

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

Talkback TEAM

Welcome to your Talkback survey on Oxford City Council's draft Corporate Plan and draft Budget

Dear member of Talkback,

On the 7 December 2011 the City Executive Board agreed that Oxford City Council's draft Corporate Plan and draft budget proposals for the next four years should be released for public consultation.

We want to know your views about our plans for the future. Have we got our priorities right? Please let us know what you think.

Please can you complete and return this short survey by 20th January 2012.

Your response to this survey will be included in a report for the City Executive Board meeting on 8th February 2012 and then provided to the meeting of the full Council on 20th February 2012.

Thank you for being a member of our Talkback Citizen's Panel, we appreciate and value your feedback.

Margaret Melling,
Interim Consultation Officer

For this special Corporate Plan and Budget survey we have increased the amount of the prize draw to £100. If you would like to be entered please provide your details below...

I would like to be entered into the £100 prize draw

Name:

.....

Email address:

.....

Home address

.....

Post code:

.....

Phone number:

.....

The winner will be notified by 31 January 2012.

The full Corporate Plan and Budget documents are available on our website at www.oxford.gov.uk/corporateplan-budgetsurvey. If you would prefer hard copies please call Margaret Melling, interim consultation officer on 01865 252057 or email mmelling@oxford.gov.uk.



Section 1: Our draft Corporate Plan

Our draft Corporate Plan, available at www.oxford.gov.uk/corporateplan-budgetsurvey, sets out our strategies, priorities and key projects. Our ambition is to build a world-class city for everyone and our priorities are:

- a vibrant and sustainable economy
- meeting housing needs
- strong and active communities
- a cleaner, greener Oxford
- an efficient and effective Council

1 How far do you agree or disagree with the priorities as set out in our draft Corporate Plan? (Please tick 1 box)

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	

2 Please use the space below for your comments on our draft Corporate Plan

Section 2: Our draft budget

Our draft budget, available at www.oxford.gov.uk/corporateplan-budgetsurvey, sets out our proposed financial strategy for delivering the Corporate Plan and includes our detailed spending plans.

Our budget proposals take into account the wider impact of the current economic downturn as well as the consequences of Government cuts and changes in policy.

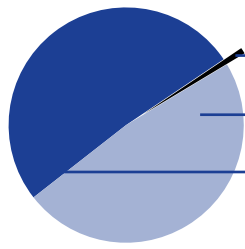
We face a number of financial pressures and uncertainties including:

- A 28% reduction in central Government grant over the four year planning period, 22% of which falls within the first two years. Local government has been hit hardest of all areas by Government cuts and the Government has indicated that the sector will face further cuts beyond 2015.
- Uncertainties around government policies and their financial implications for Oxford - including the introduction of Universal Credit, cuts to council tax benefit and reforms to Business Rates
- The impact of the economic downturn on income from car parking and commercial rents
- Increased demand for Council services as a consequence of the recession and deficit reduction initiatives by other organisations.

Oxford City Council is managing its way through these difficult times by significantly increasing its efficiency. Over the last three years, we have made efficiency savings of around £4 million a year. Further savings of £9.5 million are planned over the period 2011-12 to 2014-15 and the efficiency drive will continue beyond 2015. As a result of our strong financial management, the Council is in a position to protect our core services - particularly those that serve the most vulnerable in our community - and to continue investing in the city.

Where does the City Council's money come from?

Oxford City Council's total budget of £24.1 million in 2012-13 is made up of:



- Revenue Support Grant from Government of £229,000 (1%)
- Oxford's share of redistributed Business Rates of £11,491,000 (48%)
- Income from Council Tax of £12,417,000 (51%).

Our spending plans

Delivering capital projects that generate new housing and jobs is a key priority for the City Council. Over the next four years alone, we will be investing around £67million into the local economy – building new homes and improving the city's leisure offer – and helping to create around 900 jobs. We are also proposing measures to improve educational attainment and youth provision, tackle poverty and inequality, reduce carbon emissions and promote a green economy.

New projects

We are planning to invest £67 million over the next four years on major improvement and construction projects including:

- £8.4 million investment per year in the Council's housing stock including £1 million repairs to the tower blocks, over £2 million on kitchen improvements and £700,000 of bathroom improvements
- £7 million on a new competition sized swimming pool at Blackbird Leys
- £6 million over four years on refurbishment of council buildings protecting the city's heritage
- £2.5 million over four years on disabled facilities grants
- £1.1 million over four years on improvements to sports pavilions
- £700,000 on Leisure Centre improvements
- £300,000 on bin stores for Council flats to assist recycling to assist with recycling in flats
- £300,000 on the creation of new cycle lanes and to improve cycle safety.

These capital projects will be funded from a number of sources including:

- £8.4 million directly funded from Council House Rents
- £6.3 million borrowing
- £5.3 million from Council Tax revenue and reserves
- £3.7 million from selling land and buildings.

We also plan to spend:

- £350,000 per year for four years to support work by schools to improve educational attainment in Oxford
- £240,000 extra per year to increase the range of youth activities in Oxford
- £60,000 per year for stronger enforcement of standards in privately rented homes
- £50,000 per year for two years to create apprentice opportunities within the Council
- £50,000 per year for two years to fund local projects across the city with social inclusion aims
- Further funding to: support for older people in our community; to clamp down on noise nuisance in problem areas; to raise wages of the lowest-paid council staff and contractors working on council contracts (setting a "living wage" of £8 per hour); funding to reduce fuel poverty and support for advice work.

The City Council is planning to spend £24.1 million on services during 2012-13 (£100 million over four years), this equates to £160 per resident per year. If you own a property in the city, on average you will contribute around £5 per week in Council Tax towards Oxford City Council services.

3 How far do you agree or disagree with the priorities as set out in our draft budget?

(Please tick 1 box)

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	

4 Please use the space below for your OVERALL comments on our draft budget.

Council Tax

For the second year running the Government has announced a Council Tax Freeze Grant. As in 2011/12 local authorities can choose to take advantage of a grant equivalent to a 2.5% increase in Council Tax providing that the level of the tax is frozen. Oxford City Council is proposing to take advantage of this grant for 2012/13 and not increase Council Tax. However, this grant will only be paid in 2012/13. This means that the Council's base budget for 2013/14 will have a deficit of around £300,000. As part of its forward budget planning the Council has projected an increase in the Council Tax in that year of around 4% to meet that deficit (this is equivalent to an average of 20p per week per Council Tax payer).

5 How far do you agree or disagree with the strategy to freeze Council Tax in 2012-13 and then increase by 4% in 2013-14 *(Please tick 1 box)*

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	

6 Please use the space below for your comments on strategy on Council Tax.

Our major budget proposals for 2012-13

Vibrant, Sustainable Economy

Oxford is a global brand for education, health, bioscience, information technology, publishing, the motor industry and tourism. For all its strengths, Oxford did not escape the impact of the 2008/09 recession and it is now facing the effects of the government's severe public spending cuts. 89% of employees in Oxford work in services, including 46% in public administration, education and health. A large number of jobs in our city directly or indirectly linked to public spending will be under threat from Government cuts in the coming years. The new budget measures set out below will help to create jobs, support our city centre economy, encourage fair wages, and support young people into education and training.

7. How far do you agree or disagree with each of the following investment proposals?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
Apprenticeships: a fund of £50,000 for two years to provide around 5 new apprenticeships at Oxford City Council.					
Living wage: to increase the "living wage" for all Oxford City Council employees and contractors to £8 per hour (above the national minimum wage which is currently £6.08 per hour), £9,000 per year.					
Toilets: substantial capital funding of £420,000 over three years to improve the quality of toilets in and beyond the city centre.					
New pathway to enter Westgate: £15,000 in 2012-13 to enable better access between Westgate car park and the street					

Meeting housing needs

Oxford is one of the least affordable UK cities in terms of housing, with average house prices more than nine times higher than annual incomes. One in five of Oxford's residents live in houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) in the private rented sector. Over 6,000 households are on the housing register, and homelessness - though much improved - is over twice the national average. The economic situation and new Government policies on welfare are putting pressure on incomes and contributing to a growth in the number of homeless households across the country.

The new budget measures set out below will help to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in Oxford, and provide housing and money advice.

8. How far do you agree or disagree with each of the following investment proposals?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
Deliver a programme of 800 new homes at Barton					
Deliver 100 new homes and 2 community centres in Northway and Cowley					
Deliver 112 homes across the city part funded by a £2 million government grant					
Stronger private rented sector enforcement: £60,000 per year to allow greater proactive enforcement of standards in the private rented sector.					

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Homeshare: a £10,000 per year project with Age UK Oxfordshire to promote home sharing by older and younger people.					
Legal aid – welfare advice: a two year support post (£29,000 per year) to mitigate the impact of government cuts to Legal Aid for those most in need.					

Strong, active communities

There are major inequalities in life chances within our city. Twelve of Oxford’s neighbourhoods are among the 20% most deprived areas in England. Around 23% of Oxford’s under-16s live in low-income households. Attainment levels of pupils in state schools are much lower than the national average. In some areas, half of all adults have no qualifications. Citizens in the most deprived areas could live up to ten years less than those in the wealthiest areas. Some areas of the city suffer multiple levels of deprivation—low skills, low incomes, and poor housing. These are the areas that have been hit hardest by the rise in unemployment during the recession and where the cuts in public services will be felt most.

The new budget measures set out below will help to reduce inequality, improve the lives of the most vulnerable members of our society and to improve outcomes for young people.

9. How far do you agree or disagree with each of the following investment proposals?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
Educational Attainment: A fund of £350,000 per year for four years to support Oxford’s schools. The fund will be available to support a range of match funded bids from schools e.g. targeted interventions with under-achieving children, additional classroom support, activities before and after the school day and training of staff.					
Proactive night time noise patrol: to provide proactive work to reduce noise problems in areas and at times where there has been a history of noise complaints.					
Youth activities: A fund of £240,000 per year for four years to provide support in areas of the City where the County Council’s changes to youth provision have had the greatest detrimental impact, as well as expanding youth activity to some areas which currently have no provision.					
Leisure/school partnership activities: a three year post (£33,000 per year) to deliver more use of Oxford City Council facilities by local schools.					
Parks pavilions: a major £1.1 million refurbishment of parks pavilions including those on Blackbird Leys, Barton and Quarry Fields					
Additional equipment to clear snow from footways: £12,000 in 2012-13					
Promotion of free swimming: £28,000 per year over four years, to ensure that young people, especially those from backgrounds which are less likely to access free swimming, are aware of and take advantage of the opportunity.					

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Football pitches: a one-off £25,000 project to improve drainage at Court Place Farm, overcoming problems of water-logging and ensuring that teams are able to play there more regularly					
Older people's support grant: A 2 year fund of £20,000 per year to encourage new initiatives to support isolated older people in the community.					
Locking of Florence Park: £5,000 per year to continue funding to lock Florence Park in the evenings to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour					
Proactive riverbank enforcement: a targeted programme of enforcement to deal with the growing problem of illegal moorings funded by £22,000 per year over two years.					
Councillor social inclusion initiatives: a new fund of £50k per year for two years for Councillors to bid into to fund local projects with social inclusion aims.					

Cleaner, Greener Oxford

Survey after survey makes it clear that Oxford's citizens place a very high priority on the quality of the local environment. The City Council's objective is to maintain and develop a cleaner, greener Oxford – in the city centre, in our neighbourhoods and in all public spaces. The city presents particular challenges due to the diverse nature of its population, its high population churn (25% per annum) the large number of houses in multiple occupation, and the large number of self-contained flats.

The new budget measures set out below will help to improve our refuse and recycling service, keep our streets, neighbourhoods and open spaces clean, and reduce the Council's and the city's carbon footprint.

10. How far do you agree or disagree with each of the following investment proposals?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
Cleaner, greener area based door-to-door campaign: to extend the "Cleaner Greener" Oxford agenda, improving recycling and street cleanliness throughout the city, £12,000 per year for four years.					
Conversion of council flat sites to recycling: £27,000 per year between 2013-14 and 2015-16 to convert remaining council flat sites to recycling with improved bin stores.					
Additional hours for litter picking and maintenance in parks: £15,000 per year for four years					
New low-emission litter picking vehicle in city centre: additional vehicle to enable side-waste to be removed more effectively from around bins in the city centre, £2,000 per year for four years					
Low Carbon Oxford: £50,000 per year for two years to assist the City Council to maintain its active leadership of the low-carbon agenda and ensure that Low Carbon Oxford is able to continue its successful work.					

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Green Deal promotion: £54,000 over two years to ensure early and full take-up of the proposed "Green Deal" to promote insulation.					
Oxford Cycle City: £300,000 capital over four years and £10k revenue to create more cycle lanes and better signage.					
Groundworks Environmental Improvement Programme: £6,000 per year for four years to deliver a social enterprise programme to clear watercourses, ditches and streams to improve flood protection.					

Efficient, Effective Council

Oxford City Council aims to be a flexible, fit-for-purpose organisation, delivering high quality services and excellent value for money for all our citizens. Over the last three years we have made significant steps toward realising this ambition. We have made efficiency savings of around £4 million a year. Further reductions of £9.5 million are planned over the period 2011-12 to 2014-15. £5.9 million of the total savings relate to the delivery of further efficiencies across the organisation. As well as cutting costs, we have improved performance across 84% of our indicators.

The new budget measures set out below will help to make the City Council even more efficient and effective.

11. How far do you agree or disagree with each of the following investment proposals?	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
Service and process efficiency reviews					
Further work to rationalise and improve ICT: £1.1 million investment over 4 years					
Carbon reduction: to enable a reduction in Oxford City Council's carbon footprint to 5% per year.					

12 Please use the space below for your comments on our budget proposals



Talkback reports are available to download at www.oxford.gov.uk/consultation
Or we can send you copies on request.
Please call: 01865 252057