Thriving communities

for everyone in Oxfordshire

Annual Review 2020/2021

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

FOREWORD

Welcome to Oxfordshire County Council's annual report, providing an overview of our performance and key achievements, from April 2020 to March 2021.

In these unique and challenging times, it is essential that you have confidence in the important service we provide. This annual report provides an insight into how we have been putting your council tax – and other public funds – to work, for the good of Oxfordshire.

As your council, it is our job to provide services such as fire and rescue, highway maintenance, social care for adults and children, libraries, registration (births, deaths and marriages), education and trading standards.

Over the past 12 months, we have also been working hard to manage local impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic – from creating new services to support vulnerable people to ensuring schools were kept open for vulnerable children and those of key workers. Our annual report highlights examples of this important work. Despite the additional cost pressures of the pandemic, the council is in a financially resilient position, which is the result of careful planning and responsible decision-making.

Looking forward, the priorities we have set out in our corporate plan 2021 - 2024 will continue to guide our approach to all of the services we manage and issues we deal with on your behalf. We want to help people live safe and healthy lives and be active in their communities, and to support a thriving and inclusive local economy that recovers strongly from the COVID crisis.

Social care accounts for around half of our spend at the county council and we are working hard to enable older and disabled people to live independently while caring for those in the greatest need. Meanwhile we also strive to give every child a good start in life and protect everyone from neglect.

Protecting the local environment and making our contribution to combating climate change are also guiding lights in our decision-making, from investing in a sustainable transport system to reducing emissions from our buildings. Since 2008, we have halved our carbon emissions and we will become carbon neutral by 2030.

In all the work we do, we want to make sure we are listening to our residents and acting on their feedback so that we can continuously improve our services and provide value for money. That customer focus is central to everything we do.

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about what we deliver for you and the many ways we have been supporting you, your families and our communities during the pandemic.

Yvonne Rees
Chief Executive of Oxfordshire County Council

RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the services we deliver and how we deliver them in 2020/21. The different ways in which we have responded to the pandemic are set out throughout this report.

In the early part of 2020, the council acted swiftly to establish an emergency response to support vulnerable residents, offer assistance to key partners and maintain essential frontline services in areas like education, social care and infrastructure delivery. At the same time, much of our work moved online. As the first wave of the virus began to impact Oxfordshire, our teams were heavily involved in activity to bring the virus under control and protect the most vulnerable individuals – whether that be from the direct effects of the virus or from the impact of lockdown on people's health, wellbeing and financial security.

As lockdown measures eased in the summer, our focus switched towards managing the return of residents into the public realm and supporting businesses and other settings to help contain infection while maintaining economic activity. We worked to understand the impact of lockdown in areas such as educational attainment, children's social care

and mental health, and put in place plans to support recovery.

From September, as the second wave of infection began to take hold, we put back in place provision such as direct support to those considered clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19, supporting them to shield and initiating a local contact tracing system to supplement the national effort for the hardest to reach cases. In the first five months since its launch, in October 2020, the team successfully completed contact tracing for just under 2,000 people. A countywide COVID secure team was also established, providing advice to local businesses to ensure they were compliant with new COVID-19 rules.

We worked in partnership with other councils and the voluntary and community sector to initiate emergency welfare schemes and new support for those eligible for free school meals. As the vaccination and symptom-free testing programmes grew in scale, the county council has played a central role in operational delivery and community outreach.

Throughout the pandemic, we have acted as a trusted source of information on public health matters, working with NHS and local authority

colleagues to communicate information and guidance as widely as possible through our Stop the Spread campaign, and focusing our efforts on those groups less likely to respond to national messages. We have renewed and refined our partnership working arrangements with colleagues across public and private organisations and within the community and voluntary sector. Wherever practical, we have worked together to pool resources and ensure that the most appropriate organisations were enabled to deliver the best possible outcomes.

While the long-term impact of COVID-19 will take some time to become clear, we know that in areas such as health, inequality, deprivation and business support, the council will have a key role to play in supporting local communities and economic recovery for some time to come.
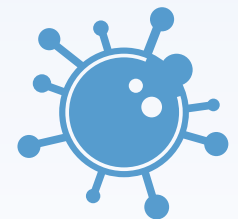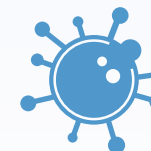
COVID-19

Keeping services going and supporting you through the pandemic

Our **adult social care** team has:

Responded to a
30 per cent
increase in demand for support

Commissioned a
25 per cent
increase in homecare hours

Our **registration service** has:

Registered a backlog of
7,193 babies
in just 7 weeks once birth registration was able to take place in June

Our **children, education and families** teams have:

Seen all children return to school on 8 March, with primary attendance reported across the county at
97.3 per cent
Put in place a full testing regime for every Oxfordshire pupil

Followed up an average of
438 contacts
per week with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

Our **highways** team has:

Treated
1.5 million sqm
of highway at over 220 sites

Our **fire and rescue** team has:

Delivered
2,334
safe and well assessments

Delivered over
800 laptops to more than 140 schools to support home-schooling

Our **countryside** team has:

Repaired
87 foot and bridle bridges

Cleared
176.5 miles of public rights of way

Our **customer services** team has:

Made over
10,000
outbound calls

Sent
6,700 emails to residents who were shielding

Our **trading standards** team has:

Investigated
600
COVID-19 related complaints

Recovered
£49,000
for victims of scams and doorstep crimes

Our **cultural services** team has:

Delivered
12,000
online music lessons to schools between April 2020 and March 2021

Loaned
5,460
library items during the first two weeks of the click and collect service

Our **waste management** team has:

Reopened all
seven
recycling centres to COVID guidelines

Composted
5,350
more tonnes of food and waste than last year – that's equivalent to the weight of 30 blue whales

In addition, we have:

Paid out £2.3 million in grants for food and other essentials to community food services and those in need, in partnership with our city and district colleagues.
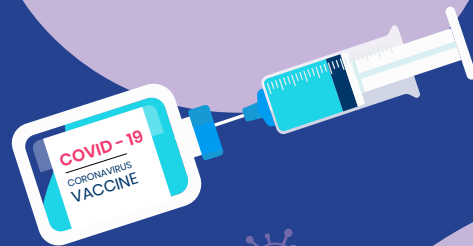
Vaccines

The vaccine rollout across Oxfordshire began on 8 December at Oxfordshire's hospital hub – the Churchill Hospital in Oxford. GP-led local vaccination centres began vaccinating priority patients on 15 December and a large vaccination centre, based at the Kassam Stadium in Oxford, became operational on 1 February.

Up to April 2021,
440,000
vaccinations were delivered, with second doses underway.

Take up of vaccinations

95 per cent
in people aged 70 through to the over 80s

More than **93 per cent**
in our clinically extremely vulnerable population

95 per cent
of our care home residents

89 per cent
of our care home staff.

Hospitals

We supported over **2,750 people** in hospital last year, and around 600 were supported through the COVID-19 discharge schemes.

THRIVING COMMUNITIES FOR EVERYONE

Oxfordshire County Council's vision 'Thriving communities for everyone in Oxfordshire' has six priorities that show our ambitions for the county.

THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Help people live safe and healthy lives

THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Provide services that enhance people's quality of life

THRIVING ECONOMY

Support a thriving local economy

THRIVING PEOPLE

Enable older and disabled people to live independently

THRIVING PEOPLE

Strive to give every child a good start in life

We listen to our diverse residents so we can continuously improve our services and provide value for money

Measuring outcomes

The outcomes framework

Our corporate plan specifies outcomes which describe the changes we expect to see as a result of the council's actions. Performance indicators show the extent to which those outcomes are being achieved, and, in turn, measures and targets show progress towards the indicators. Collectively, this arrangement is called the outcomes framework.

The following pages illustrate some of the achievements supporting our priorities over the last 12 months, including the launch of our equalities, diversity and inclusion framework, Including Everyone, in October 2020.

Including Everyone framework

Including Everyone is a joint framework with Cherwell District Council, which outlines our approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion and sets out our vision to be leaders in our field providing inclusive services, workplaces and communities, equitable access to services and equality of opportunity. A reverse mentoring scheme began in February 2021, which pairs staff from different teams and at different levels of experience so they can exchange skills, expertise and knowledge and learn from one another.

Climate change and action plan

In response to the climate emergency, we have published our declaration Climate Action for a Thriving Oxfordshire. It sets out our commitment to being a zero-carbon organisation by 2030 and fully playing our part in creating a zero-carbon Oxfordshire.

We have since developed a Climate Action Framework to inform the council's approach to climate action. In this framework we describe how we will:

- Become a climate active council.
- Operate at net-zero carbon by 2030.
- Support maintained schools to decarbonise their estate.
- Work with our suppliers to green our supply chain.
- Enable a net-zero carbon Oxfordshire by 2050.

A snapshot of our overall achievements

We listen to residents so we can continuously improve our services and provide value for money

We were awarded **Fostering Friendly Employer of the Year** in The Fostering Network's Fostering Excellence Awards.

The customer service centre provided an **extended hours shielding helpline** throughout each lockdown, **supporting 4,858 people** who were shielding.

Customer satisfaction scored an average of **97 per cent** for the year.

Almost **800 residents** across Oxfordshire benefited from the county's home library service, with **11,948 library books delivered**.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Over **50,000** certificates have been produced by the registrar's service during 2020/21, of which **7,193** have been for birth certificates. The ceremonies team processed around **24,000 emails** and conducted citizen **ceremonies for 1,052 residents** during the pandemic, **466 of them virtually.**

The customer service centre handled **213,920** customer contacts by phone and email.

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Thriving communities

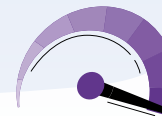**Helping people live safe and healthy lives and play an active part in their community**

Our **trading standards team** proactively worked with residents during COVID-19. Advice and tips were provided on how to avoid being scammed.

Our highways, fire and rescue, adult social care, transport and emergency planning teams delivered a **round-the-clock**, joined up **response** to severe weather conditions this winter, including the evacuation of two care homes.

A mental wellbeing hub
(**oxme.info/wellbeing**) launched this spring, providing young people who need support, with access to information about local professional services and resources.

your wellbeing matters

Out of sight, but not out of mind

→ **oxme**.info
Help, support and local services to help boost your wellbeing

Together with local authority and NHS partners, the council has signed a local government declaration on **tobacco control** and the smokefree NHS pledge.

The **speeding taskforce** group was set up to educate drivers about the dangers of breaking the speed limit. It's a joint initiative involving Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Thames Valley Police and the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner.

Street Tag

Oxfordshire's Street Tag, a family-friendly game app that rewards primary school pupils, communities and schools for physical activity, had the highest sign up rate in the country. Total results up to 31 March 2021:

Players: 7,080

Tags collected: 3,516,404

Miles: 929,125.83

Steps: 943,227,251

STREET TAG

Thriving people

Striving to give every child a good start in life and protect everyone from neglect

£12M

The Orion Academy

A new £12 million school was given the go-ahead on the outskirts of Oxford. It will benefit children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and will allow the Orion Academy to more than double its intake of pupils from ages 10 to 16.

>9/10 ✓

More than nine out of ten parents received their first choice of primary school in Oxfordshire in 2020.

Oxfordshire care leavers launched a new mentoring pilot, enabling young people in care to access a peer mentor programme.

Contact from families and partner agencies, worried about children, increased by **33 per cent** during 2020/21 (23,538 contacts). Our social workers and family support workers successfully provided relevant help and support needed.

Our youth service's restorative justice project supported 224 children, leading to **270 interventions**. Running for two years, the project helps to protect vulnerable children from criminal exploitation.

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Thriving people

**Enabling older and disabled people to live independently and care for those in greatest need**

Together with Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, and Age UK Oxfordshire, our Home First approach reduced care needs by **55 per cent** in four months by helping people to live independently in their own home.

Our care services team has supported **96.2 per cent** of people with safeguarding concerns to define the outcomes they want.
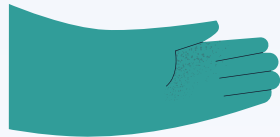
In Oxfordshire, **90.4 per cent** of people with a learning disability are living on their own or with their families, which is above the 76 per cent national average.

GOOD

Oxfordshire's social care providers scored **10 per cent** above the national average, with **94% scoring good** or **outstanding** by the Care Quality Commission.

Our care services have helped support **92 per cent** of people manage their own personal budgets, which is above the 90 per cent national average.

Thriving communities

Providing services that enhance people's quality of life and protect the local environment

£1.5M

We were awarded a **Green Homes Grant** by the government, **£1.5 million** of which will be used to make at least **150 homes** across Oxfordshire more energy efficient.

We cut our own corporate **carbon emissions** by **eight per cent,** beating our target of six per cent. Replacing boilers and streetlighting, installing solar panels and purchasing more electric vehicles helped contribute.

CARBON EMISSIONS **-8%**

We added **42 solar panels** at Ron Groves House in Kidlington and 21 electric vehicles (EV) and 44 EV charge points on council sites.

2020 Climate Action Framework
FOR A THRIVING OXFORDSHIRE

We have published our new **climate action** framework, which sets out our commitment to becoming a climate active council:

- operating at net-zero carbon by 2030 and enabling a net-zero future for Oxfordshire
- supporting maintained schools to take climate action
- working with our suppliers to green our supply chain.

58.8%
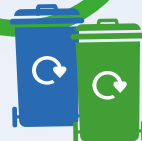
Latest government figures named us the **best performing county council** at **waste disposal** and helped residents recycle and compost **58.8 per cent** of all household waste. This compares with a national average of **45.5 per cent.**

Phase one of this year's **£32 million road repair** and surface dressing programme included new techniques that extend the life of roads. We also resurfaced an area equivalent to **80 Wembley pitches** (600,000m2) and improved **110 miles of road.**

£2.1M

We reduced the emissions of seven council buildings and four maintained schools with a **£2.1 million** grant from the **Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund.**
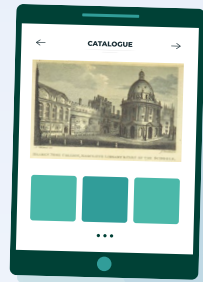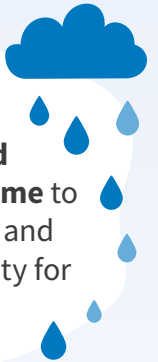
Thriving communities

The new Oxfordshire History Centre website saw an increase in visits this year to reach **63,857 visits** compared to 60,848 in 2019-20.

We developed the **Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme** to reduce flood risk and prepare the county for future flooding.

The trial of a new **e-scooter hire scheme** was launched in Headington with our partner Voi Technology. Over **1,700 people** have used the scooters, making it the joint highest usage rate of any local authority in Britain. It's now been expanded across the whole city.

Our libraries loaned **492,000 items** to readers in 2020/21, while our home library service delivered 11,948 items to almost 800 residents of all ages who were unable to visit a library.

LEO Local Energy Oxfordshire

Partnering with the city council, Oxford Brookes and Oxford University and community and private sector organisations, we created Local Energy Oxfordshire (LEO), one of the most ambitious, wide-ranging, innovative and holistic, smart, clean energy grid trials ever conducted in the UK.

SIGN UP

April 2020 also saw a record for people joining Oxfordshire libraries online. A total of 589 people joined – a record for one month and an **86 per cent increase** compared to the figure for April 2019.

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Thriving economy

Supporting a thriving local economy by improving transport links to create jobs and homes for the future

98% COVERAGE

Our better broadband for Oxfordshire programme achieved 98 per cent coverage across the county, with 140,000 residents and businesses using superfast broadband and 79,000 households receiving over 24Mbps.

46

We achieved an average excess waiting time for frequent buses of 46 seconds, beating our target of five minutes.
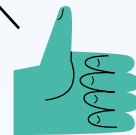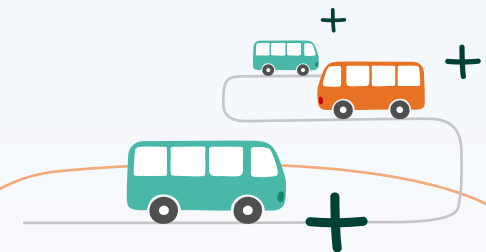
100%

100 per cent of planned surveys of highway trees were completed, in 84 parishes.

In December 2020, Oxfordshire County Council's community operations team received a **best innovation or demand management initiative finalist** award from the Association for Public Service Excellence for a substantial strategic review and commercial delivery programme.

Our public transport improvements scheme in Oxford has increased capacity and reduced delays for buses, increased services to the Westgate Centre, improved air quality, and reduced congestion in the city centre by creating additional bus layover space.

The **A361** safety improvements project (£5.1 million) delivered:

- ✓ Safety measures along a 16km stretch of the A361 between Banbury and Chipping Norton, one of the 50 most dangerous A-class roads in the UK.

- ✓ Over 2km of shared cycleway, including i-glo discs and glowing tactile paving that encourage independence for the visually impaired.

- ✓ Additional improvements to allow safer road crossing for pupils from Warriner School.

The **Science Vale** cycle network project delivered:

- ✓ Over 10 km of cycle routes connecting Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham Science Centre and Didcot, Abingdon and Wantage.

- ✓ I-glo discs to act as pathfinders at night without the need for additional street lighting, saving money and reducing carbon emissions.

- ✓ Over 3km of additional public rights of way, mainly bridleways, for a fee of £1.

Performance

Oxfordshire County Council's vision for Oxfordshire has six priorities which detail our ambitions for the county. Our corporate plan specifies outcomes which describe the changes we expect to see as a result of the council's actions.

Performance indicators show the extent to which those outcomes are being achieved, and in turn measures and targets show progress towards the indicators. Collectively, this arrangement is called the **Outcomes Framework**.

Off target

0

Slightly off target

9

On target/ Ahead of target

17
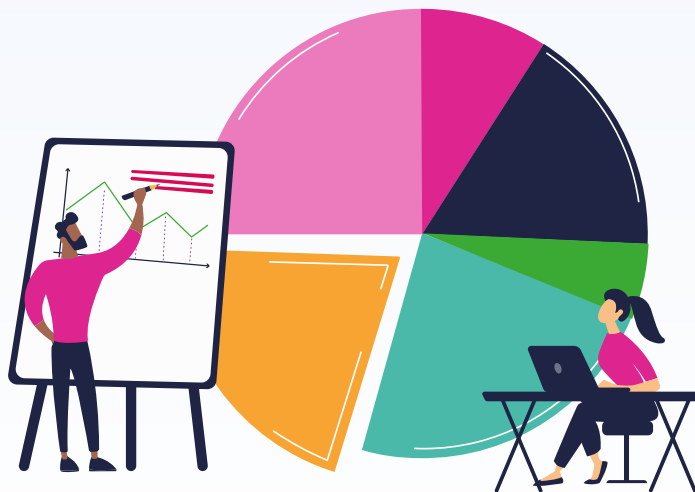
2020/21 Outcomes Framework included 11 outcomes, 26 indicators and 80 measures.

We use a traffic light system, red, amber or green (RAG) rating in these reports, signifying whether or not progress is on track.
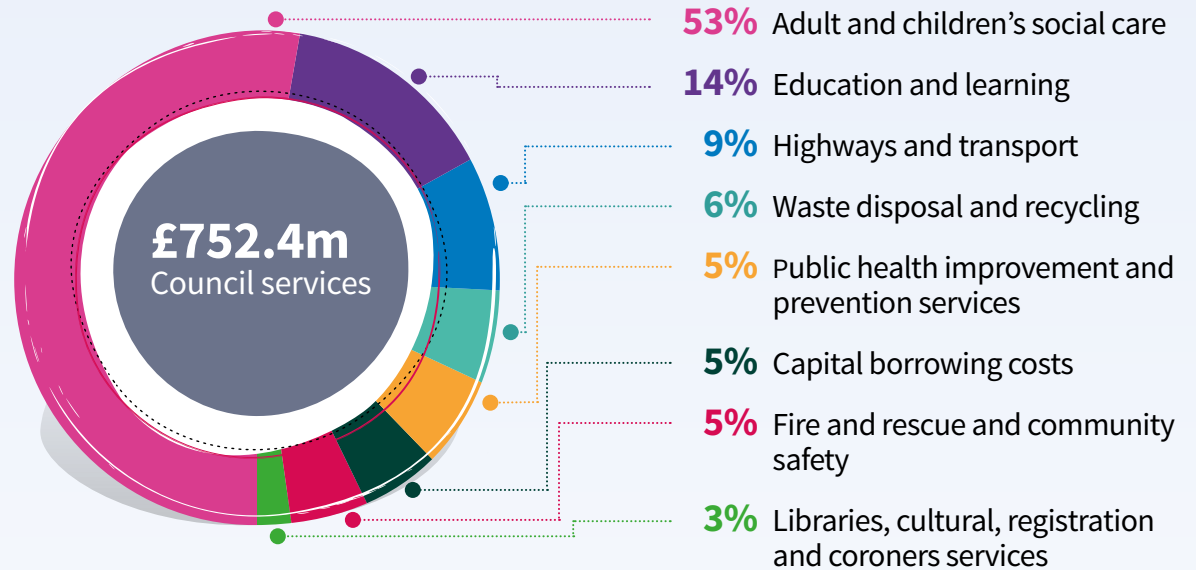
During an unprecedented year, we demonstrated strong overall performance across all strategic priorities. Out of 26 measures, nine were slightly off target and 17 fully met the target at the end of 2020/21. Considering the response achieved during a pandemic, the results were better than first predicted.

It has been a tough year for everyone, but we have listened to our customers and continued to make improvements to services.
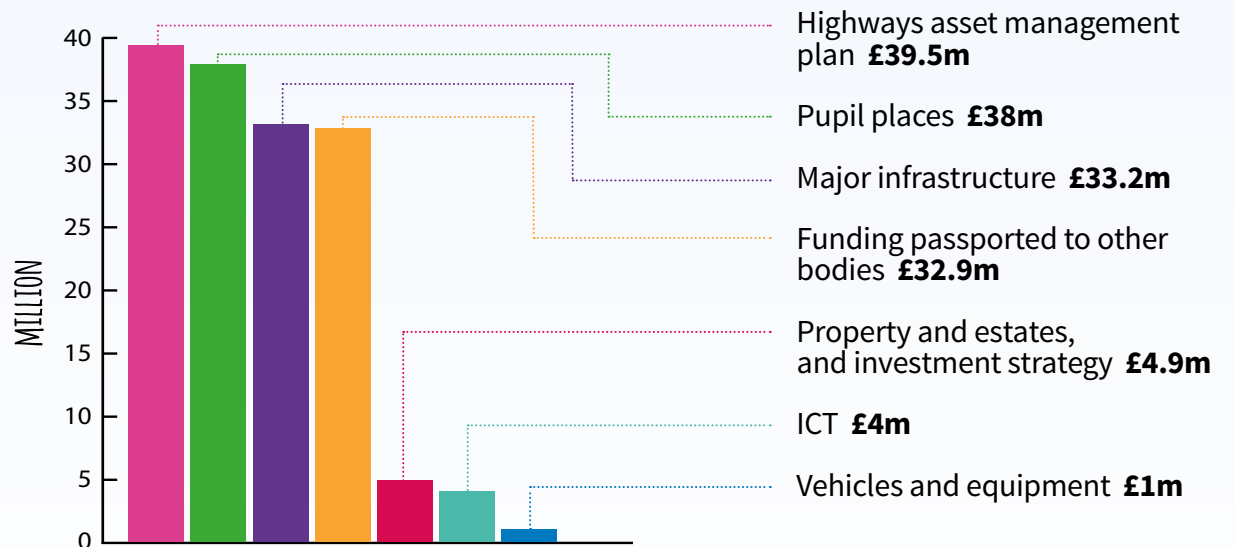
Finance

What we spent on council services

In 2020/21, we spent **£752.4m** (excluding schools). This included **£68.9m** to meet exceptional expenditure and income losses relating to COVID-19.

In addition, we spent **£201.6m** on schools, which was fully funded by government grant.

£752.4m
Council services

53% Adult and children's social care

14% Education and learning

9% Highways and transport

6% Waste disposal and recycling

5% Public health improvement and prevention services

5% Capital borrowing costs

5% Fire and rescue and community safety

3% Libraries, cultural, registration and coroners services

Capital programme

In 2020/21, we spent **£153.5m** on capital projects which included investment in highway improvements, new school buildings and energy efficient street lighting. This money can only be used for the purpose it has been given and cannot be allocated to day-to-day council spending.

MILLION

Highways asset management plan **£39.5m**

Pupil places **£38m**

Major infrastructure **£33.2m**

Funding passported to other bodies **£32.9m**

Property and estates, and investment strategy **£4.9m**

ICT **£4m**

Vehicles and equipment **£1m**

Contact us

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www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council

Have your say in consultations about changes to council services or policies at:
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You can apply, book, find, report and pay for a range of services on the county council website:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

OXFORDSHIRE
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