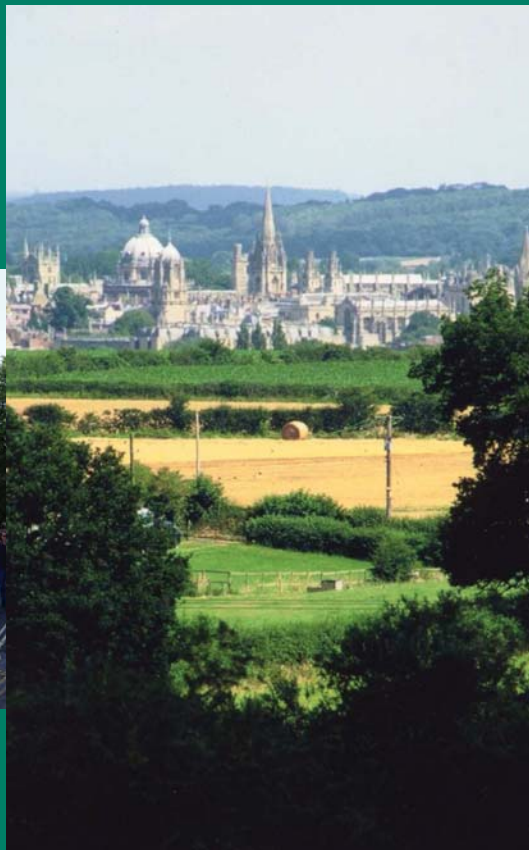


# Working Together for a Better Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire's Local Area Agreement 2006/09



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## Foreword

We welcome the concept of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) as a real opportunity to improve central/local working, to enhance service delivery and the quality of life and ultimately to reduce bureaucracy and make better use of resources. Practical reality has been slightly disappointing with a hugely challenging timescale and signs of inflexibility from some government departments. It should be said that ODPM's contribution and support has generally been welcome and helpful.

The LAA process is still evolving and will need to be refined but we welcome this opportunity to participate in this process in the hope that it will lead to greater devolution to the local level in England. We are confident that such devolution, given half a chance, will demonstrate to Whitehall that many services are best delivered at a local level and to locally determined policies.

The government wants Local Area Agreements to help deliver nationally determined priorities. Locally, we want the LAA to contribute to making Oxfordshire a better place. This LAA strives to combine these two elements. It reflects an emphasis on delivery and a focus on the areas of partnership where we can add value by working together in partnership. All of the local partners are committed to this task and we have no doubt that partnership working has been enhanced as a result of the LAA process. It will build on the significant achievements we have already made through partnership working to improve outcomes at a local level.

The tight timetable has concentrated minds although, for such a complex process of local/local and central/local partnership, more time would have been helpful. As we roll the process forward, we will have more time to develop the process and we look forward to the development of more flexible working between central and local bodies.

We pledge to work positively with the Government to deliver LAA outcomes for the benefit of Oxfordshire people and communities.

Cllr Keith R Mitchell  
Leader, Oxfordshire County Council &  
Chairman of the Oxfordshire Public Services  
Board

Professor Graham Upton  
Chairman, Oxfordshire Community  
Partnership

## Oxfordshire in context

1. Oxfordshire is a county alive with enterprise, beauty, learning and history. It has become internationally renowned as a place of architectural and natural beauty, a centre of excellence for higher education, research and innovation and is a designated European Centre of Culture.
2. It is the most rural county in the South East of England, but also a county with one of the highest levels of GDP per head in the UK, with consistently high levels of employment, and economic participation and many high tech businesses notably in biotechnology, car manufacture and motorsport. Despite the flourishing economy there are pockets of deprivation in Oxford City, Banbury and other parts of the county which have an impact on the health, wellbeing and life expectancy of individuals as well as having significant implications for the economy and public service providers.
3. Economic prosperity and the quality of the environment make Oxfordshire an attractive place to live and work. However Oxfordshire is not without its problems. In an ever more competitive world economy Oxfordshire businesses need to be more and more innovative and productive. In this respect **workforce skills, housing costs and availability and transport difficulties** are potential obstacles to success and need to be addressed over the long term.
4. Despite its academic reputation, Oxfordshire has a fifth of its adult population without qualifications who are inadequately equipped to maximise their contribution to businesses operating in an increasingly competitive global market.
5. Oxfordshire's principal road network is already operating at near capacity and there is a backlog on infrastructure investment both in road and rail. The under planned spending levels is likely to be a growing problem both for businesses and individuals. The resultant traffic congestion will also add to pollution.
6. **Housing costs** more than doubled in the period from 1998 to 2004 and the average house price in Oxford is now almost 12 times the average salary of employees in the City. In consequence people find it increasingly difficult to afford a home within easy reach of their employment. This impacts on the economy as wage pressures feed into prices but also adds to traffic congestion as more and more people commute significant distances to work.
7. Crime and anti-social behaviour are also growing concerns in all parts of the county, highlighted by the recent Mori survey.

## LAA Priorities

8. Over the **long term** the future of the County relies on solutions being found to the following challenges:
  - Sustaining Oxfordshire's successful economy
  - Addressing housing needs
  - Tackle traffic congestion
  - Improving educational attainment and skills
  - Improving the street scene and enhancing the environment
  - Reducing crime & anti-social behaviour
  - Improving health and reducing inequalities to narrow the gap in life expectancy
  - Rationalising waste management to reduce the environmental and economic impact
  - Making better use of natural resources

9. It is not feasible to address all of these issues in the next three years and some issues will require long-term solutions. The Public Service Board has decided to focus action on the following nine priorities over the next 3 years in order to maximise the added value from partnership working, avoid an over committing of resources and to reflect local and national priorities.
- a) **A new Economic Strategy by 2006:** The existing countywide economic strategy will be developed to include skills delivery, tourism and other initiatives which will aim to maximise the potential of the economy and of local people. Specific targets are listed in the 'Economic Development and Enterprise' block.
  - b) **Increasing the supply of affordable homes:** During 2006 develop a delivery strategy to increase the supply of affordable homes.
  - c) **A cleaner and greener county by 2009:** Action to improve the street scene in urban and rural areas will be a priority in the next 3 years. Specific targets are set out in the 'Safer and Stronger Communities' block.
  - d) **Children & Young People's Plan:** we will deliver the commitments within the Plan including higher levels of educational attainment by 2009. Specific targets are listed in the 'Children and Young People' block.
  - e) **Reduced crime and anti-social behaviour by 2009:** targets are set out within the 'Safer and Stronger Communities' block.
  - f) **Better waste management through the integration of waste management by 2009:** specific targets are defined within the 'Safer and Stronger Communities' block.
  - g) **A Rural Strategy to be developed:** during 2006 we will initiate the development of a new strategy in the context of the Government's Rural & Social Communities programmes which aims to support the rural economy and sustain local communities.
  - h) **A countywide Public Health Strategy to be implemented by 2007/08:** this will build on existing joint strategies with local authorities and respond to the Government's Public Health Agenda.
  - i) **A real-time, transparent and robust performance management system by 2008/09:** This will provide LAA performance information for all partners.

10. The Board have also committed to deliver the 10 stretch targets (this includes EDE Adult skills and CYP educational attainment targets which have a double value) and 24 non-stretch targets identified in the blocks below.

11. Cross cutting issues

The following table shows how outcomes link across relevant blocks.

Outcomes with stretched performance targets are shown in red

Ref	Outcome	EDE	CYP	SSC	HCOP
<b>EDE1</b>	<b>Increasing the Gross Value added of the Oxfordshire Economy by providing skills to those without any qualifications</b>				
<b>EDE2</b>	<b>Increase the efficiency and gross value added of businesses in the county by reducing their resource costs</b>				
<b>EDE3</b>	<b>Increased employment and increased</b>				

Ref	Outcome	EDE	CYP	SSC	HCOP
	levels of business start ups				
EDE4	Increase Oxfordshire's GVA by developing tourism				
CYP1	Improved achievement at GCSE				
CYP2	Achievement of vulnerable groups				
CYP3	Increase employability of young people				
CYP4	Increase the number of healthy schools  Increase participation in sport and PE  Reduce teenage conceptions.				
CYP5	Reduce young homelessness.				
CYP6	Increase early preventative family support				
CYP7	Increase access to positive activities				
CYP8	Achievement of vulnerable groups				
SSC1	Reduction in offending by young people				
SSC2	To lower the incidence of domestic violence by promoting early disclosure, effective response to disclosure and ready access to resources to increase the safety of victims.				
SSC3	Reduce the rate of re-offending by adult and juvenile Prolific & Priority Offenders (PPOs)				
SSC4	To increase public reassurance by introducing Neighbourhood Management (Policing) to all CDRP areas within Oxfordshire by March 2009.				
SSC5	Reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour and build respect in communities.				
SSC6	Reduce the harm caused to young people under 18 from illicit drug use and alcohol use				
SSC7	Reduce alcohol related harm.				
SSC8	Reduce anti social behaviour by coordinated enforcement and improved performance				
SSC9	Reduce anti-social behaviour by sustained reductions and improved service delivery				
SSC10	To reduce crime (reduction in British Crime Survey comparator crimes)				
SSC11	Improved local and global environment through the reduction of waste sent to landfill.				
SSC12	An improvement in the overall cleanliness of Oxfordshire				
SSC13	To empower local people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making and the delivery of services				
SSC14	To increase the effective participation of children and young people and ensure that it is well coordinated				
HCOP1	Reduce number of falls among older people living in care homes				
HCOP2	Increase the number of older people supported to live in their own home				

Ref	Outcome	EDE	CYP	SSC	HCOP
HCOP3	Reduce health inequalities in Oxfordshire (life expectancy)				
HCOP4	Reducing adult smoking & exposure to second hand smoking in Oxfordshire				
HCOP5	Increase participation of adult population in physical activities				
HCOP6	Enhance the Independence and quality of life for older people and vulnerable people to sustain independent living				
HCOP7	Improve access to information and advice for carers				
HCOP8	Establishing a countywide common referral and assessment process for preventive services				

## LAA Governance Arrangements

12. In Oxfordshire there is a countywide local strategic partnership (Oxfordshire Community Partnership – OCP) and five district LSPs, each bringing together key local organisations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to focus effort on the issues that matter most to local people and communities.
13. Action to date has been focused on the short-term wins rather than the long-term projects required to deliver major change.
14. In the last year OCP has been taking a data led view of future needs as well as focusing on customer and community aspirations and is now reflecting on the longer-term action it wishes to promote to fulfil the following vision.
15. **“We want Oxfordshire to be a thriving county which adapts to a changing world but remains a special place in which to work, live and visit”** (See Annex 4 for further detail).
16. The development of the Oxfordshire LAA reflects this vision and the key priorities within community strategies.
17. The LAA presents the opportunity to improve the delivery of public services and to strengthen joined up governance in the county. The LAA raises new types of decisions and puts greater emphasis on partnership working, performance management and delivery.
18. Due to the tight LAA timetable, there has been limited opportunity to discuss the LAA with the OCP. In response the Oxfordshire Community Partnership has established a Public Service Board to oversee the development of the LAA, which will form the focus for delivery of Community Strategy objectives. The PSB is chaired by the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council and brings together the key public service decision makers to improve partnership working and to deliver improvements to public services in the county. In some areas existing partnership arrangements will need improving.
19. The Public Service Board represents a high level commitment to partnership working in the county. A list of core board members is attached (see annex 2). Additional members are likely to be invited to join the board as the LAA develops. The PSB meets monthly and reports to the OCP Strategy Board.
20. An LAA Programme Board which meets monthly, has been established to manage the detailed development work and a lead officer for each of the LAA blocks has been given the responsibility for co-ordinating proposals with partners. This will include working up

project management plans with interim milestones and annual monitoring plans for the next 3 years. These will be agreed by the Public Service Board and Oxfordshire Community Partnership by September 2006.

21. We have tried to locate work on the Local Area Agreement in existing partnerships where possible. A governance diagram is attached at annex 1 which shows the relationship of these blocks and other key delivery partnerships to the Public Service Board.

- **Children and Young People** – the County Children and Young People’s Board, which is also monitoring the county’s children and young people’s plan leads on this block.
- **Safer and Stronger Communities** – Oxfordshire Safer Communities Group. Initially stronger communities issues will be tackled through The Oxfordshire Compact Group, the Oxfordshire Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Development Group and the emerging County Rural Forum. However rationalisation of these partnership groups is under consideration and it is anticipated that new governance arrangements will be agreed by Summer 2006.
- **Healthier Communities and Older people** – a multi-agency working group has been set up to progress the LAA.
- **Economy and Enterprise** – The Oxfordshire Economic Partnership will take on the LAA work for the EDE block. The SEEDA Area Programme will be aligned with the LAA as the basis for delivering its adult skills project. There is also an Affordable Housing Group (Oxfordshire Members Affordable Housing Group), which will report to the PSB.
- **Environment** – The Oxfordshire Waste Partnership and a new partnership group focused on clean/green issues will report to the PSB.

## 22. Statement of VCS Involvement:

### Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector

The Voluntary and Community Sector has an important role to play in developing this Local Area Agreement and we have sought to engage the voluntary sector in the development of action under each of the blocks. In addition both Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) and Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) are involved in the Oxfordshire Community Partnership (the countywide LSP) to which the Public Services Board is responsible in relation to the LAA.

The voluntary sector infrastructure is under developed in Oxfordshire and action is being taken to tackle areas of weakness:

- ❖ The County Council took the lead in bringing statutory agencies and VCS interests together to agree a Compact. The Compact was agreed in 2004 and a Funding Code was approved in 2005. Further development of the Compact is ongoing and the chairmanship of the Compact Group has now been assumed by the voluntary sector.
- ❖ Currently the Oxfordshire Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Development Group (OVID) is working to improve the infrastructure and ensure local statutory agencies and voluntary sector bodies are fully involved. This is the local Change Up project. The research phase has now been completed and proposals for future development of VCS infrastructure have been drawn up.

- ❖ OCVA and ORCC are working with local authorities and other partners to create a Rural Forum to oversee the Rural Social & Community Programme and to develop action in relation to rural sustainability.

The County Council has recently appointed a Head of Partnership Working to provide more capacity and energy to address these and other partnership issues. The County Council has also agreed a Volunteering Policy to encourage employees to support local voluntary sector work and, other local authorities in the county are being encouraged to participate in this initiative.

In the immediate future we shall be working with OVID, the Oxfordshire Compact Group and the emerging Rural Forum to further develop our approach to stronger communities. We also want to strengthen VCS involvement in our delivery groups in order to help deliver the targets set in this LAA but also to help develop our strategic thinking as we roll forward the LAA.