

Oxford City Council Elections 2018

Oxford Labour's Manifesto: Fighting
Austerity for a fairer city

Introduction

Oxford is a good place to live – it is diverse, vibrant city, with a thriving economy, two world-class universities, a wide range of cultural, leisure and sporting attractions, and many beautiful hidden corners. But is also a very unequal city, with wide variations in education, health, income levels and standard of living between different parts of the community. In particular, the city is scarred by a housing crisis, with increases in rents and house prices outstripping incomes, and the supply of housing in and around the city falling further and further behind demand. This situation is fuelling poverty, and is making Oxford increasingly inaccessible to those who have called it home for generations, as well as causing increasing problems of homelessness.

In Oxford Labour, we are passionate about our city, and want to make a difference. The City Council will have lost all its Government Support Grant by April 2019, but has been successful in reducing costs and increasing income from other sources. Our policies have been geared towards addressing the problems of inequality and the housing crisis, reducing the city's carbon footprint, providing good and affordable leisure facilities, and extending opportunity for all our citizens.

The City Council, under Labour's leadership since 2008, has won numerous awards, including the prestigious *Council of the Year* award in 2014. It has a committed, professional and innovative workforce, and the trust put in that workforce, by investing in services rather than seeking to privatise them, has been repaid many times over. Yet what matters most is the trust and support of local people, who need a public authority to be on their side, and to be working hard to address the issues that matter to them. We believe that we have succeeded in achieving major improvements in the services provided by the Council over the past ten years despite the financial and legal constraints imposed by central government, and we are determined to continue to do this in the years ahead.

In this manifesto, we set out our vision for Oxford, and our proposals on how to make it a fairer place to live. This manifesto is positive, deliverable, and draws upon the excellent ideas brought forward by local Labour party members, councillors and those in the communities we are proud to service.

Our key pledges:

In the next four years, we will:

- Build 1000 new affordable homes with support from the £215 million Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.
- Work with neighbouring authorities to secure high quality urban extensions that will increase the availability of affordable homes.
- Make Oxford a great cycling city, with more segregated cycle lanes, more cycle parking and successful rent-a- bike schemes.
- Promote the Oxford Living Wage as the minimum rate of pay for all employees, and continue to require the OLW as the minimum for our staff and contractors.
- Strongly support grassroots sport, backing local clubs with good facilities, and launching a new centre for football, rugby, athletics, cricket and softball at Horspath.
- Support the development of popular sports, including gymnastics, dance and boxing.
- Reduce Oxford's carbon footprint, and continue to increase recycling rates, especially for food and green waste.
- Act to reduce plastic waste and increase the availability of water in shops, cafes and through public water fountains
- Keep Council services in house and sell services to other private and public-sector organisations.

- Tackle air pollution, supporting the introduction of more electric vehicles through new public and private charging points across the city.
- Increase spending to tackle homelessness and rough-sleeping in a partnership with charities and other voluntary bodies with the objective of ensuring that no-one has to sleep rough in Oxford.

A dynamic, growing economy that works for all

Oxford is the economic heart of Oxfordshire. More than a third of the county's jobs are located in the city, although we have less than a quarter of the population. The education and health sectors are the largest employers, but BMW, Centrica, Oxfam, Oxford University Press, and the retail, construction, professional services and hospitality sectors all provide large numbers of jobs. Oxford is thriving, and the official unemployment rate is very low, but many of our fellow citizens who receive Employment and Support Allowance could, with the appropriate support, also be in employment. The City Council-supported Job Club programme has been a successful route into employment for many people in this position.

The city is going through the most radical period of transformation since the Victorian era. The opening of the Westgate Centre has transformed the city's retail sector and is bringing customers into Oxford who were previously choosing to shop elsewhere. Four other major development sites are currently under way: the Oxpens area, the 'Island' site between Park End and Hythe Bridge Streets, the railway station and the adjoining railway land to the north and south, and the Northern Gateway. In addition, the University of Oxford is planning new research, spin out and teaching facilities for the Radcliffe Observatory, Old Road and Osney Mead sites. The city's GVA per head (a measure of how much is contributed to the economy by each individual) is amongst the highest in the country and Oxford has been identified as having the country's best record for innovation. The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan is based on three growth hubs around Bicester, Oxford and Harwell/Milton Park. County-wide, employment was forecast to grow by 100,00 from 2011-2031, and nearly half of those new jobs had been created by 2017.

However, the growth potential of the Oxford city region is being held back by the crisis in housing supply, an inadequate transport infrastructure, and major weaknesses in education and skills training. Every major employer is suffering from recruitment and retention problems because of the cost and availability of housing, and the lack of appropriate technical and scientific skills training. Educational achievement among our young people still lags behind the national average. The county's road and rail network has failed to keep up with demand. The City Council has been working closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Oxfordshire Skills Board and the Growth Board to tackle these issues through bids to government through the City Deal and the Local Growth Fund, and has successfully secured a Housing and Growth Deal worth £215 million to support housing and transport schemes, and this may also bring new opportunities for improving skills training into the city.. The National Infrastructure Commission has recommended that further Government funding should be allocated over the next 30 years to support Oxfordshire's economic potential. The Government's full response is expected in the Spring.

In the next four years, we will:

- Develop Oxpens for new homes and commercial premises, through a joint venture with Nuffield College.
- Bring forward proposals for new homes and commercial development at the railway station, Osney Mead, the Northern Gateway, and sites outside the city agreed with neighbouring authorities.

- Through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, improve public transport and cycling routes into the places where people work in the city.
- Promote more apprenticeships and higher- level apprenticeships with our major employers, and support the introduction of T-levels and better career advice in secondary schools.
- Campaign to extend the Oxford Living Wage as the minimum for all workers.
- Improve understanding of local job opportunities and the pathways into them, working with the schools, Colleges and employers.

Tackling Tory austerity – using our finances for the good of the city

The City Council will have lost all of its government grant by next year, at the same time that the cuts imposed by eight years of Tory austerity policies. Cuts in support for housing costs and other social security cuts have been putting increasing pressure on Council services. The impact on the levels of family and single person homelessness has been dramatic, with increased evictions because of low income families and individuals unable meet the cost of high rents, and the Council unable to re-house homeless families because of housing benefit restrictions. The government’s decision to make councils responsible for funding council tax support for those on low incomes has placed a major new financial burden on councils. Low interest rates have greatly harmed returns from the council’s investment portfolio.

Austerity has also badly affected council housing. The government has imposed compulsory reductions in council rents – this will save the Chancellor money on housing benefit, but reduce the Council’s income by around £30 million which would have been invested in new housing or improvements in existing homes. Legislation has been passed to force the sale of “high value” council homes when they become empty, with most of the receipt being handed over to housing associations to pay for their houses lost through the newly-extended “right to buy”. The government has poured billions into encouraging home ownership, while completely failing to provide the necessary funding freedoms for councils like Oxford to build new homes at affordable rents.

Under Labour, the Council has responded strongly to the challenge of austerity. We have reached two ground-breaking local pay deals with our trade unions which have avoided compulsory redundancies, given an annual cost of living pay increase, increased employment and given stability in financial planning. We are one of a handful of local authorities which has preserved full council tax support for those on low incomes. We pay all our staff an “Oxford living wage”, and require contractors and suppliers to do the same. An ambitious capital programme has delivered improvement in all our playgrounds, in sports pavilions, a new swimming pool and leisure centre, some strategic land purchases for future housing schemes, a “great estates” programme that is improving the physical environment and green spaces on our housing estates, and innovative investment in properties to house the homeless. Front-line services have been protected, with some increases in charges for garden waste and car parking, and we have worked hard to increase our “trading” income, by selling services to other organisations such as the universities, colleges or private companies. The success of this policy has led to the creation of a new local Authority Trading Company to make it easier for future trading income to be realised. Our council has not sought to privatise services; we believe that Oxford people are better served by well managed and efficient Council staff.

In the next four years, we will:

- Use all the available financial tools to support the supply of genuinely affordable new homes to rent or buy, including employer provided homes for their employees.
- Invest in advice services to tackle poverty through improved access to benefits and employment.

- Work with our unions to develop our services and avoid compulsory redundancies among the Council's workforce.
- Use the Council's investment property portfolio to generate increased income to support our frontline services, and avoid cuts in services.
- Sell our services through the new trading company and resist any privatisation of Council services.
- Tackle the homelessness crisis and Tory cuts in social security benefits through support from the Council's welfare reform team, funding for local advice services, and investing in new affordable homes.
- Seek to maintain council tax support for those on the lowest incomes.

A decent and affordable home for everyone in Oxford

Oxford is in the grip of a massive housing crisis: it is the least affordable place to live in Britain. Even at the lower end of the market, house prices are more than ten times average annual earnings. The Tory policy of selling off Council homes has reduced the level of home ownership in the city as former Council houses have been bought up by private landlords and rented out at high rents. Less than half of Oxford's households now own their own home for the first time in many decades, while more than a quarter live in private rented housing – nearly twice the national average. 21% of homes in Oxford are owned by the Council or a housing association, but this is simply not enough to meet the demand from a waiting list of nearly 4,000 families. Only 500- 600 social rented homes become available to let each year. Building more Council homes is vital to meet the needs of low income families because the rents are less than half of market rents, and almost no private landlords in the City will now accept tenants who are claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. As a result, homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation in Oxford has increased sharply, and the rough sleeper count is up by 50% over last year.

Despite the financial and land constraints on building more Council homes, Labour has been able to work with the Homes and Communities Agency to deliver 250 new homes in the past four years, and has created innovative partnerships with private developers to create a new estate at Barton Park with 350 Council homes that will be delivered from 2018, and up to 250 new Council homes at Oxpens. Further schemes are planned through the creation of a wholly City Council owned Housing Company that will seek to take advantage of the greater financial flexibilities that are available to it.

Current Tory government policies will make a bad situation worse, with plans to require the sale of "high value" council houses when they become vacant, and to impose market rents on tenants on modest household incomes. They have already cut rents for other tenants to save the government money in housing benefit, while depriving the Council of income to reinvest in new homes and improvements to existing stock. They are making it harder and harder to deliver genuinely affordable housing, while throwing huge subsidies into home ownership and into the profits of the large housebuilders. At the same time, the Tory-led County Council has decided to cease all funding for single homelessness services across the county, just as the number of rough sleepers and single homeless people is growing at its most rapid rate ever.

The number of homes in Oxford's private rented sector is growing rapidly. The City Council was the first in the country to introduce a licensing scheme for shared houses that has successfully raised standards and improved their management. The Council is now using new legal powers to tackle disrepair and poor management in the wider private rented sector and will actively support good landlords.

We will leave no stone unturned in seeking to solve the city's housing crisis.

In the next four years, we will:

- Build and purchase genuinely affordable new homes to rent and buy through our new housing company.
- Maintain a contingency fund against the threat of the Tory ‘high-value’ Council housing cash raid.
- Work with other social landlords and Homes England to maximise the number of socially rented homes in Oxford and nearby locations.
- Retain a 50% affordable housing requirement for new developments.
- Continue our programme of major improvements and renovation to our Council homes, including regeneration of the centre of Blackbird Leys with new homes, shops and a new community centre, and the completion of the tower blocks renovation and recladding programme.
- Tackle street homelessness through a community partnership group to ensure that no-one has to sleep rough on the streets of our city.
- Increase the financial support for our homelessness services, and seek to safeguard services provided by partners whose funding is affected by County Council and Government cuts.
- Extend the improvements in housing conditions secured through our licensing scheme for shared houses in the private rented sector, through a programme of robust inspections of privately rented family homes.
- Extend the Great Estates programme of environmental improvements, creating well designed and landscaped parking spaces and public spaces.

Planning for Oxford’s Future – a green and pleasant city

With a thriving economy, unique heritage assets, green open spaces and vibrant population, Oxford is a great place to live, but it needs to grow. We already have a massive imbalance in jobs and homes, which means that nearly 50,000 people commute into the city each day, and the pressure on city housing has pushed up rents and house prices to unacceptably high levels in relation to average incomes. Oxford Labour is working with our neighbouring councils to secure a sustainable expansion of housing to serve the city area within well planned new communities and settlements. We do not support a “pull up the drawbridge” policy that would set the city in aspic, and effectively deny many people on middle and lower incomes the chance to live here. We are seeking in a new Local Plan for the period to 2036 to maintain key employment sites and green spaces, while using all available land to increase the number of homes that can be provided. We are committed to maintaining a balance between housing and leisure uses for land; a “free for all” in housing development would potentially mean losing the easy and free access to green spaces, and the wide range of leisure opportunities which make Oxford such an attractive place to live. However, a range of changes to planning rules by the Tory government has been making it easier for developers to convert employment and leisure sites to housing, even where this manifestly against the interests of the local economy and local people. But we will seek to secure the city’s environmental aspirations in the Oxford Local Plan, and through the proposed county-wide Joint Strategic Spatial Plan, to map out the employment and housing strategy for the county as a whole, that will realise our collective economic potential.

The City’s boundary is tightly drawn, making it difficult to expand outwards in the way that the city has developed organically since the mid-19th century. We are building new homes at Barton Park, within the City’s boundary, in a high quality development that will provide 350 Council homes. And we are planning further Council developments at Oxpens and the Northern gateway sites. We have worked with Thames Water and Magdalen College to bring forward proposals for 2500 homes and new community facilities south of Greater Leys which will be considered at the forthcoming SODC Local Plan

Inquiry. Proposals for a number of other significant housing developments on sites on just outside the City boundaries may also be submitted to that Inquiry. Taken together, they have the potential to transform the availability of homes for Oxford.

Oxford already has a strong cycling tradition, with many people choosing to cycle to work or school/college, and for leisure. The City Council is working closely with the County Council, which is responsible for highways, to improve the facilities for cycling with improved segregated cycle lanes and better cycle parking provision. We have set up a Cycling Forum bringing together all interested stakeholders, with the intention of developing Oxford into one of Europe's great cycling city.

In the next four years, we will:

- Approve a new Local Plan that will reflect our commitment to create a sustainable and thriving city, with more land available for building energy efficient new homes, and support for employment and leisure sites.
- Work with neighbouring authorities to develop new communities close to the city that will support the local economy and help to tackle the housing crisis.
- Take full account in the Local Plan of the special needs of older people and those with disabilities in new housing and leisure provision.
- Establish high standards of design and carbon efficiency in new developments with good space and amenity standards.
- Plan for new housing developments to incorporate the principles of Healthy Barton – accessible open spaces, affordable leisure, accessible public transport, good cycling and pedestrian routes and good health services.
- Work with partners to develop new rail services around the city, including re-opening the Cowley branch line for passenger services.
- Integrate segregated cycling routes into new developments, and work in partnership with the County Council to improve cycle lanes, cycle safety and cycle parking across the city.

Supporting our communities

Oxford continues to be a city in which areas of poverty and wealth exist very close together. Nearly 30% of children in Oxford are growing up in families that are in poverty, while much of the north of the city is one of the wealthiest areas in the country. The City Council has been working with the Oxford Strategic Partnership for over a decade to address some of the main causes and consequences of poverty. Key features of our partnership work have been public health programmes on healthy eating, sexual health and contraception, support provided through a strong network of advice centres, and support for people seeking to get into work through job clubs, and training and employment advice.

Under Labour, the Council has maintained a grants budget for community organisations which is the biggest per head of population of any District Council. These grants provide support for organisations in the charitable and voluntary sectors which help those in poverty, including the advice centres and the Credit Union. The Council's own Benefits Team has worked alongside these organisations as the benefits system has been cut back and changed, and funding from the County Council has been withdrawn. Poor levels of educational attainment in some of the schools in areas with higher levels of deprivation continue to be a major source of concern, and the Council ran a three-year literacy and numeracy support programme in a group of primary schools. We work with our social enterprise partner Fusion, and with all our arts and culture partners, to ensure that the city's sports, fitness, leisure and cultural facilities are available to everyone including those with lower incomes. This has led

to an extensive range of exciting and innovative work by our museums, galleries, music, dance and theatre groups in recent years, and remains at the heart of the City Council's Cultural Partnership.

A key priority for the City Council in developing community provision is the network of 19 community centres. We have invested over £4 million in the new Rose Hill Centre, which now provides a hub for advice, health, fitness, educational and social activity for an extended area around Rose Hill, Iffley and Cowley. A new Community Centre has been built at Northway, and community rooms provided at Barns Rd. New and improved facilities are also planned for East Oxford, Barton and Bullingdon Community Centres, and a new Centre will be included in the redevelopment of the centre of Blackbird Leys. Oxford Labour will continue to provide support and guidance for the voluntary trustee bodies who run many of our community facilities in developing the services which they provide for their local communities.

In the next four years, we will:

- Modernise and re-develop the East Oxford and Bullingdon Community Centres, and support the services provided at the new community facilities at Northway, Barton and the Venue at Barns Road.
- Develop a programme of modernisation for other community centre buildings.
- Build a new Blackbird Leys Community Centre as part of the Central Leys Regeneration Programme.
- Support action to tackle health inequalities, and press for improved primary care services in areas with poor health outcomes.
- Make space available for health services in community settings wherever possible
- Extend the range of activities offered in our community centres through the Council's communities, culture and leisure services.
- Engage widely with Oxford's minority communities to develop the provision of leisure time activities.
- Work with the remaining children's centres to support open access services.
- With partners from the charitable and voluntary sectors, develop programmes to tackle social isolation among the elderly.
- Maintain our successful and popular programmes to encourage healthy eating.
- Continue to provide £1.5 million of grants annually to support voluntary and charitable organisations in the city.

Tackling the Climate Change Crisis at the local level

The City Council places the highest priority on making our local contribution to tackling climate change, improving environmental standards, reducing waste, and maximising recycling. Oxford's waste per household is the lowest in Oxfordshire and amongst the lowest in the country, and the recycling rate has just reached 50%. The extension of food waste recycling to the 22,000 flats and maisonettes in the city has made a major contribution to that rate. Even though costs of running the service are increasing because of the reduced price paid for plastic waste, we are determined to maintain our drive towards creating a culture in which recycling and re-use are the norm.

The UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December 2015 reaffirmed the international commitment to reduce the global carbon footprint. Since 2008, the Labour City Council has reduced its carbon footprint by 5% per annum and will continue to do so. The Council set up Low Carbon Oxford in 2010 to engage all major local organisations in the drive to reduce the city's carbon footprint and 40 pathfinders have joined up, committing themselves to a 3% reduction annually. They include BMW Mini, the bus companies, the universities and many small businesses. The Low Carbon Hub was established through the Council as a social enterprise in 2012, and working through the Hub, the

Council won a 1.2 million Euro grant from the European Commission to support local investment in renewable energy. This has produced over £15 million worth of investment in solar, wind and hydro energy production in the city, and more widely across the county. We have also worked to reduce heating bills for our council tenants, with a programme of energy audits and the installation of solar panels on many council properties. A new EU grant is supporting the next phase of this programme.

The Council's stewardship of large areas of parkland and countryside reflects our commitment to maintain and develop biodiversity, to increase tree planting and maintenance and to support bee-friendly management of planting and grassland management. We work with Friends Groups in many of our major parks, and have secured and retained Green Flag status for them.

Vehicles make a major contribution to carbon use in the city, as well as causing high levels of air pollution in some critical places in the city. The City Council, together with the County Council which is the highways authority for Oxford, introduced the first Low Emission Zone outside London in the city centre and are now developing plans for a Zero Emission Zone over the period to 2035. We seek to prioritise bus use, cycling and walking, as the basis for local transport policies, alongside support for the transition to non-fossil fuel vehicles. The City Council has won a grant of £800,000 to develop on-street charging for electric powered vehicles, and grant funding for the introduction of electric taxis. The main bus companies have committed themselves to continued improvement in emission levels.

With more unstable climatic conditions comes an increased risk of flooding, causing huge distress and expense to residents and businesses in parts of the city. The City Council is a main partner and funder for the Environment Agency's Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, that will reduce the incidence of flooding in west, central and south Oxford, as well as providing an effective emergency response to flood emergencies.

In the next four years, we will:

- Cut the city's carbon footprint by 40% by 2020 from 2012, working with Low Carbon Oxford
- Pilot new community energy schemes
- Expand the use of electric vehicles with new charging points across the city and support for the transition to an all-electric taxi fleet.
- With the County Council, work to tackle transport pollution through planning for a phased introduction of a Zero Emission Zone in the city centre between 2020 and 2035.
- Provide food waste recycling for every flat in the city and continue to reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste per household
- Maintain and extend our programme of energy efficiency audits for council tenants and seek to extend this type of advice to other households, especially those on lower incomes.
- In partnership with the Environment Agency, implement the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme and other smaller projects to reduce the danger of flooding of homes across the city
- Extend bee friendly planting in our parks and open spaces, and continue to improve the ecological management and biodiversity of the city environment by encouraging community orchards and herb gardens and increasing the amount of edible produce grown.

Keeping Oxford Safe

Feeling safe, and free from the fear and risk of crime, is one of the most important factors in people feeling happy about their local neighbourhood. The City Council works with the Thames Valley Police and other organisations in the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership (OSCP). We listen to residents' concerns through our links to community organisations and aim to deal with them quickly and effectively through our Community Response teams. The police service have had to deal with a major reduction in their budget because of the government's austerity policy, but we work with them to

protect neighbourhood policing and other services which directly affect the quality of life in our communities.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is a major priority. Under Labour, the Council will continue to work through the OSCP to prevent serious crimes such as sexual exploitation, human trafficking, hate crime, and domestic violence. All our staff are trained in safeguarding procedures and how to report concerns. Maintaining strong community cohesion is a key objective in our cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic city and we work closely with a wide range of communities and their representatives.

Neighbourhood policing is the front line in tackling anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and drug use, environmental crime and neighbourhood nuisance. The Council's Community Response Team supports the police through direct engagement in local community settings, and intervening directly in some aspects of antisocial behaviour. The city's thriving night-time economy presents many challenges and the Nightsafe Partnership and our "Purple Flag" award reflect the success that the partnership has achieved in balancing the interests of the various groups of users of the city at night. We work closely with licensees to ensure that our licensing policies are effectively enforced, and with the taxi companies to ensure passenger safety and comfort.

The Council has used Public Space Protection Orders and Community Protection Notices in a small number of sensitive areas, in order to protect the public against the impact of anti-social behaviour, and to maintain a safe environment for all those who use these areas. We prioritise advice, guidance and engagement in dealing with cases of anti-social behaviour, with enforcement measures used only to tackle persistent and flagrant breaches. The Community Response team and the city centre ambassadors work alongside Police Community Support Officers to maintain a public presence and assurance to residents and visitors. Our aim is to maintain an attractive and safe public realm for all our citizens.

In the next four years, we will:

- Work with police neighbourhood teams to increase visibility and support community policing
- Work with the police to tackle the disturbing increase in drug trafficking and drug use across the city
- Maintain a high level of safety in the city centre throughout the day, working through the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership
- Vigorously combat all forms of hate crime
- Step up interventions to control graffiti and other environmental crimes
- Support the use of restorative justice to resolve non-criminal offences
- Maintain compulsory safeguarding training as part of taxi licensing
- Improve Manzil Gardens by designing out anti-social behaviour and making it a more welcoming and usable place for local residents.

Enjoyable and affordable leisure for everyone

Oxford offers a diverse range of activities for our leisure time. We can choose from a long list of Indoor and outdoor sports facilities, art and cultural activities in music, dance, drama, art and crafts, and literature, the city's countryside and parks areas, volunteering with groups involved in a wide range of social and environmental activities, and world class museums, galleries and heritage assets. But it is important that the Council's policies work to support access to these facilities for everyone in the city.

The Council has developed its indoor leisure service in partnership with Fusion, a specialist social enterprise. It provides three multi-purpose sports, fitness and swimming pool centres in Summertown, Barton and Blackbird Leys, a very popular outdoor, heated pool, which operates from April to

September, and a successful ice rink, which also hosts the city's ice hockey clubs. Outdoor sports facilities are extensive, and provide pitches for football, rugby, hockey, cricket and softball, an all-weather athletics track, and several free to use tennis courts. Under Labour, the Council has invested steadily in building and modernising these facilities, and has kept prices affordable for all sections of the community. One mark of the success in achieving a wide degree of access is Sport England's rating of Oxford as the city with the highest rate of adult participation in sport in the south-east.

We are also proud of the arts and cultural activities that the city offers, some directly provided through the Council, but many others through successful partnership working over many years with the universities, the third sector and voluntary bodies. The organisations which come together in the City Council's Cultural Partnership offer a wide range of experiences to schools, young people and families across all cultural forms. The redevelopment of the City of Oxford Museum following a successful bid for capital funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund will provide opportunities for residents to work with professional staff to showcase the contemporary history of the city. The Old Fire Station, rebuilt through a partnership of the City Council and the single homeless charity, Crisis, now offers a highly successful range of dance, drama and musical events, as well as practice spaces for local arts groups.

Outdoor leisure provision in the City's parks, children's playgrounds, two grant supported voluntary adventure playgrounds, and several country park areas, have been carefully maintained under Labour. Every playground has been brought up to modern standards and pavilions renewed or rebuilt. Our parks have been managed to support and develop the local ecology, and bee-friendly planting has been established as the standard approach.

We enjoy a close working relationship with medical representatives in the Clinical Commissioning Group, and the work undertaken through Healthy Barton indicates that there is considerable scope for using more 'social' prescribing to improve health outcomes through arts and sporting activities.

In the next four years, we will:

- Commission and launch the new and expanded sports facilities at Horspath Rd, for football, rugby, cricket, athletics and softball
- Support grassroots sports clubs, through a programme of improvements for pitches, and facilities for changing, toilets and social activities
- Improve facilities and usage of the Donnington Recreation Ground
- Draw up plans to improve facilities for popular sports including gymnastics, dance and boxing
- Redevelop the City of Oxford Museum to become a unique showcase for the history of the people of the city, which is accessible to all, provides a major educational resource and provides opportunities for all parts of the community to take part in creating exhibitions and displays.
- Keep our leisure facilities affordable, with free swimming sessions for young people and concessionary rates for people on low incomes
- With our partners, use our community facilities and leisure centres to encourage healthy lifestyles
- Extend the successful and award-winning Youth Ambition programme, using a wider range of our leisure and community services
- Support the redevelopment and modernisation of rowing and canoeing facilities at Donnington to bring more young people into these sports.
- Develop the use of Shotover Country Park for Forest School and other countryside activities for all age groups
- Draw up a plan to improve facilities for people with disabilities in our leisure centres