Oxfordshire County Council

Corporate Plan

2010/11 – 2014/15

Foreword from Councillor Mitchell / Joanna Simons

TO FOLLOW

About Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is the most rural part of the South East but has grown rapidly in recent years. The population is currently 635,000 and will continue to increase, with the growth distributed largely in and around Oxford City, Bicester and Didcot. There may also be a decline in population in a number of rural areas. See figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Population change 2006 to 2016
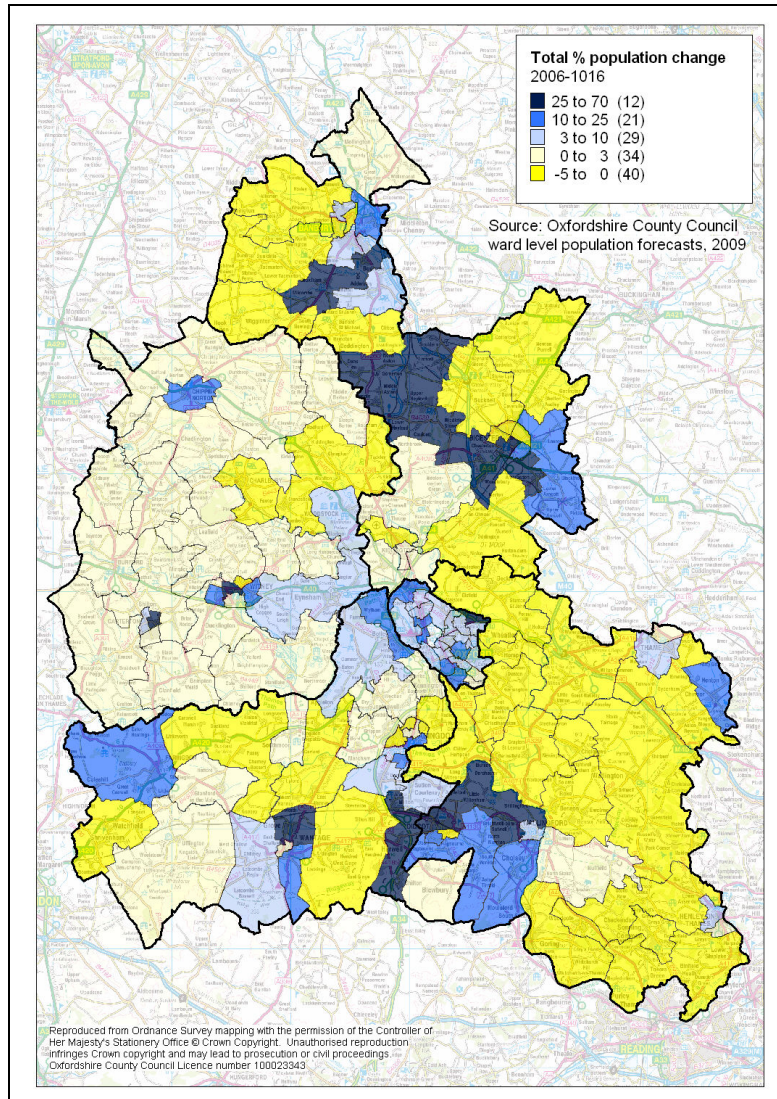
Source: Oxfordshire County Council ward population forecasts, 2009

The county has tremendous assets: people like to live and work here because the environment is attractive; there are good links to other parts of the country; we have a successful economy built around the universities and related high tech industries and businesses; we enjoy good public services and the population is more healthy and prosperous than virtually any other county in the UK. Of course there are downsides:

- The economic downturn continues to challenge local businesses, put jobs at risk and reduce resources for public services;

- Traffic congestion and pollution is growing;

- Housing availability and affordability remain a problem despite the recent dip in house prices;

- There are pockets of disadvantage and a cycle of deprivation, which needs to be broken;

- There are skills shortages and particular concerns about young people aged 16-25 years who are not in education, training or employment.

We are working with national, regional and local partners to address the problems but overall Oxfordshire is a success story.

More information is available in 'This is Oxfordshire 2009', the key facts about Oxfordshire produced by the Research and Intelligence team and available at the Oxfordshire Data Observatory www.oxfordshireobservatory.info

Figure 2: Major Development Locations
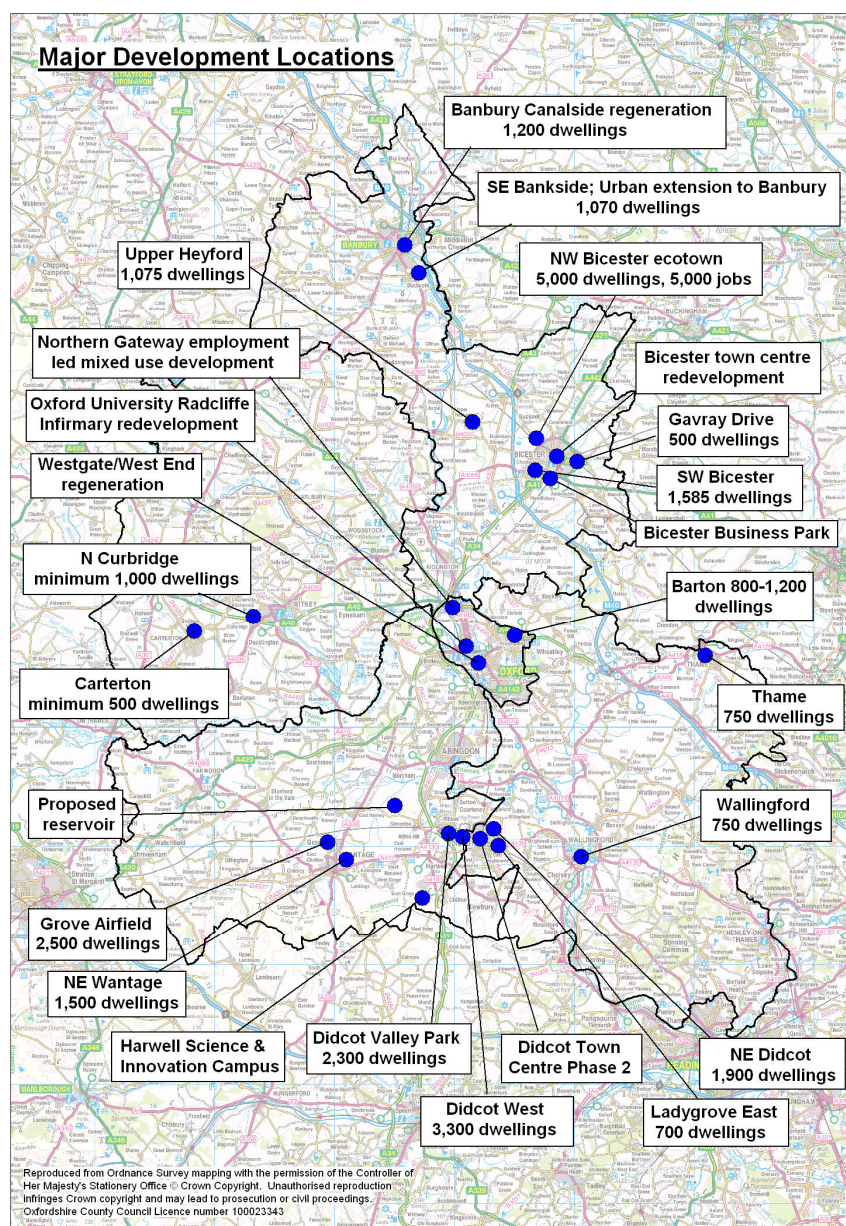
Source: Oxfordshire County Council, 2009

Our Strategic Objectives

World Class Economy	Healthy and Thriving Communities	Environment and Climate Change	Better Public Services
Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation (cross-cutting theme)			

Our strategic objectives are consistent with Oxfordshire 2030, the county's long term plan which has been agreed with partners following extensive public and stakeholder engagement. Details of Oxfordshire 2030 can be found at: **www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk**

More detail about specific services can be found in directorate plans and service business plans at **www.oxfordshire.gov.uk**

This Corporate Plan is in two parts:

Part 1 – summarises our broad strategic direction

Part 2 – sets out examples of our short and medium term delivery commitments.

Our Principles

We are committed to:

- **Low tax** – reducing year-on-year the annual increase in council tax.

- **Real choice** – providing services to meet the requirements of residents. This supports our commitment to providing services in ways that best suit the differing requirements and circumstances of the varying people and parts of our diverse county rather than expecting residents' needs to fit our services.

- **Value for money** – streamlining service delivery and improving cost effectiveness year on year.

Our Values

In delivering services we will be guided by these six underpinning values:

- **Customer focus** – putting the needs of our customers first and improving opportunities for local people to have their say and get involved with council decision-making.

- **Honesty** – being 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 county council and valuing and developing our staff to perform to the best of their abilities and deliver excellent services.

- **Involvement** – providing opportunities for our communities, our stakeholders and our staff to help shape our services and feeding back so that people know how local views influence decision-making.

- **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 resources, skills and experience to deliver services to the community, learning from our successes and constantly challenging ourselves to do better.

Focus on Communities

Oxfordshire is a diverse county. The challenge for the County Council and its partners is to deliver its strategic objectives in a way that fits with the needs of local people and local communities. We are determined that a 'one size fits all' approach should be avoided wherever possible, as our 'real choice' commitment implies.

To facilitate this we have identified 14 localities across Oxfordshire (see figure 3), which are centred on the city and our market towns. We will work with partners to join up services in each of these areas and to connect and engage with local people.

However we recognise that some areas face more significant challenges in terms of development, regeneration and inequalities than others. In consequence we will place particular emphasis in six localities – Oxford City, Banbury, Bicester, Didcot, Abingdon and Carterton – where there is either significant development planned or a need to address inequalities or both.

In our Delivery Plan you will see examples of how our strategic objectives are reflected in action in particular localities, although this does not provide comprehensive coverage of all our work.

Figure 3: Oxfordshire's Fourteen Localities
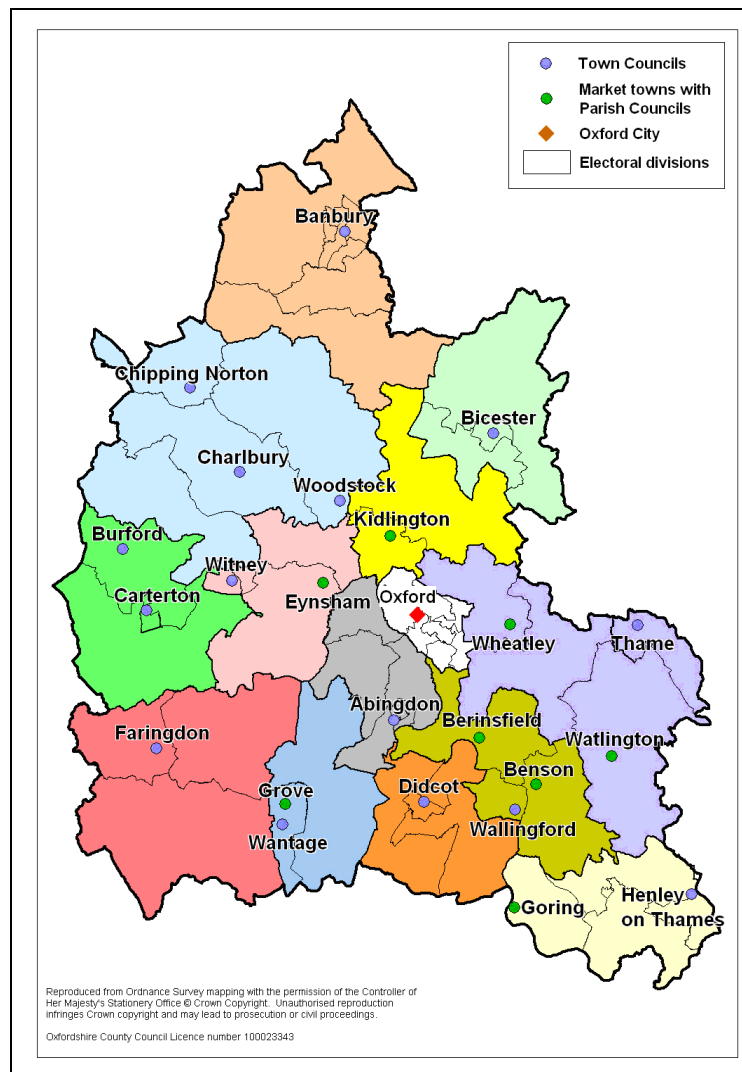
Source: Oxfordshire County Council, 2009

World Class Economy

Despite the recession, Oxfordshire has one of the strongest economies in the South East, which is itself the powerhouse of the national economy. Oxfordshire is globally competitive in areas such as high performance engineering, bioscience, medical instruments and publishing. Maintaining this competitiveness is central to the long term prosperity of the county. At the same time, it is an attractive county, much of it rural, with an outstanding built environment.

The combination of a good environment and a thriving economy is a major strength: many employers cite the quality of Oxfordshire's environment as a key factor in the success of their businesses. This also suggests that maintaining a very high quality environment will be key to Oxfordshire's future success and our aspiration is achieve this while fostering further economic growth. More broadly, we want to see the South East region among the top 10 high performing regions in the world, with Oxfordshire contributing significantly to achieving this ambition.

Figure 4: Employment by broad sector, 2008
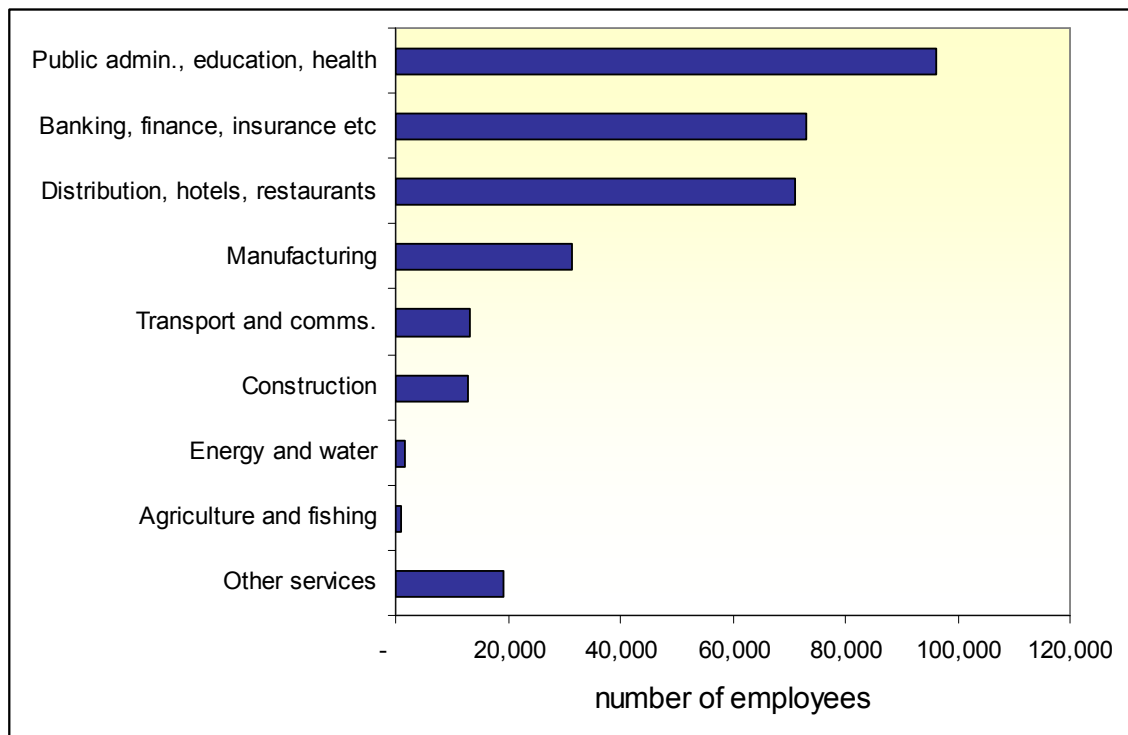
Source: Office of National Statistics, Annual Business Inquiry, 2008

Oxfordshire's economy has been one of the fastest growing in the country, particularly in terms of gross value added. The county's employment structure has changed significantly, notably in the dramatic decline in the numbers employed in the motor industry over the last 25 years. However the number of cars produced by BMW at the Cowley plant is greater than was achieved by British Leyland in the past, when employment was much higher. Employment in the public sector increased significantly in the first part of the 21st century, particularly in education.

Tourism is an important sector of the local economy, but remains under exploited. While Oxford is understandably the main magnet for visitors, many tourists are also

drawn to the more rural parts of the county and notably to the Cotswolds. Our aim is to increase the length of time visitors stay in the county and to encourage them to spend on goods and services provided by local businesses.

The growth of hi-tech and knowledge intensive companies and employment has been one of the most marked features of the Oxfordshire economy (see figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5: Location of Knowledge Intensive Business, by employment, 2008
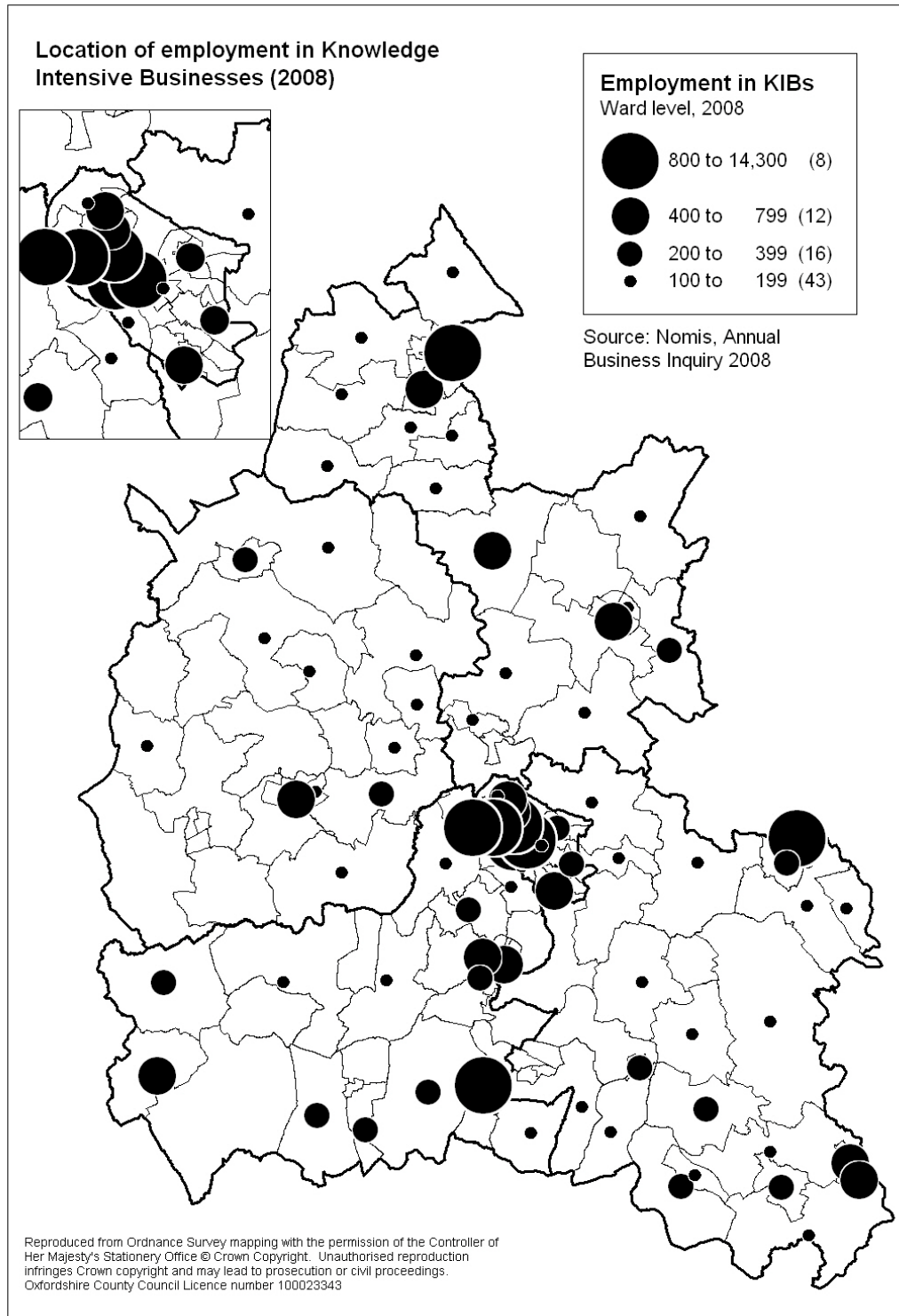
Source: Office of National Statistics, Annual Business Inquiry, 2008

Figure 6: Proportion of workforce employed in knowledge intensive business

2008 South East average (9.7%)

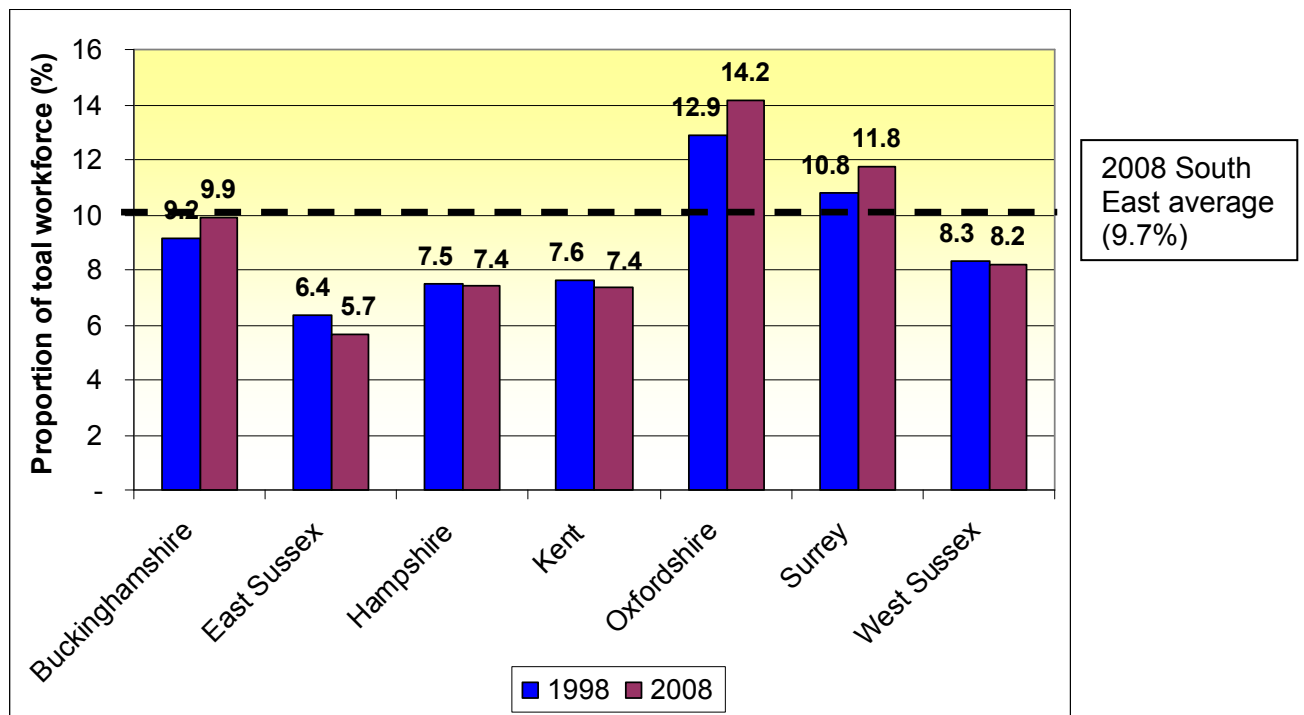Source: Office of National Statistics, Annual Business Inquiry 2008

Challenges facing the County Council

- **Infrastructure** – improvements are needed to the county's arterial roads, schools and other public buildings. We will work with partners to secure investment in priority schemes over the longer term

- **Traffic congestion** – impacts adversely on Oxfordshire businesses as well as its residents. It is a priority to make it easier to get around the county, by car, rail and other forms of public transport.

- **Educational achievement** – performance in Oxfordshire schools reflects the national average and is continuing to improve each year. However we think that our schools should do better and our aim is to be in the top 25% of areas nationally.

- **Young people** – the recession has impacted adversely on our efforts to make sure that all 18-25 year olds are in education, employment or training. With our partners we will work even harder to ensure that every young person gets the help they need to gain and maintain employment.

- **Skill levels** – these need to continue to improve, for the benefit of both individuals and Oxfordshire's businesses which need high quality, skilled employees

Healthy and Thriving Communities

87% of residents think that Oxfordshire is a good place to live (based on responses to the recent Place Survey) and levels of crime are low. However, people lead increasingly pressured lives and making time to enjoy and participate in community life is a challenge for many. Yet, without local people joining in community affairs and supporting local projects, our city, towns, villages and neighbourhoods will become less attractive places in which to live and the vulnerable (the old, the sick, those living on limited incomes) will feel increasingly isolated.

This will be especially true in rural areas, where there are already communities suffering 'dormitory town syndrome'. These are not the kind of communities Oxfordshire people want to live in and we will work to provide community leadership, encourage volunteering and support the voluntary, community and faith sector in our communities. We will also seek to reflect the diverse needs of these communities in our planning and service delivery.

We have an increasingly diverse population which has major implications for education, the economy and social cohesion. We will be tackling inequalities through our partnership projects aimed at breaking the cycle of deprivation. We also have an ageing population – which has advantages and disadvantages. There are likely to be increased pressures on public services particularly health, social care and transport services but an increasing older population may also produce economic benefits and help sustain and enhance community life.

Figure 7: The expected increase in numbers of older people
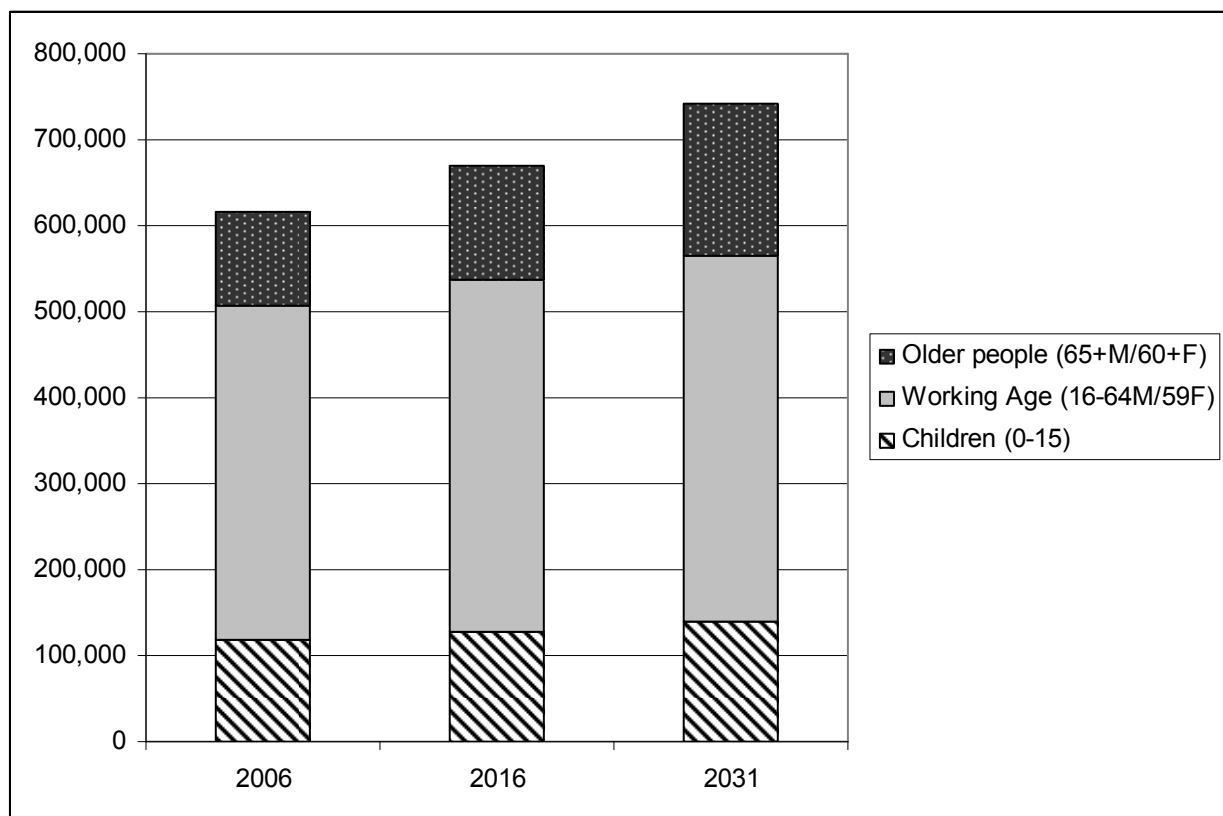
Source: Office of National Statistics 2006-based sub-national population projections

We will support and protect the vulnerable, including older people and those with disabilities. However we want to help people to maintain their independence and give them choice in the way they lead their lives and secure the services they need to support them.

Crime and anti-social behaviour are at relatively low levels but still give cause for concern for local people. As well as working with the police and other partners to tackle crime we want to focus on providing activities to help young people enjoy their leisure time in positive ways.

The County's population is generally healthier than elsewhere, with longer than average life expectancy, although there are variations in life expectancy across the county. Work to break the cycle of deprivation will address these inequalities. We will also promote healthy lifestyles for young people and older people.

Figure 8: Deprivation in Oxfordshire compared with the rest of England
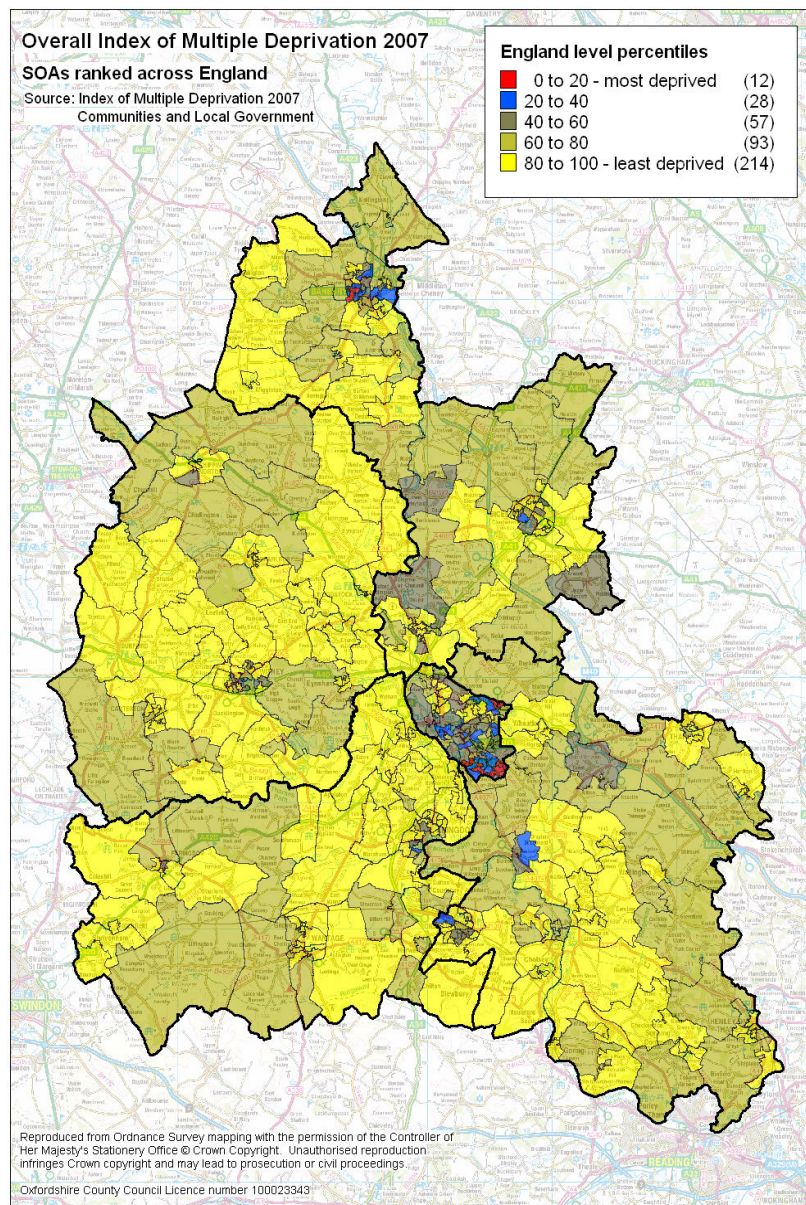
Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2007

Challenges Facing the County Council

- **Health inequality** – there are areas in Oxfordshire where life expectancy and people's health are lower than elsewhere. For example, mortality rates reveal a variation in life expectancy of over 15 years between the best and worst areas and the prevalence of mental illness in some parts of the county is double the county average. Our close relationship with Oxfordshire National Health Service and work to promote healthy lifestyles, to support the vulnerable and tackle the cycle of deprivation is designed to address these health inequalities.

- **Demographic change** – the significant growth in older people (particularly the over 85s) and people with learning disabilities will put pressure on public services in the medium term. The Council is providing additional resources to meet these challenges. It will also be important to encourage more community self help.

- **Crime and anti social behaviour** – crime is generally low in Oxfordshire but fear of crime is disproportionately high. This is of particular concern to older people and is often associated with anti social behaviour. We are working to provide positive activities for young people, notably through the youth service. We also recognise that activity generated in local communities can help to bring people together and reduce anti social behaviour

- **Community Self Help –** expectations of public services grow ever higher while resources are increasingly constrained. Community self help can assist the council in maximising the use of our resources. Many communities have good neighbour arrangements, community transport and other similar schemes and we will support and promote these activities across the county. In particular we would like to encourage and mobilise the contributions of retired, fit and skilled older people in our communities.

- **Closer to Communities –** we have defined 14 'localities' across the county based on our market towns and the city of Oxford (see figure 3). Six of these 14 areas (Abingdon, Banbury, Bicester, Carterton, Didcot and Oxford) will be given priority attention because of the development and/or regeneration pressures they face.

- **Independent living** – the population is ageing and there are more older people and people with disabilities to be cared for and supported. Our aim is to help people to maintain their independence and to have control over their lives. We will increase the availability of Extra Care Housing and Supported Living arrangements as an alternative to residential or institutional care.

Environment and Climate Change

Oxfordshire has an attractive environment with beautiful countryside, including many nature reserves, sites of scientific interest and conservation. The county also has outstanding architecture, including the Blenheim Palace world heritage site near Woodstock and over 1,000 listed buildings. To support our ambitions to develop a world class economy, we will protect Oxfordshire's natural environment and its built environment.

Figure 9: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Source: Oxfordshire County Council

Globally there is concern about carbon dioxide emissions contributing to climate change. The county's emissions are equivalent to those of a sizeable country in the developing world.

The council, our partners and local businesses need to achieve considerable reductions under the new carbon taxation system. Reducing our carbon footprint means we are reducing energy consumption and reducing operational costs.

We can also expect changes in:

- travel and lifestyle patterns as individuals adjust their behaviour; and
- climate with more extreme weather conditions creating a range of potential problems

Precise impacts will be unpredictable but our programmes and policies need to respond to and facilitate these changes.

Figure 10: Total carbon dioxide emissions per person, 2005 to 2007
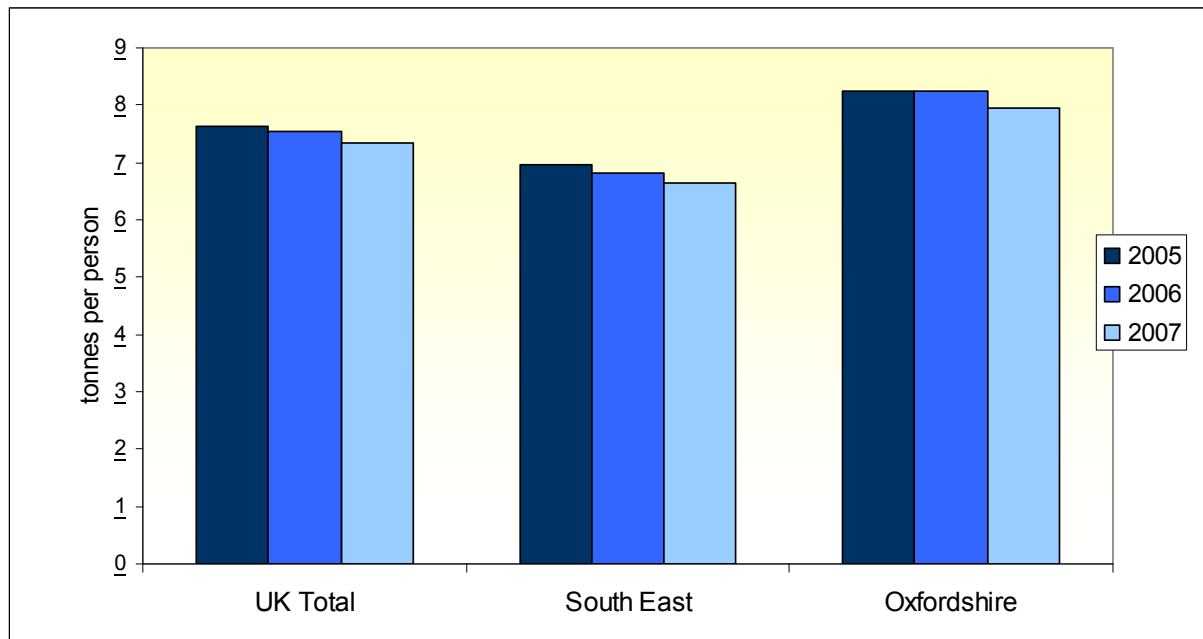
Source: Department for Energy and Climate Change

Challenges Facing the County Council

- **Reducing emissions and increasing energy efficiency** – the council has already committed to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions and the introduction of carbon tax will further incentivise action to reduce energy use.

- **Flooding** – the risk of flooding is a particular concern and a range of mitigation measures have been put in place since the summer floods in 2007. The latest estimates from the Environment Agency indicate that there are approximately 21,000 existing properties at risk of flooding in Oxfordshire, with around 8,500 at significant risk.

- **Waste management** – waste is a contributor to carbon dioxide emissions and needs to be reduced. We are working with partners to increase recycling and composting as well as investing in new waste disposal facilities which will convert waste to energy.

- **Transform Oxford** – Oxford is one of the most beautiful cities in the world and we need to protect and enhance its environment. The Transform Oxford project is one example of the County Council's commitment to the improvement of the visitor experience in Oxford.

Better Public Services

People rightly expect accessible, high quality and responsive public services. To achieve this we need to join up effectively with other public service providers. The public also expect us to spend their money wisely and they will judge value for money not simply by the level of council tax but by whether our services are visibly efficient and effective.

The Council has a proven track record for delivering value for money, achieving efficiency savings and meeting our pledge to keep council tax low. Since 2007 the council has delivered over £50 million in year-on-year efficiency savings but more will be needed in the medium term.

The Council also has a strong commitment to partnership working to ensure that the customer receives a seamless service. Our partnership with the Oxfordshire National Health Service is among the best in the country in terms of pooled budgets to achieve shared goals. We are also involved in innovative partnerships such as the Science Vale UK

Our increasing focus on locality working means we communicate and engage actively with local residents and communities. The Audit Commission praised us in the recent Comprehensive Area Assessment for the effectiveness of this engagement, particularly in setting the budget and consulting with young people.

In the medium term local government funding will tighten and, over the next 5 years, the Council will need to make efficiency savings of over £100 million. To achieve this we will need to:

- Protect key public services

- Innovate to improve customer responsiveness

- Streamline service delivery to further improve value for money

Challenges Facing the County Council

- **Improve customer service** – we will further enhance online services and develop a contact centre so that more enquiries can be dealt with at the first point of contact.

- **Keeping council tax low** – our business efficiency strategy commits the Council to lean working' reducing management costs, joining up with partners, reducing bureaucracy and rationalising our assets. This strategy will enable the Council to reduce spending and keep council tax increases low.

- **Total place** – there is increasing recognition that, in every community, huge resources are deployed by central government, local government and other public sector organisations. The Council is keen to work with others to develop the 'Total Place' approach, which could lead to better solutions and improved use of resources by reducing the risk of inefficiency and duplication.

The Golden Thread

The Corporate Plan objectives fit into a wider picture as shown in figure 11, with a golden thread linking all of our work from top level objectives through to service delivery.

Figure 11: Oxfordshire's Golden Thread

Golden thread

Oxfordshire 2030
Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)
Sets out long-term partnership vision and strategy for Oxfordshire
www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk/Oxfordshire2030

Oxfordshire 2030 Delivery Plan
Action required to deliver the SCS and LAA
www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk/wps/wcm/connect/OxfordshirePartnership/Oxfordshire+2030/OP+-+O2030+00+delivery+plan

Local Area Agreement for Oxfordshire (LAA)
Delivery mechanism for the SCS reflecting local and national priorities for Oxfordshire
www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk/wps/wcm/connect/OxfordshirePartnership/Local+Area+Agreement/

Oxfordshire County Council Corporate Plan
Sets out the council's vision and priorities for the next 4 years reflecting council priorities, the SCS and LAA

Medium Term Financial Plan
Sets out how the council will allocate funding for the next 4 years
[ADD LINK ONCE AVAILABLE]

Other statutory plans
Set the framework for delivery across the council

Directorate and service plans
Annual plans converting corporate priorities and spending programmes into operational business plans for individual services
[ADD LINK]

Individual performance objectives
For every member of staff

Golden thread

Performance Management

Measures of success in delivering the priorities identified in this plan are included in the accompanying Delivery Plan [ADD LINK]. This forms part of a robust performance management system across the Council through which we translate our priorities into action and make sure we deliver our promises.

The Corporate Plan and each directorate business plan are accompanied by a balanced scorecard. These provide a framework for measuring our performance and capacity to improve in relation to four key areas:

- **Customer** – how we are doing in delivering our key priorities for our customers
- **Projects** – the status of major projects
- **Finance** – how we are managing our budget
- **People** – how we are developing our people to deliver excellent services

The Corporate Balanced Scorecard also incorporates the management of risks and ensures accountability in service delivery.

We use a number of different methods to challenge our thinking and to make sure our strategic and service priorities are both ambitious and deliverable. This includes reporting the Corporate Balanced Scorecard to the County Council Management Team and the Cabinet on a quarterly basis to highlight areas of success and agree actions to address areas for improvement.

Finance

Day to Day spending

Our Medium Term Financial Plan 2010/11 to 2014/15 sets out how resources are allocated in accordance with the Council's priorities. Our financial planning reflects:

- the allocation of sufficient funding to resource our key strategic priorities;

- the need to fund adequately our core service requirements;

- our commitment to council tax payers;

- the financial resources forthcoming from Government; and

- our ongoing commitment to achieve efficiency savings to ensure improved value for money and service provision.
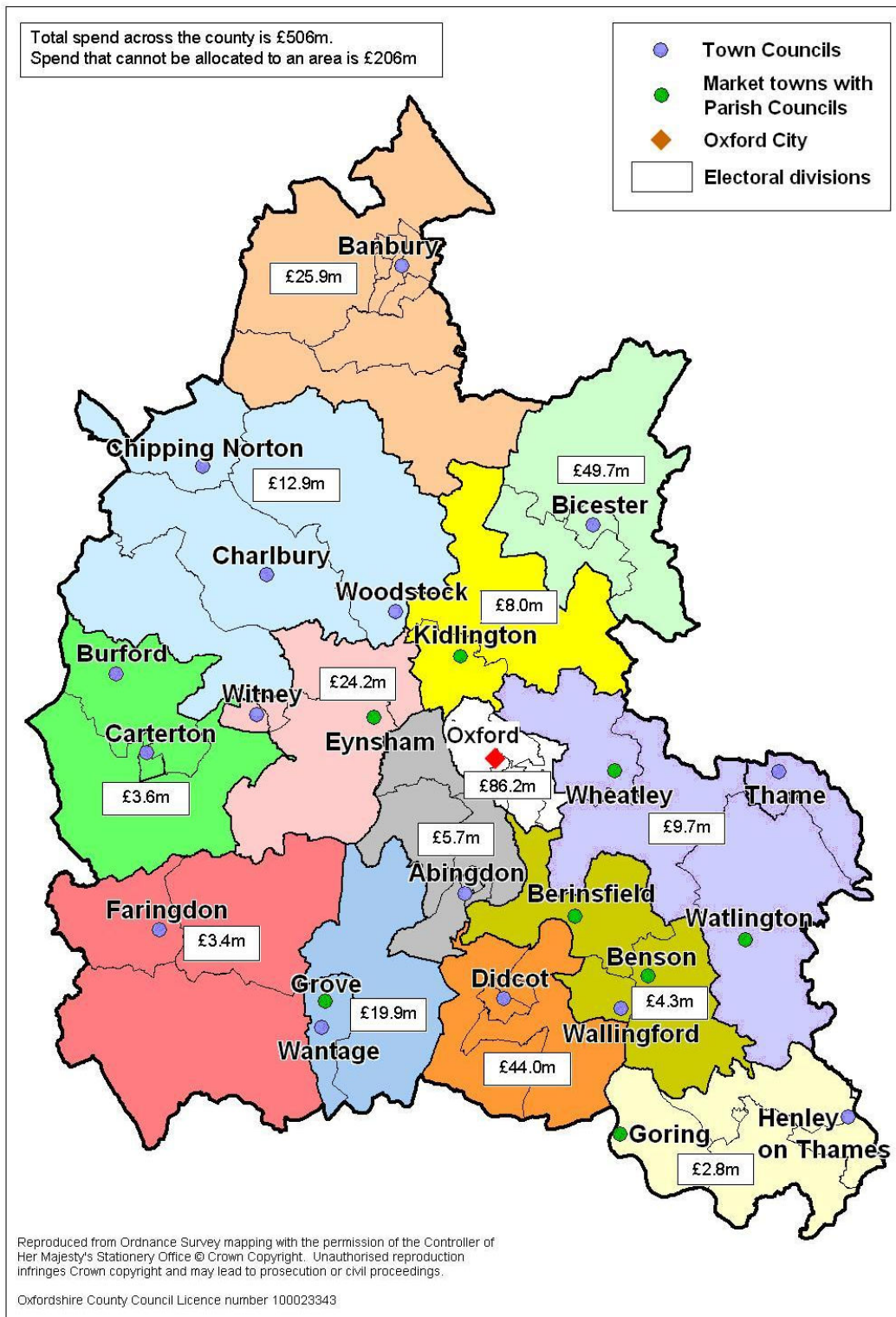
Figure 12: To follow with figures on revenue funding, after budget is agreed by Council, and appropriate text

Capital spending

The Council intends to spend £506m (excluding money spent directly by schools) on capital investments in Oxfordshire between 2009/10 to 2014/15. The projects included in the capital programme are wide-ranging, covering all areas of the council's activity (for example on roads, schools, libraries, fire stations), and all areas of the county (see figure 13).

Note that our spending plans may change depending on the outcome of the Government's next Comprehensive Spending Review and are subject to approval by the County Council's Cabinet.

Figure 13: Capital Investment in Oxfordshire 2009/10 to 2014/15 (subject to allocation in next Comprehensive Spending Review)

Total spend across the county is £506m.
Spend that cannot be allocated to an area is £206m

Legend:
- Town Councils
- Market towns with Parish Councils
- Oxford City
- Electoral divisions

Banbury £25.9m
Chipping Norton £12.9m
Bicester £49.7m
Charlbury
Woodstock £8.0m
Kidlington
Burford
Witney £24.2m
Carterton
Eynsham
Oxford £86.2m
Wheatley £9.7m
Thame
£3.6m
£5.7m
Abingdon
Berinsfield
Watlington
Faringdon
£3.4m
Benson £4.3m
Grove £19.9m
Didcot
Wantage
Wallingford
£44.0m
Goring
Henley on Thames £2.8m

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Source: Oxfordshire County Council

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. **Corporate Plan Delivery Plan**
   [add link to where available]

2. **'This is Oxfordshire', key facts about Oxfordshire**
   [add link to where available]

3. **Summary of Supporting Strategies**
   [add link to where available]

4. **Information about the structure of the Council and the Cabinet**
   [add link to where available]

5. **Medium Term Financial Plan**
   [add link to where available]