

CABINET – 17 JANUARY 2012

THE COUNCIL PLAN 2012/13 – 2016/17

Report

Background

1. The Corporate Plan produced last year built on the Council's new business strategy and outlined how we would respond to the significant reduction in budget and the new policy direction of the coalition government.

Key Issues

2. The 2012/13-2016/17 plan is a fairly light touch refresh of last year's plan, though it also seeks to reflect the significant changes that have been implemented over the past 12 months.
3. Cabinet members are asked to comment on the attached draft and give approval to the Plan going before Council on 7th February 2012.
4. The Strategy and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee discussed the Plan on 12th January - comments from the Committee will be provided to Cabinet in a verbal update.
5. We are currently working on identifying appropriate performance metrics for the plan, to drive the Council's performance framework for next year. This information will be included with the Plan when it is considered by Council in early February.

RECOMMENDATION

6. **Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the draft Council Plan going before Council on 7th February 2012.**

SUE SCANE

Report by Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer

Contact: Maggie Scott Senior Policy Manager tel 01865 816081

December 2011

DRAFT

**The Council Plan
2012/13 – 2016/17**

Foreword from the Council Leader

TO FOLLOW

About Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is home to around 650,000 people. The population is increasing but it remains a predominantly rural area and is the least densely populated county in the South East of England.

Oxfordshire is a place that people like to live and work in, with a high quality built and natural environment and thriving economy:

- 87% of residents regard the county as a good place to live (Place Survey 2008/09)
- The population is healthier and more prosperous than most other areas
- Our economy contributes £15.4 billion to the national economy and has considerable scope for further growth, boosted by the recent announcement of a 92 hectare enterprise zone in the Science Vale area in the south of the county.
- Unemployment is amongst the lowest in the country, with less than 2% of residents claiming job seekers allowance (December 2011).
- Residents and businesses benefit from the county's position at the heart of the UK rail and road transport network

As well as these positives Oxfordshire faces a number of significant challenges:

- More than 30% of the county's workforce is currently employed in the public sector, making us particularly vulnerable to the impact of budget cuts;
- Housing availability and affordability remains a problem
- There are pockets of significant deprivation, with 18 local areas in the county within the 20% most deprived in England.
- Educational attainment at GCSE level is below the regional and national averages and 6% of 16-18 year olds are not in employment, education or training. These factors contribute to the skills gap experienced by around one in five employers in Oxfordshire.
- Positive improvements in life expectancy mean the County has a growing older population; the number of residents aged over 85 is predicted to more than double by 2033, presenting challenges to service delivery

More key facts about Oxfordshire available on the Oxfordshire Data Observatory website: www.oxfordshireobservatory.info/aboutoxfordshiredata

[MAP TO BE ADDED]

Context

In last year's budget the Council identified the need to make savings of £119 million between 2011/12 and 2015/16. In addition the coalition government set out a new policy direction with profound implications for the council and other public sector organisations. Last year's Corporate Plan explained how we would respond to these changes.

The past twelve months have been challenging. We have focused on protecting front line services and ongoing delivery of the Council's core business whilst at the same time becoming significantly slimmer and more efficient, through radical transformation of all service areas.

Notable changes in the past year include:

- Savings worth £55m on course to be delivered
- The Council is now very much leaner. The restructuring that we started in 2010/11 has continued in 2011/12. All services have now been, or are currently being, restructured. There has also been a reduction in the number of council Directorates from five to three (Economy and Environment; Children, Education and Families; Social and Community Services, supported by a significantly smaller Chief Executive's Office),
- The number of senior managers employed has reduced by over 40% in the period 1 April 2010 to 30 September 2011. In the same period overall staffing numbers (excluding schools) have reduced by 12.9%.
- A stronger focus on achieving and supporting economic growth, with the establishment of the business-led Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and announcement of a Local Enterprise Zone in the south of the county, sitting alongside a refocused Oxfordshire Skills Board.
- We have established a new Early Intervention and Prevention Service to work with troubled families to help identify solutions before they escalate
- We have been part of the Department of Health early implementers programme and worked closely with health colleagues to establish a shadow Health and Wellbeing Board.
- We have established an Infrastructure Fund to enable forward funding of projects, unlocking further opportunities for investment in local infrastructure.
- We have focused on supporting the development of Oxfordshire's Big Society and increasing levels of community engagement, including establishing a Big Society fund to enable local communities to do more to help themselves.

The approach set out in last year's directorate business strategies and the overarching Corporate Plan will continue to provide the foundations for our strategy. The next twelve months will therefore be the second year of delivering the four year plan we set out last year.

Key issues to address in the next twelve months:

- We will continue to protect front line staff, in particular in those core services that support and protect the most vulnerable residents in Oxfordshire
- We will achieve further savings of £37m in 2012/13
- We will implement national policy changes that affect the Council and our key partners. This includes:

- Localism Act 2011 – a range of measures to support decentralisation including new community rights, reforms to planning processes and empowerment of local government and local communities
- Open Public Services – sets out the government’s intention to increase choice, decentralise power, diversify public service provision and increase accountability and transparency
- Local Government Resource Review – proposals for major changes to the way in which local authorities are funded, including some element of local retention of business rates (rather than the current system of formula grants based on population and need). This puts economic growth at the heart of securing quality public services in future
- Schools- current government policy places increasing emphasis upon school autonomy, through Free Schools and Academies, and a more specific role for local authorities in supporting those most in need, thereby changing the relationship between the Council and local schools.
- Strategic National Planning framework - we will take a local leadership role to align funding streams and deliver priority outcomes for Oxfordshire.
- Health and Social Care Bill - from April 2012 all upper tier authorities will be required to lead a new statutory Health and Wellbeing Board to develop a local Health and Wellbeing Strategy and co-ordinate the commissioning of public health, clinical and social care. In addition public health functions will transfer to local authorities in 2013, with shadow funding allocations to be made in 2012. A Social Care Reform White Paper is expected in Spring 2012. This is likely to have significant implications for the way in which social care services are funded in future and respond to the recommendations of the Dilnot Review.
- Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011 - establishes the role of a Police and Crime Commissioner for each Police Authority area and the subsequent abolition of Police Authorities. Police and Crime Commissioners will allocate local community safety funding which had previously been provided direct to the Council.

The remainder of this plan summarises our broad strategic direction within the context of the challenges set out above.

Our Goal: A Thriving Oxfordshire

We will continue to work towards the same strategic objectives as last year but are now setting these within the context of delivering an overall goal of a Thriving Oxfordshire. This means having fulfilled people, vibrant and active communities, and a great place; maximising economic growth whilst ensuring that the fruits of growth are enjoyed by all parts of our community and minimising any negative impact on our environment.

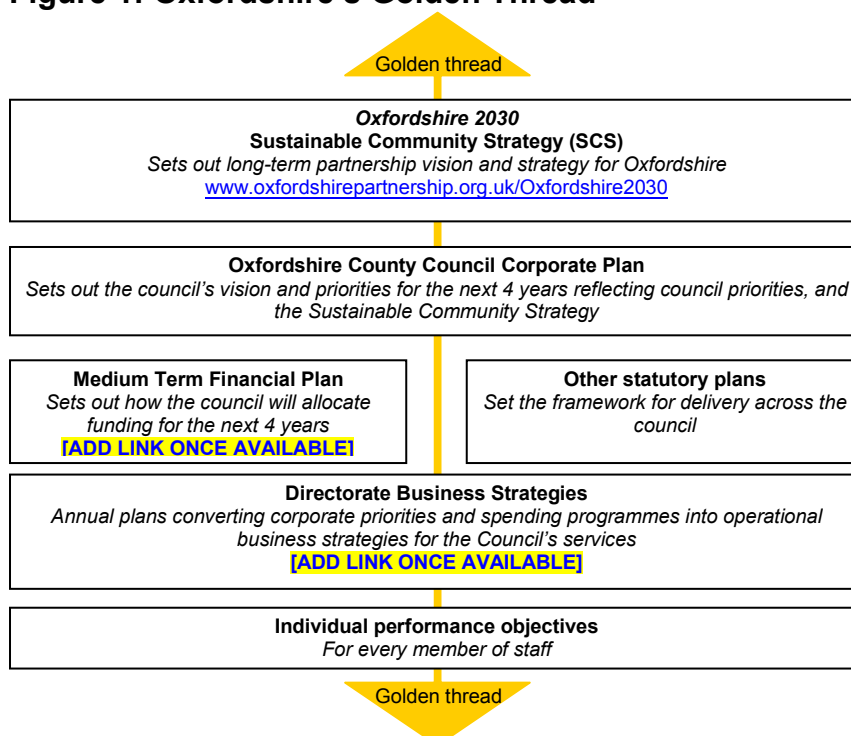
To deliver a Thriving Oxfordshire the Council will work towards the following strategic objectives:

Thriving Oxfordshire		
World Class Economy	Healthy and Thriving Communities	Enhancing the Environment
Efficient Public Services		

These objectives fit into the 'golden thread' shown in Figure 1. This links all of our work from top level objectives through to service delivery and ensures that as a Council we take a coordinated approach to the challenges we face.

Our strategic objectives continue to be consistent with Oxfordshire 2030, the county's long term plan which was developed with partners in 2008. Despite very significant changes to the financial and policy environment that the Council and our local partners face, we remain committed to working together to deliver the longer term ambitions for Oxfordshire.

Figure 1: Oxfordshire's Golden Thread

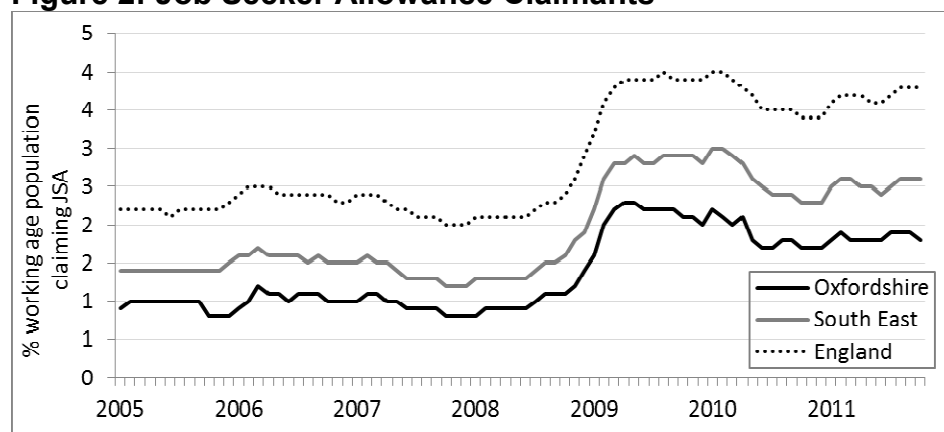


World Class Economy

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 have one of the strongest economies in the South East and despite the national and global economic difficulties, continue to have one of the lowest rates of unemployment in the country. In order to maintain and build on this strong position we must nurture and invest in the local economy.

Figure 2: Job Seeker Allowance Claimants



Source: Department for Work and Pensions, December 2011 (from Nomis)

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

Economic growth has to be delivered by business, but the County Council has a vital role to play in providing strategic leadership and facilitating the creation of an environment that enables business to flourish. We are key partners on the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and are supporting the establishment of an Enterprise Zone at Science Vale UK. We also have a key role to play in our leadership of strategic planning and infrastructure provision across Oxfordshire.

Infrastructure

We want to ensure that infrastructure enables rather than limits our economic growth. To achieve this we are working with our district council colleagues to develop a strategic infrastructure framework for the county. This seeks to maximise and align national and local funding to a common agenda of what needs to be built and where.

The county's population is expected to continue to grow rapidly, and although the gap between earnings and house prices has fallen slightly since the start of the recession housing affordability remains a problem in Oxfordshire. Ensuring an adequate supply of affordable housing remains a key factor in encouraging economic growth, so although housing development has slowed

in the short term our ambition remains to see planned major developments around Banbury, Bicester, Didcot, Oxford and Wantage realised.

Transport

Enabling movement by car, lorry and public transport remains a key objective. We are fortunate to be strategically well located, just over an hour away from London and Birmingham, with good transport links via the motorway and road and rail networks.

Oxford city 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. Significant improvements are planned for the local rail network, including the opening of a second mainline route between Oxford and London via Bicester by 2013 and the electrification of the existing route by 2017. The government have also recently given provisional approval for a new East-West rail line that will link Reading, Oxford and Aylesbury with Milton Keynes and Bedford. Government has also agreed that a new rail route between Oxford and London Marylebone will be built – Evergreen 3 – including a new station at Water Eaton.

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, Cogges Link Road in Witney and improvements to the network around the Science Vale area.

We have moved responsibility for road safety education into our Fire & Rescue Service, who are well placed to deliver targeted prevention activities to those people most at risk in our local communities and help keep the county on the move.

Broadband

Although some areas in Oxfordshire are already benefiting from next-generation, superfast broadband, other parts of the county, particularly in rural areas, still do not have an acceptable level of standard broadband service. We want to support economic growth and ensure that business and others who need it have access to excellent broadband services, and are working closely with public and private sector organisations and with individual communities to develop the right solutions for Oxfordshire.

Skills

Despite the many positives outlined above the county does face a number of challenges, in particular the need to address the skills gap experienced by one in five employers in Oxfordshire and the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training. A significant factor in both issues is Oxfordshire's relatively poor GCSE results. Our performance is more often in line with national averages rather than being well above as should be expected, given the overall affluence of the county. Disappointingly, our GCSE results fell below national averages in 2011. The Council's Strategic Plan for Education sets out how OCC will support improvements in attainment and support schools to ensure that every school is judged to be at least good by Ofsted, and aspires to become outstanding. In 2012 there will be a targeted campaign to improve reading standards across the pupil population.

Our Priorities for Action

- **Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)** – we will continue to support the partnership and through it work with the private and academic sectors to create the conditions to realise Oxfordshire’s economic potential. In particular we will work with others to ensure delivery of the Local Enterprise Zone in the south of the county, and encourage growth in the other priority locations of Oxford city and Bicester.
- **Infrastructure** – we will work across the public sector locally and with central government agencies to prepare an infrastructure plan. Through this we will align investment priorities and decisions to achieve our shared ambitions for Oxfordshire and meet local needs. We will adopt a new approach to securing contributions to infrastructure from developers, and develop proposals that encourage innovative ways of using funds available to deliver necessary infrastructure in a timely way.
- **Tackling transport priorities** – 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 alternatives to car use where appropriate and suitable. We are supporting communities through the Area Stewardship Maintenance Fund to enable them to help us address local priorities (such as replacement of non-priority road signs or grass verge cutting). We will seek to secure funding and final commitment to East West Rail, as well as the addressing pinch points in the road network.
- **Broadband** – we are working with business network providers to develop and implement a strategy for the roll out of Super Fast Broadband across the county, to improve access and support business growth.
- **Skill levels** – we are working with others to link adult skills provision to the needs of the local economy and reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). We have also expanded apprenticeship provision, and aim to continue this important entry into the job market, particularly among public sector organisations and local businesses.
- **Educational Attainment** –National policy and funding structures are shifting and we will ensure that the council can respond effectively so that the needs of all pupils are met. We have worked with key partners across the county to agree a new Strategic Plan for Education and we will focus on delivery of six strands:
 - Aspiration networks – funding allocated to clusters of schools to support each other to bring about whole system improvement.
 - A concentrated approach to securing strong and dynamic leadership and governance.
 - Promotion of Inspirational and Excellent Teaching in all subjects and across all phases.
 - Early Intervention and a Good Start in Life – helping families to make sure children get a good start in life and are in school and ready to learn throughout their education.
 - Targeted and Intensive Support for schools below the Floor Standard, those at risk of becoming so and those struggling to improve.
 - A campaign that everyone can help with – Every Oxfordshire Child a Good Reader

Healthy and Thriving Communities

Most local residents think Oxfordshire is a good place to live. People are generally affluent and healthy, the sense of community is strong and they feel safe in their local areas.

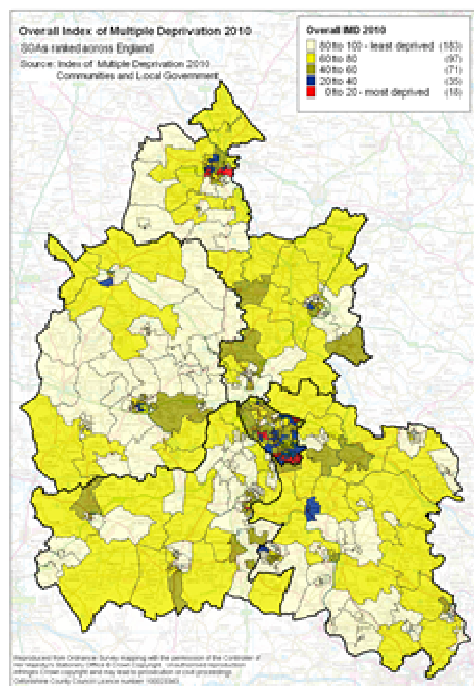
Health

Oxfordshire residents enjoy above average life expectancy, although there are variations across the county. The council works closely with key partners to help deliver the Director of Public Health's priorities: address the demographic challenge, break the cycle of deprivation, improve mental health services, tackle obesity and alcohol related harm, and fight killer diseases.

Breaking the cycle of deprivation

Overall Oxfordshire is an affluent county and levels of deprivation are low, but some small areas in Oxford City and Banbury fall within the 20% most deprived areas in the country. We will continue to work closely with our partners in these communities to address social failure and break the cycle of deprivation that can involve generation after generation of families with low skills and high unemployment, often associated with poor health, crime and anti-social behaviour.

Figure 3: Deprivation in Oxfordshire



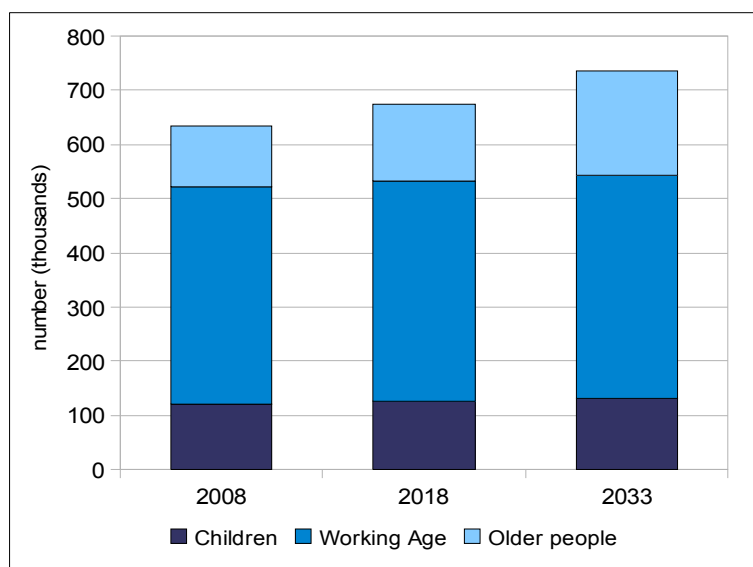
Source: Communities and Local Government, March 2011

Demographic change

The proportion of older people in the population, and younger adults with disabilities, is increasing rapidly, particularly in rural areas. This presents opportunities, as older people are more likely to be actively involved in their communities, carrying with them a wealth of knowledge and experience. However it also increases demand for social and health care services. We will

continue to work closely across the public sector and in our commissioning practices to meet this need effectively.

Figure 4: Oxfordshire population by age group, 2008 to 2033



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2008-based sub-national population projections

Support for the vulnerable - prevention and personalisation

The council will continue to support and protect our most vulnerable residents by effectively targeting resources to those most in need, including young people, older people and those with disabilities.

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, by preventing their needs escalating to the point that they require more expensive and specialist service delivery.

In the past year we have created a new integrated early intervention and prevention service, to work troubled families that are facing exceptional social difficulties. This is an innovative approach that maintains high levels of universal support, whilst increasing the effectiveness of the way we work with those children, young people and families in greatest need by helping them to take greater ownership of their lives and identifying solutions before problems escalate. We have transformed separate services and staff focused on their own professional specialisms, into cross-trained and locality-focused teams. This means a single point of contact for children and family referrals, with one professional taking responsibility for an individual or family.

We are strongly committed to Early Years' provision and want to ensure that all children are given a good start in life. We know that long term outcomes in terms of health and emotional resilience rely particularly on the period between birth and three years of age. Research shows that if children start school being disadvantaged, that gap widens as they go through school.

In addition, our Fire and Rescue Service continues to be on target - at the half-way stage of its 10-year '365Alive' campaign - to save lives, protect property and support the local economy. 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.

Prevention is also key to our approach in adult services. We want to keep people well, helping people to live at home and avoid, reduce and delay costly admissions to care homes. 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. 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.

We also want to enable the people whom we support to have more choice and control over the way they live their lives. A crucial way of delivering this is through 'self-directed support' which enables those who are eligible for social care support from the council to decide how they want to be supported through their own personal budget.

Localism and Big Society

The localism agenda aligns well with the importance that the County Council places on encouraging volunteering and enabling communities to address for themselves the issues that matter locally. The county has a strong voluntary sector with over 4,500 community and voluntary groups, an above average number of regular volunteers and an increasing number of communities preparing community-led plans.

The Council's Big Society Fund, launched in 2011, has enabled communities to bid for start-up funding for community projects that would benefit their areas. In 2011/12 this pump-priming enabled all youth centres that were due to close to remain open, either under the control of the County Council or through transfer to a school or community body. The Council is now keen to build on this approach and will use the opportunities presented by the Localism Act to further strengthen community ownership of issues that matter to them.

We will continue to work with county councillors as community leaders and social entrepreneurs. We are keen to promote community-led models of service delivery and alternative provision of services where viable. We will work with local members, support organisations and community groups to develop options and the Big Society Fund will help to provide start-up funding for new initiatives.

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. In 2011 Oxfordshire County Council was the first council 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. We are currently working with the Ministry of Defence to support the transfer of personnel to RAF Brize Norton when RAF

Lyneham closes in 2012, this includes significant capital investment into the area involving at least 1,000 new homes

Our Priorities for Action

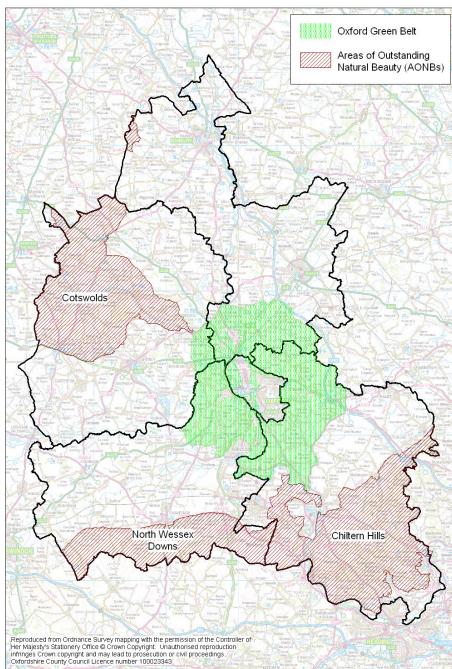
- **Implications of changes to the health service** - We have already established a Health and Wellbeing Board for Oxfordshire, and will ensure that new commissioning arrangements are effective in meeting local need. We will also bring the public health service into the County Council.
- **Improve health outcomes** - we will support delivery of the Director of Public Health's priorities: address the demographic challenge, break the cycle of deprivation, improve mental health services, tackle obesity and alcohol related harm, and fight killer diseases.
- **Demographic change** – we will continue to support the increasing number of older people and people with disabilities, to live in their own home rather than a care home. We will increase the availability of extra care housing and assistive technology to reduce the need for support staff, and continue to provide information and support to carers. We are changing the way day services for older people are provided, maintaining services in major towns, but focusing on community initiatives and local decision-making about how best to support older people in their community.
- **Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation** – we will continue to work in partnership 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.
- **Protection and safeguarding** – we will continue to reduce the number of children, young people and adults that need to be taken into care or are in need of protection. We will ensure the multiagency approach to protecting and safeguarding our most vulnerable children and young people is maintained to its current high standard, and will work with our partners to raise public and professional awareness of the needs of vulnerable adults.
- **Prevention** – we will maintain our focus on preventing the need for more specialist services through early identification of problems and early intervention in adult and children's services. We will also help reduce the numbers of fires, those killed and seriously injured on our roads and help prevent crime.
- **Personalisation** - We will focus on giving people choice in the way they lead their lives and how they secure the services they need to support them. From April 2012 we anticipate that 100% of adult social care service users will be using personal budgets.
- **Localism Act** - As further details emerge we will respond to the implications of the Act, which is intended to support decentralisation of power to the lowest level, including establishing new community rights, reforms to planning processes and empowerment of local government and local communities
- **Big Society** – we will work with elected members, partners and voluntary organisations to encourage individuals and communities to take more responsibility. We will continue to provide a Big Society Fund that will support local communities and organisations who wish to identify local priorities and do things for themselves about issues that matter to them.

Enhancing the Environment

Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South East, with a fabulous natural environment. This is an important factor in most residents' quality of life and often a key reason for people to visit as tourists or relocate here, having a very beneficial effect on our local economy. We need to manage the tension between our desire and need for economic growth and the need to enhance and protect our environment.

We have beautiful and accessible countryside, including four areas of outstanding natural beauty and many places which are nationally or internationally important for biodiversity. The county also has outstanding architecture, including the Blenheim Palace world heritage site near Woodstock and over 1,000 listed buildings.

Figure 5: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Flooding

Since the flooding across the county in July 2007 a range of mitigation measures have been put in place, but with around 12% of the county lying within the floodplain there will always be a significant number of properties at risk of flooding in Oxfordshire.

Energy

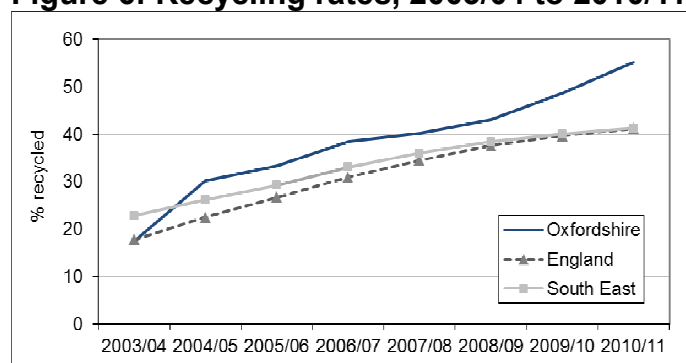
Energy costs are high and forecast to continue to rise rapidly. We are embedding energy saving and carbon dioxide reduction into our business processes across the council, as reducing our energy consumption will also result in financial savings. We will continue to invest in energy efficiency measures in our buildings, including schools, and introduce measures to reduce our demand for energy.

Waste Management

Ongoing investment in our services has resulted in very high levels of waste recycling, with over 60% of household waste now recycled or composted. We

will continue working with partners to build on the behavioural change achieved so far, thus further reducing the amount sent to landfill and minimising our financial liabilities.

Figure 6: Recycling rates, 2003/04 to 2010/11



Source: Oxfordshire County Council Waste Management team; DEFRA

Our Priorities for Action

- **Protecting the environment** – we will make sure Oxfordshire’s natural resources are used as effectively as possible and minimise the impact of economic growth on the environment. We will ensure planning applications for mineral extraction reflect the needs of the local economy. We will work with partner organisations, volunteers, community groups and local communities to protect and enhance the natural environment, and maintain the rights of way network as an important part of the rural economy.
- **Increase energy efficiency and reduce emissions** – we will realise the financial benefits of reducing the council’s emissions, in the process reducing the impact of energy tax.
- **Waste management** – we will continue to work across the public sector to further increase rates of recycling and reduce the amount of household waste sent to landfill. We are investing in new household waste recycling centres near to the major urban areas, and are closing those that have reached the end of their permissions. We are investing in new disposal facilities to convert waste to energy, and will deliver on our plans for new / refurbished Household Waste Recycling Centres. We will also work with our partners to ensure our investment is complemented by other councils investing in improved kerbside collection schemes.

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 we now find ourselves in. We delivered almost £100 million in year-on-year savings between 2007 and 2011, and have achieved an additional £55m in the past year.

The approach set out in last year's Directorate business strategies and Corporate Plan will continue to provide the foundations for our strategy. The next twelve months, and focus of this year's plan, will therefore be the second year of delivering the four year plan we set out last year.

This plan covers the period from 2012/13 to 2016/17. However local government faces a very significant change in how funding is allocated from 2013/14, when it is likely to be much more driven by local economic growth and some retention of business rates locally. There is also likely to be reductions in national government budgets in the next Spending Review period, as indicated in the November 2011 Autumn Budget Statement, which will inevitably have a knock on effect locally. This means that our financial plans beyond 2012/13 are indicative only and will need further refinement once there is greater clarity from government about the new arrangements.

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.

Aligned to last year's Corporate Plan we developed a Business Strategy to articulate the changes that were required to achieve our savings. One year 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. In the past year we have completely refreshed our website so that residents can find the information that they most want and access services online.

We think there is scope to go considerably further, in particular using new technology to stream line 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 office space – helping us to save money.

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. 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.. In response to the Localism Act, the Council will also, where appropriate, be exploring opportunities to transfer assets to the community, or manage them differently with greater community involvement.

Extend the scope of Oxfordshire Customer Services

We will continue to redesign our model for support services, building on the establishment of Oxfordshire Customer Services and a new customer contact centre last year.

Leadership and partnership working

Increasingly the job of councils is not to do everything themselves but to enable the right things to happen – through influence, through contracts, through policy and through leadership. The County Council acts as the strategic leader for Oxfordshire and has an important agenda setting role, building on the priorities expressed in Oxfordshire 2030, our local Community Strategy, and in this plan.

Local service delivery is now provided by a wide range of statutory, independent, private and voluntary sector organisations. We work closely with our partners in order to commission and oversee delivery of better outcomes and value for money for local people. This means working effectively with the police, health and other public agencies and at the local level with district, town and parish councils.

In the past year we have reviewed our existing formal partnership arrangements to maximise the benefit we receive for the investment we make. We have retained those that are critical to addressing priorities that we all recognise can only be tackled through joint working. These include the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Oxfordshire Skills Board, Oxfordshire Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Partnership, Oxfordshire Environment and Waste Partnership, Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board (including sub groups on Health Improvement, Adult Social Care, Children and Young People, and Public Involvement), Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Alliance (voluntary and community sector) and the Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership. All partnerships are driven by the priorities set by the Oxfordshire Partnership, which continues to meet to provide a light-touch overarching sense of direction and ensure delivery of the priorities in Oxfordshire 2030, our community strategy.

Equalities

We are committed to making Oxfordshire a fair and equal place in which to live, work and visit. We will meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and are publishing a new equalities policy and related performance information. 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 will continue to consult relevant people (residents, service users, providers, partners) if we plan to make changes to a service, and will undertake service and community impact assessments to ensure that 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 £119m million by 2014/15 (this includes £55m on target to be delivered in 2011/12)
- **Business Strategy – we will continue to deliver our directorate and cross cutting business strategies.** In particular we will
 - Improve our **use of technology** to support new ways of working and customer interactions;
 - **Rationalise our property** and encourage the **co-location of public sector services**, and define our policies for disposing of assets to assist community groups in developing proposals for delivering local services themselves;
 - Exploit internal and external opportunities to find savings by moving more functions into **Oxfordshire Customer Services**
- **Collaborative Working** – identifying opportunities to work with others to deliver services more effectively and develop innovative approaches to common issues, whether through formal partnership arrangements or more informal collaborative arrangements.
- **Equalities** - We will meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including publishing a new equalities policy and related performance information.

Delivery of this plan

Principles

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

- **Low taxes** – reducing year-on-year the annual increase in council tax to ease the burden on local people, including a freeze in 2011/12 and 2012/13
- **Real choice** – ensuring residents receive the services they need, in ways that best suit the varying needs of different people and communities. This means more and more services will be delivered by providers other than Oxfordshire County Council and we will increasingly put power in the hands of individuals and communities to purchase the services they need or to run services themselves.
- **Value for money** – we will have an absolute focus on ensuring services are efficient and delivering value for money for local people.

Values

The way that our staff behave is guided by six underpinning values:

- **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.

This year we have amended 'Involvement' to become 'Innovation' to reflect the need for staff to develop innovative solutions to service delivery and new ways of working in the tighter financial circumstances.

We continue to use intelligence so that where possible we reflect people's needs and preferences in the way they are able to access services and where appropriate, to identify where communities might be able to do things for

themselves about issues that matter to them. Within the wider context of finding more efficient ways to deliver services, mapping patterns of usage has been critical over the past year, and has helped inform significant changes to our services for young people and our library services to focus on hubs in key areas of population in the county.

Measuring progress

Many of the priorities for action identified in this plan are about achieving a tangible improvement in outcomes. These are listed in Annex A along with details of measurement. Progress on these issues will form the basis of the regular quarterly performance reports that are provided to the Council's Cabinet.

Other priorities for action are harder to measure; they seek behavioural / cultural change within the council or identify a need to respond to shifts in national policy. A qualitative assessment of progress against these issues will be provided at the end of 2012/13.

Finance

To be added following budget sign-off in February – to include detail of:

- Spending plans
- Where money comes from
- Link to Medium Term Financial Plan

Capital

The Council's Capital Strategy sets out the County Council's capital investment plans and explains how the Council intends to maximise the value 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 corporate priorities and in bringing benefits for wider communities. It seeks to ensure that resources are used in the most efficient way and they support the Council's objectives most effectively. It sets out a robust, relevant and sustainable financial policy and strategy that aim to get most out of the scarce capital resources over the next five to ten years.

[Link to strategy](#)

Annex A: Measuring progress

Progress against the indicators supporting our priorities for action set out below will be measured and reported in public to the Council's Cabinet.

Other priorities for action included in the plan are about achieving less tangible change in behaviour, including cultural change within the council and responding to shifts in national policy. A qualitative progress report on these issues will be reported to Cabinet as part of the 4th quarter reporting at the end of 2012/13.

We are currently working on identifying appropriate performance metrics for the plan, to drive the Council's performance framework for next year. This information will be included with the Plan when it is considered by Council in early February.

Further information

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

1. Information about Oxfordshire County Council

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/aboutyourcouncil

2. Summary of Supporting Strategies, including Directorate Business Strategies

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/improvingourperformance

3. Medium Term Financial Plan

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/links/public/financialplans

4. 'This is Oxfordshire', key facts about Oxfordshire

www.oxfordshireobservatory.info/aboutoxfordshiredata