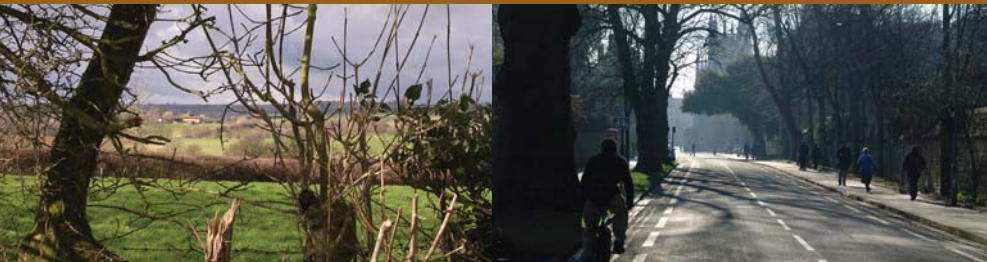


# Oxfordshire County Council Annual report 2007/08



# Oxfordshire County Council Annual report 2007/08



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The following documents are available in full on our website [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/annualreport](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/annualreport)

**Corporate Balanced Scorecard 2007/08**

**Local Area Agreement Targets**

**Best Value Performance Indicators**

**Code of Practice on Workforce Matters**

# Foreword

Foreword by Keith R Mitchell CBE, Leader of the Council and Joanna Simons, Chief Executive



Our Annual Report reflects another year of notable achievements but it is a pretty safe bet that the people of Oxfordshire will remember 2007 for one thing above all else; how we pulled together, showing determination and resilience when faced with the most dramatic summer floods of a century. The floods that caused so many trials and tribulations in our county in July 2007 will live long in our memories and affect our policies and the way that we stand up for the interests of Oxfordshire on the national stage for many years. Our Fire and Rescue Service, Emergency Planning Unit, Highways, Social Care and many other teams rose to the challenge of dealing with the emergency absolutely magnificently. It was a tribute to the plans and procedures we have in place to cope with such situations. We were not the least surprised when our Chief Fire Officer and Director for Community Safety and Shared Services, John Parry, and our County Emergency Planner, John Kelly MBE received personal recognition in the New Year's Honours list. Staff response in January 2008, when floods threatened the county once more, was also exemplary. We are already working with partners on the task of making sure the subject of coping with flooding remains firmly on the agenda of the government and the Environment Agency. We owe that to the many residents so badly affected by the rising waters.

The culture of rigour and the high standards we set, led to Oxfordshire County Council being given a four-star 'Excellent' rating by the Audit Commission early in 2007 – the best grade any council can be given. Sadly, a year later, we lost one of those stars largely because exam results were not improving quickly enough. It is a judgement that we wholly acknowledge and recognise. For many years, Oxfordshire's schools have not been producing the results that a county with our social make-up should, even though we are in line with national averages. **With this in mind, we are determined that there will be an absolutely single minded focus on turning this situation around. We owe it to Oxfordshire's parents and children to make sure our schools help youngsters reach their full potential. There is no room for complacency and we are determined to achieve this.** Overall, 2007/08 has been a great year for the county council and in three key service areas *Environment, Culture* and *Fire and Rescue* we are judged to be at the highest possible level by government. **Looking ahead, challenges that continue to pre-occupy the county council include, proposals to build thousands of new homes here, a possible reservoir in the Steventon area, the need to reduce our waste sent to landfill to meet European Union targets and planning to cope with the increased numbers of people accessing social care services due to increased longevity.** The Audit Commission scrutinised the council in detail during November and December 2007 and tell us that we have the structures, plans and collective will in place to tackle such issues - and we agree!



## Our ambitions and priorities

Our ambitions and priorities are built from a strong sense of your needs and expectations. These demonstrate the ambition we have for the county and you as residents.

# choice

Real

# LOW taxes

# Value

for money

### World class economy



### Environment and climate change



### Healthy and thriving communities



### Better public services



The following pages provide a summary of progress in our priority areas during 2007/08.





**Harwell's Diamond Light Source is the largest UK funded scientific facility to be built for over 40 years.**



# World class economy

Oxfordshire is an economically vibrant area. Unemployment is low and the economy is prosperous. We have a lot to be proud of: the highest level of research and development in Western Europe, a concentration of high value, high wage, high tech industry and, of course, world renowned universities. The publishing and motor industry in the county also strengthens our economy - one of the fastest growing in the United Kingdom. Our aspiration is that Oxfordshire remains an outstanding place to live, work, study and visit. We meet this challenge head on through improving our skills base at all levels, tackling inequalities, investing in infrastructure and by taking a planned and sustainable approach to growth while preserving our stunning natural and built environment. In the last few years we have shown our commitment to economic development and regeneration through the successful development of the Oxford Castle heritage site. This is just part of the ambitious 'urban renaissance' of the West End of Oxford which we have progressed further with our partners during 2007/08. We are also set on maximising the potential of the 'Southern Oxfordshire Quadrant' - already a leading science and innovation area.



# World class economy



## What we do



**The Economic Partnership:** We want to create the conditions to enable the economy to flourish; an economy in which residents contribute and benefit. This is driven through the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership: a group of key public sector and business partners who oversee the economic development strategy for the county – designed to create long term sustainable economic growth based on a high tech world class economy.

**Tourism:** Our county is varied and offers visitors and residents a number of unique attractions. We work with partners to promote a strong tourism brand which highlights the energetic and cosmopolitan city of Oxford, our bustling market towns, picturesque rural communities and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

**Skills and opportunity:** For everyone, regardless of their background, we aim to create an environment of opportunity where people can reach their full potential. We need to develop the skills our economy needs and ensure that our people can benefit from economic success. For young people this involves providing them with the appropriate skills to carry them through to adult life, for adults this means refreshing skills and introducing new ones when necessary.

**Supporting Infrastructure:** We also recognise the importance of infrastructure (transport, housing and community facilities). Innovative capital projects such as the Headington ‘Hamburger’ roundabout have made a real contribution to minimising traffic congestion. ‘Access to Oxford’ will secure significant inward investment to the county and enable people and goods to move more easily through the county. Our Oxfordshire Highways Team ensures the ongoing efficiency and responsiveness of road improvements.

**Thinking beyond the boundaries:** Some of our ambitions for the county take us beyond our immediate boundaries. We are contributing to the development of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, an ambitious project to establish the largest and most successful knowledge based economy in Europe. We also continue to lobby for improved transport links to support this, including the ‘east-west’ rail link. We understand the importance of working effectively in partnership to secure more opportunities for Oxfordshire.



## Spotlight on

# The Southern Oxfordshire Quadrant, the Arc and the Diamond Light

The **Southern Oxfordshire Quadrant** is a global hot spot for enterprise and innovation in science and high technology along with other high value businesses. We contribute to the 'Quadrant Partnership' along with colleagues in our district councils, regional government bodies and the commercial sector.

Together, the partnership is committed to achieving even greater economic success and sustainability.



The quadrant denotes four key areas of potential:

The Southern Oxfordshire Quadrant	
<p><b>The Harwell Science and Innovation Campus (HSIC)</b> – The government’s aim is to develop the Harwell campus to ensure facilities are internationally competitive, support world-class science and maximise opportunities for knowledge transfer. This site includes the ‘Diamond Light Source’.</p>	<p><b>Milton Park</b> – contains some 165 businesses employing approximately 6,500 people. Milton Park includes research and biotechnology firms, many of which have spun off from the near-by universities.</p>
<p><b>Didcot</b> – 7,300 new homes focused on the New Growth Point of Didcot.</p>	<p><b>Grove &amp; Wantage</b> - there are proposals for 3,400 new homes.</p>

Harwell’s **Diamond Light Source** is the largest UK funded scientific facility to be built for over 40 years. This giant machine, called a synchrotron, can be described as a series of “super microscopes”. It is housed in a futuristic doughnut-shaped building which covers the area of five football pitches. Many of our everyday commodities from chocolate to cosmetics through to revolutionary drugs have been developed or improved using synchrotron light.

**The Arc:** The Harwell Science and Innovation Campus and the science and business parks in southern central Oxfordshire form an important part of the wider Oxford to Cambridge Arc (**O2C Arc**) The O2C Arc links two world famous centres of research and innovation in order to create an “arc” of innovation and entrepreneurial activity.



# World class economy

## Spotlight on Oxford's 'West End Urban Renaissance'

Our aim is to make the West End of Oxford a vibrant and attractive new quarter of the city in which to work and live which is why we have approved developer's plans for a £300m development on part of the West End site. The plans include 60,000sqm of new retail floor space, 127 apartments (half of which are affordable housing), the refurbishment of the existing shopping centre and library and the extensive new provision for buses and car parking spaces.

The neighbouring Oxford Castle heritage site is already an established, award winning, and commercial success and the new development will further enhance the area. We worked with the city council, SEEDA, business and voluntary sector partners to secure over £40m of private sector and grant funding, provided nine new businesses for Oxford with over 300 jobs and an educational facility which is well used by Oxfordshire schools. It also provides four new public open spaces which are used for various cultural events and for general public access, and there are new pedestrian routes from the south and west to the City Centre.





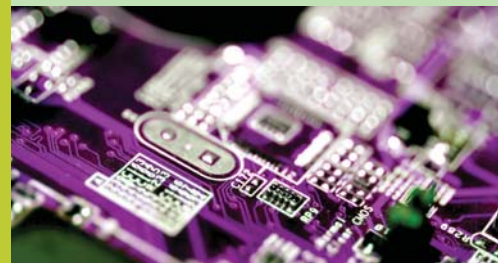
## Spotlight on The Oxfordshire Economic Partnership

The Oxfordshire Economic Partnership brings together local government bodies and the private sector. Together we support its work to grow the economy as fast as possible without compromising the environment, to achieve sustainable, thriving communities. In the past year the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership and Oxfordshire County Council have supported projects to improve business engagement with schools, promote the development of particular towns, support deprived communities in Oxford and Banbury and supported the setting up and growth of new and existing businesses. The Sustainable Business Partnership has helped companies reduce their carbon use (and costs) while the Broadband Partnership has enabled businesses to improve their efficiency.

We also continue to support **Venturefest**, an annual two day conference where Oxfordshire partners come together to provide advice on how to build and grow a successful business. We act as a sponsor to Venturefest and this year act as Chair of Venturefest. Through the Oxford Trust, Venturefest works to promote innovation and entrepreneurial culture amongst young people. This year the trust has opened an 'Apprentice' competition. The competition for Year 12 science, technology and business studies students has a prize of £1,000 and a work placement within a high tech company.  
[www.venturefest.com](http://www.venturefest.com)



The total value of visitor expenditure to the Oxfordshire economy in 2005 was estimated to be in the region of £1.2 billion.





# World class economy

## Achievements

We have been successful in securing financial contributions from developers of £12 million (approx.) for future investment. Using contributions secured in previous years we spent £4.8M to help deliver improvements now across a variety of schemes including:

- the proposed new primary school at the former Banbury cattle market (opens this summer)
- improvements to primary and secondary schools in Carterton
- Library improvements in Witney
- Major junction improvements on Middleton Road, Banbury
- Cycle ways in Oxford
- Park and Ride and other bus services to the hospitals in Oxford. Bus services in Didcot, Faringdon, Wantage and Bicester

We have improved local knowledge and promoted Oxfordshire as a brand through the creation of the new website pages at:  
[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/exploreoxfordshire](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/exploreoxfordshire).

Although we are not a housing authority we continue work with district councils and regional partners to shape regional housing strategy. With partners, we successfully negotiated a plan to build more affordable homes through our Local Area Agreement. This was approved by the Regional Agency and we expect 256 affordable dwellings to be constructed by 2009.

In the last year Cherwell School was named an 'outstanding school' by the schools inspector Ofsted; and was the first secondary school in the county to achieve this level. Ofsted also commended the school for its vocational science teaching. This provides an example of what can be achieved by strong leadership, rigorous assessment, support for under-achieving pupils and excellent teaching. Our ambition is for other schools to rise to the challenge and meet this standard.

In 2007/08, only 4.2% of 16-19 year olds were not in full-time education, employment or training. This shows a 12% decrease on the same figure for last year and is a much better result for Oxfordshire.



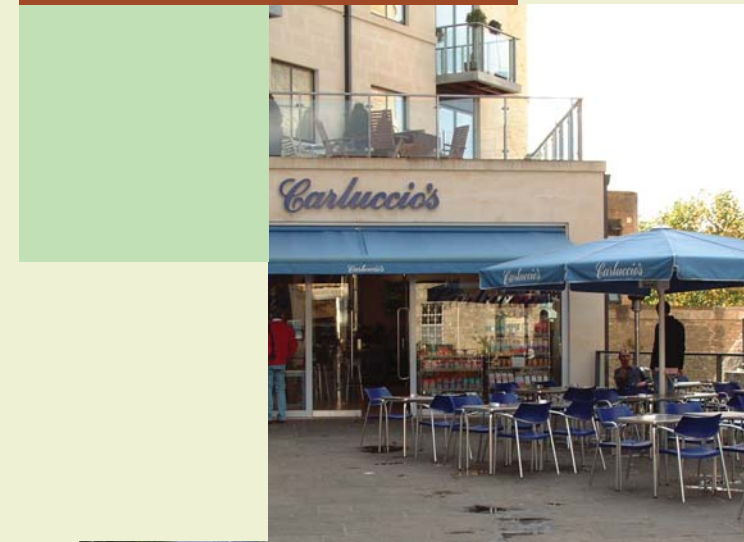
# World class economy

## Awards

The Oxford Castle development has collected a staggering number of awards since it opened. For example:

- Oxford Preservation Trust environmental Awards 2007
- Malmaison Oxford: International Hot New Hotel by Conde Nast
- Malmaison Oxford: National Hotel of the Year
- 4Ps Awards for Excellence: Highly Commended for Regeneration and Place Shaping category
- Key Learning Centre: Investors in Education Award

**In 2007, Oxford was ranked top overall for culture and was amongst the top five favourite cities in England outside of London at the prestigious Conde Nast Traveller Awards**





**We play a major role in influencing residents to take an environmentally friendly approach to modern living and to reduce our carbon footprint**





# The environment and climate change

Dreaming spires, rambling green spaces, buildings steeped in rich history: few could doubt that we enjoy an exceptional environment. We recognise our important role as custodians of the environment now and for future generations. Our challenge is to protect our areas of natural beauty while meeting the demands of a 21st century lifestyle and an expanding and ageing population. The appearance of where we live contributes significantly to the 'feel good factor' which is why maintaining an attractive visual environment is important to us. The Oxfordshire Waste Partnership works hard to address this through reducing litter, waste and detritus. We also 'de-clutter' busy pedestrian areas and partners work hard to crack down on unsightly fly-tipping. We recognise that the future of our environment is closely linked to the national and international response to the global challenge of climate change. We are committed to making our contribution. We want to lead by example which is why we have our own 'future first' programme to help us reduce our carbon footprint. One of our council buildings can already boast a 45% reduction in carbon emissions. Many of our challenges are demanding, cutting back on waste produced and sent to landfill to meet new European Union law, reducing our carbon emissions by at least 18% by 2012, improving air quality and balancing the preservation of our rural environment with the need for housing growth.

# The environment and climate change



## What we do



**Waste Management** – We have a central role in the Waste Management Partnership which oversees both the collection and distribution of waste. The partnership develops strategy and encourages residents and businesses to generate less waste and recycle more of what is produced. Oxfordshire's household waste is the second lowest of any county.

**Transport** – Public transport is crucial to our aim of balancing environmental and economic needs. Our park and ride schemes, priority bus routes and the real time bus information service make public transport accessible and user friendly. We continue to have the highest use of public transport use of any county council.

Our Highways Team work hard to ensure better traffic management which, in turn, helps reduce congestion and improve air quality.

**Planning** – Our 'structure plan' will soon be replaced with a plan that covers planning for the South East region. We will ensure that development in the county is consistent with the environmental, social and economic objectives outlined in this plan. Affordable housing and protecting our rural environment is at the forefront of our thinking.

**Climate change** – Working with our partners and the Carbon Trust, we aim to reduce our carbon footprint by 18% by 2012 as part of our contribution to this global challenge. In addition to minimising our impact on climate change, we also want to ensure we are well prepared for its effects - the summer floods demonstrated at first hand the impact the weather can have on our communities.





## Spotlight on School Travel Plans

We work with schools to explore sustainable and healthy means of travelling to school and 2007/08 has been a year of record activity. An impressive 282 schools (83%) have an approved travel plan. We are well on target to achieve the government's aim for every school to have a Travel Plan by 2010.

We have installed a record number of cycle and scooter parking spaces in the last financial year – more than 3,000 across 60 schools. Our Highways Team delivered 50 high-speed low-cost improvements at schools in the county - such as road signs, markings, footpath resurfacing, hedgerow trimming and drainage.

**Glory days** - One school to benefit from writing their Travel Plan was Glory Farm Primary School in Bicester. Cycling increased from 12 pupils in September 2006 to 151 pupils (37% of the school roll) putting them into the top three cycling schools in Oxfordshire. Car use dropped from 31% to 21% – achieving the school travel plan's aims within just one year (Jan 2007–Jan 2008).



School travel plans help tackle climate change, by reducing the carbon footprint of journeys to and from school.





# The environment and climate change

## Spotlight on Reducing our carbon footprint and managing climate change

We have committed ourselves to a 'future first' programme which is helping the council to reduce the consumption of energy, water and waste while addressing biodiversity issues.

The Future First programme includes advice on how to reduce your carbon footprint at home, at work and when travelling. We also have a number of 'Future First Champions' who ensure that colleagues are reminded of their responsibilities to reduce their footprint in the office environment with simple steps such as turning off monitors and lights. Our dedicated poster campaign supports this.

We recognise the need to adapt to climate change. With our partners we have suggested to government that our climate change adaptation plans form part of our next 'Local Area Agreement'. The agreement is a list of important targets that various partnerships in Oxfordshire work towards.



## Spotlight on The Oxfordshire Waste Partnership

In 2007/08 we agreed a new waste strategy with our district colleagues. Partner councils have agreed to the introduction of waste reduction targets with associated incentives and penalties that focus on encouraging the reduction in the amount of waste going to landfill rather than just the amount of waste recycled or composted. These innovative arrangements provide real incentives on which to focus, on reducing the amount of waste produced which subsequently goes to landfill. The new incentive system is the first of its kind to be developed by any waste partnership.

Disposing of waste and sending it to landfill emits greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. This is why the European Union has agreed a law requiring all member countries to cut down. We are no exception and must reduce the amount by 25 per cent by the year 2009/10 and 50 per cent by 2012/13. If we don't, we will face a large fine and funding of other services may be affected. The county council is currently undertaking a procurement project, fully supported by the Waste Partnership, to secure treatment facilities for residual waste. In February 2008, it was announced that all the companies taking part in the procurement process proposed using Energy from Waste technology.



**In 10 years' time, the landfill sites in Oxfordshire will be full and we will have to build new ones or treat our waste in other ways.**







## Achievements

Work to improve the visual environment of the county has continued to be successful. When we **'de-cluttered'** St Aldate's, not only was it successful but the work was completed two weeks ahead of schedule. Our southern area office alone has removed more than 200 road signs from the highway network in the Vale and South Oxfordshire area in the last 12 months.

**Greener travel** - The number of people using buses in Oxfordshire continues to be strong and bucks the national trend of

declining usage (outside London). We have extremely high bus usage for a county area. Rural accessibility is very important and over 50% of people in rural areas live within half a mile of regular services.

Our **'it's easy to recycle'** campaign has been a huge success, focusing on how to recycle waste, and how recycled materials are re-used. And it works! Recycling rates have improved again, with over 40% of the waste produced in the county recycled or composted in the last year.

Our **real time passenger information system** continues to be a great success: launched in 2006, it covers over 800 locations. The dedicated website has particularly high take up by employment establishments such as Templeton College and the John Radcliffe Hospital.

[www.oxontime.com](http://www.oxontime.com)

We have abolished **parking charges** for the two park and ride car parks we run and introduced free parking in Oxford in the evenings and on Sundays. These changes improve choice, boost the local economy and provide value for money to our council tax payers.

Latest autumn 2007 Oxfordshire school travel statistics compare very favourably with neighbouring counties. Walking is still the most common way for children in Oxfordshire to get to school (43%). This is good news because walking is active, safe and low carbon, helping the environment and boosting fitness at the same time! More good news is that 8% of children across Oxfordshire cycle to school, which is one of the highest levels in the country.



# The environment and climate change

## Awards

In 2007 we were awarded, Oxford Preservation Trust Environmental Trust Awards for:

**Marsh Baldon Primary School** - In February 2005, the older part of this Victorian primary school was destroyed by fire. We rebuilt the school to its original design, re-using materials where possible, while bringing it up to modern standards. The trust says we have 'returned a landmark building to the community'.

**St Thomas Street** improvements – the trust awarded us for 'using high standards of materials and workmanship, greatly to improve the appearance of the street.'

**Tetsworth School, Thame**, was awarded the prestigious Green Flag for ecological awareness and practice. The school was the first in the country to achieve Level 3 of the DfES backed Sustainable Learning Energy certificate, and the pupils (aged 5-11) have now become the 13th school in the county to be able to fly the internationally recognised flag.

**Our Environmental Services are judged to be of the highest standard by the Audit Commission.**





# Floods case study



## Rising to the challenge of the July 2007 floods

*'We were really struggling to keep up with the high volume of calls but, thankfully, one dedicated fire-fighter volunteered his services. Chris was off duty with a broken leg and was flooded at home but stayed to update information. Without his support the service provided to the people of Abingdon would not have been as professionally delivered.'*

The account above is just one of the stories that demonstrates the professionalism and dedication of county council staff during the most testing time in July.

The dramatic floods of Friday 20 July and the following days saw the largest operation in the history of Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service. Around 6,000 people were affected by the rising waters and 2,500 of those needed to move from their homes at short notice.

The response reflected a true partnership effort, council staff, emergency services, voluntary agencies and the NHS provided a seamless multi-agency response with the sole aim of ensuring the public's safety and well-being.

Our Emergency Planning Unit was critically important in the response with all parties working to a joint county emergency plan.

When we were threatened with further floods in January 2008 our preparation and what we had learnt from the previous summer proved invaluable and widespread problems were avoided.





**Meltdown:** Our Fire and Rescue Service received the equivalent of one tenth of its annual calls in the first 48 hours, rescuing more than 200 people, pumping water from properties, sandbagging and removing valuables from properties.

**Caring for our most vulnerable residents:** Some needed more support than others and it was essential for us to maintain a good service for our residents who live in our care. Our Social and Community Services alongside the NHS and private and voluntary sectors were instrumental in supporting our elderly and vulnerable residents who were affected by the flooding. The Kassam football stadium became a rest centre and high quality accommodation was provided next door for elderly and vulnerable people. The rapid integrated response of various groups (including the Red Cross, Women's Royal Volunteer Service and the Police) ensured the provision of safe alternatives to usual care arrangements.

**Keeping things on the move:** Our transport service provided logistical support for sandbagging and managed the consequences of the flood-affected highway network.

**Keeping you informed:** Our Communications Team maintained a 24-hour information service during the floods via various mediums. The Daily Telegraph commended our website as being best of all the counties affected and BBC News 24 said it was the most comprehensive site for information. Visits to the county council website increased tenfold from about 3,300 visits on a normal day to 32,291. Deservedly, we were nominated for a national Local e-Government excellence award for our website coverage during the flooding in the category of 'proven team-working/partnership activity which has delivered more than the sum of the parts'.

**Recovery:** The multi-agency flood recovery coordination group which came together can be credited with coordinating the various work streams. In the longer term our goal is to lobby for better financial support from central government when such dramatic events occur. We also continue to support those who have been affected more long term as a result of flooding.





**With over 615,000 residents across 1,006 square miles, the county has the lowest population density in the South East region.**





# Healthy and thriving communities

People enjoy living in Oxfordshire. Surveys show us that over 90% of the people in Oxfordshire like living in their local communities. We are fortunate to have a population that is generally healthier than elsewhere, with longer than average life expectancy. Levels of crime are generally lower than average. We have a diverse population: as the most rural county in the South East of England, half our population live in rural areas but a quarter live in Oxford city with the remainder in our bustling market towns. The profile of a 'typical' Oxfordshire resident is changing. There are now many more people over 85 living in the county and the number of people with learning disabilities living here has also increased. Our black and ethnic minority community accounts for 5% of the Oxfordshire population overall (13% in the City). The enlargement of the European Union has led to significant migration from Eastern European countries. We want to ensure that our people are kept safe from harm, are able to live healthy lifestyles and to be valued in the community in which they live, work, grow up and grow old. We also want to ensure people have the ability to participate and contribute to their communities.



# Healthy and thriving communities



## What we do

**Community safety** – We work with our partners in the district councils and police to reduce re-offending rates, domestic violence and road casualties and act to reduce the harm caused by substance misuse. Trading standards promote and maintain fair trading to protect consumers and enable reputable businesses to thrive.

**Older people and adults with disability** – Our social care services support people to remain in their own homes as long as possible while creating more choice and better value for money. We work with those with learning disabilities and those with mental health needs to help them live as full and independent lives as possible.

**Public Health** – We have a jointly appointed Director of Public Health (with the PCT) and work closely with our health partners to provide services which meet the needs of all communities and promote healthy living. Oxfordshire's Public Health Report sets out a series of proposals for tackling key threats to public health in relation to:

- Breaking the cycle of deprivation
- Meeting the challenge of an ageing population
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Preventing obesity
- Fighting killer infections

**Children and young people** – The council works with a wide range of partners to meet the needs of children and young people through the Children and Young People's Plan priorities.

**Supporting communities** – We want our city, towns and villages to be communities with a heart. Places where community spirit exists and local people engage with us to solve problems and plan for the future. Communities all over the county are developing plans for the future of their area, such as parish or market town action plans. We do this by close working with our town and parish councils. We also support the voluntary and community sector, helping to develop its capacity and skills and are involved in the promoting our services to hard to reach groups in our communities. Our libraries are vital community facilities that are well used and highly regarded. As part of our efforts to be 'Closer to Communities', the county council has also contributed to local partnerships aiming to improve their town.

**Resilience** – We work to reduce the risk of fires and other emergencies and provide effective response when things do go wrong through the Fire and Rescue Service and Emergency Planning Unit.

**Books on prescription** - The county council's library service is working with Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) and mental health charity Oxfordshire Mind in a bid to help people overcome their mental and physical health problems through reading. A pilot project will run for six months from May 2008 and involve twelve libraries over the whole county.

When patients with mild mental health problems such as stress, depression or anxiety go to their GP they may be prescribed a book which will help them deal with their condition. For example, the books advise on how to cope with problems which may stem, for example, from difficulties with work, personal or family relationships.

Oxfordshire Mind has employed Primary Care Workers to support, and signpost people to a range of services, including access to the books, which may help the person understand enough about their problem that the need for any more intensive one to one therapy is alleviated.

This is an innovative idea which shows how well different agencies such as Oxfordshire County Council's library service, the PCT and Oxfordshire Mind can work together.

## Spotlight on Bicester Resource Centre

Bicester Resource Centre is Oxfordshire's flagship day centre - a 'super' day centre offering a vast range of services not just to regular members, but to anyone in the community who might benefit from them. It has been able to host these new services through close co-operation with a range of partner organisations, such as the Primary Care Trust, the Mental Health Trust, the local carers' group and the council's own Adult Learning Service.

Serving regular members plus all the many others who access its services to meet specific needs, it still offers its core traditional day centre services, such as entertainment, arts and crafts and a hot lunch. Falls prevention, carers' support, short term help for people who are experiencing a crisis in their lives, health promotion and social inclusion work with ethnic minorities, are just a few more of the services available.



**Demographic changes will see an increase of 125% in the number of over 85-year-olds in Oxfordshire over the next 20 years.**



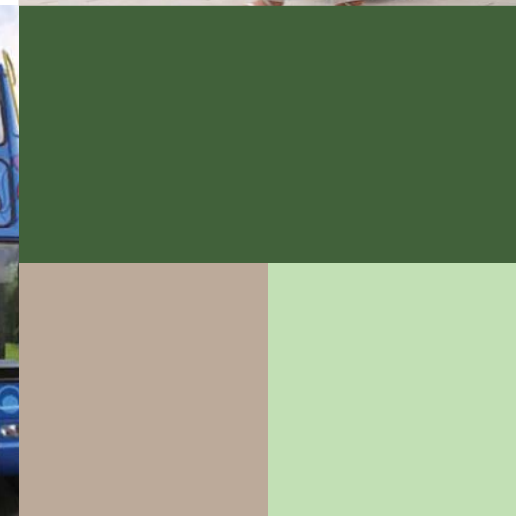


# Healthy and thriving communities

## Spotlight on Community led planning - Bicester Vision Group

In Bicester we have researched information to help understand the town and support the Bicester Vision Group whose purpose is to bring together business and local authorities to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. The project includes a business working with a local school. We have supported the recruitment of the Bicester Vision Manager who will lead the group's work. We have launched annual town and parish liaison events where we and district councils meet with local councils to discuss common issues and answer questions about our services.

We run the Oxfordshire **Rural Children's Centre Project**. Children's centres are being set up across the county to help every child fulfil their potential. The Oxfordshire 'Toy Express' (formally the Oxfordshire Playbus) was launched in February 2008 and focuses on families with children under 5 years old. Initially operating in the six locations, Standford in the Vale, Chalgrove, Crowmarsh, Sonning Common, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell and Chinnor, parents who register can select up to three toys from the catalogue which can be borrowed for three weeks and then returned at the next Toy Express Session - all for free. [Oxonplaybus@aol.com](mailto:Oxonplaybus@aol.com)





## Achievements

**Healthy schools** - Most of our schools now have a healthy school accreditation; well above national average. We will be building on the success of our 'Healthy Schools' programme with dedicated work to reduce childhood obesity. This project will be undertaken with the help of Weight Watchers.

In partnership with the PCT we support work to ensure the future and current health of our residents. There is good news for Oxfordshire:

- More people have quit smoking than ever before
- There are fewer deaths from circulatory disease (e.g. heart attack and stroke). The odds of dying early from circulatory diseases have fallen over the last decade by almost 40%

**Inequalities** - There are early signs that the inequalities gap in Oxfordshire is beginning to close. The latest figures show that the gap in death rates between the best 20% of wards and the worst 20% of wards has narrowed.

Our **365 Alive** safety campaign launched by the county council's Fire and Rescue Service in October 2006 is a 10-year campaign aimed at saving an extra 365 lives in Oxfordshire, both in the home and on our roads; saving the taxpayer £100m and educating 840,000 people about fire and road safety. The performance for 2007/08 is:

- Lives saved - 15 extra lives saved (exceeding target), a further 15% reduction below ceiling figures
- Money saved - Extra £21,110,016 above targets

- Messages delivered - 101,407 (Target is 84,000)

See the 365 Alive website for more details or contact the community safety hotline on 08000 325 999

**Voluntary and Community Sector** – the council has supported the Oxfordshire Voluntary Sector Development Partnership which has helped the local voluntary and community sector come together to improve support for local communities. Over the year, we have been in touch with and advised 35 such active communities, from Adderbury and Eynsham to Berinsfield, from Grove and Wantage to Cowley in Oxford city. That means we have worked with about one in ten of all Oxfordshire communities on issues such as transport, road safety, youth support services or childcare provision.





**Ethnic minority communities** – the council funded the African-Caribbean Community Action Network HEAT programme (Health, Education, Advice and Training) to improve advice and guidance on services for young people and families.

**Young drivers** - The Fire and Rescue Service is trialling a new interactive course at Banbury Fire Station aimed at saving the lives of inexperienced young drivers. Statistics show that new drivers are more likely to have an accident in the first two years of driving than at any other time.

**Youth Offending** – Our dedicated probation tracker officers have been working hard and the results are positive. During 2007/08 the number of young people aged 10-17 re-offending, has reduced countywide.

**The Oxfordshire Gypsy and Travellers Service (OGTS)** – The Service, awarded a Charter Mark in 2007, continues to operate effectively in balancing the need of our settled and traveller communities. Waste

clearance costs for unauthorised encampments on county, district and parish councils land usually stand at or close to zero.

Our **Access Team** is responsible for the “single front door” - a single point of contact for anyone requiring information or support from Social and Community Services. In November 2007 they celebrated their first year. For access to social care and occupational therapy they have received 40,000 calls dealing with approximately 300 calls a day – this is around 110,000 a year. The team was awarded Charter Mark in 2007.

We aim to make our resources more accessible and fun. Our innovative website, **‘The Dark Archivist’** features the sinister Dark Archivist, who takes the visitor back to Oxfordshire's past. You can search for crimes, which took place hundreds of years ago, look for old remedies and read up on crimes as they might have been written up by journalists today. [www.darkarchivist.com](http://www.darkarchivist.com)

**‘Oxfordshire 2007’** was a celebration of the county’s millennium raising awareness of the rich cultural resources that exist in Oxfordshire. Over 350 events were published and one third of Oxfordshire’s schools were involved in arts in education projects generated by the programme. <http://www.oxfordshire2007.com/>

**Returning military** - Over 300 soldiers returning from Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq were given a homecoming parade in Bicester at the start of 2008. We gave financial backing to the parade as part of a £100,000 fund dedicated to supporting returning troops and their dependents. This is also providing a wide range of community facilities for troops and their families. We hope that every one of the serving personnel knows they are valued and appreciated.

More people than ever are taking advantage of the real choice that **‘Direct Payments** in Adult Social Care offer. Direct payment means that the council gives people eligible the money to buy and choose their own care.

# Healthy and thriving communities

## Awards and assessments

Our Cultural Services are judged to be of the highest standard by the Audit Commission.

The performance of the council's Fire and Rescue Service is a highlight of 2007/08. Not only are we judged to be at the highest level (one of only two in the country) according to the Audit Commission we are also 'improving well' and provide very good value for money.

Two key individuals in our Community Safety directorate had very special recognition during 2007/08. John Parry, our Chief Fire Officer and Director for Community Safety and Shared Services, has been awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal - "an award given for distinguished service to the fire brigade." This award recognises the significant contribution made by the Chief Fire Officer both locally and nationally to the Fire and Rescue Service over the last 28 years. John Kelly, Emergency Planning Officer, has been awarded the MBE for his services to Oxfordshire County Council Emergency Planning.

Out of the 7 outcomes for Adult social care we were assessed as good with promising prospects on each.

We are proud to have an award winning Primary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (PCAMHS) .This new direct referral service helping children with mental health problems received a national award recognising its excellence. This is another example of partnerships between County Council, PCT and mental health services bringing dividends for health.

Our Trading Standards Team celebrated after being awarded Regional Food Champion status for its work with Oxford City Council in promoting a healthier diet and nutrition in the community. The team will now be considered for the National Awards and the overall winner will be announced at a reception at the House of Commons during Food Safety Week in June

Our Community Development Team in Social & Community Services and our Registration Service which deals with births, deaths and marriages, have reached a new level of excellence in customer service by scoring 100 per cent in the Charter Mark assessment.





**The county council is investing £15 million in three residential centres for severely disabled children over the next three years.**



## Better public services

We want to provide outstanding services at low cost. This provides real challenges in the face of an increasing population, increased demand for services and a reduction in the money provided by central government. We have responded proactively to these challenges by improving the services we provide year on year; both in actual terms and in comparison to others. Again this year we have reduced the level of council tax increase with our objective to provide value for money. Two thirds of our key performance indicators show a pattern of improvement. We have responded to financial constraints by finding more efficient and innovative ways of delivering our services and seek to maximise the benefits of working in partnerships with others. We have performed well in external assessments receiving the top score for Environment, Culture and Fire and Rescue as part of the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment. In February 2007, we were proud to be given a four-star 'Excellent' rating by the Audit Commission – the best grade any council can be given. We were disappointed to lose one of these stars a year later because it had been judged that exams results were not improving quickly enough. We are not complacent about this and are making it an absolute priority in 2008/09 to work with our schools to improve educational attainment. We have reorganised our children's services into locality teams and this supports delivery of this key aim.



# Better public services



## What we do



**Listening to our customers** – what you think is very important to us. Our ‘Ask Oxfordshire’ Consultation Team works with citizens panels to seek the views of residents on our services. We use this feedback to drive improvements to our services and understand when things are going well or not so well and why.

Our Children and Young People’s Sounding Boards are a very important part of our decision making structure in our Children’s Services Directorate. The Oxfordshire Children’s fund for example has recently won a national BT ‘Seen and heard’ award for its Community Chest Project which involves a panel of young people looking at applications from young people who cannot afford school activities. The project was

commended for the significant levels of decision making it gives to young people.

**Value for Money** – the Government sets us ambitious targets to deliver our services for less money. In 2007/08 we improved on a good score from the Audit Commission when they judged how well we manage our resources. Cutting services is a last resort so we use various techniques to try and deliver more for less. These include:

- Business process reengineering – this approach looks at how processes can be made smarter, quicker, better for us and the customer.
- Benchmarking- this involves looking at how well we compare to others and what we can learn from others who might do things better.

**Scrutiny** is the process by which the council looks at its own performance and that of other public sector services to check how well we are serving the people of Oxfordshire. The scrutiny function also helps us develop new policies. This is achieved mainly through five Scrutiny committees and a programme of scrutiny reviews on specific topics. During 2007/08 these included:

- Partnership arrangements
- Flooding
- Neighbourhood Action Groups
- Impact of the introduction of Planning Preparation and Assessment Time on Schools



**Horton Hospital, Banbury** - The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee strongly opposed Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trusts proposals to transfer and scale down paediatric services, obstetrics, gynaecology and the Special Care Baby Unit at the Horton Hospital and referred the matter to Secretary of State for Health in July 2007 who set up an Independent Reconfiguration Panel to consider the proposals. The Secretary of State accepted the panel's view that the proposals would not provide an accessible or improved service to the people of north Oxfordshire or surrounding areas.

**Working in partnership** – our Partnership Unit was established two years ago and drives partnership arrangements across the county. This includes

engaging and supporting the very important voluntary sector. We have an agreement with all our partners to deliver on a set of key targets; this is called our Local Area Agreement. One target for example is to reduce re-offending rates amongst young people. We realise that this will be done most effectively through working in partnership with the Police, the PCT and our Youth Services and Schools.

**Focused Improvement** - We wholly acknowledge that we need to improve the attainment of young people in schools in Oxfordshire. Although we meet National Average levels this isn't good enough when we compare ourselves to similar authorities and we don't want to be 'average'. We have set about the changes to make improvement happen and in the last year we

have our first outstanding secondary school in Oxfordshire, according to Ofsted. We are also reorganising our Children Young People and Families directorate into locality teams. This will enable workers to focus more effectively on early intervention and shift resources to supporting families before serious problems arise.

**Standards** – To help us satisfy you, we set very clear standards for our performance. This includes an ambition that all our services receive a 'Charter Mark' – a national recognition of good customer services, by 2009. We are well on course. In addition to this we also set our service level agreements in certain areas. This year we introduced a new and more effective complaints process so we can learn from your feedback.





# Better public services

**Customer Service Excellence aims to bring professional, high level customer service concepts into common currency with customer-facing public services by providing a unique improvement tool.**

## Spotlight on Charter Mark

We are committed not only to providing excellent customer service, but to also ensure that we continue to improve. During 2006 we embarked on an ambitious 3-year Charter Mark Programme. Charter Mark is the government's framework specifically designed to improve customer service in public sector organisations. Achievement of the standard is recognised by awarding the right to display the prestigious Charter Mark logo.

Our original target was for all of our eligible services to be individually awarded Charter Mark by the summer of 2009. We are very pleased to report that this programme is well ahead of schedule and we hope that by this July we will be one of the first Charter Mark county councils in the country.



Throughout 2007/08 there have been a number of achievements across the organisation with great initiatives and areas of work being praised and highlighted by external assessors. A few of these include:

- Oxfordshire Highways, which comprises Oxfordshire County Council and its partners Enterprise and Jacobs, has recently been awarded Charter Mark status. They are the first public/private partnership to achieve this.
- We had our first complete Charter Mark directorate, Community Safety, which encompasses the Fire and Rescue service, Trading Standards, Emergency Planning, the Gypsy and Traveller Services and the Safer Communities Unit, is the first within the council to achieve the award.
- The council's ICT Services was the first of our internal service providers to gain Charter Mark. During the assessment a number of strengths were highlighted including the provision of "an excellent council website".
- Two of the council's services within the Social & Community Services directorate, Registration Service and the Community Development Team, received an exceptional assessment. Both services achieved 100% compliance against a very demanding standard.

## Spotlight on Our Corporate Assessment



**The commission assesses the performance of authorities and the services that they provide for local people and help authorities to focus on improvement.**

In December 2007, the Audit Commission carried out a Corporate Assessment of the council as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process. The Corporate Assessment is a rigorous assessment of how well the council engages with and leads its communities, delivers community priorities in partnership with others, and ensures continuous improvement across the range of its activities.

We were very pleased to receive a very positive assessment although we were disappointed to miss out on a top rating of 4 stars. We aim to rectify this in 2008. The report acknowledges that we have:

- undergone a rapid improvement journey over the past five years
- improved in most service areas achieving some good outcomes for local people
- clear ambitions with partners which reflect the needs and diversity of our communities

- a clear understanding of the issues facing Oxfordshire and our role in meeting them
- provided strong and effective leadership

### Vulnerable Children

The Audit Commission/OFSTED Joint Area Review (JAR) and the Annual Performance Assessment noted a number of major strengths in services for children and young people at risk or needing safeguarding, with a service rating of 'adequate'. The JAR also noted that members and officers were well informed about 'looked after children' and took this role very seriously but recommended more training and support. The county council has set its self the target of improving performance in these areas and a robust action plan has been agreed and is being implemented.





## Spotlight on Shared Services

Our Shared Services centre was launched in January 2007, and a little over a year later is now fully operational. A total of 367 full time equivalent staff have moved to Shared Services, to deliver Human Resources and Finance services to the whole of Oxfordshire County Council and some external partners.

To date, efficiency savings of £3.6m have been achieved, benefiting front line services and the council tax payer. A further £800,000 of efficiencies is expected to be achieved over the next financial year. These savings have primarily been achieved by reducing staff numbers through the careful management of temporary contracts and redeployment of staff, with a minimum small number of redundancies.

We have introduced new electronic systems to make it easier for the customer to access our services – these include a new e-recruitment system that advertises vacancies and enables people to apply for jobs through our website. <http://jobs.oxfordshire.gov.uk>



**Shared services covers those functions and activities that are needed by every operational service within the county council.**



















# The Cabinet

The council operates a leader/cabinet model of political management. The Cabinet meets every month and makes all the council's key decisions. The Cabinet is drawn from the controlling group and comprises 10 members, each with specific portfolio responsibilities. Current members of the Cabinet and their respective portfolios are shown below.

Role	Cabinet member	Main areas of responsibility
Leader of the Council	Councillor <b>Keith Mitchell</b> <small>CBE</small> 	Corporate and community leadership; corporate strategies; Oxfordshire Partnership; economic development and tourism; regional issues; Oxford City liaison and local strategic partnership.
Deputy Leader of the Council	Councillor <b>David Robertson</b> 	Council policy co-ordination; council business management; Public Service Board and Local Area Agreement; West Oxfordshire liaison and local strategic partnership.
Cabinet Member for Finance	Councillor <b>Charles Shouler</b> 	Finance; procurement; property; Cherwell liaison and local strategic partnership.
Cabinet Member for Change Management	Councillor <b>John Howell</b> <small>OBE</small> 	Culture change and customer focus; human resources; social inclusion and equality issues; communications strategy; information and communications technology; services for members; South Oxfordshire liaison and local strategic partnership.
Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families	Councillor <b>Louise Chapman</b> 	Children's Services: Services for children, young people and families including lead responsibility for educational policy; preventative services; child protection; family support; youth service and youth justice.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Cabinet member</b>	<b>Main areas of responsibility</b>
Cabinet Member for Community Safety	Councillor <b>Judy Heathcoat</b> 	Community safety; fire and rescue; consumer protection; emergency planning; police issues; coroner's service; gypsies and travellers; drugs and alcohol awareness; Vale of White Horse liaison and local strategic partnership.
Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development	Councillor <b>Roger Belson</b> 	Regional planning and local development framework; waste management; environmental management; archaeology and access to the countryside.
Cabinet Member for Social and Community Services	Councillor <b>Jim Couchman</b> 	Adult social services; health issues; voluntary and community sector; adult learning; libraries; museums and heritage; the arts; archives; leisure and recreation; registration service and the music service.
Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement	Councillor <b>Michael Waine</b> 	Primary and secondary schools; special education; pupil services and school transport.
Cabinet Member for Transport	Councillor <b>Ian Hudspeth</b> 	Implementation of schemes for transport; highways; traffic and parking; road safety and public passenger transport.



# The County Council Management Team

The county council's services are delivered through four directorates, each led by a strategic director. The County Council Management Team (CCMT) comprises the Chief Executive, four service directors, the Assistant Chief Executives, Associate Director for Change Management and the Director of Public Health. The members of CCMT are shown below.

† From Summer 2008  
\* Retired 30 May 2008



Chief Executive  
**Joanna Simons**



Director,  
Community Safety  
and Chief Fire Officer  
**John Parry**



Director,  
Environment  
& Economy  
**Huw Jones**<sup>†</sup>



Director,  
Children, Young  
People & Families  
**Janet Tomlinson**



Director,  
Social &  
Community Services  
**John Jackson**




Director,  
Environment  
& Economy  
**Richard Dudding**<sup>\*</sup>



Assistant Chief  
Executive (Strategy)  
**Stephen Capaldi**



Associate Director for  
Change Management  
**Steve Loraine**



Assistant Chief  
Executive and Chief  
Finance Officer  
**Sue Scane**



Director,  
Public Health  
**Jonathan McWilliam**

If you have any questions about this annual report or our corporate plan, please contact our Policy Performance Team on 01865 815307



# OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

Alternative formats of this report can be made available on request.  
These include other languages, large print, Braille, Easy Read, audio cassette, computer disc or email.



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