

DRAFT

West Oxfordshire District Council

Council Plan 2016 – 2019

Introduction

Introduction by Leader – to include

Aim : To maintain and enhance West Oxfordshire as one of the best places to live, work and visit in Great Britain

Priorities:

- To protect the environment whilst supporting the local economy
- To meet the current and future needs of residents
- To provide efficient and value for money services, whilst delivering quality front line services

Background

People

West Oxfordshire is the second most rural district in the south-east of England, with a population of 108,000. The main towns are Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton, though the majority of the population (57%) lives in rural areas. The population has increased by 31% in the past 30 years, with just under half of this growth taking place in the past 10 years.

The District also has an ageing population. Estimates from 2014 to 2024 show the 65 years and over age group increasing by a further 5,300 people, with two thirds being outside the main towns. This will affect things like the demand for suitable housing (eg extra care housing), home adaptations, other service provision and associated demand for key worker housing. However, the younger population is also expected to increase.

- Those aged 85+ represented 2% of the district's total population in both 1993, and 2013 but this is predicted to rise to 7% by 2037.
- As of mid-2014 it is estimated there was a total of 24,700 children and young people aged 0 to 19 resident in West Oxfordshire. This is expected to increase by 11% to 27,400 over the 10 years to 2024.
- In 2011, most residents were White British (92.6%); this compares to 95.6% in 2001.
- The total number of residents of West Oxfordshire born outside the UK increased from 5,600 in 2001 to 8,500 in 2011

West Oxfordshire Quality of Life

West Oxfordshire people are more likely to experience a good quality of life than in other parts of Britain. No parts of the District are in the most deprived 20%, according to the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation. However, some parts of the District have elements of deprivation, with parts in the 10% most 'deprived' nationally in terms of access to housing and services such as GP's surgeries, post offices, shops and primary schools.

Housing

In 2013, the cheapest (lower quartile) market housing in the District was around 9 times the lower band gross salary. This ratio is well above the national average.

Between 2001 and 2011 the total number of households in the District increased by 4,800 (13%), with the highest percentage growth in private rented households. There are now more people in private rented accommodation than social housing. Therefore, the demand for affordable housing continues to be an issue in this District.

The Local Economy

Throughout the recent recession unemployment (as measured by Job Seekers Allowance claimants) was within the lowest 25% of Districts in the South East. The number of jobs in the District has risen in recent years and is now above the last peak in 2007. Between 2012 and 2013 there was an increase in jobs of 6,000 (12%) in West Oxfordshire, which is higher than the percentage jobs growth in other districts in Oxfordshire. Some of this change is due to the expansion of RAF Brize Norton. Jobs in the private sector have risen at a higher rate than public sector jobs.

Technology is also allowing increasing numbers of people to work from home. This is highest in the rural parts of the District. There is also significant commuting in and out of the District for work, especially in the Woodstock and Eynsham areas.

We recognise the importance of the local economy and endeavour to support local businesses. We also work to encourage tourism and we will continue to invest in the availability of high speed broadband, (having contributing £xx in 2014/15) which is increasingly important to businesses.

We are also aware that the south east quadrant of the District (ie the Eynsham, Woodstock, Long Hanborough area) is becoming increasingly important in economic terms, with the second highest number of jobs after Witney.

- The percentage of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance in June 2015 was 0.5%, compared to 1% in the South East and 1.7% nationally.
- In 2013, 21% of employment (not including self-employment) was in education, public administration, care, social work and other health occupations.
- Between 2001 and 2011 there was an increase in the net outward commuting of workers, up from 7,749 in 2001 to 8,326 in 2011.
- According to the 2011 Census, 7,500 residents of West Oxfordshire commuted to work in Oxford. This was 13% of employed residents. In the areas around Woodstock and Eynsham, around 30% of workers commuted into Oxford.

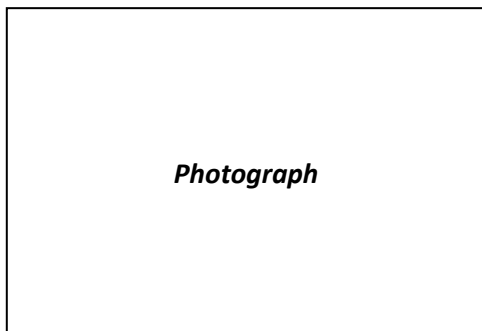
Priority – Protect the environment whilst supporting the local economy

West Oxfordshire is a pleasant area in which to live and work, with a good quality of life. It also attracts high numbers of tourists, who make a significant contribution to the economy.

The Council has an important role in ensuring the District remains an attractive area and in protecting the environment. We are able to do this through our planning policies, and have worked hard to produce a Local Plan which seeks to protect our unique landscape and built environment as well as promoting local economic growth and allowing for a mix of housing. After extensive consultation, this Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination in summer 2015.

Economically, the Eynsham, Woodstock, Long Hanborough area is 'heating up' and we are aware that we need to secure economic growth which is appropriate for the District, given the pressures of the wider economic area. We also recognise that we must continue to promote the area for tourism.

We are conscious of the many other contributions we can make to the environment, for instance through continuing to promote recycling and reducing the amount of waste we send to landfill, as well as working to keep the District clean.



Objectives

Our objectives for the next four years are to:

- Protect the natural and built environment
- Reduce waste and increase recycling
- Secure economic growth appropriate for the District
- Work in partnership to increase the economic value of tourism to the District
- Make best use of any opportunities through devolution for the benefit of the District

Key Tasks

- Implement a new waste and recycling contract from October 2017
- Implement the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.
- Develop and put in place an economic development strategy for the District
- Investigate means of increasing international visitors to the Oxfordshire Cotswolds by 31st December 2015

Priority – Working with communities to meet the current and future needs and aspirations of residents

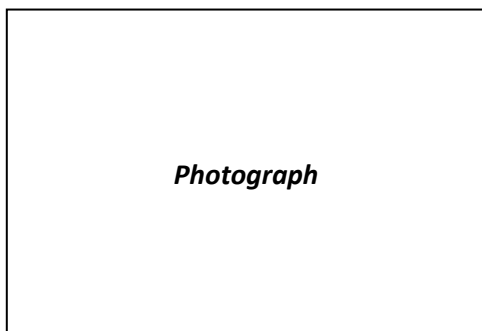
West Oxfordshire is known for having a good quality of life. For instance it has scored well in a number of national quality of life surveys in recent years and it is one of the least deprived parts of the country as defined by the Index of Multiple Deprivation. However, we are aware that we need to work with communities to maintain that quality of life.

It is important, for instance, that we work to secure the infrastructure to provide quality of life and well being for communities. We are aware that access to services such as GPs surgeries, Post Offices and shopping facilities is difficult in some areas and that improvement to the major road network and public transport is needed. Currently, we provide free parking throughout the District and we will continue to do this as well as investigating any additional parking demands.

The Council will continue to support the rollout of superfast broadband and we have invested £1.6m to ensure it is available to homes not covered by other rollout programmes.

Affordable homes are also a major element in providing a good quality of life and something which would help people of all ages live in our communities, at a time when the population is ageing.

Communities can also do things themselves to meet their needs and priorities, and we will work with them to help in this. We are supporting them in the development of Neighbourhood Plans and to use their community rights under the Localism Act.



Objectives

Our objectives for the next four years are to:

- Secure the infrastructure to support the quality of life and well being of communities now and in the future (including strategic infrastructure, utilities and services).
- Ensure appropriate infrastructure is provided for new housing developments
- Ensure better and increased use of s106 and Community Infrastructure Levy to benefit local communities
- Enable communities to provide services themselves
- Campaign to improve access to services in rural areas, improvements to the major road network and a better transport policy
- Continue free parking and consider how to meet any additional demands as identified by the forthcoming Parking Strategy

Key tasks

- Work with providers to ensure better broadband and mobile phone coverage
- Promote working at home
- Consult on and approve a new Parking Strategy for the District by March 2017
- Deliver a total of 133 affordable homes in 2016/17 and 134 affordable homes in 2017/18.
- Deliver Phase 2 of the Carterton Leisure Centre by 31st December 2016

Priority - To provide efficient and value for money services, whilst delivering quality front line services

We believe it is important that we help local people by keeping Council Tax as low as possible, whilst at the same time providing high quality services that people need.

There have been significant reductions in our grant from central government since 2010, but we have been able to freeze Council Tax for the past five years. To do this we have worked hard to find ways to be more efficient and develop new ways of working.

A key part of this has been the development of joint working with Cotswold District Council, and we are now sharing most services. We have also joined with Forest of Dean and Cheltenham Councils to share some of our services.

We now aim to develop this further in a project with those three other councils known as 2020 Vision. This Vision is for each of the four Councils to retain their independence and identity, but working together and sharing resources to maximise mutual benefit leading to more efficient and effective delivery of local services. We expect to save £1.29m over 5 years, but our aim is to make sure that the public see no reduction in the services they receive.

Photograph

Objectives

Our objectives for the next four years are to:

- Continue to be in the lowest ten councils nationally for the level of Council Tax
- To provide high quality services at the lowest possible cost to Council Tax payers
- Reduce the costs of services by initiatives such as 2020 Vision
- Avoid making cuts in services valued by residents

Key Tasks

- Implement the 2020 Vision to deliver £1.29m per annum savings by 2020
- Implement a new shared Public Protection service by the end of 2016.
- Implement a new contract for the management of our Leisure facilities by 31st December 2016
- Maximise efficiency savings through the delivery of grounds maintenance and street cleansing services via Ubico Limited
- Continue to improve the use of our assets to obtain further efficiency savings, for instance income from letting office space.

