



# INSIGHT

INCLUSIVE  
COMMUNITY  
ACTION

PLACEMAKING –  
COMMUNITIES NOT  
JUST HOUSES

ADAPTING  
TO CHANGE –  
COMMUNITY  
RESILIENCE

IMPROVING  
COMMUNITY  
INFRASTRUCTURE

## CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Over the past year, Community First Oxfordshire consolidated and built upon the solid achievements of 2016/17. We have progressed initiatives with regard to community-led housing and 'unblocking' volunteering, for example. At the same time, we are continuing discussions with our Voluntary Sector and Local Authority partners about better identifying the needs and issues of the communities we support and, thereby, how we can collectively best support them. It should also be noted that as well as new ventures CFO has continued to maintain its highly effective core support services: community halls, community shops and retail, community transport and supporting social action. None of this would have been possible without our excellent team. Their work ethic, intellectual skills and practical, community development capabilities are second to none.

In May 2018, I step down as Chairman and retire as a Trustee. The vice-chair, Gill Bindoff, will become chair on an interim basis, while the board recruits a permanent replacement. Looking back over my year as chair, I am grateful to the Trustees and staff who have supported me. I am pleased to have overseen the continuation of our core activity, our successful Neighbourhood Planning consultancy and the development of new initiatives, while encouraging Trustees to take a more active role in support of specific projects. I also wish to offer my huge thanks on behalf of the organisation to Glyn Evans, who stood down as president this year, for his many years of dedicated service to CFO. There are interesting, if challenging, times ahead, but CFO has much to look forward to. As I too look forward to watching the organisation progress and develop as a key part of the voluntary and community sector in Oxfordshire.

**John Cunningham**  
Chairman

# Spreading the word...



## FORWARD

'Community' - we hear it so much. Community organising, community-led planning, community development, community health initiatives... Community defines itself in different ways in different places and times across a spectrum of our own experiences. Hopefully, we will all have positive experiences of community though, at the same time, many of us are likely to have negative ones too. For CFO, community means openness and inclusivity, for those who have lived somewhere all their lives to those just passing through, where diversity is welcomed and everyone has the opportunity to contribute something, to 'find a way in' to the community, however defined, if they so wish. We enrich places and people with our own experiences as they in turn enrich us.

Communities are so diverse. Some are more active than others. What's happening in one place might not work in another. But it might. And for CFO that's the key to creating flourishing communities; inspiring others by showing what can be done and trying out new ideas, while offering support and developing new initiatives based on what communities tell us is needed. We hope that this report gives a flavour of that work across the last year, and CFO's aspirations for helping enable those thriving, inclusive communities we all want.



↑ TOM McCULLOCH  
CO-DIRECTOR



↑ EMILY LEWIS-EDWARDS  
CO-DIRECTOR

## Placemaking

Discussions were completed between CFO, Cherwell District Council and Dorchester Living to bring forward a placemaking project at Upper Heyford. We will be employing a community development worker for 2.5 years to develop social action and volunteering, bring together different parts of the community and release the skills and capacity of local people.

Our community mobiliser and community buildings adviser has been active at

major development sites in Bicester and Banbury, working alongside Cherwell District Council officers to support the bringing together of old and new communities to ensure community engagement, cohesion and active citizenship. To develop our placemaking work, we have also forged a partnership with Ruskin College to place community development students on CFO projects – this will have particular benefits with regard to youth engagement.



↑ HINDA ALJAK, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STUDENT FROM RUSKIN COLLEGE



### LOOKING AHEAD

Thousands of new homes are coming to communities across Oxfordshire. This creates major challenges, not only with regard to pressures on local services and infrastructure but in terms of making these new communities work as well as possible for new and existing residents. We are continuing to discuss other placemaking projects with parish and town councils and developers – watch this space!

↓ LAUNCH EVENT FOR COMMUNITY LED HOUSING STUDY IN OXFORD CITY



### LOOKING AHEAD

## Collaborative Housing Hub

CFO and our Oxfordshire Community Land Trust partners have established a Collaborative Housing Hub. Our vision is to create a viable and vibrant community-led housing sector in Oxfordshire and the Thames Valley. Community Land Trusts, cooperative housing, co-housing, community self or custom-build tenancy self-management and housing developed by community anchor organisations such as Development Trusts are typical examples of community-led housing. We want to enable and increase the delivery of high-quality, affordable and sustainable homes through promotion, support and residential delivery expertise. This will empower local people to lead and shape housing provision in their communities.

CFO and Oxfordshire Community Land Trust will complete a major community-led housing research study for Oxford City Council in autumn 2018. This will set out a roadmap for delivering sustainable Community Led Housing projects. We will also undertake our first Collaborative Housing Hub commissions.

## Neighbourhood Planning

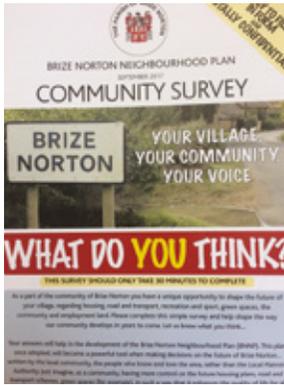
The uptake of NP projects by Parish Councils across the county continued in the last year. CFO manages a strong portfolio of commissions, supporting 10 groups in 2017/18.

The process is becoming ever more complex. Getting a solid foothold in the ever-shifting planning sands can be a major challenge for time-pressured volunteers, especially when more complicated tasks are required, such as site assessment.

As well as providing expert community engagement, planning and technical advice, a vital part of CFO's work is offering 'pastoral' support and encouragement to steering groups. The NP process can, occasionally, prove divisive and CFO has continued to make our Local Authority partners aware of the pressures that well-meaning NP volunteers can come under and the impacts this may have on community cohesion.

*'As community volunteers running a Neighbourhood Plan in South Oxfordshire, the support provided by CFO has been a life-line.'*

WARBOROUGH AND SHILLINGFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE



## Community Action

As well as following up and supporting actions with communities that have existing community-led plans and Neighbourhood Plans, we have actively sought to work with communities affected by the reduction



↑ OUR BARTHOLOMEW SCHOOL STUDENT VOLUNTEERS MEETING TIM STEVENSON, LORD LIEUTENANT OF OXFORDSHIRE

in local authority funded services; namely around the decommissioning of day centres and children's centres. Working with the key community members and groups in these communities is essential to finding sustainable solutions.

CFO believes that an important part of community action is about supporting people to develop, share skills and discuss potential solutions to common problems. To this end, we held three workshops with 140+ attendees, discussing how to attract 'Unusual Suspects' to support local community action. The more people that get involved the more inclusive and supportive we can be as communities. Following these sessions, a group of volunteers helped us develop a toolkit of ideas, which is available on our website.

↓ "PLAN NOT JAM" EYNESHAM RESIDENTS PROTESTING



## LOOKING AHEAD

We will continue to work with those involved in social action, finding out what their support needs may be and to design innovative and creative initiatives to help our communities to continue to flourish. This year we will roll-out further 'Unusual Suspects' sessions, while developing another series of workshops focusing on 'Building Bridges'; how best to connect existing communities with those in new housing developments.

## Community Transport

From the outside looking in, a day in the life of a community transport scheme is not what it might seem. It involves far more than simply transporting a passenger from A to B and back again. Like most charities and community groups, there are many procedures that must be taken to set up a Community Transport scheme, from promoting and recruiting volunteers to safeguarding volunteers and service users, sourcing funding, coordinating the scheme, leasing or purchasing a minibus... the list goes on.

We have a good community transport network in Oxfordshire, and through CFO and partner support the network can continue to thrive if barriers to success are either bridged or removed altogether. Alongside our core support service, in 2017/18 CFO worked on overcoming barriers such as poor access to hospitals and hospital parking (work in progress!), represented the views of Community Transport providers in the Department for Transport consultation on community minibuses, sourced funding opportunities and offered guidance on GDPR.



### LOOKING AHEAD

This is an interesting time, as we begin to see a shift in behaviour in parishes and towns who are seeking their own transport solutions or who are dealing directly with bus and taxi operators. With this in mind, CFO is all too aware that the support and advice on offer should not just be through organisations like CFO but from the 'experts by experience'. So, looking ahead will include increasing opportunities for peer-to-peer support.



## Red Arrow Good Neighbours Scheme

It's been over a year since the Oxford Red Arrow Good Neighbour Scheme was set up, and we have a fantastic team of 11 volunteers. There are people that use the scheme every week and people that use the scheme just the once – if our volunteers can help then they will. Like every Good Neighbour Scheme, we are always happy to have more people volunteering with us, and we are happy for more people to call on us for transport and help!



*'The information and guidance you sent on GDPR makes excellent sense - thank you!'*

GOOD NEIGHBOUR SCHEME HUB

*'Thanks so much for your swift reply - it's good to know there is someone to help when we need it!'*

BUCKLAND CAR SCHEME

### Community Buildings

We have given advice to over 150 halls and community centres. Topics of support are as broad as the day is long: insurance, licensing, governance, fire safety, hiring agreements, VAT liability, employment, business development... the list goes on. But as ever the most substantive advice we have offered has been with regard to major rebuild or refurbishment projects, assisting halls to get their funding packages in order. As well as our site visit and telephone support service, our newsletters and information sheets are key means by which we offer advice. And feedback again showed the value of our Local Area Meetings for management committees. We have also held several popular Portable Appliance Testing training sessions.



#### LOOKING AHEAD

We're always seeking to develop our support offer. In the coming year we will develop training for management committees in becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and on electronic booking systems. Affordable wi-fi in more rural areas has been highlighted as a barrier to the use of some halls- this is something else we will investigate.



↑ HORSPTH HUB BEING INTERVIEWED FOR RADIO 4'S FARMING TODAY PROGRAMME

### Community Retail

Oxfordshire has some 20 community shops. The network is strong and there is good peer-to-peer support. But these shops are not without their challenges. Stock management, publicity and advertising via social media along with other ways to encourage more customers and volunteers have been big topics this

year. And funding – always needed to allow shops to invest in new services, facilities and product lines – continues to be a challenge. CFO newsletters, site visits and information sheets have helped shops to meet their challenges, with our networking events valued in particular.



#### LOOKING AHEAD

CFO will increase its support for local shops and food markets. Community shops are unique in the way that they support small local food suppliers. Small independent shops are also part of the fabric of our communities – social hubs as well as local service providers – and need to be supported.



↑ LOCAL PRODUCE AT APPLETON SHOP - A POPULAR CHUTNEY PRODUCED BY AN OXFORD HOMELESS CHARITY AND APPLETON HONEY SELLING SO WELL THAT ONLY RETURNED EMPTY JARS ARE LEFT!



## Developing our Bulk Buy Offer

It has been another successful year for OxOil despite the best efforts of the “Beast from the East” disrupting delivery and causing demand to nearly double at the start of this year. The downside of an unregulated market quickly became apparent with oil prices increasing by over 10p per litre (26%) overnight. CFO is supporting an initiative to take this to the Competition and Markets Authority for further investigation and action.

As in many industries, market forces mean that loyalty does not always get you the best pricing. Members, especially the less computer savvy and elderly, can rest easy knowing they have secured the best pricing in the market place without having to phone and negotiate with numerous suppliers. Suppliers also win; one tanker delivering to a number of addresses in a village ensures a reduced delivery cost to them.



### LOOKING AHEAD

We will continue to support those members in fuel poverty by offering free membership. And we remain grateful to our committed network of volunteer coordinators, who play such a valuable role in supporting our more vulnerable members.



## Income 2017-18

	2017-18	2016-17
 PROJECT GRANTS	£186k	£187k
 OTHER INCOME	£95k	£113k
 AGENCY FEES	£1k	£2k
 INTEREST ON DEPOSIT	£2k	£3k
 INCOME	£284k	£305k
 EXPENDITURE	£265k	£267k

## OUR STAFF

Emily Lewis-Edwards  
Co-Director

Tom McCulloch  
Co-Director

Fiona Mullins  
Development Project  
Manager

Tessa Hall  
Community Buildings &  
Retail Adviser

Hilary Lombard  
Community Planning  
& Action

Sue Hunt  
Oil Scheme Administrator  
& Office Manager

## OUR TRUSTEES

Gill Bindoff  
Chair

Edward Dowler  
Vice Chair

Malcolm Taylor  
Treasurer

Sue Butterworth

Julian Cooper

Natasha Eliot

Jon Bright

Ian Corkin

## OUR PATRONS

Jonathan Reuvid  
President

Catherine Bearder MEP

Celia Collet MBE

Dr J V Sharp

## OUR AREA OF OPERATIONS



## CONTACTS

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## OUR PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

