

# Public Document Pack



Tuesday, 19 October 2021

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## COUNCIL

You are summoned to a meeting of the Council which will be held in the Council Chamber, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 27 October 2021 at 2.00 pm.**



Giles Hughes  
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Council

Councillors: Martin McBride (Chairman), Alex Postan (Vice-Chair), Jake Acock, Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Luci Ashbourne, Andrew Beaney, Rosa Bolger, Jill Bull, Mike Cahill, Laetisia Carter, Nathalie Chapple, Andrew Coles, Owen Collins, Julian Cooper, Derek Cotterill, Suzi Coul, Maxine Crossland, Merylyn Davies, Rupert Dent, Colin Dingwall, Jane Doughty, Harry Eaglestone, Duncan Enright, Ted Fenton, Steve Good, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, David Harvey, Gill Hill, David Jackson, Mark Johnson, Richard Langridge, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Norman MacRae MBE, Michele Mead, Lysette Nicholls, Mathew Parkinson, Elizabeth Poskitt, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Harry St John, Dean Temple, Alex Wilson and Ben Woodruff.

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Cabinet, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted. By participating in this meeting, you are consenting to be filmed.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Democratic Services officers know prior to the start of the meeting.

# AGENDA

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 24)**  
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2021.
2. **Apologies for Absence**  
To receive any apologies for absence.
3. **Declarations of Interest**  
To receive any declarations from Members of the Committee on any items to be considered at the meeting
4. **Receipt of Announcements**  
To receive any announcements from The Chairman, Leader, Members of the Cabinet or the Head of Paid Service.
5. **Participation of the Public**  
To receive any submissions from members of the public, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.
6. **Recommendations from the Executive (Pages 25 - 28)**  
Purpose:  
To receive and consider recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees in the period since 28 July 2021.  
Recommendation:  
That the recommendations set out in Annex I to the report be adopted.
7. **Amendment to Committee Membership (Pages 29 - 30)**  
Purpose  
To amend the membership of the Finance and Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee.  
Recommendation  
That Councillor Joy Aitman replace Councillor Rosa Bolger on the membership of the Finance & Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee with immediate effect for the remainder of the civic year.
8. **WODC Land Management Plans (Pages 31 - 64)**  
Purpose  
This paper presents:
  - Information on the development of Land Management Plans across twelve key sites owned and/or managed by WODC.
  - A proposed set of Land Management Plans be released to the public for engagement following Full Council approval, outlining changes to Ubico's management of the sites and longer-term projects that external funding could be sought for externally.
  - A request for approval to allocate funding from the climate budget to deliver projects across the sites that will enhance their biodiversity value.

### Recommendation

- a) that the Land Management Plans for public engagement and subsequent implementation from March 2022 be approved; and
- b) a sum of £11,800 be allocated from the climate budget for a variety of projects to enhance biodiversity across key sites under WODC's ownership and management in financial year 2021/22.

### 9. **Notice of Motion - Violence Against Women Group**

The following Motion has been received in the names of Councillors Rosa Bolger and Merilyn Davies, namely:

#### **“This Council Notes:**

Across the UK harassment and violence towards women and girls is endemic. Women and girls suffer harassment and abuse every single day. A 2021 YouGov national survey on behalf of UN Women UK found that among women aged 18-24, 97% said they had been sexually harassed, while 80% of women of all ages said they had experienced sexual harassment in public spaces. Oxfordshire is no exception. In the Thames Valley last year there were almost 20,000 reported cases of stalking and harassment and over 5,000 cases of sexual assault - these are just the ones that were reported.

In the year to March 2020, just 1.4% of rape cases recorded by police resulted in a suspect being charged (or receiving a summons).

Studies have shown that the intersectional nature of discrimination means that women with additional protected characteristics, such as those who are from Black, Asian or Ethnic Minority communities, disabled or LGBT+, are even more likely to experience harassment, discrimination and abuse.

#### **The Council Resolves:**

- To ensure that West Oxfordshire District Council does everything in its power to build a District free from harassment violence against women and girls;
- To request the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel - of which WODC is Chair - requires the PCC to report on the performance of Thames Valley Police on tackling street violence against women and what their strategy is moving forward as well as the allocation of resources to support this;
- To recognise that as multiple agencies such as Health, the Police, Fire, and OCC already attend the WODC Community Safety Partnership - and as these agencies will all be crucial in our fight to make our streets safe for women and girls - it is suggested a working group be formed to produce and implement a Rural VAWG Strategy, under the umbrella of the CSP with other relevant parties invited where appropriate; and
- To recognise and promote that this is not a ‘Women’s issues’, men can play a crucial part in culture change in West Oxfordshire.”

### 10. **Emergency / Urgency Delegations Decisions (Pages 65 - 68)**

#### Purpose

To advise of the decisions taken under the emergency and urgency delegation arrangements approved by Council on 13 May 2020.

Recommendation

That the report be noted.

11. **Sealing of Documents (Pages 69 - 70)**

Purpose:

To note the documents sealed since the last report.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted

12. **Report of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees (Pages 71 - 88)**

To receive the reports of the following meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees. Unless otherwise stated, copies are attached:

(a)	Development Control Committee	13 September 2021	
(b)	Cabinet	15 September 2021	
(c)	Economic & Social O&S	16 September 2021	
(d)	Audit & General Purposes	23 September 2021	To follow
(e)	Environment Overview & Scrutiny	30 September 2021	To follow
(f)	Licensing Committee	19 October 2021	To follow
(g)	Cabinet	13 October 2021	To follow

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the Council

Held in the Council Chambers, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney at 2.00 pm on  
**Wednesday, 28 July 2021**

#### PRESENT

Councillors: Martin McBride (Chairman), Alex Postan (Vice-Chair), Jake Acock, Merilyn Davies, Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Andrew Beaney, Jill Bull, Nathalie Chapple, Andrew Coles, Julian Cooper, Suzi Coul, Maxine Crossland, Jane Doughty, Duncan Enright, Ted Fenton, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, David Harvey, Gill Hill, David Jackson, Richard Langridge, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Norman MacRae MBE, Michele Mead, Elizabeth Poskitt, Geoff Saul, Harry St John, Derek Cotterill, Rupert Dent, Colin Dingwall, Mark Johnson, Lysette Nicholls, Mathew Parkinson, Dean Temple and Alex Wilson.

Officers: Jon Dearing (Group Manager - Resident Services), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Bill Oddy (Group Manager - Commercial Development), Vanessa Scott (Climate Change Manager WODC) and Andrew Smith (Communications Officer), Claire Hughes (Business Manager – Corporate Responsibility), Keith Butler (Monitoring Officer) and Mark Joyce, Michelle Ouzman and Adrienne Frazer (Strategic Support Officers).

#### **CL.14 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Councillor Cooper proposed an amendment to Minute Number 10 to read as follows:

“Councillor Coles moved a motion of thanks to the election team for the smooth running of the most complicated election in recent history”. This was seconded by Councillor Doughty.

**Approved**

#### **CL.15 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Luci Ashbourne, Rosa Bolger, Mike Cahill, Laetisia Carter, Owen Collins, Harry Eaglestone, Steve Good, Andy Goodwin, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett and Ben Woodruff.

Councillor Enright shared his concerns about face to face meetings and queried the possibility of online or hybrid meetings in the future. It was noted that the Government’s insistence on face to face meetings had forced some Councillors to be unable to attend because the Council Chamber would be at capacity, with little social distancing available.

#### **CL.16 Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Harvey declared an interest in Agenda Item 18, Sealing of Documents, because he was a tenant of Newman Court.

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The Chief Executive, Giles Hughes declared an interest in Agenda Item 17, Appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, as he was expected to be appointed to the posts. He advised that he would leave the room for the consideration of the item.

#### **CL.17** Receipt of Announcements

The Chairman sent his condolences to Councillor Cahill and his family following the tragic loss of their son on the weekend and had written to him on behalf of the Council.

The Council wished Councillor Rylett a speedy recovery after a serious operation.

#### Retirement of the Monitoring Officer

Keith Butler, who was retiring shortly, was thanked by the Chairman for his work during his time with West Oxfordshire District Council. Councillor McBride stated that in the short time since becoming Chairman, Mr Butler had been the font of all knowledge. He asked everyone present to join him in wishing Mr Butler the best of health in his new role as a retiree.

Mr Butler thanked everyone for their best wishes.

#### Announcements from the Leader

Councillor Mead announced that hybrid meetings were being presented to Government for review and acknowledged the success of the Covid-19 vaccination drop in centre. She highlighted the location and times of the clinic and advised that 500 jabs had been completed in the last week. She asked all Members to encourage their residents to use the facility which was open until 7.30pm that day, with the following day from 9.30 to 7.30pm.

Councillor Mead stated there would be no Cabinet meeting during August, however, it would reconvene in September.

#### Flooding update and Expression of thanks to Ubico

Councillor MacRae raised concerns regarding flooding and made the following comments:

- He planned to write to the Leader of the County Council in relation to the Section 19 Flooding report. He noted that it was now eight months after the flooding event in Witney and he was still awaiting a response.
- At the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in June, a resident had raised concerns regarding the Christmas flooding and asked for clarity on who did what and who was responsible for flooding issues. He stated that Lawrence King was working directly with residents and support groups regarding this.
- A flood fair including displays would be arranged in October or November in the Town Centre shop in Witney, to showcase who was responsible for different areas and types of flooding along with displays from companies offering prevention items.

Councillor MacRae expressed his thanks to the refuse collection teams in what had been difficult times with hot weather, lack of drivers, and the “pingdemic”. He went on to state that Ubico were a contractual service provider and should not be contacted directly by

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Members for assistance. Requests should be made through officers using the member's portal or reception. The Members Portal was stated as the preferred option as it provided an audit trail and Members were reminded not go to the depots as it was against Health and Safety policy.

Councillor Coles, following on from Councillor MacRae's flooding remarks, stated that Councillor Cotterill and other representatives were visiting Witney soon to walk through the most affected areas and had meetings planned with residents.

#### Salt Cross Update

Councillor Haine referenced a report from the Planning Inspectorate on the Salt Cross plan. He stated that the hearing regarding infrastructure had been temporarily suspended. He had asked the Council to look at the report again which was in progress and once completed, the Council would report back to the Planning Inspectorate and the hearing would continue.

Councillor Levy asked for the report to be forwarded.

#### Net Zero Carbon Toolkit

Councillor Harvey commented on a 90 page Net Zero document presented at Cabinet. He wanted all to be aware of it, commended it to the Council and recommended that all Members get a copy.

#### Expression of thanks to GLL Partnership Manager

Councillor Doughty thanked John Busby, Partnership Manager at Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) for his commitment to GLL, prior to his departure at the end of the month. She stated that since March 2020 Mr Busby had worked tirelessly supporting the Council and food banks, whilst sustaining an active football refereeing role. Mr Busby was now a successful English Football League (EFL) professional referee for Sky Bet EFL league (formally English Championship) and would be leaving GLL shortly. She wished him well for the future.

Councillor Doughty went on to state that the Communications team had published a survey for GLL to build an indoor leisure facility. The purpose of the consultation was to find out who would use the facility, what barriers they may face, and what should be included to remove those barriers. She advised that the consultation was live on the website but needed promoting to encourage better responses. Members were requested to promote it with residents as it was vital for the District.

#### Loyal Free West Oxfordshire

Councillor Coul provided an update on the Loyal Free West Oxfordshire app stating that there had been 918 downloads, with 64 current deals, 162 businesses had promoted through event listings and trails, and 2966 trail interactions. Councillor Coul wished to record her thanks to Toby Morris in helping to ensure the Loyal Free app was up and running in West Oxfordshire.

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### LGA Housing Award Shortlist

Councillor Davies was pleased to announce that the Council had been shortlisted for a Local Government Award. The award was for the rural housing broadband rollout, deemed an innovative project. She also announced that the Council had been long listed for an award with Blenheim for affordable housing provision. She had recently met with the housing officer and provision was deemed excellent regarding affordable and sustainable tenancies.

#### **CL.18 Participation of the Public**

There was no public participation.

#### **CL.19 Petition: Witney North Local Plan Housing Allocation**

Councillor Enright reported on the presentation of a petition calling for the reconsideration of the North Witney Local Plan Housing Allocation in the context of the information and comment contained in the report. He stated that this was a sincere effort by local residents to ask for reconsideration of the Witney North plan. He explained that the impetus for the petition had been the floods at Christmas 2020 which were in the exact area earmarked for development. Although some work was undertaken in 2007, the remedies did not work at the time. He stated that the flooding itself was a strong enough reason enough to ask the Council to consider this again. The 2007 flood was sighted as a 1 in 150 year event but recent issues proved that this was not the case. Councillor Enright concluded by advising that sewer capacity in the region was an issue and traffic concerns from that development were stated as quite grave.

Councillor Mead proposed that the petition be received and noted and be considered as part of the local plan review. Councillor Harvey seconded the proposal.

Councillor Davies felt this was a political petition and queried if Councillor Enright had used it for re-election purposes. She believed that residents had been misled and the development could not be disposed of. She also believed that residents may have been misled as to the result of this petition being upheld.

Councillor Langridge did not agree with Councillor Davies. He felt that Councillor Enright had done an excellent job and stated that, in his opinion, the development should never have been put in the local plan. He felt that the flooding situation had worsened since the development's inclusion, resulting in dangerous and raging torrents of water. He continued to state that the Council were planning to put 1000 homes in those areas, which would need the West End link road to work. He advised that there was no money for this but it would require a road across the floodplain, threatening floods for the whole of Oxford. He concluded by confirming that the Witney Flood Action Group felt that this development should not go ahead but Witney South or Carterton would be better locations.

Councillor Coles was saddened by Councillor Davies position. He felt that Members should respect the concerns of all residents of West Oxfordshire. He added that the petition had been started and encouraged by Councillor Enright but was supported by a large number of residents. He felt the situation had worsened and residents genuinely felt it would deteriorate further if the development went ahead.



Councillor Dingwall was pleased that the petition was going forward for consideration in the local plan. He stated that he was astonished that Councillor Enright had not learned from previous experience regarding the Coggs Link road. He went on to state that stopping that development had removed the only defence against speculative development; the result was an increase from 7600 houses to almost 16000 houses and money had to be given back to developers who had invested in the proposed development.

Councillor Dingwall went on to state that speculative development over the last six or seven years had meant there were 500 houses in the Windrush Valley and hundreds of houses in other towns and villages around the District. He concluded by stating that the development of the Local Plan was the only defence against speculative development.

Councillor Haine directed a comment to Councillor Enright who he stated had been a member of the Development Control Committee for a long time. He reminded Councillor Enright that the Local Plan had taken a long time to get in place and Councillor Enright had made no reference to where the 1400 houses should be relocated. He felt that if this allocation was withdrawn, the Local Plan could be lost and there was a danger that land would be developed anyway without the checks and balances of the Council. A master plan of development was being drawn up with 560 affordable homes, along with a primary school and flood prevention measures and a new road would be constructed across the river, reducing traffic and helping air quality.

Councillor Acock reminded Councillor Enright that did not vote against this in 2018 when he had the chance. He echoed Councillor Davies' comments relating to political motivation and this being for the benefit of Councillor Enright's election to the Council.

Councillor Graham thought the points raised were interesting and reminded the meeting that flooding issues went back beyond the recent December flooding. He felt that unless infrastructure was put in place to start with, the plan was generally going nowhere. He concluded by stating that a failure to address the lack of sewers would continue to plague the area and the principle of the petition was about the people who reside in the area.

In summing up, Councillor Harvey stated that he felt Councillor Enright was wrong. He advised that it had never been assumed that the 2007 floods were a 1 in 150 year event. However, it was recorded as unprecedented for the last 150 years and it had not been suggested that it would be another 150 years before a repeat event. The Council had accepted that climate change was happening and flood alleviation measures were continually being considered. He concluded by reminding Members that the Council had also looked at what happened in the area during the extremely cold icy winters, because climate change was occurring 12 months of the year.

Councillor Cooper asked to respond to a point raised by Councillor Haine. He stated that he had proposed an amendment to remove houses out of Witney to an alternative location but

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this had been voted against. He believed scrutiny of the last Local Plan had not been good enough however he had confidence in the current Chairman of the scrutiny committee.

Having been considered and debated, the Council

**RESOLVED**

That that the petition be received and noted and would be considered as part of the Local Plan review.

**CL.20 Recommendations from the Executive and the Council's Committees or Sub-Committees**

The recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees since its last meeting were received and considered. The Chairman reminded Members that a revised version of the report had been circulated and he confirmed that all members had received a copy.

Councillor Mead proposed that the recommendations be adopted and this was seconded by Councillor Harvey.

**RESOLVED**

That the recommendations set out in Annex I to the report be adopted.

**CL.21 Report of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees**

The reports of the following meetings of the Cabinet and the Council's Committees were received and unless otherwise stated, copies were included:

(a) Cabinet	26 May 2021
(b) Licensing Committee	28 May 2021
(c) Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee	2 June 2021
(d) Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee	10 June 2021
(e) Cabinet	16 June 2021
(f) Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee	17 June 2021
(g) Audit and General Purposes Committee	24 June 2021
(h) Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee	8 July 2021
(i) Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee	14 July 2021
(k) Cabinet	21 July 2021
(l) Urgency Committee	23 July 2021

Councillor Cooper raised an issue regarding page 35, stating that this had never formally been reported back. He queried if the money had been subdivided among parishes but asked for clarification on the criteria for subdivision.

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Councillor Al-Yousuf reminded Councillor Cooper that this had been raised at the time and an answer was presented at the committee meeting. He advised that allocation was based on available funds and assessed needs and further breakdown and rationale could be arranged if required.

Councillor Jackson, regarding Page 53, item 19, stated that it was good to see the current review with reference to planning department staffing issues. He assumed the review had started and asked for the expected timescale for the report and to whom would it be sent.

Councillor Beaney stated that two new staff had been employed and three more were on the way. Shared services included environmental services who were already going to site. The Planning service could use them to take pictures and avoid duplicating visits in some instances.

Councillor Graham, regarding Page 69 raised a question with reference to the resolution, stated that this was under private session and suggested an amendment.

The Monitoring Officer stated this should be raised at the next committee meeting regarding accuracy of the minutes.

Councillor Haine stated he had attended but was listed as apologies and requested this be updated.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 14:55 for a short comfort break.

The meeting reconvened at 15:12.

#### **CL.22 Question on Notice**

The following question had been submitted by Councillor Coles, to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mead:

*“The Leader of the Council will be aware that the plastic waste West Oxfordshire residents put in their blue-lid bins for recycling currently gets sent to Turkey for processing. The Leader will also, I’m sure, be aware of the recent report highlighting that in many cases plastics don’t in fact end up being recycled due to poor infrastructure in places like Turkey and the sheer volume of plastic waste coming from countries like the UK. What reassurances can the Leader give the residents of West Oxfordshire that their plastics are indeed recycled and are not just left dumped somewhere or piled into huge mountains, burned or left to spill into rivers and the sea. And if she is unable to reassure us, can I ask what steps the council is planning to take to address this?”*

Councillor Mead stated that information including graphs and bar charts were available to everyone on the Council website and she would be happy to circulate a link. She went on to advise that:

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*“While there is a limited infrastructure available in the UK, there will always be the need to send some materials to other countries for them to be recycled, but the commodity recycling market is a global and well established one. However, as part of the Councils reporting responsibility through a website called Wastedataflow, which is facilitated by Defra, the end destinations for all materials are checked and have to be reported quarterly. This provides the necessary assurance that the materials are being recycled and not transported to a foreign country and disposed of.”*

#### **CL.23 Climate Action Biannual Report**

Councillor Harvey introduced the report and proposed that the recommendations be adopted. He stated that he was proud to present the report and thanked officers for its production. He went on to give a summary of (i) a biannual report on the climate action taken by West Oxfordshire District Council in response to the climate and ecological emergency during the last six months: February-July 2021; (ii) the Council’s Biodiversity Work Programme, 2021-2023; and (iii) a proposal to continue the Better Housing Better Health service with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) in 2021/2022.

Councillor Harvey highlighted a number of key issues including the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit; the in house Electric Vehicle charging contracts; the Climate Action day and Climate Art competition; the Energy and Sustainability modelling for Woodgreen and Elmfield offices including decarbonisation and solar viability at leisure buildings.

In relation to the Better Housing Better Health service, Councillor Poskitt stated that houses were designed for cold climates and UK houses were not good in hot weather.

Referring to the appointment of the new Sustainable Planning Specialist, Councillor Jackson asked if the authority had had discussions regarding the need to get more solar panels on houses. He also asked if the Council could ask developers to include solar panels unless there was a good reason not to, and felt that conditions should be added to ensure it happened. Councillor Jackson noted that this could not be done quickly but felt it should be looked at by Planning.

Councillor Davies countered that solar panels were not the answer; what was being built in the first place was the issue and more emphasis should be placed on reducing energy and introducing heat saving measures.

Councillor Harvey referred to the Net Zero Carbon Toolkit, suggesting Members read it as there were ample examples of temperature controlled buildings, solar panels, and rooftops.

Councillor Chapple, regarding the Climate Action Day, asked if there were plans for more of those and suggested it would be good to make them regular events. Councillor Harvey advised that he was happy to do that if the demand was there.

Councillor Coul seconded the proposals.

**Resolved that**

- (a) the contents of the biannual report on climate action for West Oxfordshire, and of the WODC Biodiversity Work Programme, 2021-2023 is noted; and
- (b) the continuation of the Better Housing Better Health service with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) in 2021/2022 be approved.

**CL.24 Appointment of Temporary Parish Councillors**

Councillor Mead introduced the report and proposed that the recommendations be adopted. This included approving the appointment of temporary members of Bladon Parish Council and considering the future arrangements for temporary appointments to parish councils in the District.

Councillor Mead highlighted that without this, the Parish council would not have enough members to be quorate.

Councillor Enright seconded the proposal.

**Resolved that**

- (a) approval is given for the making of an Order under section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972 appointing District Councillors Julian Cooper and Elizabeth Poskitt as temporary members of the Bladon Parish Council;
- (b) the appointments shall be effective until the Bladon Parish Council is quorate (i.e. it has three members of the Council in place, excepting the temporary appointees);
- (c) in the event of either of the temporary appointees specified above subsequently being unable or not willing to fulfil the role of temporary parish councillor, the Monitoring Officer shall be authorised to appoint such other person(s) as deemed appropriate; and
- (d) should any other Parish Council in the District require the District Council to appoint one or more temporary councillors in order for it to be able to function, the Monitoring Officer shall be authorised to make such appointments if they need to be made more promptly than the date of the next meeting of either the Audit and General Purposes Committee or the Council.

**CL.25 Updates to the Constitution and Establishment of a Constitution Working Group**

Councillor Mead proposed that the recommendations outlined in the report be adopted to seek Council approval for the establishment of a Constitution Working Group to conduct a full review of the Constitution.

Councillor Mead stated that the Constitution was extremely old and needed updating fully, with reference to the recommendations. She requested that Group Leaders provide details to officers with their nominations for the Working Group.

Councillor Harvey seconded the proposal.

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Councillor Graham agreed that the constitution should be updated and suggested that the public should be consulted on the draft. He felt that it was the people who put Members on the Council and they should therefore be allowed to endorse or at least make comment on it.

**Resolved that**

- (a) Parts 7 & 8 of the Constitution be deleted;
- (b) a Constitution Working Group be established, in accordance with the terms of reference set out at Annex A; and
- (c) the proposed work plan for the Constitution Working Group at Annex B be noted.

#### **CL.26 Appointment of Monitoring Officer**

Members were updated on the forthcoming arrangements to cover the Monitoring Officer role.

Councillor Mead proposed that the recommendations be adopted as outlined in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Graham.

**Resolved** that the Chief Executive be authorised to appoint an interim Monitoring Officer for the Council for a period of up to six months, following liaison with the Group Leaders.

#### **CL.27 Notice of Motion - Climate and Ecological Emergency**

The following Motion was provided to Council in the names of Councillor Liz Leffman and Councillor Mathew Parkinson, namely:-

*“On 20 September 2020, an Early Day Motion entitled the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill was tabled in the House of Commons. A second reading is to be held shortly. While the Government’s recent Ten Point Plan is an important step towards Page 4 tackling the UK’s carbon emissions, this Bill recognises that our carbon footprint extends beyond the UK’s borders. The Bill calls for:*

- the UK to make and enact a serious plan to combat climate change. This means dealing with our real fair share of emissions so that we don’t go over critical global rises in temperature*
- our entire carbon footprint be taken into account (in the UK and overseas)*
- the protection and conservation of nature here and overseas along supply chains, recognising the damage we cause through the goods we consume*
- those in power not to depend on technology to save the day, which is used as an excuse to carry on polluting as usual*
- people to have a real say on the way forward in a citizens’ assembly with bite*

*Many residents have made it clear through social media and by forming campaign groups that they want to see this Bill succeed, and Oxfordshire County Council has already given the Bill its support. This Council agrees with the principles of this Bill and supports residents in their efforts to see it come into law. We ask the Leader of this Council to write to our MP, asking him to support this Bill and its principles when it returns to the House of Commons”.*

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Councillor Leffman proposed that the Leader of the Council write to the local MP, asking him to support the Bill and its principles when it returned to the House of Commons.

She thanked Councillor Harvey for the report from the Climate Action Working group, stated that climate change was also at the heart of the County Council's agenda and that today she was talking about the national issue. She stated that the aim of the Bill was to broaden what government proposed as part of the 10 point plan and how more could be done to tackle our carbon footprint. There were a number of issues she hoped the Government could provide support for. One issue for housing was that there was no legislation to support building to net zero so developers could refuse to do it. Councillor Leffman queried the Government's stance on building standards in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and was advised that it was hoped there would be a 70% reduction in carbon against what was currently being built. Councillor Leffman felt this was not good enough and stated it must be legislated. If larger house builders could build to a lower standard, then smaller builders would find themselves outpriced.

Councillor Parkinson seconded the proposal.

Councillor Mead stated that as the Bill had come through parliament in June, she had taken the liberty of writing to Robert Courts MP outlining the motion. A response had been received, which Councillor Mead read for the benefit of the Members:

*"I am encouraged that the UK remains committed to environmentally sustainable development as set out in the Millennium Development Goals and the sustainable Development Goals. In September 2019 the Prime Minister committed to doubling the UK's International Climate Finance over the next five years which I hope will enable the UK to play an active part in protecting the environment and reversing biodiversity loss.*

*I know that a Climate Assembly UK was formed as a result of work conducted by Parliamentary Select Committees. I welcome that many of their recommendations, which were published in their report, are already either in place or in the pipeline as a result of the Government working towards net zero. Achieving net zero will affect everyone and it is important that we work together to achieve it.*

*Therefore, I do not believe that the Bill is required as work is already underway to achieve our net zero target and protect our environment."*

Councillor Mead stated that she could not support the motion based on the response from the MP.

Councillor Harvey was disappointed to see this motion to Council as the authority had already played a large role in tackling Climate Change and there was no mention of the progress made over the past two years. He felt it was more important for the Council to reduce its own CO2 emissions rather than get involved in gesture politics. He went on to say that the

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Council was making great progress in Climate Change and biodiversity and gave some examples.

Councillor Harvey stated he had been actively involved in the Oxfordshire tree mapping project which had made a real and tangible difference for the businesses and residents in the area. These were all reasons he could not support the motion and felt Council should focus on what could be done locally.

Councillor Davies stated that from a Planning aspect, although the carbon toolkit was available, it meant nothing without the powers to enforce it. She agreed that Government support was key to make that happen.

Councillor Dingwall was concerned for new homebuyers. He felt that these measures would make homes more expensive than they already were. He believed that rather than looking at national policies the Council should look locally for things that could help. He advised that solar panels were very expensive to install on a house but solar farms were more affordable and community solar areas should be looked at within developments. He stated that flooding was also an issue due to the water table being very high. He stated that the whole of California runs on geo thermal energy and asked if that could be used here with the cost shared by everyone rather than using individual air source heat pumps.

Councillor Postan said he was an advocate for solar panels and the savings they made and that maintenance was little or nothing in his experience. He felt that the Bill recognised that the Council's carbon footprint extended beyond its border.

Councillor Levy was surprised by the defensiveness of the comments made by Members of the Conservative group. He noted that the Council was taking a lead on climate change, but a lot more could be done and writing to the MP was one of them. He stated that Government involvement was needed to change standards for housing to get things done locally. He also suggested that the County Council needed to encourage cycling and the use of public transport.

Councillor Coles stated there was nothing critical in the motion about the good work the Council had achieved in the last few years and was surprised by the negative attitudes of some of the Members.

Councillor Al-Yousuf commended the spirit of the motion and advised that there was nothing he disagreed with. Referring to the urgency from Councillor Leffman, he stated that she wanted no more and no less than for the Council to write to the MP. As it appeared that this had already been done by Councillor Mead and there was a reply he felt that further discussions were fruitless and the meeting should move on.

Councillor Chapple agreed that a letter had been sent, but questioned if the content of that was reflective of that which was requested.



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Councillor Coul stated that all of these things were being looked at and acted on by Government already. She felt this was being used as a political tool by Councillors. She reminded Members that the MP was clear on his views and writing to him again was a waste of time. It would be better for the Leader of the Council to make representations to other organisations that could bear fruit.

Councillor Haine, in response to Councillor Dingwall claiming home improvements would be expensive, stated that this should not be the case as land was made cheaper as a result of these improvements.

Councillor Acock stated he did not see the point of the motion. He suggested that the Council could be writing and pre-empting the outcome as the Bill may or may not return for a second reading. He felt the motion should be withdrawn as the letter had already sent and the MP had replied.

Councillor Parkinson stated that the Council should be pushing for this and doing everything possible.

Councillor Leffman, in summing up, stated she was very disappointed with the attitude of Members. She very much welcomed the work of the Council and it was going in the right direction. A lot had been done but more was still needed, which would require the Government to step up and mandate the things the Council wanted to see in new developments. Legislation for net zero development needed to be in place to allow the Council to do that. The MP response did not mean he was right and did not stop the Council from writing again to reiterate their point, stating they do not agree. She concluded by advising that other Districts and the County Council had endorsed this and she would not withdraw the motion.

The motion was then put to the vote and defeated.

**Defeated**

#### **CL.28 Notice of Motion - Planning Applications**

The following Motion was received in the names of Councillors Enright and Fenton, namely:-

*“This Council believes planning works best when developers and the local community work together to shape local areas and deliver necessary new homes; and therefore calls on the Government to protect the right of communities to shape individual planning applications.”*

Councillor Enright introduced the motion and advised that he felt the Government should protect the rights of communities to shape individual planning applications. He reminded Members that the Council was Member of the Local Government Association (LGA) with many other groups, often with differing views. However, all groups were aligned on the issue regarding Government planning reforms; the LGA believed the measures would take away

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local determination and they believed in the right for local communities to have a say in the way their area was developed. He advised that the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 was coming forward for people to comment on and was an example of joint working and the faith in strategic planning. He reiterated his belief that local communities should have a say on local developments.

Councillor Fenton seconded the proposal.

Councillor Acock stated that he supported the motion but suggested that it would have been nice for the Labour group to outline the actions required. He requested that in future, all motions should include actions.

Councillor Levy proposed an amendment to the motion stating that it gave undue relevance to the role of developers in the planning process. The wording of the amendment was designed to show that locals should take the lead on local planning and affordable housing, making West Oxfordshire more attractive to outsiders. He concluded that he would prefer his wording to that proposed in the substantive motion.

Councillor Graham seconded the amendment stating that it was a dangerous issue as the planning authority could be lost from the process and residents would speak directly to Secretary of State if the Local Plan was lost.

Councillor Davies did not see the point of the amendment, suggested it was rewording for the sake of it and it needed to be a balance of what both developers and residents wanted.

Councillor Leffman reiterated Councillor Davies' comments stating that the Council were making a statement to show Government they did not agree with this and that local people wanted to have a say in their communities. She felt that the Council must say this to Government and not allow them to remove more local authority power to Central Government.

Councillor Coul stated that she believed good development was achieved by everyone working together; developers, residents, and the local authority. The amendment would do a disservice to that collaboration.

Councillor Graham stated that the amendment was there to make an important point about infrastructure. This should include infrastructure as part of the whole package and was not happening as part of current planning. The proposed change may seem small but he felt it was vitally important. The Planning Bill would massively affect what happened locally if Council got this wrong.

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Councillor Enright, in summing up and closing the debate on the amendment, stated he did not accept the amendment and felt it said the same thing in different words. He agreed that everyone needed to work together to get the best outcome.

The amended motion was put to the vote and was defeated.

Councillor Haine suggested the substantive motion was premature and advised that there would be another White Paper release in the Autumn. He felt that Council should wait for the paper to be released for consultation.

Councillor Cooper stated that the protection of the planning system was worthy of the Council's time. He was proud that the planning committee did not have block votes and allowed different groups to work together. He agreed that it was important for local communities to have their say.

Councillor Coul agreed with the ethos of the motion but suggested that the timing was in question. Council had already stated that the original white paper was not acceptable and that paper was withdrawn. She stated that Council should wait for the new paper then there may not be an issue or if there was then a response could be addressed at that time.

Councillor Fenton stated that it was a difficult job to look at all the planning applications. The overall workload and long list of applications that were dealt with by officers showed how important planning was to the authority. He was delighted that Government withdrew the original White Paper which would have removed one of the purposes of District Councils. Progress was inevitable but local people should be allowed to have input in that. He also felt it might be premature but it had cross party support as it currently stood, before the next White Paper came forward. He hoped that when this happened it would leave the Council with some measure of control.

Councillor Enright, in summing up, thanked Councillor Fenton for his support stating that he had addressed the timing and was satisfied the time was right.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

**Carried**

#### **CL.29 Emergency and Urgency Delegations**

Members received a report asking them to note the decisions taken under the emergency and urgency delegation arrangements approved by Council on 13 May 2020.

**Resolved** that the report is noted.

#### **CL.30 Appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer**

The Chief Executive left the room for this item.

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Councillor Mead introduced the report which proposed the appointment of the Chief Executive, Mr Hughes to the role of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, stating that the Council was one of only a few authorities in the land where the Chief Executive was not the Returning Officer.

Councillor Harvey seconded the proposal.

Having read the report and heard from the Members present, it was

**Resolved** that the Chief Executive be appointed and designated as the Council's Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer, with immediate effect.

**CL.31 Sealing of Documents**

Members received a report asking them to note the documents sealed since the last report.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

The Meeting closed at 4.25 pm

CHAIRMAN

 <p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>	<p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p><b>Council: Wednesday 27 October 2021</b></p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p><b>Agenda Item No. 6</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>Recommendations from the Executive and the Council's Committees or Sub-Committees</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk">michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Senior Strategic Support Officer Email: <a href="mailto:amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk">amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider the recommendations made by Cabinet and the Council's Committees since its last meeting.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p><a href="#">Annex 1</a> – Schedule of recommendations</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the recommendations set out in <a href="#">Annex 1</a> to the report be adopted.</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>To support the Council's priorities to protect the environment whilst supporting the local economy, to meet the current and future needs of residents and to provide efficient and value for money services, whilst delivering quality front line services.</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>None</p>

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. The Council is required to consider recommendations made by the Cabinet and the Council's Committees since its last meeting.

**2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1. The recommendation set out at 4 relates to a matter to be considered at the Licensing Committee on 19 October 2021, i.e. on the day of publication of these papers. If there is any amendment or further recommendations to be added, Councillors will be made aware of them prior to the Council meeting.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. Any financial implications of the proposed decisions are as set out in the associated reports to Cabinet and/or Committees.

**4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1. None

**5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1. Not applicable

**6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. Whilst there may be climate change implications arising from specific items within the schedule, there are none arising directly from this report.

**7. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS**

- 7.1. The above are as set out in the relevant reports to the meetings of the Cabinet/Committee, and the decisions or minutes of those meetings.

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1. None

	Meeting and Date	Subject and Agenda Item No. or Minute Reference	Recommendations
1.	Cabinet – 13 October 2021	Item 6 – Adoption of Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document	b) Council be invited to formally adopt the final version of the West Oxfordshire District Council Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
2.	Cabinet – 13 October 2021	Item 7 – Approval for the introduction of charges at the public conveniences at New Street, Chipping Norton	That Council approve the introduction of charging for the use of the New Street Car Park public conveniences, Chipping Norton, at a charge of 20p as per all other units as soon is practicably possible to install the equipment.
3.	Cabinet – 13 October 2021	Item 8 – Approval of charges for the delivery of waste and recycling containers	(b) Cabinet recommends to Council its preferred price point option I with an effective date of 1 December 2021.
4.	Licensing Committee – 19 October 2021	Item 5 - Gambling Act 2005 – Statement of Principles (Policy) Review 2021	The Licensing recommends that: a) Council adopts the Council’s revised Statement of Principles; and b) Council continues to adopt a “no- casino resolution” for inclusion in the published Gambling Act 2005 Licensing Policy Statement.

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 <p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>	<p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p><b>Council – Wednesday 27 October 2021</b></p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p><b>Agenda Item No. 8</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>Amendment to Committee Membership</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk">michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Democratic Services Manager <a href="mailto:Amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk">Amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To amend the membership of the Finance and Management Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>(a) That Councillor Joy Aitman replace Councillor Rosa Bolger on the membership of the Finance &amp; Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee with immediate effect for the remainder of the civic year.</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>None</p>

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Members agreed the membership of the Council's Committees at its Annual Council meeting in May 2021.
- 1.2. Since then, officers have received a request from Councillor Bolger to replace her on the Finance and Management Overview Scrutiny Committee with Councillor Joy Aitman. Councillor Bolger has struggled with the timings of the meetings which clash with school pick up times.
- 1.3. The amendment to the Committee membership was agreed by the Labour Group Leader on in August and Councillor Aitman has been acting as a substitute member at subsequent meetings.

## 2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The Appointment of Committees report agreed in May 2021 explained how the political balance had been calculated and asked Members to agree the following allocation of seats for the Finance and Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

Committee	Seats					(Total)
Fin & Man O & S	14	8	3	2	1	14

This amendment is replacing one Labour Group Councillor with another and does not, therefore, affect the numbers above.

- 2.2 From an organisational perspective, the amendment will ensure that all Members of the Committee receive the appropriate information promptly and will avoid Councillor Aitman being missed off any circulations. If agreed, the website will be updated accordingly.

## 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. This report has no financial implications.

## 4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS


- 4.1. The report takes account of the statutory requirements as contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Committees and Political Groups Regulations 1990.

## 5. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

- 5.1. Members could choose not to agree to the amendment, however, this would result in a substitute member needing to be sought for each meeting.

## 6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1. None

 <p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>	<p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p><b>Council: Wednesday 27 October 2020</b></p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p><b>Agenda Item No. 9</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>WODC Land Management Plans</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>Witney North, Witney West, Witney South, Witney East, Witney Central, Carterton North East, Brize Norton and Shilton, North Leigh, Chipping Norton</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor David Harvey, Cabinet Member for Climate Change Email: david.harvey@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Rachel Crookes, Biodiversity &amp; Countryside Land Management Officer Email: rachel.cookes@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>This paper presents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on the development of Land Management Plans across twelve key sites owned and/or managed by WODC.</li> <li>• A proposed set of Land Management Plans be released to the public for engagement following Full Council approval, outlining changes to Ubico’s management of the sites and longer-term projects that external funding could be sought for externally.</li> <li>• A request for approval to allocate funding from the climate budget to deliver projects across the sites that will enhance their biodiversity value.</li> </ul>
<p>Annex</p>	<p>Annex I: Draft Land Management Plans for Public Engagement</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>a) that the Land Management Plans for public engagement and subsequent implementation from March 2022 be approved; and b) a sum of £11,800 be allocated from the climate budget for a variety of projects to enhance biodiversity across key sites under WODC’s ownership and management in financial year 2021/22.</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To protect the environment whilst supporting the local economy</li> <li>2. Working with communities to meet the current and future needs and aspirations of residents.</li> <li>3. To provide efficient and value for money services, whilst delivering quality front line services.</li> </ol>

Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	The WODC Land Management Plans have been developed by the Biodiversity & Countryside Land Management Officer working in close consultation with key officers, stakeholder partners and colleagues within West Oxfordshire District Council and Ubico to inform the proposals within this report and Annexe. A Steering Group was set up at the start of the Land Management Plans' development, with representation from Estates, Climate and Contracts teams to guide this process and keep all parties informed. This document has also been the focus of consultation with the Council's cross-party Climate Action Working Group.

## **I. BACKGROUND**

I.1 This paper presents:

- Information on the development of Land Management Plans across twelve key sites owned and/or managed by WODC.
- A proposed set of Land Management Plans be released to the public for engagement following Full Council approval, outlining changes to Ubico's management of the sites and longer-term projects that external funding could be sought for externally.
- A request for approval to allocate funding from the climate budget to deliver projects across the sites that will enhance their biodiversity value.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

2.1 Following the Council's motion to declare a climate and ecological emergency on the 26th June 2019, a Climate Change Strategy was developed; a key theme was the Protection and Restoration of Natural Ecosystems. Several strategic objectives were also outlined within this theme, including "protecting existing biodiversity value and creating new opportunities for the restoration of natural ecosystems at sites under the Council's stewardship". This will be carried out with a new, dedicated biodiversity and countryside land-management staff member. Land Management Plans will be developed". This was then embedded into the Biodiversity Work Programme that was created and approved by Council on 28th July 2021; action within the work programme was the "creation of enhanced LMPs to improve habitat management and associated biodiversity".

2.2 The Council owns and manages around 106ha of green space across the District in the form of fields, commons, parks and public green spaces within estates. Twelve sites were selected for their current and potential value for wildlife:

- Deer Park Wood, Witney
- Deer Park South, Witney
- Deer Park estate, Witney
- Bathing Place estate, Witney
- Millers Mews, Witney
- Langel Common, Witney
- Bishops Farm Mill, Witney
- Madley Park, Witney
- Shilton Park, Carterton
- Kilkenny Country Park, Carterton
- North Leigh Common
- Rowell Way, Chipping Norton

2.3 A baseline assessment of these key WODC owned and managed public open green spaces was initially completed by Rachel Crookes, the Council's Biodiversity & Countryside Land Management Officer (BLMO), Climate Team, between March - June 2021. This established the current status and management practices for all of the selected sites, which include commons, parks, fields and public green spaces.

2.4 A Steering Group was set up with representation from Publica's Estates, Climate and Contracts teams at the start of the Land Management Plans' development process, with the aim of integrating the objectives and views of these key internal stakeholders. The Steering Group has guided the formation of the proposals, and all parties are fully on board and ready to incorporate the planned changes.

- 2.5 From the baseline position, the BLMO has gone on to develop five-year Land Management Plans containing:
- Biodiversity enhancements on a site-by-site basis to be incorporated as part of a revised grounds maintenance schedule being implemented by Ubico over the next five years. Changes to land management carried out by Ubico have been targeted as cost-neutral.
  - Longer-term biodiversity projects on a site-by-site basis, with schemes costed individually and including an allowance for five years' management.
- 2.6 A number of changes to land management have been given agreement in principle by Ubico following close consultation between the BLMO and Bob Lightfoot and Laurence Sutton from Ubico during August and September 2021. Examples of these include a reduction in the number of annual grass cuts across WODC estates, the creation of meadow areas with reduced grass cutting, the establishment of historical grass cutting regimes on floodplain meadows and additional support for volunteer groups managing some of the sites - full details of the proposals for each site are contained within Annex 1. Other WODC biodiversity professionals including Melanie Dodd, Biodiversity Officer, and Nick Dalby, Forestry & Landscape Officer were also consulted on the ecologically technical elements of the plans. Data analysis was carried out for the proposed management changes and confirm that fuel use, vehicle use, CO<sub>2</sub>e and Ubico staff man hours will not be negatively impacted by the proposed changes to grounds maintenance.
- 2.7 The changes are intended to be embedded as part of an updated grounds maintenance schedule for a contract renewal from April 2022. It should be noted that this is subject to formal agreement and incorporation as part of the contract.
- 2.1. Complementing the proposed changes to grounds maintenance by Ubico, and in addition to these changes, are also individually-costed biodiversity enhancement projects developed for the longer-term, for each site. These focus on the restoration and improvement of existing natural habitats and biodiversity value of a site and/or look to create new wildlife habitat increasing ecological value further. The longer-term projects are proposed to be resourced through external funding opportunities. The resource and finance required, both revenue and capital, have been considered for each individual work package and project developed for a five-year period.
- 2.8 As initial funding towards the longer-term biodiversity projects at the sites, a number of short-term one-year projects have been identified as best value for money. There is a focus on one-year projects currently as this corresponds with the remaining duration of the Fixed-Term Contract for the BLMO, a position currently funded through the Council's Local Recovery Plan. Funding from the existing climate budget is recommended for allocation to projects as outlined below.

Location	Project	Cost (£)
Housing estates	Wildflower meadow signs	1,000
Housing estates	Hedgehog highways campaign	1,200
Housing estates	Wildflower meadow seed enhancement	700
Housing estates	Hedgerow planting	800
Langel Common	Deadwood clearance on eastern bank	800
North Leigh Common	Woodland thinning	1,200
North Leigh Common	Tree planting	500
Deer Park Wood	Replacement tree planting for ash dieback	600

Deer Park Wood/North Leigh Common	Owl box installation	200
Deer Park South	Eastern glade orchard planting	200
Deer Park South	Woodland thinning	1,200
Kilkenny Country park	Public BioBlitz event with TVERC	1,000
Kilkenny Country park	Soil survey	100
Bathing Place estate	Artificial badger sett re-establish	300
Bathing Place estate	Balancing pond brush clearance	2,000
<b>Total cost</b>		<b>11,800</b>

- 2.9 The Land Management Plans are proposed to be made public for an online engagement exercise in November/December 2021. The public and other local groups and stakeholders will have the opportunity to review and provide feedback.
- 2.10 The Land Management Plans demonstrate that the Council is making meaningful changes across its estate to improve biodiversity in response to the climate and ecological emergency declared in 2019, and going beyond a business as usual approach to managing its estate. Implementing the Land Management Plans will also bring additional benefits to other natural capital assets that are intrinsically present across the estate, such as flood protection, carbon storage and pollination.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The changes to Ubico's management schedule have been demonstrated to be cost neutral, with no impact on the company's resources or time as a result of the proposals.
- 3.2. The longer-term projects are proposed to be resourced through external funding opportunities such as government grants. The resource and finance required, both revenue and capital, have been considered for each individual work package and project developed for a five-year period.
- 3.3. A sum of £11,800 has been requested for allocation from the climate budget to deliver a number of small, complementary biodiversity projects on WODC's land as well as information panels helping to raise public awareness to the changes underway.

### 4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no perceived legal implications associated with the proposals within this report.

### 5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The Land Management Plans set out proposals for how the Council can improve the biodiversity value of its sites through both changes to Ubico's existing contract and longer term projects to be resourced through external funding. Ubico have agreed in principle to amend their work schedule to accommodate the changes on a cost neutral basis, and this can therefore be promoted as actions that will take place if the Land Management Plan's public engagement receives a positive response.
- 5.2. The longer-term projects currently do not have funding allocated to them for delivery, and are therefore to be communicated as aspirational projects dependant on funding. As such, there are no risks with noting these within the proposals despite the current lack of resources to support all projects incorporated.

## **6. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 6.1 The impacts of adopting and implementing new Land Management Plans for the Council will have equal impact on all services, customers and staff and there is a shared benefit to the objectives of this report and associated benefits from taking positive action to improve the biodiversity and value for nature across the sites the Council manages.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The proposals within this report will have a direct, positive impact on the Council's operations with regard to energy and resource efficiency, and associated carbon reduction. The creation of new habitats will also benefit those local priority species affected by the effects of climate change.

## **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 8.1. One alternative option is to take no action at all.

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1. The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

- Meeting minutes and motion agreed by the Council on 26 June 2019.
- Meeting minutes and motions agreed by the Council on 22 January 2020.
- Meeting minutes and report agreed by the Council on 29 July 2020.
- Meeting minutes and report agreed by the Council on 24 February 2021.
- Meeting minutes and report agreed by the Council on 28 July 2021.

- 9.2. These documents will be available for inspection at the Council Offices at Woodgreen during normal office hours for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting. Please contact the author of the report.





WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

# CLIMATE ACTION for West Oxfordshire

## Managing our green spaces with nature in mind

In June 2019, West Oxfordshire District Council declared a climate and ecological emergency. In 2020, our “Your Views” survey told us that residents placed great value in biodiversity and so “The Protection and Restoration of Natural Ecosystems” became a leading theme in the Council’s Climate Change Strategy published in 2021. In our bid to build back greener following the pandemic, the Council’s local recovery plan gave resource to developing Land Management Plans for sites within our stewardship.

We have an estimated 106ha of green space which includes parks, fields greens and public open spaces within estates. Twelve sites have been selected for their wildlife value and are the focus of our Land Management Plans which outline upcoming changes in our management approach, aimed at benefitting wildlife and access to nature across the District.



### Who manages our green spaces?

Our grounds maintenance contractor, Ubico, manage our sites for us. They carry out activities such as grass cutting, cutting back encroaching vegetation from footpaths and litter picking sites to keep them clean and tidy.

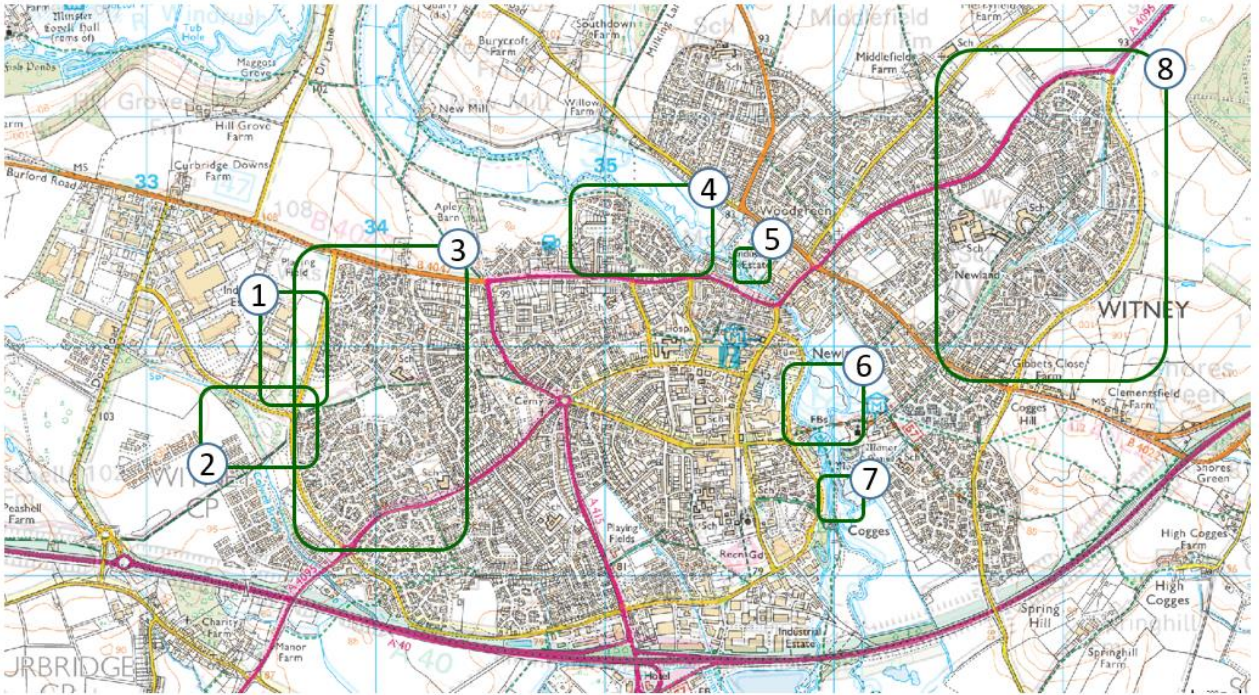
We also have two fantastic teams of volunteers that work alongside Ubico – the Witney Woodland Volunteers who work at Deer Park Wood and the Friends of North Leigh Common who manage their namesake.

We will continue to work with all of these teams, and would like to set up a new volunteer group to be sure our land is being well managed for local wildlife and those visiting the sites.

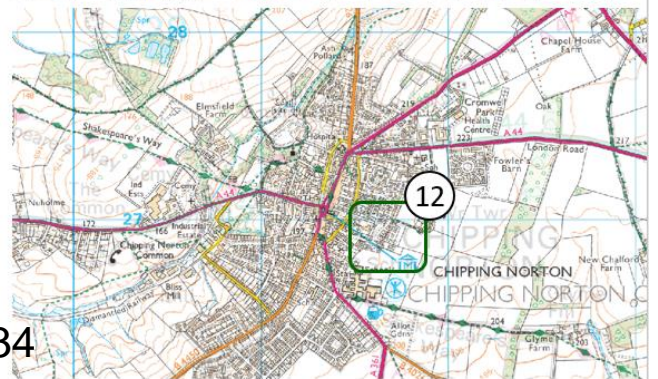
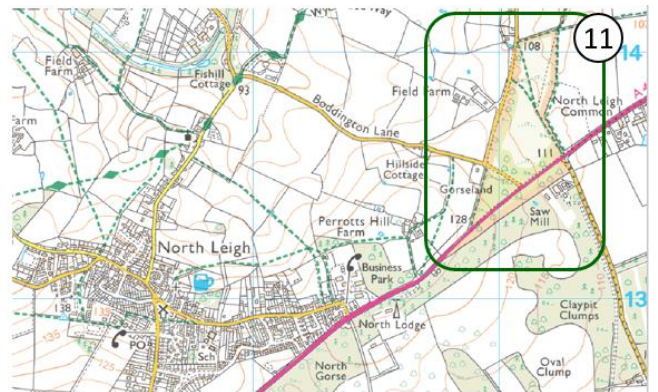
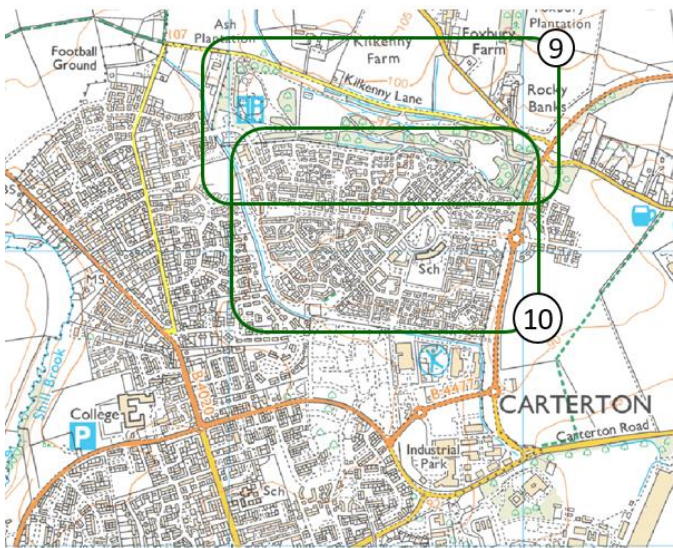
Tell us your thoughts...

We want to keep you both informed of our future Land Management Plans and provide you with an opportunity to send us your feedback. [CLICK HERE](#)

# Key Council owned and managed green spaces

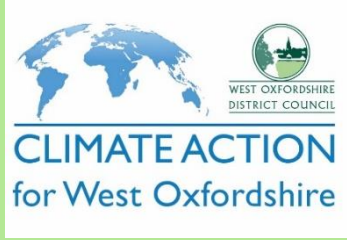


1	Deer Park Wood	3	Deer Park estate	5	Millers Mews	7	Bishops Farm Mill
2	Deer Park South	4	Bathing Place estate	6	Langel Common	8	Madley Park Estate



9	Kilkenny Lane Country Park	11	North Leigh Common
10	Shilton Park	12	Rowell Lane estate

# Deer Park Wood

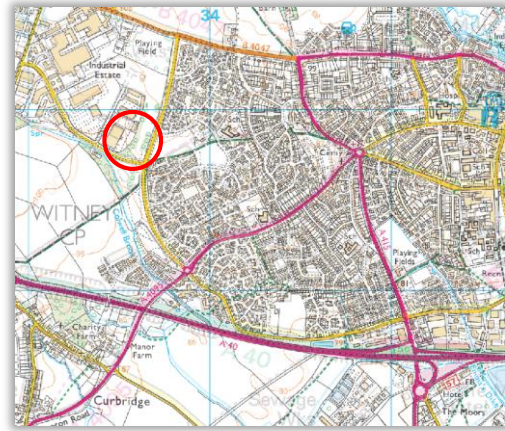


WODC site number: 1  
Grid reference: SP336100  
Land area: 3.7ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Continue working with the Witney Woodland Volunteers to maintain the site's habitats
- Improve the quality of the site's central grassland area and road verges
- Restore areas where ash dieback works have occurred



## Site description

Deer Park Wood is made up of a mosaic of habitats: a linear area of grassland runs north-south through the site, with mature woodland around its edge. There are also hedgerows, hazel coppice, a small orchard, and wildflower meadow areas, all of which provide excellent breeding and foraging opportunities for local wildlife. This site is managed by the Witney Woodland Volunteers, who run regular work parties to ensure it is well maintained for both people and wildlife.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is the largest area of woodland within Witney, a habitat that is scarce in the area. It is a remnant of the royal deer park that was present until the mid 16th century.
- It is home to many species with declining populations, such as hedgehogs, bats and a wide variety of birds.
- There are many interesting flora, with several species of orchid seen both within the site and just outside it on the road verge.
- It is well used by the public: its circular path is used by residents and Witney Parkrun, its central area is used by the local Forest School group.



# Deer Park Wood

## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Removing the grass clippings after the grassland's central area is cut to reduce the soil fertility and encourage further wildflower diversity.
- Reducing the number of grass cuts from seven to four along the road verge, with the aim of timing cuts to allow common and bee orchids to grow.
- Removing internal areas of redundant rabbit fencing, to aid the movement of larger mammal species such as hedgehogs and badgers across the site.
- Giving the Witney Woodland Volunteers additional support with members from the WODC grounds maintenance team to complete larger works such as tree management.



## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Replace trees affected by ash dieback with new saplings in keeping with the site's existing tree stock.
- Install a new information panel for visitors to the site about its wildlife, habitats and management.
- Install a box for tawny owls, to increase nesting habitat availability for this species.
- Provide the Witney Woodland Volunteers with new equipment and ecological training.

**Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Wood production – Carbon storage – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation – Nature education**



# Deer Park South

WODC site number: 2  
Grid reference: SP335096  
Land area: 6.7ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Work with the Witney Woodland Volunteers to maintain the site's habitats, whilst keeping a wild feel
- Enhance the habitats along Colwell Brook for species such as water vole and fish
- Improve the condition of the site's woodland areas



## Site description

The site is made up of a mosaic of habitats: a balancing pond is located in the middle of the site (not owned by WODC, owned by...), and is surrounded by woodland, scrub and grassland habitats. Colwell Brook runs north to south through the site, and goes on to join the River Windrush. The habitats have received little maintenance attention in recent years, and there are no formalized footpaths around the site. The site has a 'wild' feel as a result with several overgrown areas.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is home to many species with declining populations with its overgrown and unmanaged habitats, such as hedgehogs, invertebrates and a wide variety of birds.
- It contains a range of interesting flora, with orchids having previously been recorded on the road verge to the north.
- Colwell Brook is an important freshwater habitat where water voles have previously been recorded along its length.
- These habitats provide a number of ecosystem services, such as improving and regulating water quality, mitigating flood risk and increasing carbon storage.



# Deer Park South



## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts from seven to four along the road verge, with the aim of timing cuts to allow common and bee orchids to grow.
- Removing internal areas of redundant rabbit fencing, to aid the movement of larger mammal species such as hedgehogs and badgers across the site.
- Giving the Witney Woodland Volunteers formal access to manage the site, with a management plan to follow and support from members of the WODC grounds maintenance team on larger works such as tree thinning.

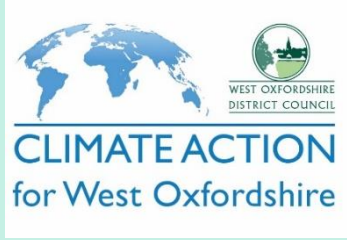
## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Change the site's levels for improved water discharge from Colwell Brook into the balancing pond, to reduce floodwater volumes in the brook and improve the pond for wildlife.
- Install a new information panel for visitors to the site about its wildlife, habitats and management.
- Manage the grassland in the small eastern glade of the site, and plant orchard trees within the newly managed space.
- Restore the dry stone wall along the southern boundary of the site, to create foraging habitat for birds and encourage reptiles to inhabit the site.

**Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Flood protection – Carbon storage – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation – Water supply**



# Deer Park estate

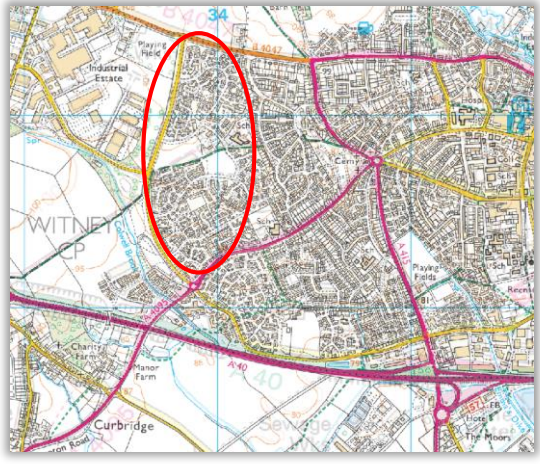


WODC site number: 3  
Grid reference: SP338094  
Land area: 11.6ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the site in a way that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike
- Manage grassland areas to improve the floral resources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- Improve the site's connectivity with new habitat features

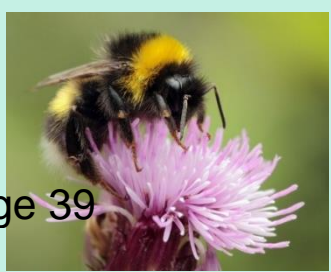


## Site description

The land owned by WODC at Deer Park consists mostly of short grassland areas and road verges: some of these areas are planted with trees and shrubs in places. Two large recreation grounds are located centrally within the Deer Park. Trees planted when the estate was built form woodland areas along the site's boundary and in pockets within the site. Its proximity to Deer Park Wood to the west makes it likely visited by a wide range of bird and insect species.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is well used by the public, with paths through the green spaces around the site used by local residents.
- The woodland and shrub areas provide breeding and foraging habitat for local bird and invertebrate populations, and provide shelter for mammals such as hedgehogs.
- The estate's vegetation corridors extend in several directions from the site, providing habitat connectivity towards Witney and the wider countryside and allowing wildlife to travel safely across the landscape.



# Deer Park estate



## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts across the estate from ten to seven, to allow flowers such as daisies, clover and buttercups more opportunities to fully grow and act as pollen and nectar sources for foraging pollinators.
- Creating “mini meadow” areas in strategic locations, allowing grass and existing flowers to grow longer over the summer before cutting and collecting the clippings.
- Embedding regular checks and maintenance activities of areas that have been affected by subsidence due to vegetation growth into the grounds maintenance schedule, to prevent future damage occurring.

## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Enhance the new meadow grassland areas with wildflower seed mix or plug plants for increased floral diversity, encouraging more pollinators to visit.
- Plant native hedgerows in strategic locations to increase berry and nut provision for bird and mammal populations, and increase habitat connectivity for species such as bats and birds to travel safely across the estate.
- Coppice trees within the woodland areas to diversify woodland age structure and accommodate different invertebrate and bird species.

**Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Wood production – Carbon storage – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation**





# Bathing Place estate



WODC site number: 4  
Grid reference: SP351104  
Land area: 6.2ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the site in a way that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike
- Create new habitats to improve the floral resources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- Improve the site's woodland and riverside areas for priority species



## Site description

The land owned by WODC at the Bathing Place Estate consists primarily of woodland areas, which extend along the western boundary and then along the southern bank of the River Windrush. These habitats, although generally currently under-managed, are important breeding and foraging areas for birds, mammals and insects. The historic Bathing Place, once an open air swimming spot, sits in the north west of the estate. A path runs east to a footbridge over a weir and towards the Windrush's floodplain meadows.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is well used by the public, with paths through the green spaces around the site used by local residents.
- The riverbank and woodland provide natural habitats for many plant and animal species, many of which have UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) priority status such as water vole and otters.
- It sits within the "recovery zone" of Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Network, an area identified to have importance for landscape connectivity.



# Bathing Place estate



## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts across the estate from ten to seven, to allow flowers such as daisies, clover and buttercups more opportunities to fully grow and act as pollen and nectar sources for foraging pollinators.
- Creating “mini meadow” areas in strategic locations, allowing grass and existing flowers to grow longer over the summer before cutting and collecting the clippings.
- Coppicing trees within the woodland areas to diversify tree age structure and accommodate a wider variety of insect and bird species.

## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Enhance the new meadow grassland areas with wildflower seed mix or plug plants for increased floral diversity, encouraging more pollinators to visit.
- Remove the redundant tree guards within the recently planted woodland areas.
- Re-cover the exposed artificial badger sett within the riverside woodland to encourage this priority species to the site.
- Formalize the path within the riverside woodland to allow better resident access.
- Clear the balancing pond within the riverside woodland area to re-instate its function as a drainage feature, improving its value for wildlife.

**Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Flood protection – Carbon storage – Cooling and shading – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation**

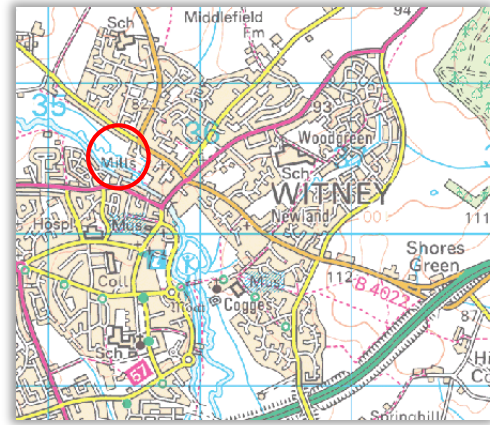


WODC site number: 5  
Grid reference: SP356103  
Land area: 0.7ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the existing wildlife value of the site
- Attract nature’s pollinators by creating new areas of flower-rich meadow habitat
- Enhance the natural riverside environment as a wildlife haven



## Site description

The site is part of a network of floodplain meadows that runs north and east of Witney - the River Windrush runs along the southerly edge of the site. Riparian and floodplain meadow are valued natural features of the existing landscape attracting UK priority species such as water vole and kingfishers. Trees and native hedgerows provide a natural boundary that surrounds the site, enclosing an area of tall grassland.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is part of an important network of floodplain meadows in Witney.
- The riverbank and floodplain meadows provide natural habitats for many plant and animal species, many of which have UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) priority status.
- It sits within the “core zone” of Oxfordshire’s Nature Recovery Network, of county importance.
- There is potential to conserve and restore further an important habitat that offers a number of ecosystem services which include improving and regulating water quality, mitigating flood risk, increasing carbon storage and providing habitats for biodiversity.



# Millers Mews



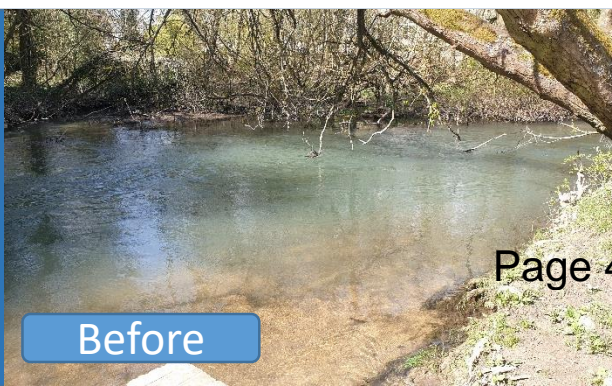
## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Increasing the number of times we cut the grass each year, from one to three, collecting and removing these cuttings to maximise flower diversity over time. This is designed to mimic historic techniques of floodplain meadow management and help restore the quality of natural habitat over time.
- Cutting back hedgerow lines and encroaching brambles to increase the total area of grassland.
- Clearing larger deadwood dropping from the bankside trees so we are reducing the chance of deadwood entering the river and becoming a flood risk.

## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Manage the trees along the River Windrush to create willow pollards, emulating a historical landscape feature.
- Introduce locally-sourced wildflower seeds from high-quality floodplain meadow sites to increase floral diversity and establish rare plant communities. This can be done by a practice called “green hay spreading”.
- Restore the quality of natural habitat within the ditches connecting with the River Windrush to attract greater numbers of wetland flora and fauna.
- Establish reed beds in the River Windrush as new water vole and waterfowl foraging and breeding habitat.

**Co-Benefits: Carbon storage – Improved local air quality – Reduced flood risk - Access to nature – Health & wellbeing**



# Langel Common

WODC site number: 6  
Grid reference: SP359097  
Land area: 3.7ha



## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Attract nature's pollinators by restoring the grassland to a flower-rich meadow habitat
- Enhance the natural riverside environment as a wildlife haven and eradicate invasive species
- Improve the tree management within woodland areas



## Site description

The site is part of a network of floodplain meadows that runs north and east of Witney - the River Windrush runs along the eastern edge of the site. Riparian and floodplain meadows are valued natural features of the existing landscape attracting UK priority species such as water vole and kingfishers. The grassland is currently low in diversity, and invasive Himalayan balsam is present along the river bank. The path through the riverside woodland is well used by the public, and is an important habitat for nesting birds.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- The large grassland area forms an important part of the network of floodplain meadows in Witney.
- It is of county importance, sitting within the "core zone" of Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Network and has habitats for many UK priority species.
- The site is a key green space in Witney, with thousands of visits a year from local residents and tourists to the town.
- Restoring the habitats enhances a number of ecosystem services, such as improving and regulating water quality, mitigating flood risk and increasing carbon storage.



# Langel Common



**We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:**

- Increasing the number of times we cut the grass each year, from one to three, collecting and removing these cuttings to improve floral diversity over time. This is designed to mimic historic techniques of floodplain meadow management and help restore the quality of natural habitat over time.
- Letting the short grass to the north of the footpath grow back and cutting back bankside scrub to maximize the grassland restoration area.
- Reducing the area covered by the invasive Himalayan Balsam plant, in order to allow native riparian vegetation to flourish.



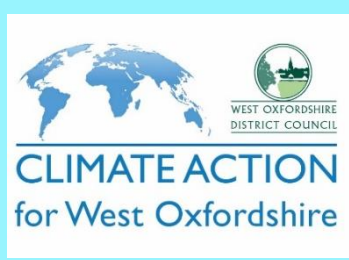
**We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:**

- Introduce locally-sourced wildflower seeds from high-quality floodplain meadow sites to increase floral diversity and establish rare plant communities. This can be done by a practice called “green hay spreading.”
- Manage the woodland along the River Windrush to create willow pollards, and coppice areas to diversify woodland age structure to attract difference insect communities.
- Improve the Riverside Walk footpath and install a new information panel.
- Completely eradicate Himalayan Balsam from the site, restoring the ditches along the northern and eastern boundaries for small mammals and invertebrates.
- Establish reed beds in the southern area of the sites as water vole and waterfowl foraging habitat.

**Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Reduced flood risk – Pollination – Flood water storage – Habitat connectivity – Recreation – Nature education**



# Bishops Farm Mill



WODC site number: 7  
Grid reference: SP360092  
Land area: 0.7ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the existing wildlife value of the site
- Attract nature’s pollinators by creating new areas of flower-rich meadow habitat
- Enhance the natural riverside environment as a wildlife haven and eradicate invasive species



## Site description

The site is part of a network of floodplain meadows that runs north and east of Witney - the River Windrush runs along the eastern and southerly edge of the site. Riparian and floodplain meadows are valued natural features of the existing landscape attracting UK priority species such as water vole and kingfishers. The grassland is currently relatively low in diversity, and Himalayan balsam, an invasive species, is present along the scrubby river bank.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is part of an important network of floodplain meadows in Witney.
- The riverbank and floodplain meadow provide natural habitats for many plant and animal species, many of which have UK BAP status.
- It sits within the “core zone” of Oxfordshire’s Nature Recovery Network, of county importance.
- There is potential to conserve and restore further important habitats that offer a number of ecosystem services which include improving and regulating water quality, mitigating flood risk, increasing carbon storage and providing habitats for biodiversity.



# Bishops Farm Mill

## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

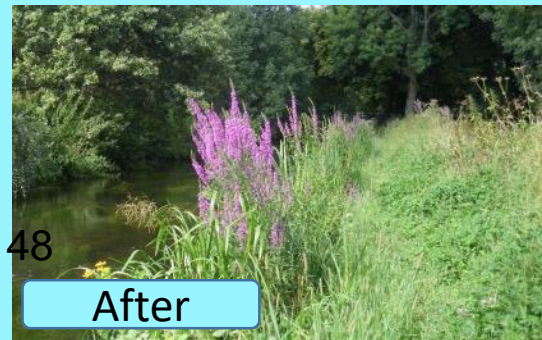
- Increasing the number of times we cut the grass each year, from one to three, collecting and removing these cuttings to improve floral diversity over time. This is designed to mimic historic techniques of floodplain meadow management and help restore the quality of natural habitat over time.
- Cutting back encroaching scrub and brambles to increase the total area of grassland.
- Reducing the area covered by the invasive Himalayan Balsam plant, in order to allow UK native riparian vegetation to flourish.



## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

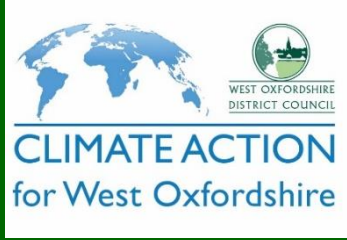
- Introduce locally-sourced wildflower seeds from high-quality floodplain meadow sites to increase floral diversity and establish rare plant communities. This can be done by a practice called “green hay spreading”.
- Manage the trees along the River Windrush to create willow pollards, emulating a historical landscape feature.
- Liaise with local landowners to review maintenance activities on adjoining sites, for a joined up and consistent approach to managing the floodplain meadows.
- Completely eradicate Himalayan Balsam from the site, to stop its spread south of the River Windrush.

**Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Reduced flood risk – Pollination – Flood water storage – Habitat connectivity**





# Madley Park estate

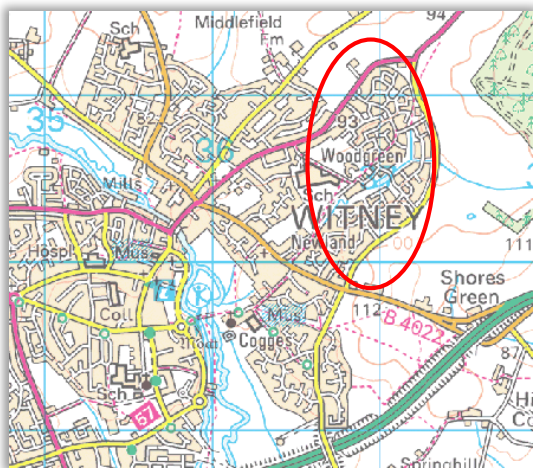


WODC site number: 8  
Grid reference: SP370104  
Land area: 18.6ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the site in a way that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike
- Manage grassland areas to improve the floral resources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- Improve the site's connectivity with new habitat features



## Site description

The land owned by WODC at Madley Park consists mostly of short grassland areas and road verges – some of these areas are planted with trees and shrubs in places. A strip of woodland runs down the middle of the estate, sheltering Madley Brook that flows north to south and feeds into River Windrush at its end. Several other woodland areas are present along the estate's boundaries, providing important breeding and foraging habitats for birds, mammals and invertebrates.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:


- It is well used by the public, with paths through the green spaces around the site used by local residents.
- Freshwater habitats such as Madley Brook and the balancing ponds are particularly valuable to wildlife; otters have previously been recorded along the watercourse. The woodland areas also support a wide range of priority species such as birds and bats.
- The estate's vegetation corridors extend in several directions from the site, providing habitat connectivity towards Witney and the wider countryside and allowing wildlife to travel safely across the landscape.



# Madley Park estate

## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts across the estate from ten to seven, to allow flowers such as daisies, clover and buttercups more opportunities to fully grow and act as pollen and nectar sources for foraging pollinators.
- Creating “mini meadow” areas in strategic locations, allowing grass and existing flowers to grow longer over the summer before cutting and collecting the clippings.
- Managing the reed bed and scrub surrounding the balancing pond, to ensure safe access to the water when required and control willow tree growth.



Before



After

## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Enhance the new meadow grassland areas with wildflower seed mix or plug plants for increased floral diversity, encouraging more pollinators to visit.
- Plant native hedgerows in strategic locations to increase habitat connectivity for species such as bats and birds to travel safely across the estate.
- Remove the redundant tree guards within the recently planted woodland areas of the site, to reduce the risk of wildlife consuming plastics.
- Coppice trees within the woodland areas to diversify tree age structure and accommodate a wider variety of insect and bird species.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Flood protection – Carbon storage –  
Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation



Before



After

# Kilkenny Lane Country Park

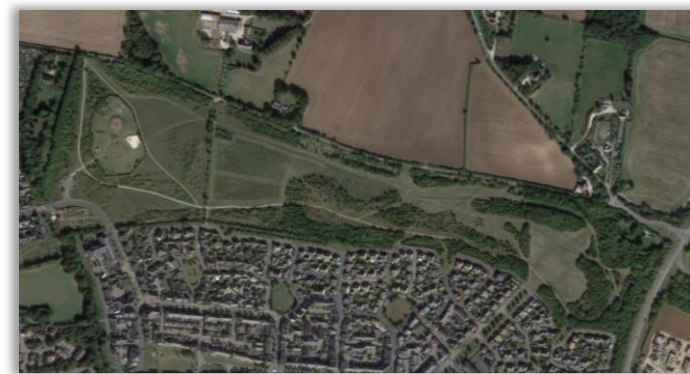


WODC site number: 9  
Grid reference: SP284084  
Land area: 20ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the existing wildlife value of the site
- Attract nature's pollinators by creating restoring and diversifying areas of flower-rich meadow habitat
- Improve the condition of the mature scrub areas



## Site description

The site consists of a mix of habitats, with large areas of grassland making up most of the site; dense scrub/woodland, hedgerow, scattered trees, ditches and ponds are also present, making the site suitable for a wide range of species.

A playground is located in the east of the site with an associated carpark. The grassland areas are cut once a year, and the cuttings removed to allow more wildflowers to grow.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- The site is home to many species with declining local populations, such as hedgehogs, bats and a variety of birds such as woodpeckers and goldcrests.
- The site's grasslands contain a range of interesting flora, with several species of rare wildflowers and orchids present in the summer months attracting many insects.
- It is well used by the public - paths around the site are used by local residents, dog walkers and those who come to visit the play park.
- The site acts as a drainage feature for the neighboring Shilton Park estate— as well as capturing floodwater runoff, the balancing ponds are also valuable wildlife habitats.



# Kilkenny Lane Country Park

## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Enhancing an area of grassland with wildflower seeds, to increase its floral resources for pollinators.
- Increasing and decreasing cutting regimes in different areas of grassland, to create a diverse mosaic of flowers for a wide range of insects to use.
- Removing internal areas of redundant rabbit fencing, to aid the movement of larger mammal species such as hedgehogs and badgers across the site.
- Clearing vegetation from the site's balancing ponds to ensure they continue to function as sustainable drainage features.



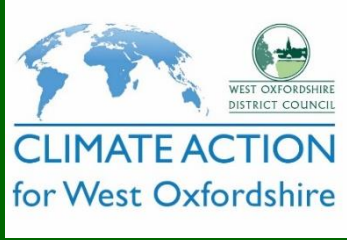
## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Set up a new volunteer group, and organize regular habitat maintenance work parties, for tasks such as coppicing, litter picking, tree guard removal and scything.
- Install a nature trail with associated activity pages for children, to inform visitors to the site about its wildlife, habitats and management.
- Introduce locally-sourced wildflower seeds from high-quality floodplain meadow sites to increase floral diversity and establish rare plant communities. This can be done by a practice called "green hay spreading."
- Undertake soil surveys to better inform how to maximize the wildflower growth within the grassland areas.

**Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation – Nature education – Flood prevention**



# Shilton Park estate

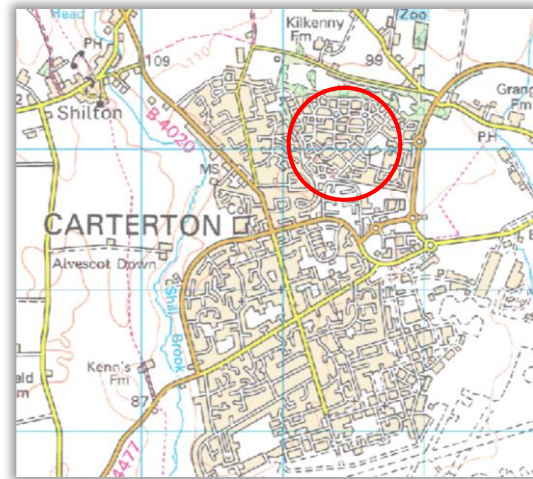


WODC site number: 10  
Grid reference: SP285080  
Land area: 10.6ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Create new habitats to improve the floral resources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- Improve the site's connectivity with new habitat features
- Maintain the site in a way that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike



## Site description

The land owned by WODC at Shilton Park consists primarily of short grassland areas and road verges with trees and shrubs planted in places for visual interest. A stream runs along the estate's western and southern boundary, which is shaded by recently planted woodland. Dense tree planting is also present along the eastern boundary. The site's proximity to Kilkenny Lane Country Park makes it likely visited by a wide range of bird and invertebrate species.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It is well used by the public, with paths through the green spaces around the site used by local residents.
- The water quality in the stream that runs around the west and south of the site is in good condition, and able to support amphibians such as frogs and toads.
- The greens, parks and road verges link into green vegetation corridors that extend in several directions from the site, providing habitat connectivity across Carterton and into Kilkenny Lane Country Park and the wider countryside, and allowing wildlife to travel more safely across the landscape.



# Shilton Park estate

## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Reducing the number of grass cuts across the estate from ten to seven, to allow flowers such as daisies, clover and buttercups more opportunities to fully grow and act as pollen and nectar sources for foraging pollinators.
- Creating “mini meadow” areas in strategic locations, allowing grass and existing flowers to grow longer over the summer before cutting and collecting the clippings.
- Coppicing trees within the western woodland areas to diversify woodland age structure to accommodate different invertebrate and bird species.



Before




After


## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Plant native hedgerows in strategic locations to increase berry and nut provision for bird and mammal populations, and increase habitat connectivity for species such as bats and birds to travel safely across the estate.
- Remove the redundant tree guards within the recently planted woodland areas of the site, to reduce the risk of wildlife consuming plastics.
- Enhance the new meadow grassland areas with wildflower seed mix or plug plants for increased floral diversity, encouraging more pollinators to visit.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Wood production – Carbon storage –  
Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation



Before



After

# North Leigh Common

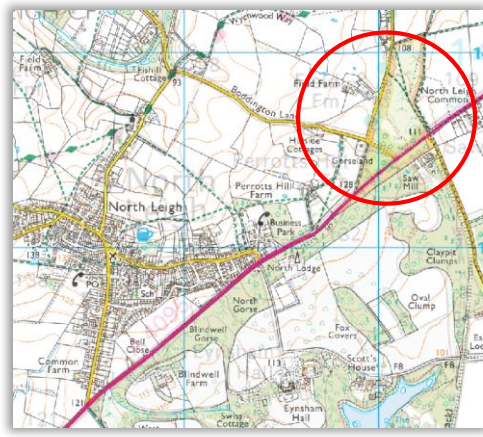


WODC site number: 11  
Grid reference: SP400136  
Land area: 17ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Continue working with the Friends of North Leigh Common to maintain the site's habitats
- Restore areas of rare acid grassland
- Create a diverse woodland age structure



## Site description

This site is designated an Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site, and is comprised primarily of woodland habitats. Grassland areas are present over a mix of underlying geologies, with acidic soil areas of particular importance. Bracken is prevalent through the woodland, and freshwater ponds and a small spring can additionally be found. The site is managed by the Friends of North Leigh Common, who run regular conservations work parties to ensure the site is well maintained for people and wildlife.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- The majority of the site is made up of one of the few areas of woodland within Oxfordshire, along with acid grassland habitat that is locally rare. It sits within the "core zone" of Oxfordshire's Nature Recovery Network, making it of county importance.
- The site's habitats contain a range of interesting flora and fauna, with species of rare plant such as trailing St. John's-wort and orchids present in the summer months. Common lizards are frequently spotted on the grassland's boundaries, and the nearby ponds have recently been restored for the endangered great crested newts.
- The Common has historic value, having being used for grazing since 1759 and as a source of sand and clay for brick making since the 1800s.



# North Leigh Common



## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

- Giving the Friends of North Leigh Common additional support with members from the WODC grounds maintenance team to complete larger works such as tree management.
- Removing the grass clippings after the central grassland's annual cut from the site, to reduce the soil fertility and encourage further wildflower diversity.
- Cutting back additional areas of bracken to create glades and rides, encouraging the growth of acid grassland species and their associated butterflies.
- Following the new pond management plan provided by the Newt Conservation Partnership e.g. preventing bramble encroachment on ponds.

## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Restore areas affected by ash dieback by planting trees and/or creating new heathland habitat where trees are removed.
- Carry out larger tree thinning works with an arboricultural contractor to diversify the age structure of the woodland.
- Provide the Friends of North Leigh Common with new equipment and ecological training opportunities.
- Install a new interpretation panel to inform visitors to the site about its wildlife, habitats and management, and update the leaflet associated with the site.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation – Nature education – Cooling and shading – Carbon storage





# Rowell Way estate

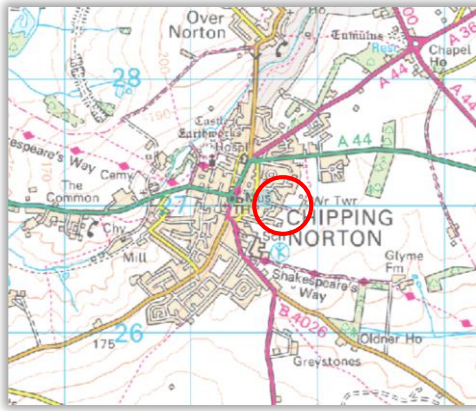


WODC site number: 12  
Grid reference: SP316271  
Land area: 4.4ha

## What is our five-year plan?

We aim to:

- Maintain the site in a way that can be enjoyed by people and wildlife alike
- Create new habitats to improve the floral resources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies
- Improve the site's woodland areas for priority species



## Site description

The land owned by WODC at Rowell Way consists mostly of short grassland areas and road verges: some of these areas are planted with trees and shrubs in places. A small linear woodland is also present in the south-east of the estate, which contains a range of native shrubs and trees that currently provides some floral resources for pollinators, and berries and nuts for local birds and small mammals.

## We value this site as a natural asset because:

- It contains one of the few areas of woodland within Chipping Norton, a habitat that supports a wide range of invertebrate, bird and mammal species.
- It is well used by the public, with paths through the green spaces around the site used by local residents.
- The greens, grass alongside footpaths and in particular the linear woodland area link into green vegetation corridors that extend in several directions from the site, providing habitat connectivity across Chipping Norton and into the wider countryside, allowing wildlife to travel more safely across the landscape.



# Rowell Way estate

## We plan to change how we manage this site in the short term, by:

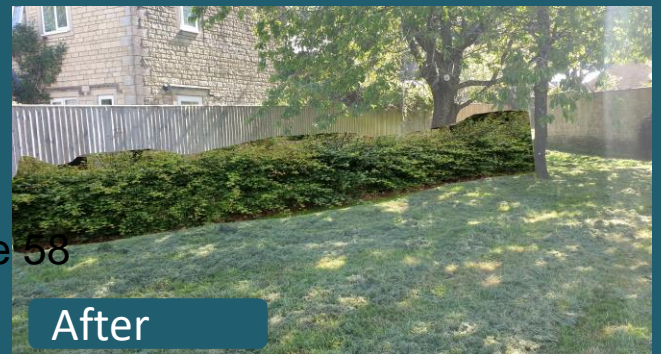
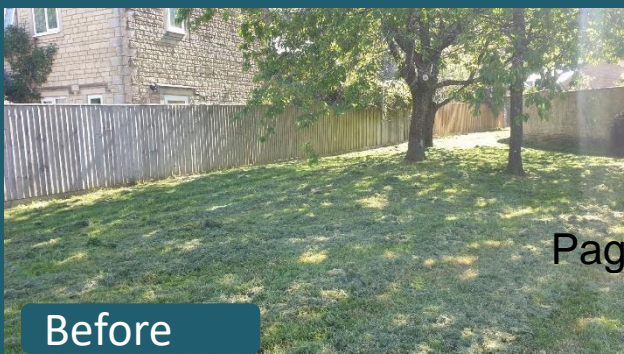
- Reducing the number of grass cuts across the estate from ten to seven, to allow flowers such as daisies, clover and buttercups more opportunities to fully grow and act as pollen and nectar sources for foraging pollinators.
- Creating “mini meadow” areas in strategic locations, allowing grass and existing flowers to grow longer over the summer before cutting and collecting the clippings.



## We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity in the longer term and will actively seek funding to:

- Enhance the new meadow grassland areas with wildflower seed mix or plug plants for increased floral diversity, encouraging more pollinators to visit.
- Plant native hedgerows in strategic locations to increase berry and nut provision for bird and mammal populations, and increase habitat connectivity for species such as bats and birds to travel safely across the estate.
- Coppice trees within the eastern woodland area to diversify tree age structure and accommodate a wider variety of insect and bird species.

Co-Benefits: Biodiversity – Wood production – Carbon storage – Pollination – Habitat connectivity – Recreation



# Site-wide projects

We would like to make even greater improvements for biodiversity across our sites in the longer term and will actively seek funding to implement the following:

- Wildflower meadow signs - create signage in connection with the newly created meadow areas within the estates. This will mark out the areas to local residents, so they know to keep an eye out for newly blooming wildflowers.
- Hedgehog highways – make it easier for hedgehogs to travel across our estates by encouraging residents to cut small holes in their fences to create ‘hedgehog highways.’
- Swift boxes – provide subsidised swift boxes to residents on our estates to boost the nesting opportunities for this species at risk.
- Ash dieback – a highly destructive disease of ash affecting 80% of trees across the UK - work will identify current and future areas where the risk of ash dieback is highest and commission tree works and replacement planting where appropriate.
- Subsidence strategy – work to identify current and future subsidence risks caused by trees across our estates, to reduce the risk of damage to residents’ houses in the future.




## Thinking to the future...

Larger projects we would like to undertake in future years include:

- Windrush in Witney – a project with many stakeholders that own land along the River Windrush coming together to manage the riverbanks and floodplain meadows for wildlife and people
- Species surveys – commissioning species surveys from ecological consultants or , to build up a better idea of what can be found on our sites and how we can improve their management in the future
- Community engagement – working with local volunteer groups and residents to hold events that get the local community involved and excited about the natural world around them such as BioBlitzs, wildlife walks and talks, and habitat management sessions

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 <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>Council – Wednesday 27 October 2021</b>
Report Number	<b>Agenda Item No. 10</b>
Subject	<b>Emergency / Urgency Delegations Decisions</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk">michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Elizabeth Griffiths – Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer Tel: 01993 861188 Email: <a href="mailto:elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk">elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To note decisions taken under the emergency and urgency delegation arrangements approved by Council on 13 May 2020.
Appendices	None
Recommendation	That the report be noted.
Corporate priorities	N/A
Key Decision	N/A
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	None

## **I. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. At its meeting on 13 May 2020, the Council approved Emergency and Urgency delegations to the Chief Executive to enable decisions to be taken which were either an emergency, or where there was urgency such that the matter could not reasonably await the next meeting of whichever body would otherwise take that decision.
- 1.2. The report on the matter included the statement that: *“Any decision under the above provisions shall be recorded and published, and reported to Council, Cabinet or the appropriate Committee or Sub-Committee, such report to include the reasons that the powers needed to be used”*.

## **2. FEE SETTING FOR FIT AND PROPER TEST – MOBILE HOME SITE MANAGER**

- 2.1. The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020, require the manager of a site to be a Fit and Proper Person (“the Regulations”). Local authorities are required to introduce a fit and proper person test for mobile home site owners, or the person appointed to manage the site, unless they are eligible for an exemption under the Regulations.
- 2.2. The Council may charge a fee for the application and determination process, which must be outlined in an approved policy and determinations must be made within a reasonable and published timescale.
- 2.3. The recommended fee is £267.75 and is due every five years (or less if conditioned so).
- 2.4. Following a request from officers in July 2021, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, agreed to approve the fee setting outlined above, due to applications being received and the fee needing to be declared.

## **3. TEST AND TRACE SELF ISOLATION DISCRETIONARY SUPPORT PAYMENT POLICY – AMENDED JULY 2021**

- 3.1. Following a request from officers in July 2021, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, agreed some minor amendments to the above policy relating to test and trace isolation support, in light of the new rules from 16 August 2021.
- 3.2. From 16 August 2021, the rules were amended to reflect the need for only those individuals who had not been fully vaccinated to self-isolate and the policy was amended in line with the published guidance from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

## **4. REASONS FOR USE OF URGENCY POWERS**

- 4.1. The use of urgency powers was necessary due to the timeframes involved and the need to declare a fee as applications were being received.
- 4.2. The test and trace policy required amending in light of new rules which came into force on 16 August 2021.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. The fee set in section 2 would be included in a future Fees and Charges report.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1. This report has no legal implications.

**7. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS**

7.1. None required as this report is for noting.

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1. None



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Schedule of documents sealed out of meeting by the Chairman and the Head of Democratic Services, since the last meeting of the Council.

<b><u>Registration Number</u></b>	<b><u>Description of documents</u></b>	<b><u>Parties in addition to the Council</u></b>
11925	Service and Management Agreement – Shopmobility Service – Plus Plan	Inclusive Care and Education Limited (The ICE Centre) (2)
11926	Lease – Shopmobility Unit, Langdale Gate, Market Square, Witney – Plus Plan	Inclusive Care and Education Limited (The ICE Centre) (2)
11927	Deed of Variation (Supplemental to the Design Build Operate and Maintain Contract dated 2 Oct 2018)	Greenwich Leisure Ltd (2)
11927A	Duplicate	
11928	Temporary Road Closure – Church Lane, Spelsbury on 25 July 2021 plus Plan	Councillor Rick Leyland (1)
11929	Lease – Unit 13, Talisman Business Centre, Bicester – plus plan	GN Resound Uk Ltd (2)
11930	Licence to Alter – Unit 13, Talisman Business Centre, Bicester	GN Resound Uk Ltd (2)
11931	Order – Section 91 Local Government Act 1972	Bladon Parish Council (1)
11931A	Duplicate	
11931B	Triplicate	
11932	Lease –The Ground Floor of the Depot at Avenue Four, Station Lane, Witney – Plus Plans	Ubico Ltd (2)
11933	DS1 – 48 The Sands, Milton-under-Wychwood	
11934	DS1 – 2 Downstep, Market Street, Charlbury	
11935	Temporary Road Closure – High Street Woodstock from Junction with Park Lane and Park Street ending at Woodstock Town Gate Blenheim Palace plus plan	Blenheim Palace (1)
11936	Short Term Garage Lease – Garage 5, Brook Hill, Woodstock – plus plan	Graham Diamond and Helen Bunting (2)
11937	Transfer of Part (TPI) – Part of Land at Chichester Place, Brize Norton – Plus plans	Simon and Janet Morris (2)
11937A	Duplicate	
11938	Temporary Road Closure – Church Street, Charlbury (from its junction with Market Street inc Park Street to its junction with Shilson Lane) on Friday 17 September (1800 until 2100 hrs) and Saturday 18 September (0900 until 2330 hrs) plus plan	Mr Steven Jones (Charlbury Street Fair Committee) (1)
11939	Temporary Road Closure – Spring Street (from the Theatre to its junction with Church Lane)	Sasha Buckman-Barbour (1)

11940	for the Great Panto Fun Run on Sunday 26 September 2021 (0945 to 1015hrs) plus plan Tenancy at Will – Land Adjoining Units 7 & 8 Talisman Business Centre, London Road, Bicester plus plan	South Central Ambulance Service NHS Trust (2)
11940A	Duplicate	
11941	Licence to Assign – Unit B Swain Court, Downs Road, Witney	Daniel Dixon (1) Abdul Karim (2)
11942	Authorised Guarantee Agreement – Unit B Swain Court, Downs Road, Witney	Daniel Dixon (1)
11943	Rent Deposit Deed – Unit B Swain Court, Downs Road, Witney	Abdul Karim (1)
11944	Lease – Land Adjoining 35 Rock Close, Carterton plus plan	Kate Alford (1)
11945	Temporary Road Closure – Witney Road/Acre End Street/Thame Street/Mill Street to junction with Spareacre Lane/Newland Street/Queen Street/Oxford Road/Cassington Road/Station Road (alternative route for all traffic via Spareacre Lane and Hanborough Road to the B4449) – Eynsham Annual Shirt Race – Saturday 2 October 2021 – 1300 to 1500 hours plus plan	Tracey Stevens (1)
11946	Deed of Variation of Section 106 Agreement – Land South of Oxford Road, Enstone	Orbit Homes (2020) Ltd (1) Grevayne Properties Ltd (2)
11946A	Duplicate	
11946B	Triplicate	
11947	Licence to Carry Out Works – Unit 4 at Des Roches Square, The Weavers, Witan Way, Witney	The National Farmers Union Mutual Insurance Society Ltd (2)
11947A	Duplicate	

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the Development Control Committee

Held in the Council Chamber, Woodgreen, Witney at 10.00 am on **Monday, 13 September 2021**

#### PRESENT

Councillors: Jeff Haine (Chairman), Ted Fenton (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Andrew Beaney, Julian Cooper, Maxine Crossland, Harry Eaglestone, Duncan Enright, Steve Good, Andy Graham, David Jackson, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Michele Mead, Lysette Nicholls, Elizabeth Poskitt, Alex Postan, Geoff Saul, Dean Temple and Alex Wilson.

Officers: Phil Shaw (Business Manager - Development Management), Claire Hughes (Business Manager – Corporate Responsibility), Amy Bridgewater-Carnall and Adrienne Frazer, Strategic Support Officers.

#### **1 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **2 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bolger, Davies, Langridge and Woodruff.

Councillor Poskitt substituted for Councillor Chapple, Councillor Graham substituted for Councillor Rylett and Councillor Mead substituted for Councillor St John.

#### **3 Declarations of Interest**

During the course of the meeting, Councillor Good advised that he was the Council's representative on the Cotswolds Conservation Board.

#### **4 Consideration of Planning application to redevelop the Old Mill, Kingham as a 33 bedroomed Hotel and ancillary facilities**

Prior to consideration of this item, the Chairman, Councillor Haine, advised that following receipt of correspondence relating to the meeting of the Uplands Committee, and having taken advice from the Monitoring Officer, he had decided to step down as Chairman for this item. Councillor Fenton took the Chair in his capacity as Vice-Chairman. Councillor Haine remained as a member of the Development Control Committee and addressed the meeting accordingly.

The Committee received a report from the Business Manager – Development Management, Mr Shaw, which dealt with the consideration of a planning application to develop the Old Mill, Kingham as a 33 bedroomed hotel and ancillary facilities.

Following a meeting of the Uplands Planning Sub-committee in July 2021, the Business Manager – Development Management had decided to refer the previously taken decision to the full Development Control Committee, as was his prerogative under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

## Development Control Committee

13/September2021

Mr Shaw introduced the report and provided clarification on the extant permission for five units on site, pre and post development and gave an overview of his reasons for calling the decision in to Committee. It was noted that the Council had sought separate legal advice on the matter and there was no evidence that this application was not a major development. In addition, the pandemic did not constitute exceptional circumstances. For information, the legal advice received was detailed in section 4.1 of the report.

The following people addressed the Committee:

Mr Christopher Stockwell, objecting;

Mr John Dewar, Kingham Parish Council, objecting; and

Mr James Roberts, applicant, supporting.

Councillor Leverton asked Mr Stockwell if the general opinion of Kingham residents had been collated via a survey. Mr Stockwell advised that most residents had communicated their objections through the village Facebook group, other social media methods or via email to the Parish Council.

Councillor Graham asked for clarification on the objection received from County Highways and it was noted that the Environment Agency had objected as per section 1.16 of the report.

Mr Shaw continued with the presentation of the report and highlighted key areas including the objection from the Parish Council, the scale of the development in a village setting and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the significant amount of built form being introduced, the extant permission for five detached dwellings and the officer view that the development would be harmful to the character of the settlement.

Whilst officers did not dispute that the site needed reinvestment, this was not felt to be suitable reason for approving major development in the AONB. The report detailed the Landscaping officer's comments at 5.28 of the report, along with the opinion of the Cotswold Conservation Board at 5.29 and the Conservation Officer's comments at section 5.36 of the report.

Members were signposted to the detail in the report relating to the Exceptional Circumstances case, the Landscape Impact, the impact on Heritage Assets and the accessibility and highways issues.

In summary, Mr Shaw reiterated his officer's original recommendation of refusal for the reasons outlined on pages 37 and 38 of the document pack.

Councillor Haine addressed the meeting and outlined the reasons why he did not agree with the officer's recommendation. He reminded Members of the reasons that a Judicial Review could be called and how he felt each application should be considered on a case by case basis. Councillor Haine proposed that the application be approved subject to an archaeological survey, appropriate conditions and a S106 agreement. He explained that the reasons for going against officer recommendations were because the application accorded with paragraph 172 of the Local Plan; Note 55 of the NPPF; and Local Plan Policies OS1, OS2, OS3, OS4, E4, EH1, EH2 and EH3.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Postan who supported the application for a number of reasons, not least because he felt this was not major development. He referred to the existing hotel on site with a similar number of bedrooms, the repairs required and the benefit the development would have on the residents of Kingham with regard to future employment opportunities. Councillor Postan described how the 'soft edge' of Kingham could be managed using clever design and planting and suggested a routing order to ensure that deliveries were made at certain times of day.

## Development Control Committee

13/September2021

Mr Shaw urged caution with regards to the comments made relating to major development and reminded the meeting that this was a matter for the decision maker, as highlighted in paragraph 3.2 of the report. He advised that the type of landscaping described would be difficult due to the layout of the site and he did not feel there was room for mitigating landscape schemes.

Councillor Beaney agreed with previous speakers that this was not major development and he referred to footnotes 176 and 177 of the NPPF to evidence his decision. He reiterated that there had been no technical objections, queried the comments made by the Cotswold Conservation Board and did not agree that the setting or nature of the development was major development. He provided Members with examples of nearby applications where alternative officer views had been taken.

Councillor Jackson addressed Members and advised that having looked again at the papers, and having heard the advice from officers he had been persuaded that this was a major development and there were no exceptional circumstances provided that had convinced him otherwise. He therefore supported the officer recommendation of refusal.

Councillor Good advised that he was still uncertain and he valued the experience of both the senior officer and the Chairman. However, he did not feel that the Committee should be swayed by the potential risk of the cost of a judicial review.

Councillor Graham felt that the potential financial impact on the Council should be considered, noted that the scheme fell within an AONB and no economic case existed other than for the benefit of the applicant. He noted the number of serious objections and was disappointed that the applicant had not engaged with the Parish Council. He felt there was no doubt this was major development and would impact on the openness of views. He therefore agreed with officers and supported the recommendation to refuse permission.

Councillors Saul and Enright both outlined their views with regards to the issue of major development. Councillor Saul did not feel that he had been convinced of any exceptional circumstances that would apply and felt officers should be supported. He felt the applicant should be invited to reapply for permission on a smaller scale.

Councillor Enright also felt there was a solution to be found but had been persuaded by the officers that this was major development. He felt that transport solutions also needed addressing.

Councillor Cooper felt that judicial reviews could be tackled as long as good process had been followed, however, he did feel not this application was major development. He also referred to other, historical applications, located outside of the AONB and noted that this site had a higher grade of protection.

Councillor Levy noted that two differing legal opinions had been presented and queried if a third should be sought. However, he advised he was struggling to see a reason why this was not major development and therefore felt the officer recommendation and legal advice of the Council should be supported.

Councillor Poskitt noted that major development was not just due to size but also the significance of a site. She felt the views of the Kingham residents was interesting and noted that the infrastructure had unlikely changed for 50 years. Following a query relating to access for emergency vehicles, Mr Shaw advised that no objection had been received directly from the Emergency Services.

In response to a question from Councillor Graham, Members were advised that personal liability of Councillors did exist but only in relation to irrational decision making situations.

## Development Control Committee

13/September2021

Councillor Crossland felt that the argument was finely balanced, was mindful that the development could be a tourism asset and would add to rural employment. However, whilst the design was good she felt it may not be in the correct location and was disappointed that there was insufficient room for landscaping.

Councillor Temple referenced policy EH1 relating to brownfield sites and recognised that officers had worked hard to produce an acceptable application. However, he was also mindful that this matter had been ongoing for some time, could leave a village in a beautiful area with a derelict building and wondered what the future may hold for the site if permission were not granted.

The proposal to approve permission, contrary to officer's recommendations and subject to an archaeological survey, appropriate conditions and a S106 agreement, was then put to the vote and was lost.

Councillor Enright proposed that the application be refused, in line with officer's recommendations, for the reasons outlined in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Cooper.

The Officer recommendation of refusal was then put to the vote and was carried for the reasons outlined below.

### **Refused**

#### Reasons

1. The proposed development comprises major development within the Cotswolds AONB and no exceptional circumstances case has been made to justify this development which would have a significant adverse impact on the area's natural beauty and landscape including its heritage. The development would also be of a disproportionate and inappropriate scale to its context and would not form a logical complement to the existing scale and pattern of development or the character of the area. As such, the proposed development would conflict with Policies OS2, OS4, EH1 and BC1 of the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, the West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016, the National Design Guide 2019, and the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF;
2. The scale, siting and design of the proposed development would have a harmful impact on the setting of the Kingham Conservation Area and the results of an archaeological evaluation have not been submitted in conflict with Policies EH9, EH10, EH11 and EH15 of the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 and the NPPF; and
3. The applicant has not entered into a legal agreement to provide the required contribution/mitigation measures to maximise opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport and towards promoting healthy communities. As such the proposal is therefore also contrary to West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 Policies OS5 and T3 and the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF.

The Meeting closed at 12.40 pm

CHAIRMAN

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the  
**Cabinet**

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney at 2.00 pm on  
**Wednesday, 15 September 2021**

PRESENT

Councillors: Michele Mead (Leader), David Harvey (Deputy Leader), Suzi Coul, Merilyn Davies, Jane Doughty, Jeff Haine and Councillor Norman MacRae MBE.

Others present, Councillors; Julian Cooper, Colin Dingwall, Andy Graham, Martin McBride and Alex Postan.

Officers: Amy Bridgewater-Carnall (Senior Strategic Support Officer), Mandy Fathers (Business Manager - Operations Support and Enabling), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Bill Oddy (Group Manager - Commercial Development) and Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica).

**27 Notice of Decisions**

The notice of decisions taken at the meeting held on 21 July 2021 were noted.

**28 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence received.

**29 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**30 Participation of the Public**

Mr Charlie Maynard addressed Members on Agenda Item 6 - Update on the Community Infrastructure Levy and Item 7 - Creating a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. A copy of his submission is attached to the original copy of these minutes.

**31 Receipt of Announcements**

Expression of Gratitude to Ubico

Councillor MacRae addressed Members and paid tribute to the Council's colleagues at Ubico for their efforts in continuing to manage, deliver and maintain all of the waste streams across the District. He noted the difficulties being encountered across the country due to a shortage of HGV drivers and thanked all Ubico staff for their hard work.

Loyal Free West Oxfordshire

Councillor Coul announced that to date there were over two thousand registered users of the Loyal Free West Oxfordshire app, with 15 thousand interactions and 5.5 thousand trail interactions. She encouraged anyone who had not already done so, to download the app.

Afghan Resettlement Programme

Councillor Davies provided a summary update on the Afghan Resettlement Programme and reminded Members that a full report would be considered at Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the following day. She advised that a Cabinet Support Group had

been set up to assess how the Council would deliver its fair share of accommodation and wraparound services. Councillor Davies concluded by stating that the Council was actively working to support families and were proud to be working with partners across Oxfordshire.

#### Covid-19 Update and Council Newsletter

Councillor Mead addressed the meeting and reminded everyone that Covid-19 cases were rising with 99% of deaths being associated with unvaccinated individuals. She stressed the need to continue to encourage residents to take up the vaccine and for everybody to continue to follow government advice.

Councillor Mead announced that the Council would be producing a Newsletter later in the year, encouraged Members to sign up and to recommend this to all residents as well. She advised that there was an information banner on the Council's website directing visitors to sign up and the project was due to go live in a month or two.

Following a question from Councillor Graham, it was confirmed that Councillors would be able to contribute to the newsletter.

#### **32 Update on Community Infrastructure Levy and decision to hold in abeyance in light of the Government's Planning Reforms**

Members received a report from the Planning Policy Manager which provided an update on the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in West Oxfordshire, in light of the previous public consultation held in July 2020 and the Government's subsequent proposed planning reforms, announced through the Planning White Paper in August 2020 and Queen's Speech of May 2021.

The report reminded Members that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was a charge that could be levied on most forms of development, to help fund the infrastructure that was needed to support the future growth of an area. CIL was intended to complement the current system of Section 106 planning obligations.

Members had considered a charging schedule in February 2020, which was then the subject of a six week, public consultation. The consultation was deferred from July 2020 to 21 August 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the responses received were made available to Members.

During the consultation, the Government published its Planning White Paper "Planning for the Future" which set out proposals to improve infrastructure delivery and would ensure that developers played their part through a reform of developer contributions. The paper stated that CIL and the current system of planning obligations (Section 106 agreements etc.) would be reformed as a nationally set, value-based flat rate charge (the 'Infrastructure Levy'). Subsequently, the Queen's speech confirmed the Government's intention to take these proposals forward through a new Planning Bill, expected to be published in Autumn 2021.



Therefore, officers felt that it would be prudent to hold any further progress towards submission and examination of the Council's draft CIL charging schedule in abeyance, until the Planning Bill had been published.

An alternative option was that Cabinet could choose to continue as originally planned but, due to the lack of detail and information available from central Government at the present time, this was not considered to be an effective use of officer time.

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor Haine, introduced the report and proposed the recommendations as laid out. This was seconded by Councillor MacRae.

In response to a question from Councillor Cooper relating to the impact this decision would have on the review of the Local Plan, Councillor Haine confirmed that work on the review was due imminently. Mr Hargreaves addressed the meeting and advised that the current programme of works on the Local Plan showed that the initial review was due to commence in November and it was hoped more information would be available on the Government Bill by then. However, he advised that the initial works would focus mainly on high level scoping, with officers seeking views on the process, therefore, the detailed work on the Local Plan would begin at a later date.

Councillor Graham asked for clarification on the term 'affordable housing' and queried if this included social housing. Councillor Haine advised that social housing was just one of many forms of affordable housing covered and agreed that a list, elaborating on the types of housing covered, could be included.

Having considered the report, and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet

**Resolved that**

- a) the report be noted; and
- a) any further progress in relation to the submission and examination of West Oxfordshire's draft CIL Charging Schedule be held in abeyance until further information on the Government's proposed planning reforms have been set out in the forthcoming Planning Bill.

**33 Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc**

Members received a report from the Planning Policy Manager which asked Members to agree the District Council's formal response to the current MHCLG public consultation '*Creating a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc*' which was running for twelve weeks from 20 July 2021 – 12 October 2021.

The report reminded Members of the background of this project which had started in 2016 with the Government asking National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) to look at how infrastructure development in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc could maximise the potential of the area. The Commission's final report, was published on 17 November 2017 and one of the key recommendations was the need for a long-term vision for the arc and its sub-regions. As a consequence, the government designated the Oxford-Cambridge Arc as a key economic priority.

This report related to the development of the Arc Spatial Framework which covered three core phases, the first of which was to develop a vision for the future of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, utilising public engagement to shape a vision for the area, through consultation in summer 2021. Consultation on this paper was due to close on 12 October 2021 and comments would be taken into account in developing the Spatial Framework's vision for the Arc to 2050.

Members noted the suggested draft response attached at Annex A to the report and were asked to approve submission of this as the Council's formal response to the consultation.

An alternative option was that Cabinet could make comments or changes to the submission as laid out.

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor Haine, addressed Members and proposed recommendation a) as laid out. He then proposed the following amendment to recommendation b):

b) That the suggested draft response attached at Annex A to the report be submitted as the Council's formal response to this consultation, *subject to authority being given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, to consider any comments made at the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee.*

Having considered the report, and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet agreed to the revised recommendations.

**Resolved that**

- a) the report be noted; and
- b) the suggested draft response attached at Annex A to the report be submitted as the Council's formal response to this consultation, subject to authority being given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, to consider any comments made at the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**34 Service Performance Report 2021-22 Quarter One**

Members received a report from the Chief Executive which provided details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2021-22 Quarter One (Q1), and enabled Councillors to assess operational performance.

The report reminded Members that a review of performance indicators was currently underway, Portfolio Holders were having discussions with relevant managers about priority areas and finding metrics that would be most representative and provide assurance as to how the Council was performing.

The report noted that in relation to Service Performance, the last two quarters had resulted in mixed performance but this was beginning to show a more positive outlook into quarter two. Details regarding the National Lockdown and the start of restrictions being lifted, and the impact this had on services were also included. The full Performance Indicator report was attached at annex A to the report.

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Members also noted the information provided at section 4 of the report, which related to the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review 2020/21. This set out the complaints made against the Council along with the relevant outcomes.

An alternative option was that

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Coul, addressed Members and explained that the report highlighted the areas that the Council had performed well in as well as some of the issues encountered. She proposed the recommendation as laid out and this was seconded by Councillor Harvey.

Following a query from Councillor Graham relating to Food Safety statistics, he was reminded that the quarter being scrutinised covered the last lockdown period and this may have an impact on the data. Councillor MacRae reminded Councillor Graham that the service area was working hard to support local businesses in the hospitality industry, in order to help them revitalise and recover.

Having considered the report, and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet

**Resolved** that the 2021/22 Q1 service performance be noted.

### **35 Finance Performance Report 2021/22 Quarter One**

Members received a report from the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer which provided details of the Council's financial performance at the end of 2021-22 Quarter One (Q1).

The report highlighted that the Quarter 1 results overall were as expected with a few notable outliers. Several budget lines had received grants which had created surpluses but would be spent over the year. Green waste was significantly exceeding budget but this was due to an error where the increase in fees was not reflected in the budget. Car parking penalty charges was the one area which was significantly worse than expected. Income was hugely down in 2020/21 but while the budget expected this to bounce back in 2021/22 this had yet to be seen. It was noted that restrictions were still in place.

One of the issues exacerbated by Covid was the Council's level of aged debt but the council had successfully engaged a credit controller on a fixed term contract and the issue was being addressed.

The report outlined significant variances and those worth noting in the main text, however a full list of variances by cost centre was included at Annex A to the report. Further detail was provided on the budget monitoring for each Service Area at section 1.5 of the report along with information on the Business Support Grants, GLL, Trade Waste income, Council Tax Support and Treasury Income. An overview of the Capital spend against the budget was provided at Annex B to the report.

There were no alternative options provided as this report was for information.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Coul, addressed Members and stated that this quarter's reporting had covered the last lockdown period and, whilst the Council was on a stable footing, it was still important to remain prudent. She proposed the recommendation as written and this was seconded by Councillor Mead.

In response to a question from Councillor McBride, officers advised that the outstanding debt owed by GLL Ltd was just under £0.5 million, as agreed last year. It was anticipated that this would be cleared by the end of the financial year. Members agreed that it was important to encourage residents and visitors to use the District's leisure facilities.

Councillor Cooper queried if this was an indication that the outdoor swimming pool at Woodstock would be remain open. In response, Councillor Doughty advised that the pool had done very well over the summer, attracting over 1200 visitors. She assured Councillor Cooper that it was a positive sign but reminded him that Covid-19 was still a risk to the leisure industry.

Having considered the report, and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet

**Resolved** that the 2021/22 Q1 finance performance be noted.

### **36 Council Tax Section 13A Policy**

Members received a report from the Group Manager for Resident's Services which outlined proposals to introduce a Council Tax Section 13A Policy to support the Council in making decisions when considering such applications from Council Tax payers in the District.

The report reminded Members of the discretionary powers provided to them by Section 76 of the Local Government Act 2003 which introduced Section 13A (Billing Authority's Power to Reduce Amount of Tax Payable) into the local Government Finance Act 1992. In accordance with Section 13(A)(1)(a) of the LGFA 1992 as amended, the Council had a Council Tax Support scheme which provided assistance to those deemed to be within financial need. Council Tax legislation also provided for a wide range of discounts, exemptions and reductions that had the effect of reducing the level of council tax due.

The Council Tax Section 13A Policy, attached at Annex A to the report, would require the applicant to have exhausted all other options before making an application under the policy. When applying this policy, officers would similarly consider whether alternative actions could be undertaken and any relief awarded under Section 13A (1) (c) would be intended only as short term assistance and not a means to reduce Council Tax liability indefinitely.

No alternative options were provided.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Coul, addressed Members and proposed the recommendations as laid out. This was seconded by Councillor Davies.

Having considered the report, and having heard from the Members present, Cabinet

**Resolved** that

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- a) the Council Tax Section 13A Policy included at Annex A to the report be adopted; and
- b) the decision making process detailed within paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 of this report, be approved.

The Meeting closed at 2.26 pm

CHAIRMAN

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## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the  
**Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
Held in the Council Chamber at 6.30 pm on **Thursday, 16 September 2021**

### PRESENT

Councillors: Councillor Andrew Beaney (Chairman), Councillor Andy Graham (Vice-Chair), Councillor Jill Bull, Councillor Laetisia Carter, Councillor Maxine Crossland, Councillor Meryl Davies, Councillor Duncan Enright, Councillor Mark Johnson, Councillor Nick Leverton, Councillor Lysette Nicholls, Councillor Mathew Parkinson, Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, Councillor Andrew Prosser and Councillor Dean Temple

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Adrienne Frazer (Strategic Support Officer)

#### **25 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, with the following amendment:

Minute Number 19 – Enforcement Update: the wording “especially with the limited current resources available.” be changed to “especially with the limited staff available.”

#### **26 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Acock.

Councillor Enright substituted for Councillor Collins and

Councillor Temple substituted for Councillor Wilson.

#### **27 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **28 Participation of the Public**

There were no submissions from members of the public in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.

#### **29 Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

#### **30 Cottsway Housing - Presentation**

The Committee received a presentation by the Operations Director and Chief Executive Officer of Cottsway Housing, which provided Members with a broad range of information about the organisation. Copies of the presentation had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Operations Director and Chief Executive Officer informed the Committee that West Oxfordshire was the main focus of their work.

Members expressed their appreciation of Cottsway Housing for their presentation and for: the £250,000 they allocate for adaptations to homes; the support Cottsway provide to the Witney and West Oxon Food Bank; and the upgrading of homes in Chipping Norton.

Members asked questions about:

- Building new homes as homes for life and adaptations for people with disabilities
- Solar panels being installed on Cottsway houses
- The regulations relating to the Right to Buy (RTB) scheme
- Empty property rates during the pandemic

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- The number of bungalows owned by Cottsway
- The Osprey site, Carterton Avon Way, Rye Grass and Caroline Court in Woodstock, residents' concerns and Langford village
- Ensuring operational staff work to the Cottsway's values
- Board diversity
- Supporting the Afghan refugees
- Affordable rent levels and the planned drop in Universal Credit
- Improving communications with Councillors when they were advocating for residents

The Operations Director responded to the queries as outlined below and provided further detail on:

- The process which Cottsway used to acquire new homes, was mainly through buying them from large house builders. This created significant difficulties in requesting specific types of housing. The Operations Director advised that the Planning Department's use of section 106 agreements could help in this area.
- Central Government was exploring ways to increase the RTB scheme to all housing association tenants.
- Cottsway did not hold a waiting list and all new sites were let to a mixed, balanced community.
- The sites in Woodstock would be re-developed in time but there was no pressure on residents to move. No planning application had been submitted and the plans for the sites were not in the short term.
- Langford Village had 642 homes in the contract, 543 of which were for West Oxfordshire (WODC) and Cottsway worked very closely with officers at WODC.
- The policy on affordable and social rents and the challenges to provide houses at a social rent as well as their concern about the reduction in Universal Credit and its impact on rent collection and tenants' need for the food bank.

The Operations Director agreed to respond to any further specific questions directly to the relevant Councillor should they contact him.

The Committee noted the presentation and thanked the Operations Director for attending.

Councillor Enright left the meeting.

### **31 Preparation for the Arrival of Refugees from Afghanistan**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Group Manager, Resident Services on the Afghan Resettlement Programme.

The Business Manager Operational Services provided an update on progress since publication of the report. She reported that a Cabinet Support group had been formed and advised that West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) had agreed to offer support to the council's fair share of Afghan refugees. In addition, that the Council had agreed to recruit a support officer and a final agreement would be in place with Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) next week. The private rented sector would be approached and encouraged to offer suitable homes, with Cottsway Housing offering a three bedroom house and properties would be declined if they were not suitable, The officer confirmed that there would be a full time resettlement officer at the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, Councillor Davies provided the meeting with a further update which included:



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- WODC was likely to receive 5 or 6 families
- WODC had decided to take the actions outlined above before Government regulation came in
- The support work mentioned above was in addition to existing support provision
- GARAS would organise wrap around care and settle the families in
- All actions had been informed by the work with Syrian refugees
- The Home Office would vet all accommodation offered and would veto homes that were not suitable
- That £10,500 per person had been allocated by Government
- WODC had asked the Blenheim Estate for the offer of accommodation
- That a sensitive communications strategy was being developed with the people already on the housing waiting list particularly in mind
- That the approach had been developed by the Oxfordshire District Councils working together rather than by Oxfordshire County Council

Councillors and officers expressed their confidence in GARAS and said they were excellent and a known quantity since they had supported the Syrian refugees. It was anticipated that GARAS would be funded to provide support for as long as was needed.

Councillors Carter and Graham expressed their thanks and congratulations to officers and particularly to Councillor Davies, on all that had been done so promptly.

The Chief Executive confirmed that some of the funding allocation would be used to fund the support worker post.

Councillor Davies added that WODC had decided not to collect furniture and other items for the refugees as these would be provided by the Home Office. A targeted appeal would be made when the refugees' additional needs were known.

Councillor Poskitt asked for a paragraph for all Members to use in local publications outlining this approach. Councillor Davies agreed to provide this.

Having received the report and discussed the details with officers, the Committee

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

Councillors Davies and Parkinson left the meeting.

## **32** Creating a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc

The Chief Executive presented the report of the Planning Policy Manager on Creating a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

The Chief Executive explained that the report was for the Committee to consider and comment on. This was the Council's formal consultation response to the public consultation on the development of a new Spatial Framework Plan for the Oxford – Cambridge Arc, the area which spanned the five counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. He assured Members that he would take their comments forward and encouraged Members to complete the consultation's online survey.

The Chief Executive explained that the focus of central Government in creating the Arc was around economic, environmental and planning policy across the whole of the Arc's area. He noted that it was unusual for consultation to occur this early in the process and that the

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Council's draft response had been prepared drawing on work across the whole of Oxfordshire.

Following Members questions, the Chief Executive clarified that the Arc included the whole of West Oxfordshire and the planning spacial framework would rely on Local Plans for implementation. He advised that there was an opportunity to influence planning policy through the Arc as it would be a high level planning document that Council's within the Arc would be required to have regard to when drawing up their Local Plans.

The Chairman expressed concern about section 1.3 of the report and the suggestion that considerable new house building was part of the plan. Councillor Leverton questioned the phrase "truly affordable" homes. Councillor Poskitt suggested that implementation was important and that it was necessary to provide the infrastructure first, also that the plan needed to be flexible as technology was developing very fast. Councillor Prosser strongly supported the rail link emphasising that it was vital it was electrified and ran to the west of the District to Carterton and Brize Norton. In section 3 of the report, The Economy – Education and Training, Councillor Beaney asked that Special Educational Needs requirements be added as Oxfordshire could improve its provision in this area.

Councillor Graham indicated that mechanisms were needed to evaluate the progress of the project and ensure that it had a meaningful impact.

**RESOLVED** that:

- a) the report be noted and that the Committee's comments be included in the Council's response; and
- b) that the amended draft response be submitted as the Council's formal response to this consultation.

### **33 Council Priorities and Service Performance Report 2021-22 Quarter One**

The Committee considered the previously circulated report of the Chief Executive, which provided details of the Council's progress towards achieving its aims and priorities set out in the Council Plan 2020-2024, and service performance during Quarter One.

Comments and queries on the report were as follows:

- The report was to be provided in a new format in future
- The reporting dates across the three Districts did not coordinate, making comparisons difficult. The Chief Executive explained that this was because West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) data was more current. However, he agreed that this made comparison difficult and asked the Democratic Services officer to follow this up with officers.
- What were the outcomes and impact of agile / hybrid working?

Councillor Johnson noted that the report's main message was about a lack of resources compared to last year. The Chief Executive explained that the comparison was difficult to make because of the impact of the pandemic, affecting services and altering the Council's activity. He commented that Planning was where the staff resource issues were mainly felt and a plan was in place to address this. Councillors Leverton and Temple asked further questions about the loss of staff in the Planning Department. The Chief Executive informed the meeting about the new career grade structure and revised salaries that had been put in place to address the staffing issues in Planning. It was agreed to put this issue onto the Committee Work Programme for January 2022 for an update.

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Councillors Prosser, Poskitt, Graham and Bull asked for more detail on the performance indicator for empty homes. The Chief Executive suggested this was put on the committee's work programme. The Chairman noted that a new officer for empty homes had been appointed across the three Districts.

Having received the report and discussed the details with officers, the Committee

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

Councillor Carter left the meeting.

#### **34 Committee Work Programme**

The Committee received and considered the report which gave members the opportunity to comment on the Work Programme for 2021/2022.

The Chief Executive provided an update from the Deputy Head Estates (Accommodation Optimisation), Defence Infrastructure Organisation relating to REEMA North as follows:

“While our new housing project on the REEMA North site continues to move forward through our scrutiny and approvals process, unfortunately we are not in the position that we would like to have been at this point. At this time, we do not have sufficient certainty on future timelines to brief your committee or to discuss the way forward on the project. However, behind the scenes a huge amount of effort continues to go into obtaining authority to proceed with this initiative, and we remain as keen as ever to work closely with West Oxfordshire District Council to move the project forward to the benefit of both organisations. To this end we have already produced preliminary layouts for the planned 182 Service family homes (and for the remaining land that is planned to become available for private housing) and have been reviewing previous planning submissions to inform us ahead of working up an application to a full submission.”

Councillor Leverton asked whether service homes were classed as social housing and the Chief Executive agreed to respond to him directly, after the meeting.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the Group Finance Director and the Shared Healthy Communities Manager were in discussions with Ministry of Defence staff about supporting new military families to settle into the area.

Following discussions, it was noted that:

- Members would be asked for questions to be put to the Police by the Committee who were due to attend the next meeting
- Health Watch could be invited to speak to the Committee with regard to the lack of dentists in the District. Councillor Davies also offered to raise the issue at the Health Improvement Board.
- Other items for the work programme had been suggested throughout the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That the work programme be updated accordingly.

#### **35 Cabinet Work Programme**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Business Manager – Corporate Responsibility and Interim Monitoring Officer, which gave Members the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on 17 August and 15 September (tabled) 2021.

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Members noted that discussions on the Community Infrastructure Levy had been postponed until the Government bill had been heard in the Autumn.

**36 Members Questions**

Councillors Bull and Crossland raised the issue of the Members Portal not working well. Councillor Leverton agreed and suggested that it was due to the high security settings on the Portal. Councillor Graham commented on a lack of training in using the Portal. A majority of Members agreed with these comments. The Strategic Support Officer was asked to raise this with the Business Manager – Corporate Responsibility.

Councillor Bull requested that it be recorded when Members leave a meeting and Councillors expressed broad agreement with this request.

Councillor Beaney agreed to speak to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Member training, Councillor Doughty, about the Portal and recording Members attendance.

The Meeting closed at 8.50 pm

CHAIRMAN