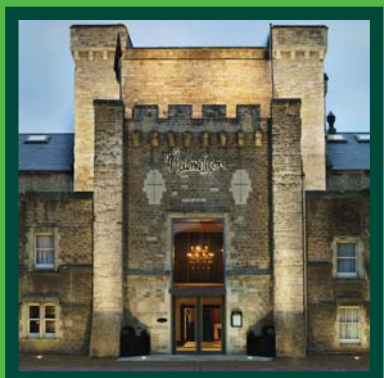


# Oxfordshire County Council Annual Report 2006



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



**OXFORDSHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL**  
[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)



# **Oxfordshire County Council**

## **Annual Report 2006 Draft**





## Foreword by Keith R Mitchell, Leader of the Council

The last 12 months have seen significant changes to the way the Council is run. It was my privilege to be elected as Leader of the new Conservative administration which was given an overall majority by the people of Oxfordshire in the elections in May 2005. We were elected on a platform of 'low taxes, real choice, value for money' and we have already taken significant strides towards meeting our promises at the election.

We promised **low taxes** and our prudent financial management has enabled us to deliver the lowest Council Tax of any shire County Council in the South East of England. We will continue to build on this pledge and deliver ever lower council tax increase for each year of our administration.

We promised **real choice** and we have already begun to implement our election pledges which will increase the level of choice available to our citizens. For example, we have abolished parking charges at the park and ride schemes that we run and we have introduced free parking during evenings and on Sundays in the centre of Oxford. This provides real choice of transport alternatives. You will find many examples of our successes over the past year throughout this Annual Report.

We promised **value for money** and, despite the low rate of council tax increase, we have been able to deliver a 'no cuts' budget and have found additional funds in services which Oxfordshire people have told us are most important to them. For example, we have found an additional £250,000 for the Youth Service and a further £100,000 a year for the next three years for local bodies to bid for specific facilities for young people. All schools in the County will receive above inflation increases in budget per pupil and we are also making significant investment in school buildings.

We have also taken a substantial leadership role in the County. Working with colleagues from the statutory and voluntary sectors, we have led the creation of a Public Services Board. The Board has agreed to a range of targets which, if successfully achieved, will lead to receiving £16 million in reward grants from central government (our taxes) to be invested in further improving public services. We have also lobbied hard at regional level to ensure that housing growth is sustainable and supported by the necessary investment in infrastructure.

We will continue to manage your money wisely and improve the services you receive by ensuring they continue to be relevant to your needs and by continually looking for more efficient ways of delivering them.



### **Introduction by Joanna Simons, Chief Executive**

I am delighted to introduce our first Annual Report. It has been an exciting year of change for the County Council and one that coincides with my first year as Chief Executive.

We have changed our approach to planning this year. In April 2006, the Council approved our first long-term Corporate Plan which sets out our objectives, priorities and key targets for the next four years. In our Annual Report we have highlighted our achievements over the last year and provided details of how we have performed against a broad range of targets.

The Council has performed well in external assessments. The Council was classified as a good authority at the end of 2004 and this was confirmed under the new assessment regime in December 2005 with the Council being assessed as a 3 star authority. This was due in no small part to the performance of our services during the year. Our fire service was assessed as 'good' in July 2005 and remains one of the most cost effective in the country. Our social services improved their overall rating this year securing a two star rating. We received a score of 4 (the highest rating for Culture).

However, we are not complacent. The past year has seen us lay substantial foundations to ensure we are well equipped to deliver excellent services to the people of Oxfordshire in the years ahead. We have successfully realigned two directorates to create new Directorates for Children, Young People and Families and for Social and Community Services. This will enable us to deliver services in a joined up and cohesive way in the years ahead. We have started the process of creating a Shared Services Centre which will bring together back office functions to create efficiencies and release more resources to frontline services. We are committed to building on our excellent record of CharterMark accreditation for a large number of our services by starting a process which should lead to the Council being accredited as a CharterMark authority demonstrating our commitment to excellent service for all our customers

If you have any questions about any aspect of this Annual Report or our Corporate Plan, please contact our Corporate Performance Team on (01865) 815307.



## The Cabinet

Our **Cabinet** leads the County Council and is responsible for most functions. It meets regularly in public and makes all the council's key decisions. The Cabinet is drawn from the controlling Conservative group and comprises 10 members each with specific portfolio responsibilities. Members of the cabinet are shown below together with their Cabinet portfolios.

### **Councillor Keith Mitchell**, Leader of the Council



Corporate and community leadership; corporate strategies; regional issues; Oxford City liaison and local strategic partnership

### **Councillor David Robertson**, Deputy Leader/Transport



Transport; highways; traffic and parking; road safety; public passenger transport; West Oxfordshire liaison and local strategic partnership

### **Councillor Don Seale**, Adult Learning and Cultural Services



Adult learning; libraries; museums and heritage; the arts; archives; leisure and recreation

### **Councillor Louise Chapman**, Children & Young People



Services for children, young people and families including lead responsibility for educational policy; preventative services; child protection; family support

### **Councillor Michael Waine**, Schools Improvement



Primary and secondary schools; special education; pupil services; school transport; music service

### **Councillor Roger Belson**, Sustainable Development



Regional planning and local development framework; economic development; waste management; environmental management; archaeology; access to the countryside; tourism

### **Councillor Ray Jelf**, Community Safety



Fire and rescue; consumer protection; emergency planning; police issues; trading standards; registration service; coroner's service; travellers; drugs and alcohol awareness; youth justice

### **Councillor Charles Shouler**, Finance



Finance; procurement; property; Cherwell liaison and local strategic partnership

### **Councillor John Howell, Change Management**



Culture change and customer focus; human resources; communications strategy; information and communications technology; South Oxfordshire liaison and local strategic partnership

### **Councillor Jim Couchman, Social Care & Policy Co-ordination**



Adult social services; health issues; social inclusion & equality; Cabinet business management; services for members; Vale of White Horse liaison and local strategic partnership; voluntary and community sector

## **County Council Management Team**

The County Council's services are delivered through five directorates each led by a strategic director. The County Council Management Team (CCMT) comprises the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive and the five directors. CCMT meets on a weekly basis and takes a strategic approach to the management of the council. Members of the County Council management team are shown below:



**Joanna Simons, Chief Executive**



**Keith Bartley, Director for Children, Young People & Families**



**John Parry, Director for Community Safety**



**Richard Dudding, Director for Environment & Economy**



**John Jackson, Director for Resources**



**Charles Waddicor, Director for Social & Community Services**



**Stephen Capaldi, Assistant Chief Executive**



# Growing our economy - Improving our prosperity

## How the County Council works for Oxfordshire

We have a crucial role in helping our economy to grow quickly while ensuring this is not at the expense of our environment. The Council plays a leading role in developing the Economic Development Strategy for the County through our membership of the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership. We are committed to seeing growth in science based high-tech industries, but at the same time protecting our green belt. We are responsible for maintaining and improving our transport infrastructure, which has a vital role to play in maintaining a successful economy. We also play a key role in ensuring we have an appropriately skilled workforce who can respond to new opportunities and this is reflected through our joint work with Learning and Skills Councils. We have also played our part in improving access to affordable housing for key workers.

## Our key achievements in 2005/6 include:

Completing (with partners) the acclaimed transformation of the Oxford Castle site into an economic powerhouse for the region. Already set to become one of the county's top commercial and historical attractions, this important heritage site has been regenerated in a way that blends top class commercial development – including a luxury hotel, flats and restaurants set within attractive piazzas – with enhanced and protected historic access and educational facilities. The project completes the first stage of the planned regeneration of the whole West End of Oxford

[www.oxfordcastleunlocked.co.uk](http://www.oxfordcastleunlocked.co.uk).



We introduced the first stage of '**Oxfordshire Highways**', our new partnering arrangements through which we deliver maintenance and improvement work on roads and footpaths throughout the County. This brings together the Council and our two main contractors to provide a single point of contact for customers and introduces new ways of working to provide improved customer service and efficiency.



We have ended parking charges for the two **park and ride schemes** we run. We are also trialling **free parking** in Oxford in the evenings and on Sundays. These changes improve choice in transport alternatives, providing value for money to our Council Tax payers

## Growing our economy - Improving our prosperity

as well as providing a boost to the local economy.

During the year we developed our new Local Transport Plan 2006-11 which sets out our vision for transport in the County. The strategy aims to improve access to jobs and services, particularly for those in need, in ways which are both safe and sustainable.

The County Council has been recognised as the best council in the South East at encouraging small businesses to win local authority contracts.

### Performance Highlights

- ✓ We have completed the successful development of the Oxford Castle site contributing to the renaissance of the West End of Oxford.
- ✓ We provided 22 loans for housing to key workers in Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

### Did you know?

We maintain 2,800 miles of Oxfordshire's roads and pavements, we maintain 981 road bridges and over 500,000 trees.

We support public transport and work to improve real choice

We subsidise 150 bus routes



We launched a new website ([www.oxontime.com](http://www.oxontime.com)) to give people real time information about whether buses are running on time. The new service has received more than 10 million enquiries since its launch in July 2005.

# Investing in our children & young people

## How the County Council works for Oxfordshire

We take seriously our responsibilities to children, young people and their families and are committed to investing in their future. We do this through working closely with a number of key partners in the County. The Council's responsibilities are many and varied. For example, we work closely with nearly 300 schools to help improve performance; provide a comprehensive education system for all children and young people aged between 4 and 19; protect vulnerable young people at risk; look after children and young people not living with their families; assist children and young people with disabilities or learning difficulties, help children and young people in trouble with the law; support children and young people who misuse drugs or alcohol; provide children and young people with employment and life skills and provide positive activities through the Youth Service.

## Our key achievements in 2005/6 include:

- The successful development of our first **Children and Young People's Plan**. This is the first time strategic planning for children and young people has been brought together in one overarching document. The plan identifies joint agency priorities for improving outcomes for all children and young people and under the new Children Act all statutory agencies have a duty to cooperate in its implementation.

- We have created a new Children and Young People's Board to oversee the joint planning and commissioning of services for children and young people. The Board brings together the County Council and colleagues from the police, health, District Councils and other voluntary and statutory organisations together with representatives of children and young people.
- We have also taken the opportunity to bring together all services for Children and Young People in a new **Children, Young People & Families Directorate**. This has provided an excellent basis for more integrated working and improved service delivery.



- Our **schools performance** has shown improvement in almost all measures used. The number of young people receiving 5 or more good GCSE passes rose by 3% in 2005 and the proportion of 16 year olds participating in

## Investing in our children & young people

education and training rose from 78% in 2003 to 83% in 2005.

- 2005 saw the launch of our **'Learning Matters' campaign**. The campaign is designed to engage the people of Oxfordshire to inspire our children and young people to achieve their potential, with a particular focus on raising achievement at GCSE level.
- External inspectors gave our children's services a score of 3 out of a possible 4 and judged that we deliver consistently above minimum standards in the outcomes we deliver for children and young people and for our education services.
- The Commission for Social Care Inspection judged our children's social care services as having moved from 'uncertain prospects for improvement' to 'promising prospects'.
- We have developed a Performance and Intervention team which supports families in their communities and has reduced significantly the number of children and young people becoming looked after.
- Our prudent financial management over the year has enabled the Council to invest an extra £250,000 in our Youth Service. We are also creating a special fund of £300,000 spread evenly

over the next three years to enable local bodies to bid for specific facilities for young people.

- We launched a new website for children and their carers to encourage young people to read more books by introducing more of the internet generation to our library service.

### Key Facts

We fund 12 nursery schools, 234 primary schools, 34 secondary schools, 14 special schools, 600 early years and childcare settings and serve over 85,000 children and young people.

We spent £26.6 million on capital improvements in schools in 2005/6

### Performance Highlights

- ✓ We achieved results above the national average for key stage 3 in English, Maths & Science
- ✓ We achieved stretching targets for:
  - ✓ The achievements of Bangladeshi pupils at GCSE
  - ✓ Reducing the number of children permanently excluded from schools
  - ✓ Reducing the number of children in care offending

# Protecting our communities

## How the County Council works for Oxfordshire

The County Council provides a diverse range of services that help to protect our communities. We are responsible for the Fire and Rescue Service which helps to reduce risk from fire and other emergencies and provides an effective emergency response when things go wrong. Our Emergency Planning service ensures we are well placed to respond to a range of potential emergencies. We have a responsibility to work to prevent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour through our Safer Communities Unit. Our Transport Service works to ensure a safe highways network in the county. Our Trading Standards service works all year round to protect the interests of Oxfordshire's consumers.

### Our key achievements in 2005/6 include:



- Positive reductions in fire trends, including the number of fires, deaths and injuries.

## Key Facts

In 2005/6, our Fire & Rescue Service attended around 6,000 incidents including 2,100 fires. The service rescued 31 people from fires and 124 people from road traffic collisions.

Our Youth Offending Service worked with over 1,300 young offenders in 2005.

Our Trading Standards service inspects nearly 2,000 businesses each year; ensures electric blankets, toys, bicycles and furniture are safe; checks the health and welfare of farm animals at livestock markets and abattoirs

- A reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads
- We opened a new winter service depot in Woodcote, which will help keep roads in the south and east of the County hazard free in the winter months.



## Protecting our communities

- Our Trading Standards service saved homeowners £30,000 following a campaign to target rogue traders.
- Over the last year, 84.65% of all identified victims of youth crime were offered the opportunity to participate in a restorative process.
- Our Emergency Planning Service is working with local businesses to ensure they are well prepared for major incidents.



### Performance Highlights

- ✓ Our Fire and Rescue Service was awarded a 'good' CPA rating including an excellent grading for 'achievement of our objectives'.
- ✓ The Fire and Rescue Service is the most cost effective service in England costing residents only 60p per week.
- ✓ We have reduced the number of property fires year on year for the last five years due to our fire prevention/protection strategy.
- ✓ We have reduced the number of deliberate fires by 30% over the last five years.



# Promoting Social and Community Services

## How the County Council works for Oxfordshire

The County Council works closely with colleagues in the statutory and voluntary sectors to provide social care services for adults. We provide services for older people, people with learning and physical disabilities, those with mental health needs and we support carers. The health economy in Oxfordshire is under acute financial pressure and we have been working very closely with our partners to minimise the impact of this on local residents. At the same time demographic changes increase the demand for our services: a trend that will continue in the future. We place a strong emphasis on promoting independence and supporting rehabilitation.

We also provide a range of cultural and adult learning services throughout the County. This includes our highly regarded Library and Music Services. We also provide Museums, a Museums Resource Centre and an Adult Learning Service.

### Our key achievements in 2005/6 include:

- Achieving a two star rating for our Social Care Services, a significant improvement on the previous year.
- Achieving the highest inspection rating for Cultural Services.
- Our Supporting People Programme, managed by the Directorate in partnership with other

agencies, received a two star rating.

- Bringing together our services for Adult Social Care, Cultural Services and Adult Learning into a new Social & Community Services Directorate which will provide a real opportunity for the development of comprehensive community services.



- Managing £54m of pooled budgets for the joint purchase of residential and nursing home care with the health service. These arrangements bring intermediate care services under a single management arrangement to improve efficiency, provide economies of scale in purchasing from providers and keep prices down.

## Promoting Social and Community Services



- Our library service won praise for our excellent stock of library books. Our book lending has increased over recent years against a national trend of falling borrowing.

### Performance Highlights

- ✓ We increased book issues by 5% and issues to children by 13% against a national trend of falling issues
- ✓ Over 20,000 people enrolled in adult learning courses
- ✓ Improved Social Care Services from a 1 star to 2 star rating

### Key Facts

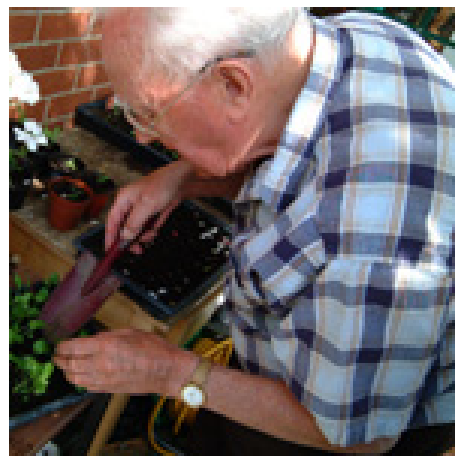
We provide care to over 7,500 older people; 1,100 physically disabled and sensory impaired people; 1,200 people with learning disabilities; 900 people with mental health problems; 6,500 carers; 2,000 people in residential/nursing care and 8,500 people who need support to live at home.

Over 4.25million visits were made to our libraries resulting in 4.4million books, CDs and DVDs being issued

177,000 people visited our museums

6,000 children participated in musical activities

- Installing new equipment in the Central Library in Oxford to help deaf and hard of hearing people.
- Working with bus operators and user groups to develop an Oxfordshire standard of disability awareness training.



# Protecting our environment

## How the County Council works for Oxfordshire

The County Council takes our role as custodians of our outstanding environment very seriously.

Our environmental role encompasses responsibility for environmental protection and waste management. As a Structure Plan authority we comment on major planning applications to ensure that development in the county are consistent with the policies and proposals in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. In future we will have a major role to play in lobbying the South East of England Regional Assembly who will take responsibility for regional planning policy to ensure Oxfordshire's interests are protected.

## Our key achievements in 2005/6 include:

- Our Energy education programme has inspired our young people to identify ways of cutting energy use.



- Installing 140 new and 25 renovated cycle racks in Oxford to

- increase opportunities for cyclists to move around the City and provide real choice in transport alternatives.
- Recycling one-third of the County's waste in partnership with our District Council colleagues

## Key Facts

We have played a key role in establishing the Oxford Green Belt and are committed to protecting it from development.

We manage more than 2,600 miles of rights of way in the county.

- Signing up to a project that assists business to cut down on waste management costs

## Performance Highlights

- ✓ With our District Council partners we achieved a countywide recycling rate of 21.65% and a composting rate of 11.71%, a combined improvement of over 3%.
- ✓ We have the lowest waste per head of any county in the country
- ✓ We achieved an average recycling rate of 53% at our waste recycling centres

## Listening to our customers

### How the County Council works for Oxfordshire

At the core of all we do is a commitment to serve the needs and respond to the wishes of Oxfordshire's diverse communities and our service users.

We place significant emphasis on giving people a say in how services are planned and run and how we spend their money. We use a range of consultation methods to ensure we understand people's views, which is particularly important when we have to make difficult decisions.

We have five key consultation principles:

- keep an open mind and run consultations in an open and honest way
- give all relevant parties the chance to have their say
- take views expressed into account when we make decisions
- provide feedback to consultees
- tell people what we are doing in response to consultation findings

We use a variety of methods to ensure we stay in touch. We have a Citizen's Panel. We regularly run public meetings, hold consultation exhibitions, carry out surveys and organise focus groups. Mystery Shopping initiatives are continually taking place, information on consultations and surveys in your area and across

## Developing our Council

the county can be viewed on our website [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk) to become involved in the issues [consultationsfeedback@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:consultationsfeedback@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### How the County Council works for Oxfordshire

We are conscious that in focussing on excellent service delivery today, we do not forget to ensure that we develop our capacity as a Council to respond to the challenges of the future and deliver continuous improvement in the services we provide.

During the year we began a new ambitious programme for change and organisational development. We take this programme very seriously. In addition to being the first Council in the country to appoint a dedicated Cabinet member for Change Management, the programme is overseen by a Change Management Board comprising senior Cabinet members and our senior management team.

Details of our Change Programme can be found in the Council's Corporate Plan 2006-10. We are committed to using public money wisely and well. We delivered our promise that we would reduce the expected increase in the Council tax. As part of our commitment to value for money we are implementing a further £5m of efficiency savings this year on top of approximately £5m we delivered last year. Our sickness levels are very low compared with most other public sector organizations and compare favourably with many employers in the public sector.

## **Objectives and Strategic Priorities 2006-10**

During 2005/6, the Council adopted new objectives and strategic priorities for the period 2006-10. We have set these out below. They are explained in more detail in our Corporate Plan together with the key targets that support them.

### **Our Objectives:**

*"low taxes, real choice, value for money"*

### **Our Strategic Priorities:**

Help the economy to grow as fast as possible with a real choice of access to jobs, homes, leisure and services and in a way that does not prejudice the future of our environment

Give all of us – throughout our lives – the opportunity to enjoy effective teaching and learning

Safeguard our communities and maintain our rural character

Help our disadvantaged residents to live fulfilling and independent lives

Keep improving our services by listening to users' views

Make Oxfordshire – its City, towns, villages and countryside – welcoming, safe and exceptional places to live, work, learn and visit.

## **Summary Accounts**

To be added when available.



## **Appendices of Performance Results & Statement on Workforce Matters**

To be added when available.

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

Please telephone 01865 815676



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