

Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire County Council was established under the Local Government Act of 1888 whereby the administrative responsibilities of the old courts of Quarter Sessions were transferred to elected county and county borough councils. Oxford City became a County Borough with its own administration.

Since its inception the County Council has acquired a large number of statutory functions and responsibilities. The overall direction and management of the Council is undertaken by its elected Members who oversee and scrutinise the work of its professional staff. The core records are the minutes and reports of Council and committee meetings which provide a detailed history of its organisation and functions, including:

Agriculture: including control of dangerous diseases in animals, purchase and provision of land for small holdings and allotments, agricultural education and land drainage

Civil defence: before the outbreak of World War Two the Council was responsible for developing an Air-Raid Precautions Scheme for the County and implementing the Government Evacuation Scheme

Education: acquired responsibility for all elementary (primary) and some secondary education under the Education Act 1902; later expanded to include all education under the Education Act 1944

Fire Service: inherited in 1947 from District Councils and Boroughs

Health: including the County Asylum at Littlemore (inherited from Quarter Sessions), health visiting, maternity care, supervision of midwives, provision of services for blind persons, nursing homes, adoption, housing for rural workers, water supplies and drainage for rural areas, provision of health centres and ambulance services; most of these functions were transferred to the NHS in 1974

Pensions: under the Old Age Pensions Act 1908 a County Pensions Committee and local committees were established to adjudicate on pensions until 1948

Planning: from 1929 the County Council coordinated District and Borough planning schemes until the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 which made it responsible for creating a County Development Plan and universal planning controls (until 1974) *NB: records relating to individual planning applications since 1947 are held by District Councils.*

Police: jointly controlled by Oxfordshire County Council and Quarter Sessions until 1968 when the Thames Valley Police Authority was created

Protection of consumers (trading standards/weights and measures):
inherited from Quarter Sessions

Transport : responsibility for main roads and bridges inherited from Quarter Sessions; extended in 1949 to surveying and maintaining public rights of way; the County Council also planned and organised local bus services

Valuation of properties for rating purposes: inherited from Poor Law Unions in 1929 until 1948

Welfare (Public Assistance/Social Services): inherited in 1929 From Poor Law Unions along with responsibility for civil registration of births, marriages and deaths; since 1948 the County Council has been responsible for local social services

Interesting Examples

The **North Oxford Bypass** was constructed in the 1930s as part of a government project to improve trunk routes and provide employment during the Depression. The committee supporting papers and correspondence in the Clerk's Department include the following plan and aerial photo showing the Banbury Road and Wolvercote junctions (c1931).

Where are these records?

County Council records are subject to a corporate retention schedule and, having completed their active administrative life, are selected for transfer to the History Centre. The core records of Council and committee meetings are regularly transferred and catalogued. In addition, the records of the Clerk's (now Chief executive's) department have been catalogued up to c 1990. The remainder have not been catalogued and cannot therefore be produced without prior notice. All paper records can be consulted under the usual conditions of access at the History Centre. Electronic records of the Council and committee meetings for the last 10 years or so can be searched online .

Where is the catalogue?

The catalogues of records of Council and committee meetings (CC1 & CC2) and the Clerk's/Chief Executive's department to 1990 (CC3) are searchable online via Heritage Search.

Visiting Oxfordshire History Centre.