most effectively. It sets out a robust, relevant and sustainable financial policy and strategy that aims to get the most out of scarce capital resources over the next five to ten years.

The Capital Strategy can be found here:  
[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/capitalstrategy](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/capitalstrategy)

The council intends to spend £x on capital investments in Oxfordshire between 2013/14 and 2017/18. The projects included in the capital programme are wide-ranging, covering all areas of the council's activity (for example on roads, libraries, fire stations), and all areas of the county.

## **11. Further Information** (to follow)