

A Thriving Oxfordshire

*Oxfordshire County Council
Corporate Plan 2014/15-2017/18*

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1. Leader's Foreword

In this, the first corporate plan since the 2013 local elections, Oxfordshire County Council set out how we are planning to respond to the tremendous challenges which face our council - primarily our growing population, and our falling budgets.

I hope though, too, that a message of optimism about Oxfordshire - its individuals, families, charities, businesses, and the communities they make up, shines through as well. Oxfordshire is a great place to live and work for the vast majority of our people, and a huge contributor to the national economy.

Nonetheless, these are tough times for many of us, and I recognise that we are shouldering at least our fair share of the burden of getting the national deficit down. Staff and councillors have risen to this challenge, and we have already delivered savings on a scale hard to imagine at the start of this journey.

While flattered by government's well-placed confidence in us to deliver, I recognise the hard choices this implies, and the justifiable unhappiness we have heard loud and clear about some of the cuts we have needed to make in our recent budget. People have every right to protest, but as I have said throughout this process, our savings target is fixed. If we shy away from some cuts, we have to find others to replace them.

I am certain that our self-reliant communities, our thriving voluntary sector, and our innovative and growing private sector mean it will be possible for the state to do less, and individuals to do more - but I am committed to the Council managing this in a fair and equitable way across the county and across our communities, and in protecting our provision for the most vulnerable whenever possible.

We also have a key strategic role in supporting the private sector growth which generates the jobs people need to live independent lives, and shaping the education which enables local people to take up those opportunities. With the City Deal this year, and the Strategic Economic Plan in gestation, we will not be losing sight of this agenda, and the need for us to speak up for Oxfordshire on the national stage, particularly important as we approach the next general election.

Even after all these savings, we will remain a large organisation, delivering 80% of local government services to over 650,000 people, and we have a leading strategic role to play. Even if we were reduced to providing only the services we are required to provide by law, we would still be spending hundreds of millions of pounds a year.

To maximise value for taxpayers, we need to be as smart in our spending as possible - in our co-operation with public sector partners, business, and the voluntary sector, and in our use of property, sharing buildings, enabling people to work on the move, and reducing those costs.

I can't promise when these tough times will end. I can promise an open and responsible approach to find a way through them, in partnership, and drawing on all of Oxfordshire's many strengths to get the best outcome possible.

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2. About this Plan

The county council produces a Corporate Plan every year. The Plan is where we set out our strategic priorities for the next four years. It drives the work of all our services and feeds into each directorate’s business strategy.

This Plan sits under the long-term plan for the county, as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy called ‘Oxfordshire 2030’.

The Corporate Plan is described as a ‘golden thread’ that links our very high level, long term, strategy with our day-to-day working priorities.

Figure 1: The Golden Thread



3.

Measuring Progress

A series of performance indicators are used to assess our performance in delivering our priorities. These are monitored on a quarterly basis by the council's Performance Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, and the reports are published on our website. [url]

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3. Our County

Oxfordshire is a diverse and dynamic county, home to 654,000 people¹ and over 30,000 businesses. The county has a competitive economy, where the unemployment rate is one of the lowest in the country, and the number of young people unemployed has returned to pre-recession levels. In total, Oxfordshire's economy contributes £16.5 billion a year to the national economy².

The vibrancy of Oxfordshire's economy is inextricably linked to the activities of its two universities, its teaching hospital and research trust - which is one of the largest in the UK - and the concentration of science and research activity in the south of the county. Oxfordshire's bio-technology sector has grown 14% since 2008³, while the space technology cluster located at Harwell is growing rapidly and includes the European Space Agency and the International Space Innovation Centre. Along with the neighbouring counties of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire forms part of one of the highest concentrations of high-tech employment in Europe. In addition, we are home to globally recognised, prestigious, brands such as BMW Mini and Oxford University Press.

Oxfordshire is the second most rural county in the south-east of England and three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) fall within its borders. Thanks to this natural beauty, along with its rich cultural and historic heritage, the county attracts over 26 million visitors every year. The total value of tourism in 2011 was estimated at £1.7 billion, and the industry supports around 30,000 jobs⁴. The agricultural and forestry sector also contributes £81 million to the local economy.⁵ Oxfordshire has a strong strategic location, in the heart of England, and its transport links mean many people who make their homes here enjoy a good quality of life, while having the opportunity to commute to employment opportunities both inside and outside the county. Many highly-qualified young people move here to study and work, and we also have a significant military population, including the largest station of the Royal Air Force, Brize Norton, in our county.

Notwithstanding our overall prosperity, the county faces some important challenges.– The 2011 census tells us that the population grew by 50,000 between 2001 and 2011 and is still growing, and there were 18% more people over the age of 65 in 2011 compared with 2001.⁶ The county has pockets of significant deprivation, with eighteen local areas in the county amongst the 20% most deprived in England⁷. Rural isolation affects the lives of many people living outside our major towns and city. Oxfordshire is also one of the most expensive places to live in the country, with house prices almost nine times higher than median annual earnings. House prices in Oxford City are the second highest in the country outside of London.

¹ ONS Census 2011

² ONS Regional Gross Value Added (income approach), December 2013 release

³ ONS Business Register and Employment Service, 2012

⁴ The Economic Impact of Tourism on Oxfordshire, estimates for 2011, Tourism South East

⁵ ONS Regional Gross Value Added (income approach), December 2013 release

⁶ ONS Census 2011

⁷ Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010

Crucial to meeting some of these challenges, Oxfordshire is home to strong civic activism. While best known as the home of Oxfam, our county also has 3,800 other voluntary and community organisations⁸.

If you would like to know more about the make-up of the county, visit the Oxfordshire Insight website: insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk



⁸ Hidden Asset 2009, Regional Action and Involvement South East

4. About Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire County Council is made up of 63 councillors who were elected by Oxfordshire residents in May 2013. The council is controlled by the Conservative Independent Alliance and its decision-making body - the Cabinet – has 10 councillors.

The day-to-day management and operations of the council are carried out by the County Council Management Team, which consists of the Chief Executive and directors who, between them, manage the delivery of public services provided by the council.

In 2012/13 we:

- filled 34,000 potholes
- assessed the care needs of 11,000 vulnerable people
- allocated 12,000 primary and secondary school places
- investigated 3,200 trading standards complaints
- served 2,000,000 school meals
- received 12,000 emergency calls to our Fire and Rescue Service
- safely disposed 300,000 tonnes of municipal waste, registered 17,500 births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships

and much more...

The Strategic Role of Oxfordshire County Council

In 2014/15 Oxfordshire County Council’s gross expenditure is £873.6m.

49% of our funding is from council tax. Central government grants make up another 26% and the remainder is a combination of income we raise from charging for services and our share of local business rates.

With this money the county council provides 80% of local government services in Oxfordshire. We work closely with many local partners, including Oxford City Council and the four Oxfordshire district councils, but as the 'Upper Tier' authority our budget is more than double all of Oxfordshire’s district and city councils combined. The city council and district councils are responsible for local planning and housing services, but otherwise the county council delivers most of the services for Oxfordshire residents.

Our key strategic responsibilities are:

Children’s Social Services	Social Care for Adults and Older People	Highways and Transport
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Thriving Families	Fire and Rescue Service	Infrastructure Planning
Education Services, including school admissions	Emergency Planning	Waste Management
Public Health	Trading Standards	Customer Services

Respective statutory responsibilities of the county council and our city and district partners mean that there is substantial crossover in our work.

For example:

- It is widely acknowledged that Oxfordshire's economy is constrained by a lack of housing supply. Decisions about the numbers and locations of new housing rest with the city or district council and rely on the county council for provision of infrastructure.
- District councils are responsible for housing services. However if a vulnerable young person or family are made 'intentionally homeless' in some circumstances the county council has responsibility for providing housing support.

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5. Our Vision for a Thriving Oxfordshire

Our ambition is for a county where local residents and businesses can flourish - a Thriving Oxfordshire. To us this means having:

- A Thriving Economy - with small businesses starting, existing small businesses growing, and large businesses choosing to locate here, creating good jobs for local people. A strong economy makes everything else possible.
- Thriving People and Communities - where residents are empowered to help themselves and can contribute to what happens locally, and where everyone can make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.
- A Safety Net – where we support some of the county’s most vulnerable residents, focusing on those we have a duty to consider, such as older people, disabled adults, and children. We must ensure these residents are aware of, and are easily able to access, the services and care to which they are entitled.

We will work to achieve these objectives by delivering essential core services and playing a key leadership role within the county to bring partners together to encourage the best possible outcomes for the residents of Oxfordshire. We will also, wherever appropriate, look first at how we can help people and communities to help themselves.

<p>Our ambition: A Thriving Oxfordshire</p>
<p>This means having: A Thriving Economy Thriving People and Communities A Safety Net</p>
<p>The county council’s role in delivering this ambition: Providing Community Leadership Working in Partnership Helping People to Help Themselves</p>

6. The Financial Challenge

In planning how to deliver this vision it is impossible to ignore the financial context in which we will be working over the next four years. Unprecedented reductions in funding for local government, coupled with increasing demand, present a huge challenge for Oxfordshire County Council.

We already know that between 2010 and 2018 the grant we receive from government will be cut by a total of 40%. This means that by 2018 our annual budget will have reduced by £260m compared with 2010. And there may be further cuts to come.

So far we have worked hard to deliver efficiencies which have contributed annual savings of £170million. But we are only two-thirds through our savings target - we still have a further £90m worth of annual savings to make. It is clear that these savings are not achievable through efficiencies alone and that cuts to services are now necessary.

We also need to adapt to a changing financial framework, as in many instances funding that in the past came direct to the council is now either distributed via other organisations, such as the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), or is being pooled with partners, such as the local health service. We must change our focus to ensure we have the skills to influence and work with these partners if we are to access the money we need to deliver key projects.

Money is not the only factor we need to consider in our planning. We must also take account of the changing needs of our local population: we need to plan for the growing number of older people; we need to manage a changing relationship with key public sector partners in health, education, and policing; and we need to respond to the changing demands placed upon us by national government. We must also work within the context that Oxfordshire is an expensive place to live and that house prices in Oxford City are the second highest in the country outside of London. This presents serious challenges, including a substantial barrier to recruiting essential staff, such as care workers.

Despite all this change, we remain a county with many strengths - our world class academic and research institutions, our areas of outstanding natural beauty, our strong heritage, and our proximity to key transport links, especially access to London. The council is determined to make the most of these strengths and will work closely with local and national partners to set the agenda and create the environment in which Oxfordshire can thrive.

Making Savings

The council has made major savings since 2010, including:

- reducing the workforce by 30%
- reducing the number of managers by 40%
- pay freezes and reduced terms and conditions for remaining staff
- reducing the cost of the pension scheme
- increasing productivity
- reducing the number of councillors
- reducing the number of offices we have
- making more services easier to use online
- sharing services with other councils
- outsourcing more services to the private or voluntary sector
- tighter contracts, getting better value for money
- reducing our spend on discretionary services
- using volunteers wherever possible to supplement our permanent staff, e.g. day services, libraries
- supporting the transfer of services to the voluntary sector e.g. youth services
- introducing charging for services that were previously free, e.g. Park and Ride

But there is still a lot more to do.

Talking Oxfordshire

In the autumn of 2013 the county council ran a county-wide consultation exercise called 'Talking Oxfordshire'. This aimed to inform residents about the level of additional savings the council would have to make in 2014/15 and asked them to put forward ideas and suggestions as to how we should deal with them. Nearly 1,000 residents attended public meetings, over 400 responded to the online consultation and 600 took part in a telephone survey –here is a selection of quotes that were submitted:

- *“Preventative services are required in order to reduce the eventual need for statutory services. Very short-sighted to cut preventative services.”*
- *“The principle that people should pay (at least something) for the services they get should be practised as much as possible. Provided there is support for those on low incomes then it is right that the user is the person charged for the service.”*
- *“People in rural communities always lose out because the towns & cities are always seen as more in need.”*
- *“I regard library services as essential but payment for them should be considered, with exemption for students and anyone on public benefit.”*
- *“The Council should be doing all it can to retain those services which vulnerable people require whether they are legally required services or not.”*
- *“I was shocked to find that most children’s centre sessions asked only a £1 donation. I would happily have paid a little more, perhaps £2.50 - £3?”*
- *“I think volunteering and opportunities to contribute are valuable. However, they often need to be enabled by a paid member of staff or service - without this coordination or expert input, volunteers are often unable to operate”*

Full findings from Talking Oxfordshire can be found here:

<http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/talking-oxfordshire>

7. The County Council's role in a Thriving Oxfordshire – Community Leadership and Partnership

To both respond effectively to our significant financial challenges and meet our vision for a Thriving Oxfordshire we need to fundamentally rethink the role of the county council. The council will make the transition to being an organisation that:

- prioritises work we are required to do by legislation, regulation or policy
- has a concentrated focus on prevention and early intervention
- ultimately provides a vital safety net for the most vulnerable people in our communities that we have a duty to support.

The council is actively refocusing its work, and is engaged in looking for new ways to deliver the most efficient services that provide the best outcomes for our residents. We have to be single-minded in ensuring that we use the resources we have to provide services that have the greatest impact.

We remain responsible for services that are essential to the county - supporting older people, protecting vulnerable children, and securing crucial strategic infrastructure, like roads and rail, that underpins the economy. However, wherever appropriate we will look first to:

- **Enable people and communities to help themselves** – the days when the county council could deliver all services to all people have gone. Responsibility and accountability needs to be shared throughout our communities for the county to thrive, so enabling people to become more empowered and proactive is crucial.
- **Commission and support partners** in the public, private and voluntary sectors to provide services – already, £400m of our revenue spend goes to partners to deliver services on our behalf. Our role is to ensure these arrangements have high levels of quality control and deliver the best value for money for the county. We will use our influence to encourage and facilitate a thriving market of suppliers and providers. We are paying particular attention to this in relation to social care where providers face serious challenges around recruiting and retaining care workers due to the high cost of living across the county, and particularly in Oxford City. We must also continue to build on the good relationships we have with our partners in order to deliver seamless services to residents in a way that makes sense to them and results in the best possible outcomes.
- **Take a community leadership role** – we remain extremely ambitious for the county, and we also recognise that many complex social, economic and environmental challenges can only be successfully addressed through collaboration with our partners and communities. When we are best placed to lead or co-ordinate work we will play a key role in linking up efforts, particularly where they deliver on our ambition for a Thriving Oxfordshire. We have a responsibility to provide strong and positive community leadership to encourage the best possible outcomes for our residents.

By sharpening our focus in this way we can ensure that the council remains resilient to the ongoing changes we face and that we work effectively to ensure those most in need have access to quality services. If we do this we will be best placed to ensure Oxfordshire is the Thriving County we want to see for all our residents.

We are already taking great strides towards meeting our ambition for a Thriving Oxfordshire. Examples of our work in the last year include:

- **The Oxfordshire Reading Campaign:** Working with schools, Oxford University Press, the National Literacy Trust, and local volunteers we delivered targeted support to improve reading skills for children aged 6 to 7 years in Year 2. The Campaign's annual report shows that in the first 10 months of the scheme, the average reading age of children taking part has shot up by 13.5 months.
- **The Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal:** We worked alongside the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, District Councils, Universities, and scientific research institutions to win a City Deal agreement from the government. This means that around £55.5 million of government funding can now be controlled locally to boost innovation and business growth, create jobs and help secure Oxfordshire's place as a world leader in technology, knowledge and expertise. Ultimately the deal is expected to be worth over £1.2 billion when private sector investment is taken into account. The plans we have developed with our partners include the delivery of improvements to the A40 and A34, as well as a real push to drive up skills to support the accelerated development of our high-tech business sector. This means more jobs for the county and more inward investment across the board.
- **Fire and Rescue Service and Community Safety:** We are working to safeguard our communities from fire risk through the provision of advice and enforcement of fire protection, risk reduction, intervention activities and provision of information to improve community safety. We also provide (directly or with partners) preventative programmes for children and young people at risk of offending. We manage and deliver the Junior Citizen Programme countywide as well as the Consumer Challenge Quiz for children with special needs.
- **Broadband for all in Oxfordshire:** Our £25 million programme - a partnership with BT, with government support - aims to ensure that over 90 per cent of all premises across the county have access to superfast broadband by 2016. Through the same partnership with BT we are working with District Councils and individual communities on plans to extend coverage further into the remaining rural areas.
- **Working closely with the NHS:** Over £330m is currently committed to pooled budget arrangements to spend on service users of both the county council and the local Clinical Commissioning Group. This includes a significantly expanded pooled budget covering care for older people, and others to improve care and outcomes in physical disability, learning disability and mental health and wellbeing. We are developing integrated locality teams, and working towards a single point of access for health and social care. We are involved in the South East GP pilot that provides an

Adult Social Care Link Worker in six GP practices to share information, signpost and discuss appropriate care for high risk patients requiring both health and social care services. Both organisations are motivated to provide services that we would be happy for our own families to receive.

- **Public Health:** Following the return of public health responsibilities to local government in April 2013 we are working to integrate these services across our work, saving money in the long run through prevention and early intervention work, and helping our residents stay healthy.
- **Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation - The Kingfisher Unit:** This Unit is a joint social worker, police and health team focused on preventing, protecting and prosecuting cases of child sexual exploitation in Oxfordshire. The team provides a first response to concerns about exploitation and provides support to children, families and other professionals to reduce the risk to children through awareness raising, disruption activity and, where required, gathering evidence and achieving prosecutions. In 2013, over 12,000 Oxfordshire children saw the educational play 'Chelsea's Choice' to raise awareness of grooming and sexual exploitation.
- **Community Information Networks:** We have partnered with Age UK to create networks of local advisers across the county to improve the dissemination of information and advice about the range of social care and the support services available, and to support people to access them. The networks will roll out in 2014.
- **Thriving Families:** Our targeted approach continues to support troubled families – those with the most problems and who cause problems to the community around them - to make lifestyle changes and become thriving families. By July 2013 Oxfordshire had turned around 279 troubled families, the fourth highest rate in the country (out of 152 local authorities), and the approach will be extended to more families in 2014.
- **East-West Rail:** The county council provided a leadership role in achieving agreement amongst national and local partners to develop a new train route providing direct connection to London, Milton Keynes, Heathrow via Reading and all points east and west. Plans include a new 'Oxford Parkway' station at Water Eaton. The economic impact of the project is estimated to be £15m per year and is estimated to create up to 12,000 new private sector jobs.
- **Office Co-location:** The county council has been working with Vale of White Horse District Council to co-locate staff into the District offices at Abingdon. This arrangement will see property released to enable cost savings, and deliver better outcomes for staff and their clients. We have good working relationships with health, and staff are able to work from offices at the Clinical Commissioning Group and John Radcliffe Hospital. The Health and Wellbeing Resource Centres are used by health services and voluntary organisations to extend the use of the buildings and offer important support to service users. We will work closely with other public sector agencies to identify further opportunities for co-locating services as a way of improving the customer experience.

Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for 80% of local government services in the county.

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A selection of our key partners





Safe roads, reliable journeys, informed travellers

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8. A Thriving Economy

As the country returns to economic growth Oxfordshire is well placed to play a pivotal role in supporting the recovery - thanks to local businesses, our attractiveness as a location for investment, our skilled workforce, and our national and international transport links. A thriving economy is crucial to the wider success of the county.

The council has a key role to play in realising the potential of the county's economy but cannot drive economic development alone. Instead, we increasingly take a community leadership role to achieve these goals. For example:

- **City Deal** - we are working with partners including the Universities, research institutions, City and District Councils and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver the 'Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal' – this is a deal that means £55.5 million of government funding can now be controlled locally to enable us to set ambitious policies to boost innovation and economic growth. Our aim with the Deal is to support high-tech and research industries along the 'knowledge spine' from Science Vale, through Oxford, and up to Bicester (see map), to grow into thriving businesses, and to attract similar companies to the county through providing improved road and rail links. The result will be high quality jobs and an opportunity to drive the improvement of skills of local people.
- **Strategic Economic Plan** - We are working on the development of the 'Strategic Economic Plan' which provides a basis for future Oxfordshire bids to the Local Growth Fund. From 2015 this Fund will be the primary source of Government funding for capital investment in major structural maintenance and new highway schemes, so it is essential we have a robust strategy in place that puts us in a strong position to access these funds. Work on the Plan has been led by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership of which the county council is a member. As a democratically accountable body, the county council has a key role to play in influencing the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership and the proposals for future development across the county.

We must be realistic in that we have significantly less money under our own control, but we will make sure that wherever alternative pots of money are available – either from central government or other partners - we are able to access them so that we can deliver this essential work. For example, we are working to ensure we have an up-to-date 'Local Transport Plan' so that we have strategies in place early to secure sufficient financial contributions from developers to fund essential infrastructure.

The county council continues to have direct control over some crucial areas, however. For example, we are the local 'Highways Authority' which means we must be consulted on planned infrastructure for all new developments and have a duty to maintain a safe highway network. Across the county we are responsible for approximately 3,000 miles of roads, 2,000 miles of footways, 2,900 bridges and structures and 59,600 street lights. We recognise this is an area of our business that

has an immediate impact on everyone's day to day lives, and we are improving public access to information through initiatives such as the 'Fix My Street' web site – where the public can report road defects. We are also responsible for network management of traffic flows, and a central part of the City Deal is to take forward much needed improvement to the highways system – particularly on the congested A34 and A40.

We are also engaged in some exciting new developments on the railways, including the East-West Rail line, which will connect to London, Milton Keynes, Heathrow via Reading and all points east and west, and will include the development of a new Oxford station at Water Eaton. There are also ambitious plans in place for Didcot station to become a 'state of the art' multi-modal interchange and gateway to the area, supporting the goal of improved connectivity for the Enterprise Zones within Science Vale. This type of work is core to our focus on supporting and enabling future growth.

More broadly, our Cultural Services team attracts wedding business into Oxfordshire, provides citizenship ceremonies to welcome our new citizens, and contributes to cultural tourism. Our Trading Standards team enable local businesses and industry to successfully compete in the marketplace, ensure their business continuity, and minimise the likelihood and impact of regulatory challenge.

The proportion of Oxfordshire GCSE students achieving at least five A* - C grades including English and Maths is at its highest ever level, and there have been significant improvements in reading, writing and mathematics for seven and eleven year olds. There has also been an increase in the number of schools rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by OFSTED. This suggests the council's education strategy launched last year is already having a positive impact, although our performance has still not reached the aspirations the council, pupils, parents and schools hold, and performance varies significantly for some groups of children. 'A Strategy for Change – Improving Educational Outcomes in Oxfordshire' sets out a clear vision for Oxfordshire to be a dynamic and forward-looking place for education and learning, providing the best quality experiences for children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve.

Our priorities for action in the next 12 months are:

- **Growth and Investment** – we will continue to support the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and help deliver its priorities, including those of the Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal and the Strategic Economic Plan. We will support our district colleagues to provide local housing for local people. In particular we will cooperate with district and city councils to respond to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which has indicated that that up to 106,560 additional homes are needed across Oxfordshire in the period 2011-2031.
- **Infrastructure** – we will build upon the work associated with the City Deal to set out the infrastructure required to support economic growth in the longer term. We are a key member of the Local Enterprise Partnership which has developed the Strategic Economic Plan that forms the basis of our Growth Bid to Government – we will also seek to access any funding required to support

the significant growth that is planned. We will work with District and City councils to: ensure that new development pays for the infrastructure and services that are needed to support it; ensure these costs are reflected in proposals for the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy; and ensure the right infrastructure plans are in place for areas of significant planned development, such as Bicester, Oxford and Science Vale.

- **Skills** – we will continue to support the Oxfordshire Skills Board to implement the Oxfordshire Skills Strategy, which aims to increase the availability and take-up of apprenticeship training, and help stimulate further demand for apprenticeships in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths subjects (known as ‘STEM’ subjects) in young people – it also seeks to up-skill people who have few or no formal qualifications. We will also work wherever we can to promote educational excellence for all children and young people and improve educational attainment in the county. Many of our schools – especially our secondary schools – are now academies, meaning they are independent from us, but we will continue to work hard to build positive relationships with our academy partners, including through the Oxfordshire Schools Forum. We still have a crucial leadership role in ensuring there is a diverse supply of strong schools for the county’s children, and a key role in continuing to improve educational attainment in the county.
- **Transport** – we will work closely with our partners to deliver funded projects, including significant improvements to Oxfordshire's road and rail infrastructure, such as Milton Interchange, Chilton Interchange, the first phase of Oxford Science Transit and phase 1 of East-West Rail. We will continue our work to update our Local Transport Plan – which sets out the long-term strategy for Oxfordshire. We will continue to respond to proposals associated with the development of HS2 to ensure local interests are protected. We will continue to work hard to maintain the county’s roads – we fix tens of thousands of potholes a year - while keeping a close eye on value for money and quality of delivery.
- **Broadband** – we will deliver high speed broadband for more than 90% of Oxfordshire premises by 2016, in partnership with BT. We will work with district council partners to help those not yet covered to identify local solutions.
- **Property Rationalisation** – we will continue the work of rationalising the county council’s property portfolio to release funds to use for direct service delivery. We will continue to make fundamental changes to our back office services and increase the flexibility of our workforce to ensure we work as efficiently as possible. Across the organisation we are focussed on ensuring that our contracts with partners deliver value for money and positive outcomes for council tax payers.

The council maintains almost 3,000 miles of road. We filled 34,000 potholes in 2012/13 and there was a 70% increase in the number of road defects reported from the same period last year. The average cost of filling a pot hole is £60.



The 'Knowledge Spine'

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9. Thriving People and Communities

According to most of our residents, Oxfordshire is a good place to live. People are generally affluent and healthy, the sense of community is strong, and people feel safe in their local areas. The county council is focussed on maintaining this.

We do however have areas of acute isolation and pockets of deprivation in the county - both urban and rural – and will continue to tailor our work to meet the unique needs of these areas, working through our locality-focussed teams. More broadly, we will continue to play a key role in supporting and building resilient communities by working closely with our partners where appropriate, such as the military community and town and parish councils.

We want to play a positive role in giving all local children the best start in life – building further on our relationships with schools and academies and working with all partners, including the health service, to ensure we all have high expectations for our children’s educational attainment and future prospects.

For older people we are placing great energy into developing approaches that, wherever possible, keep people well and help them to live at home and remain active in their local communities for as long as possible. We want to continue to increase personalisation in the services we provide – increasing the numbers of people who have Self Directed Support and who receive a Direct Payment so that they have more control and choice over the care they receive. We also have a focus on waiting lists, aiming to reduce the amount of time people have to wait for an assessment or a care package. We will concentrate on joint working with colleagues in the NHS – as well as closer working between our own service teams - to drive efficiency, and join-up care for service users. Delayed Transfers of Care (sometimes called ‘bed blocking’, when people stay in hospital longer than they need to) remains a key area of concern and focus, and the only way to tackle such a challenge is through positive coordinated working between hospitals and social care.

We want to avoid, reduce and delay the need for more complex care or admission to a care home – as well as close working relationships with the NHS, our work with district council colleagues to establish more Extra Care Housing developments is a good example of this. We will continue to invest in equipment and assistive technology and we will invest in reablement – this means helping people to maintain or regain their independence by learning or relearning the skills necessary for daily living. We are also working to ensure that as many carers as possible are known and supported by us, as their role is essential in achieving our goal of seeing more people live as independently as possible in their own homes. Our Supported Transport Programme will see us working closely with bus operators and other transport providers to adapt how we support the transport needs of the communities of Oxfordshire. Underpinning all of this is our wider work to ensure that there is accessible and useful information and advice for all of our service users so that they are able to make the care choices that are right for them.

In addition, our Public Health work continues to pioneer prevention and early intervention approaches which maximise local people’s healthy lifespan – whatever their age – through, for example, supporting them in making healthy lifestyle choices

and keeping safe from diseases. This increases residents' likelihood of living longer without the need to rely on the health service or social services.

The county council has joined with the district and city councils to form the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This means we have a powerful role in scrutinising any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in Oxfordshire. We will continue to represent the concerns and priorities of service users in holding local health services to account.

We are the Minerals and Waste Local Planning Authority, so play a key role in ensuring household waste is disposed of efficiently and that recycling is maximised. Next year our Energy from Waste facility, which will generate enough electricity for 38,000 homes, will be in operation. We will also continue to ensure the countryside is accessible to all and that our responses to emergencies, such as flooding, remain robust and effective. Our Fire and Rescue Service has a proven track record of engaging with the community to further the message of fire prevention and will continue to have a crucial role in promoting community cohesion, while our Cultural Services team contribute to creative educational programmes and help to connect communities to their heritage.

Our priorities for action in the next 12 months are:

- **Housing options for older people** – the county council will continue to work closely with housing associations and district councils to push forward ambitious plans to develop more appropriate housing options for older people. This includes Extra Care Housing schemes which provide tailored support to allow people with care needs to live independently.
- **Community Information Networks** – we are investing in community networks to support people to stay in their communities for as long as possible by helping them access the information, advice and local services they need to make informed choices about how best to meet their own needs.
- **Libraries** – our library service provides access to books, information and knowledge to support the recreational, cultural and educational needs of those who live, work, and study in Oxfordshire. In the coming year we will be supporting the development of Community Libraries and enabling community and stakeholder involvement in the delivery of library services across the county.
- **Joint working and pooled funding** – we will relentlessly seek to improve and maintain standards of services and care, working in partnership with the NHS and providers, from across the public, voluntary and private sectors, to ensure people receiving care continue to be treated with dignity and respect. We have in place agreements to jointly manage over £300m worth of funding every year with the NHS which means better value for money for tax payers and more streamlined services for those who need them. In addition, we will be developing proposals for using the Better Care Fund – a pot of £37m – with health partners, which means more money coming across from health budgets to adult social care. Our intention is to develop plans for a Joint Commissioning Unit with health, and a single assessment process for service users. One of the key outcomes for the Fund is to achieve is a reduction in the

number of patients delayed for transfer or discharge from hospital, We are determined that Oxfordshire's performance will improve in this area.

- **Public Health** – the council will work with the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and other partners to ensure effective commissioning arrangements are in place to improve health and social care outcomes for all Oxfordshire residents. We will work to ensure that our contracts with partners deliver value for money. We will also address health inequalities and prioritise areas of local need. The Director of Public Health's most recent annual report highlights the six main long term challenges to long term health in Oxfordshire as: an ageing population; breaking the cycle of disadvantage; mental health and wellbeing; obesity; excessive alcohol consumption; fighting killer infections. Particular emphasis is given to health in rural areas, loneliness as a health issue and the increase in residents from minority ethnic groups.
- **Preparing for Emergency** - our Fire and Rescue Service continues its crucial work to prevent fire, plan for the risk of major events such as flooding, and respond to serious road accidents. Their strategy to work jointly with other counties and other emergency services will continue, as will the council's provision of valuable regulatory services, including Trading Standards.
- **Military Covenant** – the council will continue to work in partnership with the armed forces locally to ensure our services reflect the Covenant principles so that members of the armed forces and their families do not face disadvantage. The council will support groups that apply to the MOD community covenant grant scheme for funding to run projects which encourage local communities to integrate with the armed forces community in their area.
- **Minerals and Waste** – as the Minerals and Waste Local Planning Authority we will develop and consult on a new Minerals and Waste Local Plan before submitting it for independent examination. The new Local Plan will provide the framework within which new proposals are considered. The opening of Ardley Energy from Waste facility will reduce the amount of residual waste going to landfill and provide the capacity to generate enough electricity for up to 38,000 homes.
- **Natural Environment** – we will continue to work with our partners to promote our natural environment, both as a resource for recreation and leisure activities and as a place in which our rural economy can prosper. We will work with our partners to that our response to extreme weather events – such as flooding – is robust and effective.
- **Customer Services** – our Customer Services Centre will complete its move into County Hall, bringing it closer to the centre of service delivery and helping maintain its focus on delivering solutions to customer queries.

Oxfordshire's population has grown by almost 50,000 in 10 years and is still growing.

We expect a 16% increase in the primary school populations (4-11 year olds) from 2011/12 to 2016/17. Over the next five years we expect the county will need nine additional primary schools and three additional secondary schools.

The county has an excellent recycling record, with 60% of the 300,000 tonnes of waste produced per year either composted or recycled. However this means that 40% of waste is sent to landfill. The council is taxed on waste that is sent to landfill

and in 2014/15 we will have to pay £80 per tonne.

Oxfordshire is one of only 13 county councils in the country with Fire and Rescue Service responsibilities.

Flooding in 2014

January 2014 was the wettest month in Oxfordshire since records began almost 250 years ago. The resulting flooding saw:

- 21 flood alerts established
- 168 properties flooded
- 32 people evacuated
- 45 roads closed
- One rail line closed
- 80 elderly and vulnerable clients provided with emergency transport
- One rest centre opened
- One school closed
- 500 bridges in need of inspection following the event

Our Fire and Rescue Service, Highways, Social Care, and Schools teams worked together around the clock to minimise the impact of the flooding where possible, and assist those affected.

Our priority is to assess the full impact of the flooding and to work with Government to ensure full recovery and compensation plans are in place, and that we access the funding we need to repair the damage.

We held a conference on the flooding in March 2014, attended by over 100 partners from across the county, and are applying our learning from the event to influence our new Flood Risk Management Strategy, which will go out to public consultation in 2014.

10.A Safety Net

Despite our relative affluence we do have pockets of both rural and urban disadvantage within the county, and demands on both our adult and children's social care services continue to increase significantly. As a council we are determined to face these challenges by concentrating our work on supporting these most vulnerable of Oxfordshire's residents – groups for which we have a legal duty to provide support - and ensuring they have real control over getting the care to which they are entitled.

We are focussed on embedding multi-agency working across the county in order to best protect our most vulnerable children and provide targeted support to their parents. We are committed to providing early help in order to avoid problems escalating and family needs becoming more complex. Our early intervention service remains pivotal to our targeted prevention approach. As an example of our joint working, the Fire and Rescue Service works with the early intervention hubs to mentor young people who are otherwise lacking positive influences.

We also want to start delivering our ambitious plans for children in the council's care to ensure they are placed within the county's borders, whenever appropriate. We will work to respond much more flexibly to those children on the edge of care and change the culture of always bringing children into care full time. We will be developing plans for new assessment homes to offer part-time respite alongside intensive family interventions to allow a permanent return home wherever possible.

Children's social care will continue to focus on protecting children at risk of harm or neglect and tackling, as well as preventing, cases of child sexual exploitation. We have made considerable investments in frontline children's social care services to ensure we have sufficient capacity to maintain high standards and ensure children and young people are appropriately safeguarded. The Kingfisher team has been established jointly with the police and with health partners specifically to focus on preventing child sexual exploitation and prosecuting cases if required.

We also have a critical safeguarding role for all vulnerable adults, ensuring that people live their lives free from abuse and taking action to protect people where necessary. We will continue to provide information and support to individuals and their carers to ensure people can live a life free from abuse and the fear of abuse, and can have care and support which meets their needs.

We work effectively between teams to focus work on the most vulnerable. For example, Trading Standards support and protect those at greatest risk from doorstep crime, fraud and scams.

Our priorities for action in the next 12 months are:

- **Thriving Families programme** – this programme works with the most disadvantaged and challenged families to reduce worklessness, antisocial behaviour, crime and school exclusions and to increase school attendance. The key focus is on our most resource intensive and vulnerable families with the aim of reducing the numbers needing the type of support offered by social

care. This continues to be a vital strand in the on-going work locally to narrow the gap in outcomes that exists across the county.

- **Breaking the Cycle** – we will continue to work to improve the quality of life in the most deprived areas of the county by: promoting better engagement in education, employment and training; supporting the vulnerable and those with multiple and enduring problems; promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing health inequalities; reducing and mitigating the effects of child poverty.
- **Multi-agency children’s safeguarding** – we will continue to work in close partnership with the police, schools, health service and others to ensure that our vulnerable children and young people can live a life free from both abuse and the fear of abuse. This includes establishing a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub that will co-locate staff from across these agencies so they can work closely together to respond to the needs of vulnerable young people.
- **Corporate parenting** – we act as effective and caring ‘corporate parents’ for looked after children, with key roles in improving their educational attainment, providing stable and high quality placements and proper planning for when they leave care. However, children being looked after by the council are currently being placed too far away from home, in many cases out of the county. We will deliver our new placement strategy that has been developed to ensure these children can live closer to home, to make it easier to keep contact with relatives and for them to move back home as soon as it is appropriate to do so.
- **Adult safeguarding** – we will undertake a comprehensive review of existing processes and procedures in adult social care, with the aim of delivering better ways of working to pressures on staff, enable quicker responses and create more capacity to cope with increasing safeguarding alerts.
- **Early intervention** - we work with partners to understand local need and secure provision of services that promote prevention and early intervention, and offer early help to children, young people and families so that emerging problems are dealt with before they become more serious. We will continue to make better links between early intervention services and children’s social care to create a more cohesive all-round service that improves outcomes for children and young people. We will also be focusing on improving the experience of children and young people and their families from needing care and support to receiving it, and moving between services where necessary.

More children are entering care across the UK and like other councils Oxfordshire has seen more referrals into care following high profile cases. In 2012/13, 247 children came into the care of the council. The average cost of supporting a child in residential care is £175,000.

People are living longer, creating a greater need for social care. We also know that over the next 10 years the number of over 85s is expected to rise by 38%. The average cost of a care home place for an older person per year is £27,000.

11. Our Values

The council will continue to be guided by CHOICE, our six organisational values, in how we work with each other and with the people of Oxfordshire.

The values have been refreshed this year to reflect the fact that a lot has changed since they were first launched, and to reflect the new priorities for the council as a whole.

- **Customer focus** – understanding and prioritising the needs of our customers and improving opportunities for local people to do more for themselves.
- **Honesty** – being open and transparent about how the organisation operates. Ensuring robust governance arrangements and practice.
- **One team** – working collectively as a council and with partners to meet strategic goals.
- **Innovation** – encouraging and embracing new approaches to meet the needs of customers, enabling our staff to challenge and take risks.
- **Commercial** – being clear about our role in delivering services and what the market can offer. Focusing on getting the best value from our relationships so we can deliver quality services underpinned by robust management.
- **Enthusiasm** – being adaptable and ambitious, anticipating strategic changes, driving programmes to refresh our approach and supporting staff to perform to the best of their abilities.

Equalities

We are committed to making Oxfordshire a fair and equal place in which to live, work and visit. We are meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 via a five year Equality Policy which runs until 2017 and sets out the four key objectives that guide all of our work:

- Understanding the needs of individuals and communities
- Providing accessible, local and personalised services
- Supporting thriving and cohesive communities
- Promoting a culture of fairness in employment and service delivery

If we plan to make changes to a service we will continue to consult relevant people (residents, service users, providers, partners), and will undertake Service and Community Impact Assessments ('SCIAS') to consider whether vulnerable and other sections of our communities are unfairly disadvantaged by any changes.

12. The Finances

We have had to take some tough financial decisions in order to live within our means in the face of continued reductions in central Government funding and increasing demand for our services. We have worked hard to hold down costs and deliver services in new ways to manage this challenging financial situation.

Our financial plans

The principles upon which our medium term financial plan and capital programme are based are set out in our financial strategy. Our medium term financial plan 2014/15 to 2017/18 is available online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mtfpsummary and sets out how resources are allocated in accordance with the council's priorities.

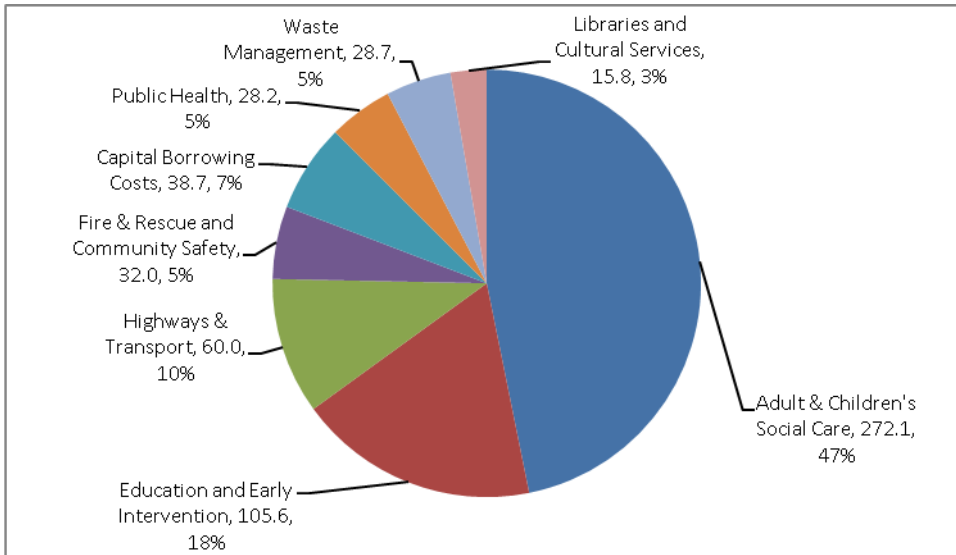
Our financial planning reflects:

- The reducing level of financial support from central Government and consequential revenue savings required over the medium term
- The allocation of resources to meet statutory service requirements and key strategic priorities
- Our commitment to council tax payers, and
- Our on-going commitment to achieve efficiencies to ensure improved value for money

We will spend £585.3m in 2014/15 on services (excluding schools). In addition, spending by schools maintained by the council is funded by a specific government grant of £288.3m.

What we spend on services (excluding schools)

Adult & Children's Social Care 47% (£273.4m)
 Education and Early Intervention 18% (£106.4m)
 Highway & Transport 10% (£61.1m)
 Capital Borrowing Costs 6% (£39.6m)
 Fire & Rescue and Community Safety 6% (£32.0m)
 Waste Management 5% (£28.7m)
 Public Health 5% (£28.2m)
 Libraries & Cultural Services 3% (£15.9m)

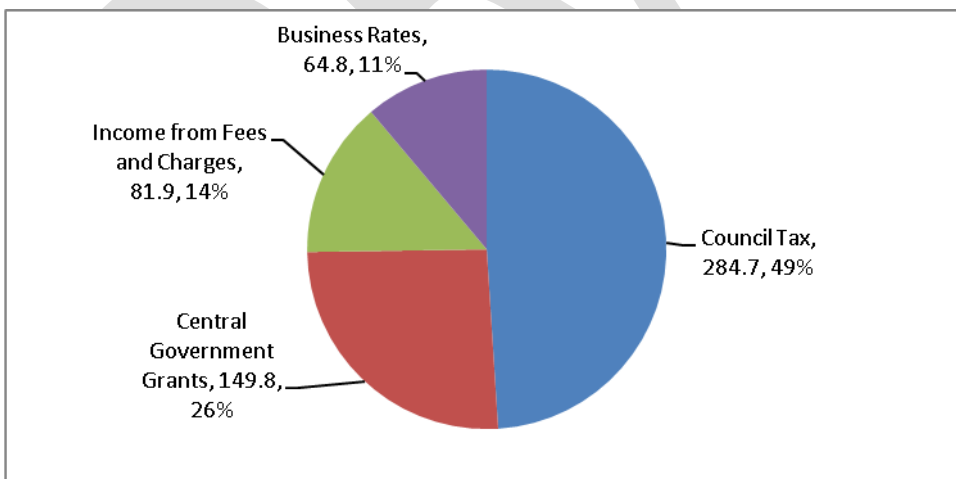


Our funding (excluding schools)

Our funding comes from a number of sources, including government grants and business rates, with just under half of our total funding coming from council tax. This means that a rise of one per cent in total spending (excluding schools) would require a council tax increase of just over two per cent, all else being equal.

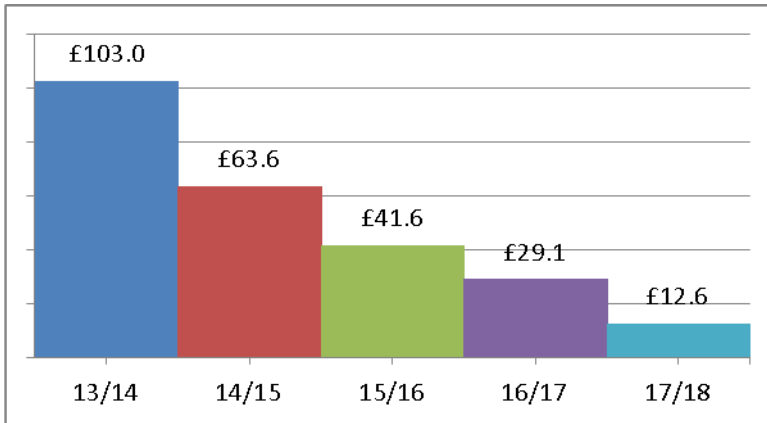
Where the money comes from

- Council Tax 49% (£284.7m)
- Central Government Grants 26% (£152.2m)
- Income from Fees and Charges 14% (£83.4m)
- Business Rates 11% (£65m)



Earmarked Revenue Reserves

Our earmarked revenue reserves are held for specified one-off projects, contractual commitments and to support the medium term financial plan. Most of the council's reserves will be used up over the next four years, with the total expected to fall from £103.0m at the start of 2014/15 to £12.6m by the end of 2017/18.



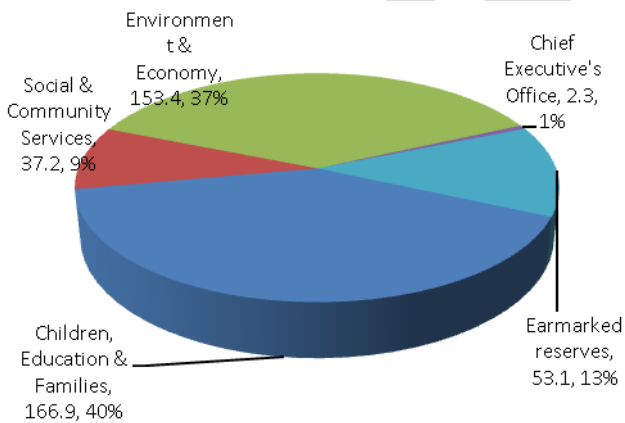
Capital

The capital element of our financial strategy provides a framework for ensuring the use of limited capital resources supports the achievement of the priorities set out in this plan. Our principles for prioritising capital investment are to:

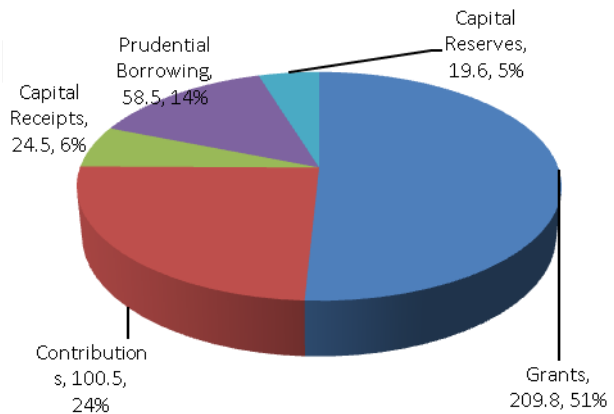
- Comply with our statutory duties
- Improve the efficient and effective delivery of our services, and
- Promote economic growth

We intend to spend £412.9m on capital investments in Oxfordshire between 2013/14 and 2017/18. The projects included in the capital programme are wide-ranging, covering all areas of the council's activity (for example on schools, roads, children's homes and fire stations) and all areas of the county.

Spending on capital investment



Funding for capital investment



13. 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. If you would like more detailed information about the work of the council you may be interested in the following:

[More about Oxfordshire County Council \[url\]](#)

[The Sustainable Community Strategy 'Oxfordshire 2030' \[url\]](#)

[Our Directorate Business Strategies \[url\]](#)

[The Medium Term Financial Plan \[url\]](#)

[Oxfordshire Insight \[url\]](#)

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At a Glance

<p>Our ambition: A Thriving Oxfordshire</p>
<p>This means having: A Thriving Economy Thriving People and Communities A Safety Net</p>
<p>The county council's role in delivering this ambition: Providing Community Leadership Working in Partnership Helping People to Help Themselves</p>

What We Do

Children, Education and Families	Social and Community Services	Public Health	Economy and Environment	Chief Executive's Office
<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's Social Services Education Services Early Intervention Service/Thriving Families 	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Care for Adults and Older People Fire and Rescue Service Emergency Planning Trading Standards Safer Communities Gypsy and Traveller Service 	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Health Health Improvement, Disease Prevention and Substance Misuse Treatment Health Protection and Emergency Planning 	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economy and Skills Highways and Transport Infrastructure Planning Waste Management Property and Facilities Customer Services 	<p>Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal Democratic Services HR Cultural Services - including Libraries Finance Policy Major Programmes Research



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL