

Oxfordshire County Council

Productivity Plan for 2024/25 to 2026/27

Productivity Plan 2024/25

Introduction

1. This productivity plan has been produced in response to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' review of productivity in local government.
2. As requested, the following sets out our key transformational programmes, priorities and future ambitions for becoming an employer, partner and place shaper of choice.

Financial Context

3. In 2024/25 the council plans to spend £899m on day to day services. 52% will be spent on adult and children's social care and 9% on Highways Maintenance.
4. The budget for 2024/25 which was approved by Council in February 2024 includes new savings of £13.9m. Investments of £10.6m include activity expected to reduce future demand for children's and adult's social care.
5. The council has a strong track record of delivering planned savings. New savings totalling £28.2m were built into directorate budgets in 2023/24 and 84% of these were achieved during the year. Over the last five years the council has achieved savings totalling £96.9m, 79% of the budgeted total. As set out in the Financial Strategy a financial indicator tracks forecast delivery during the year. Any savings not achieved are required to be followed up in the next financial year or are considered as part of the next Business Planning process.
6. The [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) (MTFS) approved by Council in February 2024 has a deficit of £13.9m from 2025/26. Whilst the amount of funding from Government and that which can be raised from Council Tax for 2025/26 and beyond has not been announced, action needs to be taken to ensure that it is possible to set a balanced budget in future years.

Delivering the Future Together

7. In 2021, the Council launched [Delivering the Future Together](#) (DTFT) to help the organisation be the best it can for its people and manage organisational change. Building on the success of the programme a new phase is expected to deliver transformational change and achieve our ambition to be an employer, partner and place shaper of choice.
8. Over the next two years, our vision for a successful and sustainable council of the future is one where the council:
 - is smaller; operating from fewer buildings making sure those we keep are used to their full capacity;
 - embraces technology where it improves productivity and connectivity to the people we serve, helping us become more efficient;
 - collaborates more closely with partners in the voluntary and community sector so it is no longer the main provider for every service; and
 - exploits commercial opportunities where they deliver value for our residents.

9. This will accelerate delivery of financial and non-financial benefits and the achievement of our operating principles and also support the council's financial sustainability.
10. To support this change, we are enabling more matrix working across the organisation to share skills and encourage a growth mindset whilst addressing resourcing need to deliver transformation at pace.
11. We have established a Change Academy which will see 24 self-nominated colleagues from across the council fast tracked through a project and programme management training programme and seconded into the Transformation Programme Management Office for 12 months.
12. We have a fully established Lean six sigma apprenticeship scheme which is open to anyone across the organisation and includes a Level 4 Improvement Practitioner Qualification. The scheme enables colleagues to gain business improvement skills and implement their learning to make efficiencies and process improvements.
13. We are also in the process of establishing three communities of practice in Data, Policy and Project Management which will allow all colleagues the opportunity to matrix work on key delivery projects to increase skill levels across the organisation and deliver consistent best practice, regardless of their current role or service area.
14. Programmes and projects within the transformation programme are monitored by the monthly Transformation Delivery Board who oversee progress and benefits realisation. Progress is reported to the Strategic Transformation Board, made up of our senior leadership team, who hold ultimate accountability for setting the strategy and maintain oversight of the priority programmes.

People and Culture Strategy & Organisational Design

15. Our [People and Culture Strategy](#) agreed in January 2024 aligns with the DTFT vision of becoming an Employer of Choice, by:
 - Attracting, recruiting and retaining talented people
 - Enabling our people to thrive and perform
 - Enabling our people to grow and evolve for the future
 - Enabling our people to lead and transform for the future
16. Aligned with DTFT, the commitments in this strategy prioritise investing in our current workforce to provide resilience ahead of making the organisation smaller.
17. Savings built into the 2024/25 – 2026/27 Medium Term Financial Strategy that reflect the need to reduce the size of the organisation are:
 - £1.5m saving expected to be achieved through delayering and reducing the size of the organisation so that the council is sustainable.
 - Reductions in staffing costs which will increase to £4.0m ongoing from 2024/25 are already included in the budget agreed in February 2023.

18. Improving our culture is everybody's responsibility and we have a set of values designed and agreed by colleagues which are front and centre of every behaviour.
19. Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is part of these values and is in line with our statutory duty set out in the Equality Act 2010. We are committed to a psychologically safe working environment and inclusive services for all our residents, protecting the nine protected characteristics with the addition of ensuring our decisions have no or mitigated negative impact on rural communities, armed forces, carers and areas of deprivation. All colleagues are required to complete a one-hour online training module on EDI.
20. Our [Including Everyone Strategy](#) was adopted in 2020 and its delivery and actions are the responsibility of everyone across the organisation, with measures updated annually and oversight led by our Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Consequently, spend on EDI is minimal.
21. We have proactively engaged in the Race Equality Code Accreditation scheme and are developing an action plan for implementation following the findings of our review. We are committed to addressing identified areas of improvement as a priority.
22. We have a number of voluntarily run internal networks for colleagues to join, including a women's, Race Equality And Cultural Heritage, LGBTQI+, neurodiversity, disability and wellbeing, young person's, Christian and Jewish network. There is an allocated annual budget of £12k to support network activity which can be used for conference attendance, promotional material, catering costs and external speakers. In 2023/24 only £1k of the budget was spent between five of the eight networks.
23. We enable the use of Trade Unions and have membership of Fire Brigades Union, Unison, National Union of Teachers and University and Colleges Union. The annual costs for this are £281k. As we are going through significant organisational change, it is prudent to hold these memberships to support colleagues across the organisation.

Commercial Strategy

24. The [Commercial Strategy](#) sets out our commercial ambition and a pathway to embedding commercial thinking as part of our culture and governance. Our vision is to leverage Oxfordshire's unique assets and strengths to optimise organisational efficiency, generate sustainable revenue, support the development of a more inclusive local economy and enhance public services through innovative and responsible commercial activities.
25. The initial focus is enabling a commercially minded organisation with an understanding of commercial awareness, value creation, strategic thinking, resourcefulness, entrepreneurial spirit, and collaboration. Activity will include information and systems, processes, people and capability, risk appetite and monitoring and evaluation.
26. One example project is our [Green Financing](#) strategy which is being developed to underpin the decarbonisation of the council's buildings and generate funding for the future capital programme.

27. The adoption of the commercial strategy and delivery plan will support services with achieving the 2024/25 budget saving of £2.0m relating to reductions in contract and commercial spend.
28. Progress of commercial activity is overseen by a dedicated Commercial Board that will operate under the direction of senior management.

Property Strategy

29. Our [Property and Assets Strategy](#) set outs our 10-year ambition for a property portfolio driven by the need to repurpose the estate to enable new ways of delivering services, support agile working and decarbonise existing buildings. It also looks at reducing the number of leased properties.
30. We are continuing to implement the strategy to support the revitalisation of the local corridor of regeneration through the Oxford city centre programme, by completing the construction of the fire station at Rewley Road, the sale of County Hall and subsequent move of our council offices to Speedwell House. Our relocation to this other council owned site will significantly enhance an area of the city where the market alone has not led to regeneration.

SEND Improvement Plan

31. Following an Ofsted judgement, we have worked collaboratively with partners to develop and implement a [Priority Action Plan for the SEND Local Area Partnership](#).
32. An Oxfordshire SEND Strategic Improvement and Assurance Board (SSIAB) drives the action required and the internal Transformation Delivery Board has oversight of programme delivery. Membership of the SSIAB includes representatives from the parent carer forum.
33. Four multi-organisational Task and Finish Groups have been established to deliver actions relating to their assigned area of improvement.

Oxfordshire Way

34. The [Oxfordshire Way](#) was originally co-developed by Adult Social Care and the Voluntary Community Sector as an ambitious vision and programme to support working together in a more person-centred, outcomes-focused manner.
35. Its purpose is to build greater resilience in our communities with increased independence and improved ways of working to reduce demand on formal care services through proactive and preventative community outreach.
36. There is an opportunity to explore how Oxfordshire Way can be further expanded into the system. This would include how the principles can be implemented into children's (building on work done previously) and across the wider system and organisation. This could unlock further opportunities for Oxfordshire to enable a more holistic, asset-based approach to prevention and early intervention, supporting our aim of collaborating more closely with partners in the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Data

37. We are committed to improving our data-led approach with a number of priority areas to enable data, intelligence and insight at the heart of all we do. Our Business Intelligence transformation programme aims to accelerate our ambition to becoming an insight driven organisation.
38. To achieve this, we are mobilising a data, insight and delivery hub to centralise management of data and the delivery of insights. We will maintain a consistent approach through a data strategy that puts a spotlight on continuous improvement, fosters innovation and maintains data quality and integrity, underpinned by data maturity assessments to help identify areas for improvement.
39. Performance is measured and monitored regularly through monthly business management and monitoring reports which present the councils performance, risk and financial position.
40. Accountability for performance monitoring and measurement of outcomes lies with Performance & Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, both of which receive regular updates on delivery of savings.
41. Residents can access our performance data using our [citizens portal](#) which hosts our Key Performance Indicators and qualitative progress measures.

Digital innovation

42. We are embracing technological innovation by proactively exploring the benefits of Artificial Intelligence, rolling out Microsoft Co-pilot on a large scale trial to measure the potential efficiencies that can be achieved through its use.
43. Longer term we are looking to the future with the development of a Technology Strategy that will set out our ambition for the use of technology and innovation over the next five years.
44. Our Improved Customer Experience transformation programme aims to increase digitisation and begin discovery of technology integration to improve our customer service and 'front door' accessibility. This is underpinned by the recently approved [Customer Experience Strategy](#) which aims to provide customers with a more accessible, aligned and coherent experience when they contact the council, with a clear feedback loop to continually improve the experience across all services.
45. We have launched a Business Services Transformation programme which will deliver improvements to HR, finance, payroll and procurement functions providing consistency and reduction in duplicative administrative tasks through the investment of optimised standard solutions.