

Tuesday, 6 July 2021

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## FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney on **Wednesday, 14 July 2021 at 2.00 pm.**



Giles Hughes  
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors: Councillor Derek Cotterill (Chairman), Councillor Geoff Saul (Vice-Chair), Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf, Councillor Rosa Bolger, Councillor Julian Cooper, Councillor Rupert Dent, Councillor Harry Eaglestone, Councillor Steve Good, Councillor Gill Hill, Councillor Dan Levy, Councillor Mathew Parkinson, Councillor Alex Postan, Councillor Andrew Prosser and Councillor Harry St John

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 Committee Administrator know prior to the start of the meeting.

## AGENDA

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 8)**  
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 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. **Participation of the Public**  
To receive any submissions from members of the public, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure.
5. **2020/21 Treasury Outturn (Pages 9 - 18)**  
Purpose  
To advise members of treasury management activity and the performance of internal and external fund managers for 2020/21.  
  
Recommendation  
That treasury management and the performance of in-house and external fund managers' activity for 2020/21 are noted.
6. **Council Priorities and Service Performance Report 2020-21 - Quarter Four (Pages 19 - 78)**  
Purpose  
To provides details of service performance during Q4.  
  
Recommendation  
That the Committee reviews, and challenges as appropriate, performance for 2020-21 Q4.
7. **Investment Policy Task & Finish Group - Update**  
To receive an update from the Chairman or other members of the Task and Finish Group.

8. **Committee Work Programme (Pages 79 - 82)**

Purpose:

To provide the Committee with an updated Work Programme for 2020/2021.

Recommendation:

That the Committee notes the work programme and provides comment where needed.



9. **Cabinet Work Programme (Pages 83 - 86)**

Purpose:

To give the Committee the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on 22 June 2021.

Recommendation:

That the Committee decides whether to express a view to the Cabinet on relevant issues in its Work Programme.

10. **Investment Property Outturn 20/21 (Pages 87 - 96)**

Purpose

To inform Committee of the performance of the Council's investment property portfolio.

Recommendation

That the report is noted.

11. **Members Questions**

To receive any questions from Members of the Committee

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# Public Document Pack Agenda Item 1

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Record of Decisions of the meeting of the  
**Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 2 June 2021**

### PRESENT

Councillors: Councillor Derek Cotterill (Chairman), Councillor Geoff Saul (Vice-Chair), Councillor Joy Aitman, Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf, Councillor Julian Cooper, Councillor Rupert Dent, Councillor Harry Eaglestone, Councillor Andy Graham, Councillor Gill Hill, Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, Councillor Alex Postan, Councillor Andrew Prosser and Councillor Harry St John

Officers: Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer)

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

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2021 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to adding Councillor Enright to those that were present.

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

The following temporary appointments were notified:

Councillor Poskitt substituted for Councillor Levy.

Councillor Aitman substituted for Councillor Bolger.

Councillor Graham substitute for Councillor Parkinson.

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

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **4 Participation of the Public**

There were no requests received.

#### **5 Start Time of Meetings**

The Chairman provided an overview of previous start times of the meeting. The Chairman then proposed that Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee would meet at 2pm for the year 2021/22. Councillor Eaglestone seconded the proposal.

**RESOLVED:** That the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee meets at 2pm for the year 2021/22.

#### **6 Establishment of Council's Investment Policy Task and Finish Group**

Following a request from Councillor Al-Yousuf at the April meeting, it was agreed that a Task and Finish Group would be established to look at defining the Council's Investment Policy and review Arlingclose's service contract and investment mandate.

The Senior Strategic Support officer explained to the Committee how Task and Finish Groups were established, their purpose and reporting responsibilities.

02/June2021

The Chief Finance Officer began by offering an overview of the Council's current Financial position and explained the investment and treasury funds.

Members noted that the Council currently received external, independent advice from Arlingclose. The role, cost and work of Arlingclose on the Council's Externally Managed Pooled Funds was discussed. It was noted that many circumstances had changed since the contract with Arlingclose began. The Council's current investment and borrowing positions as well as approaches to debt and risk were considered.

The Chief Finance Officer acknowledged that it was a good time for a review and agreed to provide a short (one page) briefing paper for the first meeting of the Investment Policy Task and Finish Group. She informed the Committee that the Council currently had circa £12m invested and when £2m of that matures the Council could choose to keep £10m invested in order to maintain its status under MiFID 2.

Following a query from Councillor Al-Yousuf, Mrs Griffiths advised that the Council's needs, treasury function and the challenges to be faced were covered in the budget papers. It was agreed that advice was needed on the bottom line that the Council wanted its' Treasury Investments to reach.

The Chairman proposed that the scrutiny vice-chair, Councillor Saul be nominated as the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group. Further proposals of membership were Councillors Levy, Al-Yousuf, Dent and Postan.

**RESOLVED that:**

1) the Investment Policy Task and Finish Group's initial meeting will decide the Group's remit and scope, to be brought to the next Financial and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 14 July 2021 for approval;

2) the Investment Policy Task and Finish Group could be held virtually with the agenda being published five working days in advance; and

3) the following Members are nominated to the Investment Policy Task and Finish Group; Councillor Saul (Chairman), Councillor Levy, Councillor Al-Yousuf, Councillor Dent and Councillor Postan.

**7**

**Cabinet Work Programme**

The Committee considered the report from Democratic Services which gave Members the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on the 18 May 2021.

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

02/June2021

## 8 Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered the previously circulated report from Democratic Services, which invited it to consider its Work Programme for 2021/2022.

No comments were raised other than to add the approval of the Investment Policy Task and Finish Group's scoping document for consideration at the next meeting. The Senior Strategic Support Officer outlined the first step in establishing this Group as the remit and scope of the Group being agreed by Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Poskitt asked about the progress of the electric vehicle charging points scheme. The Chief Finance Officer advised that in order to dovetail with, and supplement, Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC) charging point programme, the Council had delayed its work on this project until OCC's work was more advanced. She advised that Councillor MacRae was up to date with the latest situation.

**RESOLVED:** That the work programme be noted with the following addition:

(a) the progress made in establishing the Investment Policy Task and Finish Group including its scope and remit be added to the work programme.

## 9 Members Questions

Councillor Cooper asked about how the Council responds to central Government consultation documents. Councillor Al-Yousuf advised that officers respond to these requests and would consult Members when necessary.

The Meeting closed at 2.52 pm

CHAIRMAN

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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>FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2021</b></p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p><b>Agenda Item 5</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>2020/21 TREASURY OUTTURN</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Suzi Coul / Cabinet Member for Finance Email: suzi.coul@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer) Tel: 01993 861188 Email: Elizabeth.Griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To advise members of treasury management activity and the performance of internal and external fund managers for 2020/21</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A, B &amp; C</p>
<p>Recommendation/s</p>	<p><i>a.</i> That treasury management and the performance of in-house and external fund managers' activity for 2020/21 are noted</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	

## Annual Treasury Management Report

### 1. Summary

- 1.1 Interest earned in 2020/21 from investments held was £721k on an average investment balance of £40m with a return of 1.81%. Before the Base Rate was reduced to 0.10%, the original budget was set as £680k, but was not reforecast as the new drawdowns of loans given to Cottsway Housing Association and Southhill Solar Ltd, ensured additional income not budgeted for. Overall a surplus of £41k was achieved for the financial year, of which £27k was attributable to the new Southhill Solar and Cottsway loans and roughly £6k was interest paid on the high levels of cash grants held through the year. Gains of £22k were made on the returns from Pooled Funds, however fixed term deposits were lower than first forecast and returned a deficit of £14k.
- 1.2 Investments of £12m in Pooled Funds returned 3.04% in dividends and made unrealised gains of 9.27% (£1.13m) on its capital value compared to 2019/20. The current capital values now stand at £197k lower than the original investments of £12m as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- 1.3 The Council complied with all Prudential indicators for 2020/21 as set in the February 2020 budget.
- 1.4 No borrowing was undertaken in 2020/21, though the original plans set in February 2020 were to borrow to fund part of the capital programme. Due to the cost of long term borrowing and the very low investment returns on short term cash, the strategy was to internally borrow. Internal borrowing is a treasury management practice whereby the Council utilises its cash balances on a temporary basis until the original plans for the cash fall due. This delays the need to borrow externally. Going forward, this internal borrowing is expected to be refinanced, with long term debt expected before the end of 2021/22.

### 2. Economic & Financial Markets Background

- 2.1 The coronavirus pandemic dominated 2020/21, leading to almost the entire world being in some form of lockdown during the year. The start of the financial year saw The Bank of England cut Bank Rates to 0.1% and the UK government provided a range of fiscal stimulus measures, the size of which has not been seen in peacetime.
- 2.2 Some good news came in December 2020 as two COVID-19 vaccines were given approval by the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The UK vaccine rollout started in earnest; over 31 million people had received their first dose by 31<sup>st</sup> March.
- 2.3 A Brexit trade deal was agreed with only days to spare before the 11pm 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 deadline having been agreed with the European Union on Christmas Eve.
- 2.4 Ultra-low interest rates prevailed throughout the whole financial year, with yields generally falling between April and December 2020. 1-month, 3-month and 12-month rates averaged 0.01%, 0.10% and 0.23% respectively over the financial year.

### **3. Investment Activities**

- 3.1 A counterparty list recommended and reviewed by treasury management advisors Arlingclose was received monthly and this advice was followed by the treasury team. At the end of the period Arlingclose had made no changes to the names on the list or the recommended maximum duration of 35 days. As a result of this and the uncertainty of timing of cash flows during the pandemic lockdowns due to loss of income generation and additional grants received, the treasury team held the in-house balances in liquid MMF's, to enable cash support for the services it provides to the public and secondly, to fund the authorities capital programme, without the need to borrow.
- 3.2 Both the CIPFA and the CLG's Investment Guidance require the Authority to invest prudently and have regard to the security and liquidity of investments before seeking the optimum yield. This was maintained by following the Council's counterparty policy as set out in its Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2020/21. Investments during the year included:
- Investments in AAA-rated Stable Net Asset Value Money Market Funds
  - Call accounts and deposits with Banks and Building Societies systemically important to UK banking system
  - Pooled funds (collective investment schemes) meeting the criteria in SI 2004 No 534 and subsequent amendments
  - Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT)
  - Housing Association Bond

### **4. Investment Background**

- 4.1 The Authority held significant invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. During 2020/21, the Authority investment balance ranged between £22.4 million and £56.5 million. It should be noted that when it was at its highest value, this was due to the COVID Business grants received of £26.87m in early April 2020, and not fully paid out until July 2020. On average the Council held £40m in all treasury investments which is higher than usual largely due to the additional COVID grants.
- 4.2 Due to several years of funding the capital programme with internal borrowing the expectation is that there will be minimal levels of invested funds going forward and the Council will need to borrow to fund future capital programmes.

### **5. Externally Managed Funds**

- 5.1 Seven years ago the authority decided to invest £12m over several pooled funds. Some of the original funds have been sold and then re-invested into new ones. The performance of each of the current Pooled Funds can be seen in the table overleaf.

## Current Pooled Funds

Fund Manager	Investment	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2020	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021	Dividends Received 2020/21	2020/21 Gain/(Loss)	Gain/(Loss) v Original Investment
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Payden & Rygel (L)	2,000,000	2,005,540	2,049,368	11,431	43,828	49,368
UBS (B/E)	2,000,000	1,665,187	1,844,708	93,100	179,521	(155,292)
Schroders (E)	1,000,000	687,135	844,976	52,180	157,841	(155,024)
Threadneedle UK (E)	1,000,000	778,854	984,746	28,671	205,892	(15,254)
CCLA Div (B/E)	1,000,000	911,541	988,176	31,359	76,635	(11,824)
M&G Strategic (B)	2,000,000	1,865,992	2,090,468	60,408	224,476	90,468
Royal London (L)	2,000,000	1,933,013	1,999,053	44,743	66,040	(947)
Aegon (L)	1,000,000	843,371	1,001,836	42,784	158,465	1,836
<b>Total –current funds</b>	<b>12,000,000</b>	<b>10,690,633</b>	<b>11,803,331</b>	<b>364,676</b>	<b>1,112,698</b>	<b>(196,669)</b>

(L = Liquidity ; B= Bond; E= Equity)

- 5.2 £12m of the Authority’s investments are invested in externally managed strategic pooled bond, equity and multi-asset funds where potential volatility and liquidity are lesser considerations when compared with short term cash deposits, and the objectives instead are regular revenue income and long-term price stability. These funds generated an average total return of 12.31%, comprising a return of dividends of £364,676 (3.04%) income return which is used to support services in year, and £1,112,698 (9.27%) of capital growth.
- 5.3 During the initial phase of the pandemic in March 2020, the sharp falls in corporate bond and equity markets had a negative impact on the value of the Council’s pooled fund holdings and was reflected in the 31st March 2020 fund valuations with every fund registering negative capital returns over a 12 month period. Since March 2020 there has been improvement in the stock market values which is reflected in an increase in capital values of these short-dated, strategic bond, equity and multi-asset income funds in the Authority’s portfolio.
- 5.4 Following the cut in Bank rates from 0.75% to 0.10% in March 2020, the Authority had expected to receive significantly lower income from its cash and short-dated money market investments, including money market funds in 2020/21, as rates on cash investments fell close to zero percent. This produced a deficit of over £13k against the original budget for cash deposits.
- 5.5 The investment income budget for 2020/21 was set at £680,000 Actual investment receipts exceeded the reforecast by £41,097 with the overall level of return of 1.81% and with an average investment balance of £39.906m for the financial year. Almost £30K of this positive variance was driven by the increased income generated by the additional loans given to Cottsway Housing and Southill Solar. The overall performance against the budget is shown in the table below:

Investment Performance: 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021	Pooled Funds	In-House investments	Housing Association Bond	Housing REIT	External Loans	Total
Budget (£)	£339,000	£40,400	£118,800	£15,000	£166,800	£680,000
Budgeted return (%)	2.83%	0.23%	4.75%	1.00%	3.00%	1.67%
Interest earned (£)	£364,676	£26,739	£118,750	£16,500	£194,432	£721,097
Gross rate of Return (%)	3.04%	0.14%	4.75%	1.65%	3.07%	1.81%

5.6 The cash investments for all funds as at 31 March 2021 are shown in Annex B

## 6. Compliance with Prudential Indicators

6.1 The Council can confirm that it has complied with its Prudential Indicators for 2020/21, which were set in February 2020 as part of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy. In compliance with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice this report provides members with a summary report of the treasury management activity during 2020/21. None of the Prudential Indicators have been breached and a prudent approach has been taken in relation to investment activity with priority being given to security and liquidity over yield.

### 6.2 Debt Limits

	2020/21 Maximum	31.3.21 Actual	2020/21 Operational Boundary	2020/21 Authorised Limit	Complied? Yes/No
Borrowing	0	0	£38.3m	£41.3m	Yes
PFI and Finance Leases	0	0	0	0	N/A
<b>Total debt</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>£38.3</b>	<b>£41.3m</b>	

6.3 The Authority's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans, should the Authority's long-term plans change, being a secondary objective. In keeping with these objectives, no new borrowing was undertaken in this financial year. This strategy enabled the Authority to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk.

## 7. Looking Forward

7.1 The Bank of England (BoE) Base Rate at 0.1% is not expected to increase throughout 2021/22. In its June 2021 policy announcement, the BoE expected the economy to experience a temporary period of strong GDP growth and above-target CPI inflation, after which growth and inflation is

expected to fall back. However there are risks to this if inflation rises higher than expected, Base Rate could be increased sooner. However, The Bank's Monetary Policy Committee currently does not intend to tighten monetary policy at least until there is clear evidence that significant progress is being made in achieving the 2% inflation target sustainably.

- 7.2 Government initiatives continued to support the economy over the quarter, following the range of measures announced by the Chancellor in the 2021 Budget, which included extending the furlough (Coronavirus Job Retention) scheme until September 2021.
- 7.3 Given the projected shortfall in cash and the imminent borrowing requirement it is unlikely that the Council will be investing in additional funds and indeed, all of the pooled funds are expected to be used for working capital, replacing internal borrowing for previous capital spend. The Council will seek to maintain some level of investment in money market funds, although this will be balanced against the cost of borrowing. The Council also has to be mindful of its current stance to hold a minimum balance of £10m invested (not including loans) to qualify as a "professional investor" under MiFid II requirements.

SCHEDULE OF CASH INVESTMENTS OUTSTANDING AT 31 MARCH 2021

NAME OF COUNTERPARTY	VALUE DATE	NOMINAL AMOUNT (£)	MATURITY DATE	RATE OF INTEREST	Fitch Credit Rating
Federated Investors LLP	31.03.21	3,920,000	01.04.21	0.01%	AAA/MMF
Lloyds Treasury Direct	31.03.21	6,000,000	01.04.21	0.01%	A+
Fundamentum Housing REIT	31.03.21	1,000,000	01.04.21	1.65%	N/A
Cottsway 2 Housing Association	31.03.21	1,947,488	16.01.70	3.41%	A
Cottsway 2 Housing Association	31.03.21	1,854,318	20.05.70	2.87%	A
Cottsway 2 Housing Association	31.03.21	4,019,233	22.12.70	2.00%	A
Southill Solar Limited	31.03.21	2,500,000	30.10.35	3.85%	N/A
<b>TOTAL IN-HOUSE INVESTMENTS</b>		<b>21,241,039</b>			

BONDS

COUNTERPARTY	Book Cost (£)	Market Value (£)
A2D Bond (4.75%)	2,500,000	2,601,578

### MANAGED FUNDS

COUNTERPARTY	As at:	NOMINAL VALUE (£)	MARKET VALUE (£)
Royal London Short Dated Credit Fund	31.03.21	2,000,000	1,999,053
Payden Sterling Reserve Fund	31.03.21	2,000,000	2,049,368
CCLA Diversified Income Fund	31.03.21	1,000,000	988,176
Threadneedle UK Equity Fund	31.03.21	1,000,000	984,746
Aegon Monthly Income Fund	31.03.21	1,000,000	1,001,836
UBS Multi-Asset Income Fund	31.03.21	2,000,000	1,844,708
Schroders Income Maximiser Fund	31.03.21	1,000,000	844,976
M&G Strategic Bond Fund	31.03.21	2,000,000	2,090,468
<b>TOTAL VALUE OF FUND</b>		<b>12,000,000</b>	<b>11,803,331</b>

## Current Pooled Funds – May 2021

<b>Fund Manager</b>	<b>Investment</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2021</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> May 2021</b>	<b>2021/22 Gain/(Loss)</b>	<b>Gain/(Loss) v Original Investment</b>
	£	£	£	£	£
Payden & Rygel (L)	2,000,000	2,049,368	2,050,134	766	50,134
UBS (B/E)	2,000,000	1,844,708	1,870,635	25,927	(129,365)
Schroders (E)	1,000,000	844,976	885,443	40,467	(114,557)
Threadneedle UK (E)	1,000,000	984,746	1,037,125	52,379	37,125
CCLA Div (B/E)	1,000,000	988,176	1,018,884	30,708	18,884
M&G Strategic (B)	2,000,000	2,090,468	2,103,358	12,890	103,358
Royal London (L)	2,000,000	1,999,053	1,995,086	(3,967)	(4,914)
Aegon (L)	1,000,000	1,001,836	1,017,352	15,516	17,352
<b>Total –current funds</b>	<b>12,000,000</b>	<b>11,803,331</b>	<b>11,978,017</b>	<b>106,289</b>	<b>(21,983)</b>

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# Agenda Item 6

 <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>Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Wednesday 14 July 2021</b></p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p><b>Agenda Item No. 6</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>Council Priorities and Service Performance Report 2020-21 Quarter Four</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>All relevant Cabinet Members</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Tel: (01993) 861658 Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>This report provides details of service performance during Q4</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p><a href="#">Annex A</a> – Council Plan Annual Statement Annex B - Performance Indicator report</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the Committee reviews, and challenges as appropriate, performance for 2020-21 Q4</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance: Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>

## **I. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. The Council monitors service performance each quarter as well as progress towards achieving the aim and priorities set out in the Corporate Plan at the end of Q2 and Q4.
- 1.2. Performance in those service areas relating to the work of this Committee is provided in this report.

## **2. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK - PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

- 2.1. A high level Commissioning Framework was approved by Cabinet in October 2020. The Commissioning Framework identifies that the provision of robust performance data – quantitative and qualitative, together with a robust analysis of that data and evidence – is vital to ensure that the Council has the information to assess whether its commissioned services are being delivered to a high quality.
- 2.2. A new performance management framework has been developed; a much broader framework than previous frameworks. It sets out six key strands of information on which assurance needs to be provided, with a key shift in focus from performance monitoring to performance management:
  - Business analytics and service assurance
  - Place based measures and comparators
  - Publica Business Plan strategic actions
  - Council Plan priority actions
  - Project and programme management assurance
  - Risk and opportunity management
- 2.3. The quarterly performance report will continue to evolve in line with the Performance Management Framework as well as feedback from senior officers and Members.
- 2.4. As an example, a selection of publically available benchmarking data has been included in the Q4 Performance Indicator report on a trial basis. Benchmarking can be a useful tool for driving improvement; by comparing our performance with other similar organisations, we can start a discussion about what good performance might look like, and why there might be variations, as well as learning from other organisations about how they operate (process benchmarking).
- 2.5. Two comparator groups that are commonly used to benchmark Councils' performance are: all shire districts councils and CIPFA Nearest Neighbours (NN). Whilst performance benchmarking can be useful as a tool for driving improvement, it is important to remember that performance needs to be viewed within context i.e. a range of both internal and external factors contribute to the level of performance achieved; therefore benchmarks should be used as a 'guide' and as a starting point for discussion.
- 2.6. The Commissioning Framework also sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica's Executive Director (Commissioning) is accountable to the Council for the services commissioned from Publica, and also for the services commissioned by Publica from third parties on behalf of the Council. Publica must ensure that it provides the necessary information to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and

standard. The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for reviewing and approving the information provided in this report prior to its publication.

2.7. The Council's Chief Executive has received a report on service performance, and he has assessed it in line with the high level Commissioning Statement. . He has noted the progress that has been made to deliver the actions in the Council Plan as well the lower level of operational performance in Q4 as a result of the ongoing pandemic and its impact on resources and the delivery of services. The Chief Executive has also noted the continued impact of Covid-19 on communities, businesses, customers, services, and staff as the nation moves from response to recovery and back to response again. He has drawn particular attention to the following:

- i. The nation entered its third lockdown on 5 January 2021. Many services continue to support residents, communities and businesses that have been impacted by Covid-19 as part of their every day job. Enormous efforts continue to be made by a number of services in supporting businesses to access grants, carrying out 'track and trace', and operating the Community Response hub (call handling, outbound calling, complex welfare support and problem solving, food parcel delivery and welfare checks, and signposting those that need support to the relevant organisations). In 2020-21, the Council distributed a total of £39,595,446 in business grants;
- ii. The Council's leisure centres have been severely impacted by Covid-19 and three national lockdowns, when the facilities were required to close down. Following the end of the third lockdown, leisure centres were re-opened for some outdoor activities on 29 March 2021, and potentially all facilities and activities could be fully re-opened from 21 June, subject to the Government agreeing to the stage four easing of the national lockdown. The Council agreed a contract variation with the service provider and further financial recovery packages to cover the period until March 2021. Some government grant funding has been available to cover Council losses; and a further tranche of funding was made available through Sport England to cover costs incurred by leisure operators during the lockdown, and to support the re-opening;
- iii. Affordable housing has continued to be delivered in the District and demonstrates the success of the strategic sites included in the Local Plan in bringing forward housing numbers. During the year, 374 affordable homes were delivered exceeding the Local Plan target by 100 units;
- iv. Similar to other councils throughout the country, the Council's business rates collection figure (in year) has been understandably impacted by Covid-19. The Government has gone some way in helping certain businesses such as retail with 100% business rate relief, but there are still businesses that are struggling financially. The Council is distributing a number of support grants to eligible businesses, however, there is no requirement to use it to pay for business rates.

### 3. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

3.1. The West Oxfordshire District Council Plan Annual Statement (attached at Annex A) presents a narrative of progress towards each of the Council priorities, drawing together specific examples of successful actions, such as:

- Adoption of Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy by Full Council;

- Submission of Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan to the Planning Inspectorate, setting out strategic planning policy for zero-carbon development;
- Appointment of Market Towns Officer to work with Witney, Chipping Norton and Carterton on Town Plans as a means of supporting economic recovery from Covid-19;
- Application of Health Impact Assessments to major planning applications as a means of delivering 'healthy place-shaping';
- Scoping work underway to explore the establishment of well-being hubs, as a means of enabling partner organisations (other public service providers and the Voluntary and Community Sector) to work alongside each other to provide accessible and joined up services for residents.

#### **4. SERVICE PERFORMANCE**

- 4.1. Since the start of the pandemic, many services, both customer facing and support services have been impacted by Covid-19; the Council's leisure facilities have had to close during multiple lockdowns and tier restrictions, while other services including housing, revenues and benefits, planning, land charges and customer services have experienced higher workloads due to customer demand or because colleagues were supporting residents, communities, and businesses through the crisis. Support services such as ICT, Accountancy and Accounts Payable have also played a part in supporting the administration of business grants and other payments. The majority of staff have continued to deliver services from home which has meant that services have had to adapt and find new ways of working. This has presented a major challenge for some services such as planning and food safety and resulted in backlogs. The impact of these challenges coupled with delivering key projects such as the new revenues and benefits system has affected performance in some areas.
- 4.2. The services which relate to the work of this Committee are Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits; the relevant indicators are listed at the front of the Performance Indicator report at Annex B with pages 4 to 11 of that Annex providing the further relevant information.
- 4.3. Of the nine targeted indicators, two indicators achieved their targets (Green), four indicators achieved their targets 'within tolerance' (Amber), and three indicators did not achieve their targets (Red). A full report is attached at Annex B.
- 4.4. Two indicators in customer services – 'percentage of calls responded to within 20 seconds' and 'percentage of calls abandoned' did not achieve their targets due to reduced staff resources and higher workloads related to the usual annual billing processes as well as Covid-19 related calls. In addition, the implementation of the new revenues and benefits system in February resulted in system downtime and a backlog of emails and voicemails. Call waiting messages were revised to advise and signpost customers to alternative ways to deal with their queries; and advisors were offered overtime to clear the backlog
- 4.5. The indicator 'average number of days taken to process new housing benefit claims' did not achieve its target. The implementation of the new revenues and benefits system created a backlog of applications. In addition, a range of year end activities have to be administered including the benefit uprating and rent increases which required additional resource. Since the transfer of claimants to Universal Credit in November 2017, the number of new claims

has fallen by over 70%, and is causing the outturn to be skewed due to large delays in processing a very small number and often the more complex cases. It is proposed that this indicator be replaced by a new indicator to measure performance on Council Tax Support scheme.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1. None

**6. RISK ASSESSMENT**

6.1. None

**7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

7.1. None

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1. None

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL PLAN ANNUAL STATEMENT  
**April 2020 - March 2021**

Our vision is to support West Oxfordshire to be fit for the future through:



**1. Climate Action**

Leading the way in protecting and enhancing the environment by taking action locally on climate change and biodiversity.



**2. Healthy Towns and Villages**

Facilitating healthy lifestyles and better wellbeing for everyone.



**3. A Vibrant District Economy**

Securing future economic success through supporting existing local businesses and attracting new businesses to deliver the economic ambitions of the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy.



**4. Strong Local Communities**

Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities.



**5. Meeting the Housing Needs of our Changing Population**

Securing the provision of market and affordable housing of a high quality for the wide range of householders making their home in West Oxfordshire.



**6. Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance**

Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council.

## Introduction

Following the launch of the [West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2020 – 24](#) in January 2020, Officers have embarked on delivering the projects defined as a means of achieving the Council Plan vision to support West Oxfordshire to be fit for the future through delivery of its priorities.

The context for delivering the Council Plan has changed significantly given the Coronavirus pandemic that required the Council to pivot its focus towards responding to the sudden challenges posed by the pandemic, principally supporting West Oxfordshire residents, its business and economy, and community and voluntary sector during the series of lockdowns experienced over the first year of the Council Plan. This involved redeployment of 100+ staff and in so doing enabled support for vulnerable members of the community at the same time as continued delivery of key public services. Whilst focus shifted to the pandemic, work has continued to progress against each of the priorities, albeit perhaps in a different way to that anticipated during the creation of the Council Plan. This agility and ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and indeed the unprecedented situation, reflects well on the Council and its staff and demonstrates that they have remained true to the vision in the Council Plan to be 'fit for the future'.

This Annual Statement details progress against each of the 6 Council Plan priorities and should be read in conjunction with the [WODC Annual Monitoring Report \(AMR\)](#) for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. The AMR is structured around the 6 Council Plan priorities, setting out progress against the Local Plan as the strategic development framework for the District. By priority, an outline of the current district context in terms of background/contextual information and what has happened during the AMR period is provided. Facts and figures are used to illustrate the Council's progress/patterns of change against a number of indicators – such as carbon emission reductions, amount of recycling, visitor numbers to leisure centres, and local workforce structure. This detailed overview also highlights what is on the horizon by way of activity, which aligns with the actions that underpin the 6 Council Plan priorities and delivery of the Council's vision to be 'fit for the future'.

## Covid-19 Response and Recovery Planning

A short summary of the Council's response to the pandemic is provided below which illustrates the far reaching impact of the pandemic and efforts to meet the needs of West Oxfordshire's local economy, the voluntary and community sector and local residents.

### WODC Covid-19 Response Summary:

Given the Council's responsibility for delivering services to over 100,000 residents, Covid-19 has been an unprecedented challenge which required us to react quickly to changing circumstances in order to support local business and economy, the voluntary and community sector and local residents. We have maintained essential services whilst redeploying staff to new areas of work to help deal with the crisis.

There has been a dynamic and inspiring community sector response across West Oxfordshire to the challenges introduced through the pandemic. Local groups, towns and villages have mobilised to support their communities and the Council has developed a Community Hub team to work effectively with voluntary sector partners and volunteers.

Collaboration with our partners at a County-wide level was required in order to respond to the crisis. In particular, close coordination and good communication between the County, City and District Councils, with the NHS and OxLEP, to support vulnerable people and align programmes to support local businesses.

The following statistics for the 2020/2021 financial year outline some of what the Council has achieved during the Covid-19 lockdown period working with key partners:

- 1,430 residents have been given support with complex needs
- 1,017 vulnerable residents have been contacted by Councillors
- Grants totalling £39,595,446 paid to businesses in West Oxfordshire
- 6,217 shielded residents called during lockdown.

In tandem with supporting local business and economy, the voluntary and community sector and local residents through the pandemic, considerable effort was invested in planning for recovery from the impacts of the pandemic and in the longer term, the District's renewal. It was recognised that the joint work with local communities, and with Oxfordshire's partners, undertaken in the early months of the pandemic provided strong foundations from which to develop a recovery plan.

A cross-party Covid-19 Advisory Group was established comprising Councillors working with Officers to consider how we will address challenges and opportunities arising from the pandemic through support to enable communities and businesses to thrive in a post-Covid world. A series of workshops were held to devise four Covid-19 Recovery Themes of Economy, Community, Climate and Council, Service Delivery and Finance. These are closely aligned

with the 6 Council Plan priorities as a means of ensuring that actions prioritised as part of the District's Covid-19 recovery effort and investment in this will also positively contribute to achieving the vision of the Council Plan. Full Council considered the [West Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery Plan](#) in October 2020 and this provides the Council with a helpful framework for ensuring that the wide ranging impacts of the pandemic are mitigated against and adapted to.

Whilst this Annual Statement focuses on progress against the Council Plan, activity underway and what is on the horizon in relation to achieving the Covid-19 Recovery Themes is also referenced due to the close alignment of these two areas of activity.

## Climate Action: Leading the way in protecting and enhancing the environment by taking action locally on climate change and biodiversity

### Covid-19 Recovery Theme: Climate

Over the last year Full Council approved two commitments in the Council Plan:-

- The Carbon Action Plan (October 2020), incorporating the Pathway to Achieving Carbon Neutral by 2030
- Climate Change Strategy (February 2021), focussing on climate action.

Together these set out a comprehensive, clear and robust strategy for the Council's response to the climate and ecological emergency.

[The Carbon Action Plan](#) defines 'The Pathway to Achieving Carbon Neutral by 2030'. It:

- Presents extensive data on WODC's Green House Gas (GHG) emissions
- Presents the GHG account as a baseline and measure of WODC's current impact on climate change, thus calibrating the success of future action taken to reduce/remove emissions
- Defines a set of Guiding Principles for planning future activity by WODC towards its target
- Sets out a process for the monitoring and review of action in progress and planned, keeping the Plan live and responsive to external influences, technological changes and innovation
- Leads by example, establishing an assessment methodology and Guiding Principles that other partners working across the District can apply to their own projects.

[The Climate Change Strategy](#) provides a framework for achieving the Council's clear and robust strategic priorities for climate action. Informed by extensive consultation, the Strategy enables the targeting of resources in a structured way. It enables WODC to contribute strategically to climate action for Oxfordshire and the South East whilst also taking local, grassroots action on five core themes of activity: 1) Protect and restore natural ecosystems, 2) Energy, 3) Active travel and low carbon transport, 4) Standards in new development, and 5) Engage, support and educate.

With the Strategy in place, the Council has the means to:

- Influence and shape strategy and policy for climate at County and Regional level
- Communicate its local response for the purposes of sharing best practice
- Contribute positively to the national effort – channelling any funding to achieve local outcomes

- Listen and respond to community views on climate action.

The Council has focussed on producing planning policy to achieve net-zero carbon development of 2,200 homes at Salt Cross Garden Village. The [Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan](#) (SCG VAAP) has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for hearing in Summer 2021. If the policies for the Salt Cross Garden Village remain intact then this will provide a template for other developments within the District.

In addition to the SCGV AAP, a Sustainability Standards Checklist has been developed by an internal working group with input from planning policy, development management, biodiversity, landscape, climate and conservation heritage specialists. This was approved by Full Council in February 2021. The Checklist incorporates all elements of environmental sustainability for consideration in planning, including an expectation on applicants to consider tree planting and biodiversity. A commitment to securing the benefits of the Checklist has been made by the Council through the funding of a Sustainability Planning Specialist for 12 months to ensure that these are applied to development proposals going forward. The Standards relate to Water use and flood risk; Biodiversity; Green and Active Travel; Aligning with net-zero carbon; Sustainable construction; and Materials and waste.

Planning permission has recently been granted for a Solar Farm on land to the west of Eynsham, within proximity to the Strategic Development Area West Eynsham and the Salt Cross Garden Village.

Turning to the Council's overarching goal to enhance our natural environment and boost biodiversity through the establishment of robust, resilient, and well-functioning ecological networks several strands of activity have been underway over the last year.

WODC has played a proactive role as a District partner of the Oxfordshire Growth Board which has recently engaged in a draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire which commits specifically to protecting and enhancing our natural environment, whilst pursuing a zero-carbon future. The Environment Advisory Group, on which the District lead executive member sits, exists to embed critical environmental thinking across the Growth Board's programmes (e.g. Healthy Place Shaping) and link closely with other existing partnerships such as the Local Nature Partnership which is currently in formation.

The establishment of an Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership is particularly relevant to the Council achieving its ambition to safeguard West Oxfordshire's natural environment. This strategic forum will exist to guide nature recovery in an integrated way to produce multiple benefits for local people, the economy and the environment. Stakeholder engagement in December 2020 and March 2021 confirmed strong support for an Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and detailed work is now underway on its Governance arrangements with its formal launch anticipated in September 2021.

A further Oxfordshire-wide partnership approach towards biodiversity enhancements is the Nature Recovery Network of which WODC is a contributor. The Nature Recovery Network is working to produce a Nature Recovery Strategy (a statutory requirement of the Environment Bill) that will endeavour to protect and enhance the natural environment as well as guiding the development of planning policies. An overarching aim of the NRN is to double the extent of land of high value for nature by 2050. The [Oxfordshire Plan 2050](#) provides an opportunity to use the [draft Nature Recovery Map](#) and [recommended associated policies](#) to help plan for nature's recovery at a county-wide level and to set the framework for future Local Plans. WODC sits on the NRN and actively supports the maintenance of Oxfordshire's Conservation Target Areas and Local Wildlife Sites Projects through their consideration via the planning process. Recent examples include delegation of authority to Woodstock Town Council to take forward an application via Natural England to

designate the Local Wildlife Site 'Woodstock Water Meadows' as a Local Nature Reserve and additionally has provide £4,000 grant funding to the Local Wildlife Trust and Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre who run the Local Wildlife Sites project.

The Windrush in Witney and Lower Windrush Valley Project are a key policy consideration for the development of the East Witney Strategic Development Area, informing new access arrangements between the new built area of Witney and the landscape surrounding it. Of particular note is the landscape and ecological value within the Windrush Valley just north of the A40 which forms part of the East Witney SDA area.

A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Mechanism for securing a positive contribution to biodiversity is required of major (and some minor) applications for compliance with Local Plan Policy H3 'Bio-diversity and Geo-diversity'. The [Interim Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance for Developers and Ecological Consultants](#) has been in operation since April 2020, providing guidance to developers to ensure that sufficient information is submitted to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain. Furthermore, the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre has supported WODC to screen biodiversity metric calculations submitted to ensure that they achieve a Net Gain for Biodiversity. The first Biodiversity Net Gain payment has been made to fund off-site BNG provision arising from development of the Windrush Industrial Park. The payment of £112,290 was secured for the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment to deliver 9.41 biodiversity units which represents a significant step for the financial contribution towards nature's recovery within West Oxfordshire.

At March 2021, 15 planning applications were applying the BNG approach. This progress is being fed into a [national research project](#) at the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology to identify how BNG is contributing towards nature's recovery at the UK level and inform what happens when BNG becomes mandatory.

Work has also progressed on a draft Green Infrastructure Strategy Supplementary Planning Document which would guide where investment is required for people and wildlife e.g. BNG payments could be used in specific locations. This will incorporate [Building with Nature](#) principles to provide planners and developers with evidence-based, how-to, guidance on delivering high-quality green infrastructure. In support of this approach, a Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) bid has been submitted by WODC in March 2021 to fund a Natural Capital Investment Strategy for West Oxfordshire. This Strategy will develop investment and revenue-stream opportunities for Green Infrastructure, natural capital, biodiversity net gain, and carbon balance within key strategic opportunity areas for the district. The £99,000 bid (outcome due in June 2021) is supported by the Council's partners Oxfordshire County Council, District/City Council partners, BBOWT, Lower Windrush Valley Project, The Wychwood Project, Evenlode Catchment Project and the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment. This collaborative effort between climate and planning Officers demonstrates an understanding of revenue stream models for natural capital with benefits for habitat creation for both biodiversity and natural flood risk management.

Finally, early work has commenced on a WODC Biodiversity Plan. This will define a biodiversity work programme to include development of Land Management Plans for land within the Council's stewardship, with ecological enhancement a key priority identified in the Covid-19 Recovery Plan. A Biodiversity and Countryside and Land Management Officer has been funded as part of the Council's investment in the recovery to deliver these benefits for the Council's estate.

## What's on the Horizon?

- Continued partnership work to further develop the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, including further exploration of how the Draft Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Map can be used to inform the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and the proposed review of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan due to commence in autumn 2021.
- Continued development of land management plans and ecological appraisal to conserve and enhance the ecological condition of Council's own land.
- Implementation of the Sustainability Standards Checklist to planning applications.
- Appointment of an Energy Projects Specialist to assist in realising the ambition of the Carbon Action Plan.
- Sustainability assessment of Council offices, involving modelling of energy performance and assessment of waste, water and cycle storage facilities undertaken. Recommendations for retrofit to be considered.
- Launch of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership.
- Consultation on draft Green Infrastructure Strategy Supplementary Planning Document.

## Healthy Towns and Villages: Facilitating healthy lifestyles and better wellbeing for everyone

### Recovery Theme: Communities

The value in adopting a ‘healthy place shaping’ approach in new and existing developments is highlighted in the Council Plan. A [Health Impact Assessment \(HIA\) toolkit](#) and methodology has been approved by the Oxfordshire Growth Board in January 2021 and is now to be applied to the delivery of the local plan and major developments. HIA is a practical approach used to judge the effects a proposed development may have on the health and wellbeing of different groups of people. It is a tool used to identify the health impacts of a plan or project and to develop recommendations to maximise the positive impacts and minimise the negative impacts, while maintaining a focus on addressing health inequalities. By bringing such health considerations to the fore, HIAs add value to the planning process. The findings of HIAs are used to make recommendations to decision makers as to how any negative health impacts of a development can be reduced, and any positive health impacts maximised.

It is intended that this methodology will be used by developers and consultants when preparing major development proposals to help shape and inform design choices. The Council has recently requested HIAs for major development applications in Witney and Woodstock which were submitted and are currently being assessed against the Toolkit and Methodology for conformity. Further efforts to augment healthy place-shaping in the District through development is evident in the draft Supplementary Planning Document for the East Chipping Norton Strategic Development Area. This new development of 1,200 homes, along with around 5 hectares of business floorspace and a range of supporting services and facilities and green space and biodiversity enhancements, presents a further opportunity to create an area which puts the health and well-being of its residents (incoming and existing) at its heart.

Healthy Place Shaping has been further augmented by Policy 4 in the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan which requires a ‘Rapid Health Impact Assessment’ to accompany any planning application for major development at the garden village. This must demonstrate alignment with the emerging Oxfordshire HIA methodology, to fully identify the needs of everyone in how they live and work, access and use all types of infrastructure, services and networks.

Consultants were commissioned to undertake a Built Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy for the District in March 2020 and significant steps have been taken towards achieving this key action identified in the Council Plan. Initial work involved an audit of current indoor leisure facilities stock across the District. Sport England are modelling leisure facility need against projected population growth for the District (due June 2021). In addition to this preparatory work towards the Built Indoor Leisure Facility Strategy, a Focus Group to consider need in the Witney area and scope for a relocated Windrush Leisure Centre (‘Windrush 2’) is imminent and the outcomes of this will be supplemented by a resident’s online survey to help inform the required facility mix for any new Windrush 2.

Collectively the outputs of the initial audit, modelling against population growth and stakeholder consultation will inform a needs analysis of indoor Leisure facilities – addressing current, latent and unmet need for built leisure facilities across West Oxfordshire. This will form the basis of the Built Indoor Leisure Strategy & associated Action Plan.

Turning to measures of health and well-being across the District, the March 2021 [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\)](#) provides information about Oxfordshire's population and the factors affecting health, wellbeing, and social care needs. A strong feature of the JSNA is a consideration of the wider determinants of health which is valuable to the District in planning its support to local health and well being. It is informed by research undertaken between November 2020 – February 2021 and is endorsed by the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

Community profiles for West Oxfordshire are provided on the [places page of Oxfordshire Insight](#), presenting a range of population and health and wellbeing statistics including:

- Population by age
- Deprivation and children in poverty
- Public Health indicators
- Physical activity and child obesity
- Unpaid care and care homes
- GP practice data for selected health conditions (diabetes, dementia and depression)
- House prices and commuting

Of particular note is a February 2021 updated community profile for [Witney](#).

### **What's on the Horizon?**

- Deployment of a Healthy Place Shaping Partner funded by Sport England via Oxfordshire County Council's Public Health Team to WODC to support the adoption of a Healthy Place Shaping approach.
- Built Indoor Sports Facility Strategy (including proposals for relocation of Windrush Leisure Centre) to Cabinet for Adoption in Summer 2021.
- New Playing Pitch Strategy for the District to provide an assessment of the need for playing pitches and recommendations for improving provision, informed by consultation with user group representatives.
- Developing, with partners, a masterplan for the redevelopment of Hanborough Station.

## **A Vibrant District Economy: Securing future economic success through supporting existing local businesses and attracting new businesses to deliver the economic ambitions of the Local Industrial Strategy**

### **Recovery Theme: Economy**

The Council Plan identified two strategic areas for economic growth which the Council is also committed to delivering through their inclusion in the Local Industrial Strategy: the Carterton Technology Hub and the Garden Village Science Park. Progress has been made on each.

*The Carterton Technology Hub* seeks to unleash the economic role, potential and value of Carterton through a new Technology Hub. Local market strengths include many small businesses with specialisms in high-tech manufacturing and engineering in addition to RAF Brize Norton. There is a local imbalance of jobs to workers leading to around 60% out-commuting (including to nearby Witney), indicating both the need and opportunity to diversify the local economy. A strategic outline case has been developed which has informed a proposition paper to the OxLEP, thus further evolving the business case for the project which was successfully made through its inclusion in the adopted Local Plan. Next steps include a detailed feasibility study and SWOT analysis informed by input from a wide range of stakeholders previously engaged in the concept through the Local Plan process. Carterton Town Council is identified as a potential lead partner – supported by WODC and involving the MOD, RAF, OxLEP, local businesses and residents. This endeavour will be further supported through Oxfordshire County Council's 'Access to Carterton Strategy'. Work on this to date has identified a 'preferred options package' comprising three distinct schemes to improve Carterton's strategic connectivity: B4477 Carriageway Improvement Scheme; West Facing Slips at B4477/A40 Junction and wider benefits schemes and; Witney to Carterton cycleway along Witney Road.

*The Salt Cross Science and Technology Park* allocated as part of the new 'Garden Village' strategic development area in the adopted Local Plan, includes a 40 hectare science and technology park that will attract high growth businesses giving them the space to grow and create high value jobs in line with the ambitions of the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy. The Area Action Plan includes a policy detailing the requirements of the park which will deliver, within an extensive network of green and blue infrastructure, 80,000m<sup>2</sup> of science, technology, engineering and high tech related business floor space. Concurrently an Outline Planning Application has been received by site promoter, Grosvenor Estates, which proposes 57,000m<sup>2</sup> of B-Class land uses as part of an employment area with the proposed uses to be determined at the Reserved Matters Application stage of the planning process. Once the Area Action Plan has been adopted this will be used to set the policy context against which the planning application for Salt Cross will be determined, of which the Science and Technology Park is part.

In close proximity to the Salt Cross Science and Technology Park is Hanborough Station and this is identified within the Council Plan as a focus for partnership effort to secure new and upgraded infrastructure, including short and long-term enhancements to the Cotswold railway line. The Hanborough Station Sub-Group of the North Cotswold Line Task Force has been established, bringing together the five county councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships covering the 86-mile route between Hereford, Worcester and Oxford, together with the Cotswold Line Promotion Group, Network Rail and the Great Western Railway.

In January 2020, the Task Force submitted its case to the government for a doubled two trains per hour North Cotswold Line service between Worcestershire, Oxford and London and we are awaiting the assessment of the case by the Department for Transport and Network Rail. In parallel, the Task Force set out its aspirations for additional local trains as a metro-style service between Hanborough and Oxford to support West Oxfordshire housing growth, the visitor economy and to encourage a shift from road to rail for journeys to Oxford or London. The Sub-Group will develop the case for these local services, plans for expanded passenger facilities at Hanborough Station, and engage with local stakeholders and communities.

On the theme of lower carbon transportation, the value of provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) as a means of improving the public realm in our town centres was identified as an action towards achieving a vibrant district economy, in addition to meeting zero carbon ambitions. Two approaches to this are underway:

1. WODC direct procurement of Electric Vehicle Charging Point (EVCP) in Council-owned car parks: Viability assessments of car parks within the Council's stewardship for installation of EVCP have been undertaken in partnership with the Oxfordshire Park and Charge team. Six car parks have been selected as part of Tranche One for EVCP during Spring and Summer 2021: Hensington Road, Woodstock; Back Lane, Eynsham; Woodford Way, Witney; Woodgreen Offices, Witney; Black Bourton, Carterton; and New Street, Chipping Norton.
2. An Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (OEVIS) is being developed to set a consistent design and technical standard for EV infrastructure across the County. WODC is inputting to the strategy which is being coordinated by the iHub Innovation Team at Oxfordshire County Council.

The Covid-19 pandemic has expedited the need to target efforts to support the vitality and viability of our market towns and this is captured in the West Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery Plan. The Council has funded a dedicated Market Towns Officer to work with Witney, Chipping Norton and Carterton to develop Town Covid-19 Recovery Plans which respond to the specific needs of each. Town Centre Covid-19 Recovery Groups have been established to engage key stakeholders to identify the unique impacts of the pandemic on their town, the (short and longer term) opportunities that have arisen, and identify a set of initiatives that will help realise the potential of the town. This activity will inform the Covid-19 Recovery Plan for each town, aiming to support local businesses and strengthen the visitor economy.

In addition to the Town Covid-19 Recovery Plans, the Council is procuring a place promotion app to support local business, with the predicted impact being an increase in footfall across the town centres by encouraging repeat purchases and attracting new visitors to West Oxfordshire. The loyalty app will list events and interactive trails in addition to presenting users with discounts and offers at local businesses. The Council has also partnered with Makespace Oxford as part of a launch of a £1.7 million programme to breathe life back into high streets through the [Meanwhile in Oxfordshire Project](#). This initiative is designed to encourage selected vacant units in our high streets to be filled with a variety of offerings, from retail to creative and co-working spaces as a means of mitigating the negative impact of empty units on the high street.

The Council has submitted in January 2021 a representation to a Government consultation on proposals to allow all uses falling within the Use Class E to be converted to residential use under permitted development (i.e. no planning permission required for change to residential use), irrespective of scale and

location. The Council has advised Government that whilst fully supportive of housing delivery where need is evidenced, key uses in town centres including currently occupied commercial properties, will be lost to residential creating an imbalance of uses that harms town centre vitality and viability and that beyond town centres, key uses in rural areas will be lost to the detriment of local communities (leading to unsustainable patterns of development and commuting). The Council will continue to seek to protect the vitality and viability of town centres and rural economic sustainability through its role as Local Planning Authority.

The Council is continuing to support local businesses who are having to adapt to changing Covid-19 restrictions, and multiple lockdowns through the distribution of a large range of business grants made available by central government. A total of £39,595,446 has been paid over the 2020 - 21 financial year. Financial support has also been made available to those individuals having to self-isolate under the Test and Trace support payment. Since 5 November 2020, a number of grants has been made available to businesses that have been required to close under the Tier system or national lockdowns, or were able to remain open but were severely affected by Tier restrictions:

- Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed, Mandatory) – a total of £5,690,759 was paid out to 3214 businesses in retail, leisure, hospitality, accommodation and events which were mandated to close between 5 November 2020 and 31 March 2021;
- Additional Restrictions Grant (Discretionary) – a total of £1,310,902 was paid out to 834 businesses from November to the 4 April 2021. This grant is available for businesses that do not have a business rate assessment of their own as well as other businesses with a rateable value that have remained open but have been severely impacted by the pandemic. This category includes charity properties and regular market traders;
- Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) - a total of £ 769,273 was paid to 1,515 businesses that remained open but were severely impacted by restrictions;
- Christmas Support Payment for wet-led pubs scheme – one-off grants of £1,000 were paid to 37 businesses between December 2020 and February 2021;
- Closed Businesses Lockdown payment – 779 businesses were supported with a one-off payment. A total of £3,821,000 was paid out between 5 January 2021 and 4 April 2021.

### What's on the Horizon

- 'Access to Carterton' – public consultation on 'preferred options package'
- Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the aforementioned six WODC owned car parks across the District
- Development and implementation of Town Centre Covid-19 Recovery Plans for Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney
- Launch and roll out of Loyal Free place promotion app
- Development of Masterplan for Hanborough Station

## Strong Local Communities: Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities

### Recovery Theme: Communities

The response to the pandemic has really shone a spotlight on the importance of this priority – we have witnessed a dynamic and inspiring community sector response across West Oxfordshire to the challenges introduced by the pandemic. Local Groups, towns and villages have mobilised to support their communities and the Council established a Community Response Hub to further augment these efforts and work effectively with voluntary sector partners and volunteers. There has also been a strong collaborative effort to tackle the crisis, where the Council has sought, together with the County, City and District Councils, the NHS and OxLEP to support vulnerable people and align programmes to support local businesses.

These collaborative efforts between ourselves and partners, and the communities we serve must continue and be built upon in order to respond to any local Covid-19 outbreaks, address any local food security issues (£59k of funding has been awarded to Food Banks and community food projects), and meet any duties to support those who are vulnerable. This work will complement delivery of other aspects of the Council Plan identified under this priority, as described further below. Examples of efforts include:

- Recruitment of staff to work with new Mutual Aid groups to sustain them as an invaluable resource to tackle loneliness and isolation in our communities
- Research into the establishment of Wellbeing Hubs is underway, as committed to in the Covid-19 Recovery Plan. This model would see the co-location of statutory and Voluntary/Community sector partners alongside housing associations to deliver easy to access services. Early conversations are underway, and current and planned provision has been mapped so that gaps in provision can inform where there is opportunity to complement and support existing service delivery to residents.
- West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice working on behalf of the Council to provide £63,655 to those struggling to afford food under the Covid-19 Winter Grants Scheme (funded by Oxfordshire County Council)
- Recruitment of additional staff to allow the Community Response Hub to continue to support residents with significant wellbeing challenges
- Approval of funding for Oxfordshire ‘[Reducing the Risk](#)’ charity to provide Domestic Abuse Champion training in addition to securing a two year extension to the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse contract
- Approval of funding for two local West Oxfordshire charities, the [Witney Hub](#) and the [APCAM Group](#), to deliver mental health services for young people and their families
- The Go Active Get Healthy Diabetes service has moved online and provides help for residents to become more active as a means to manage their diabetes.

A commitment in the Council Plan to direct our management of property assets through a new Asset Management Plan to achieve improvements in the joint use of sites through the [One Public Estate](#) programme has moved a step forward with completion of a series of feasibility reviews of sites in Welch Way, Witney. Following this scope for feasibility work on partnership owned sites to consider options for development that suit all partner’s needs is to be

assessed – in accordance with the principles of the One Public Estate programme. The next action will be to undertake a draft scoping exercise to which input will be invited from all partner organisations.

Further to the focus on assets at Welch Way, Witney, a number of public sector partners (District and Oxfordshire County Council and the NHS) with offices in Witney are assessing the scope for co-location of office space as a means to reduce office space requirements. This conversation has been expedited by the disruption to established ways of working by the Covid-19 pandemic. The next step is to undertake an appraisal for the repurposing of local authority office space in Witney in order to enable and promote flexible working across agencies. Careful consideration will be given to how we can work more efficiently on a smaller footprint whilst garnering the benefit of a significant reduction in town centre office footprint and a reduction in travel time for staff through the facilitation of greater home working.

A further commitment to working with partners to promote West Oxfordshire as a visitor attraction (whilst protecting its essential character) is made in the Council Plan and the pandemic has placed a new emphasis on the visitor economy as tourism patterns have changed with a drop in international visitors to the District (and the wider Cotswolds) against a backdrop of greater domestic tourism demand.

A grant of £90k was secured from the Discover England Fund which will contribute to the roll out of the [Uncover the Cotswolds](#) project, increasing exposure of new/little known experiences to a wider market. Engagement with local tourism businesses provided an overview of some of the challenges faced by the visitor economy in the wake of the pandemic and this continues to inform the Council's approach to supporting the visitor economy to recover and renew post-Covid. Given the significant contribution the visitor economy makes to West Oxfordshire it is evident that there is a particularly acute need for support.

Early focus has been on improving the online capabilities of local tourism businesses, including to become bookable online (e.g. via Visit England's Tourism Exchange Great Britain platform). A partnership initiative '[The Real Cotswolds](#)' project has been launched (with Wake up to Woodstock for Woodstock and with the Witney Chamber of Trade for Witney) to enhance destination marketing. This project will continue to develop digital town guides for Burford, Chipping Norton, Witney and Woodstock. A suite of [free training modules](#) for local tourism businesses has also been commissioned.

### What's on the Horizon?

- Roll out of scheme 'Move Together' from May 2021 which has been externally funded to improve mobility amongst the most frail and lonely residents
- West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice Bureau will continue to support the community through a dedicated funded role to provide guidance on benefits, welfare and debt advice.
- Roll out of Visit England funded promotion of businesses that are fully bookable online from May 2021.

## Meeting the Housing Needs of our Changing Population: Securing the provision of market and affordable housing of a high quality for a wide range of householders making their home in West Oxfordshire

### Recovery Theme: Communities

A significant step towards achieving this priority has been accomplished with the publication of the draft [Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document](#) (AH SPD) which has been subject to two rounds of consultation to address stakeholder representations. Once adopted, the detailed guidance it provides will steer the successful implementation of Local Plan Policy H3 on the delivery of affordable housing. At this stage the AH SPD will become a material planning consideration.

Local Plan Policy H3 requires the provision of on-site affordable housing as part of larger market housing schemes of 11 or more units varying by location from 35% - 50%. In addition, smaller market housing schemes of 6-10 units within the Cotswolds AONB are required to make a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing within the District. The policy also addresses the issue of housing mix and the provision of affordable housing in rural areas including through rural exception sites. By providing additional guidance on the implementation of these requirements, the AH SPD seeks to set out a range of options and requirements to secure delivery of successful affordable housing schemes across the District that meet the housing needs of our changing population.

Options for delivery are presented including criteria for identifying qualifying sites; the size of affordable homes needed, the preferred tenure mix, rural exception sites and self and custom build schemes. Delivery is addressed through requirements relating to design criteria, accessibility and adaptability, space standards, zero carbon homes and modern methods of construction. Specific delivery mechanisms are articulated including housing options for the Armed Forces and also Key Workers and Community Led Housing.

Finally, exploration of two new routes to affordable housing in the District are presented:

- A) *The Blenheim Approach:* WODC is working closely with Blenheim Estate on an innovative model for delivering an increased level of affordable housing at between 60 – 80% of market rental costs. This model has been successfully implemented in Long Hanborough and will also be offered on their other sites for development at Woodstock East. It is the intention of Blenheim to retain ownership of the rental properties so they can be held in perpetuity for local people, especially those within the key worker categories.
- B) *Partnerships with Legacy Landowners:* WODC is also interested in partnering with other legacy landowners to accelerate delivery of affordable housing in the district and the AH SPD invites those landowners (particularly in smaller rural settlements) who are considering development as part of their long term legacy planning to engage with them to explore the scope for delivering affordable housing through rural exception sites.

Further to the achievement of the AH SPD, progress towards the delivery of Shared Ownership Affordable Housing in the district has been made. In partnership with the Oxfordshire Growth Deal and Heylo Housing, WODC has been able to develop a programme whereby 43 homes will be made

available as shared ownership rather than them being sold on the open market as originally intended. Heylo Housing are a Registered Provider; who are able to negotiate bulk acquisition of new homes from developers for use as shared ownership housing.

In 2020-21 374 new affordable homes have been completed in the District, far greater than the Local Plan identified need of 274. It is anticipated that this target will again be exceeded in 2021-22. In addition to this the Council is exploring a range of housing products for existing and upcoming developments to broaden the range of Low Cost Home Ownership products available. These include [Discount Market Sale](#), [Build to Rent](#), and [Rent to Buy](#).

The Council is working directly with Blenheim Estates to bring forward strategic sites and rural exception schemes that propose low carbon development and additional affordable homes. It is also working with other landowning organisations who are seeking to develop and manage their own affordable housing stock and with specialists and co-housing groups to bring forward self-build co-housing on large strategic development sites. Also in partnership, the Council is collaborating with Parish Council's and Registered Providers to bring forward smaller schemes to help meet local need for affordable housing.

Within the West Oxfordshire Local Plan there is a requirement for sites of over 100 homes to provide suitable [self-build/custom finish plots](#). Self-build is also promoted through a Council maintained [self-build register](#) which can be accessed on the Council website and additional guidance is provided in the aforementioned Affordable Housing SPD.

In terms of fulfilling the Council's obligations to meet the accommodation needs of Gypsy and Travelling Communities, two planning consents have been given to intensify the use of two existing sites in Minster Lovell and Bampton to provide more accommodation for this group.

### What's on the Horizon?

- Adoption of Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document late Summer 2021.
- The Council is working with Registered Providers to assist and also partner with a Registered Provider Housing Company planning for strategic sites that will provide 100% affordable schemes. Year 2021/22 will see delivery of additional affordable homes that have been funded using Oxfordshire Growth Deal funds (facilitated by WODC), and in some cases with S106 receipts. These will include Extra Care and General Needs apartments and houses for affordable rental and shared ownership at: Rockhill, Chipping Norton; Lavender Place, Bampton and additional shared ownership properties in Witney and Minster Lovell. Delivery will continue on further schemes beyond 2022.
- WODC has commissioned a study into the potential for a 'living rent' from Oxford Brookes University that will identify how it may benefit certain groups of people in need of affordable housing. Once these findings are known, Officers will work on incorporating these into guidance/policy.

## Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance: Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council

### Recovery Theme: Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance

Achievement of the aforementioned 5 Council Plan priorities are dependent on the Council having a sound financial footing. It has been the case for some time that local government finances have been constrained in part by local government finance grant cuts and increasing service costs pressures. These have been further amplified by the pandemic (greater draw on Council services, extraordinary service costs and lost revenue streams) and this, coupled with future limitations to incentive based funding such as the New Homes Bonus, present the Council with a challenge to match delivery ambitions to our revenue stream.

An [Investment Strategy](#) was approved by Full Council in October 2020 which sets out a range of tools and activities to help improve the general approach to matching income and expenditure across the activities of the District Council. The strategy starts from a premise that there is a significant funding gap that needs to be closed and capital investment is a major tool available to the Council to achieve this so long as it covers the revenue implications of that investment and makes an appropriate return. Capital Investment provides a route to delivering the ambitious programme of the Council set out in the Council Plan.

The priorities for the Investment Strategy were identified as:-

- Climate Change and Green Infrastructure
- Economic Development and Jobs Infrastructure
- Housing Infrastructure

The strategy identified the need to provide a revenue return in the order of 3.5% above borrowing costs in the long term to ensure that the investments were financially sustainable and helped bridge an emerging forecast budget gap. An amount of £15m was set aside in the 2021/22 capital programme to support the strategy.

To date two acquisitions have been completed in addition to an item that was approved prior to the investment programme.

- A property to provide emergency housing accommodation was purchased with a net cost to the Capital Programme of just over £1m. This will not only deliver 16 units of emergency accommodation but will also deliver a return on capital of in excess of 12%.
- An opportunity arose to marry the freehold of land the Council already owns with some industrial units on land in a growth area of the district. This provided a strategic opportunity for the Council to increase its control over the site which will provide future redevelopment opportunities. The investment of circa £2.5m will not only secure the site and support jobs in the district but also deliver a return on capital of approaching 10%.
- The Council invested £2m in a solar project within the district which delivers both renewable energy and local community benefits. The loan delivers a return on capital of 3.85% in addition to the climate and community benefits.

Taken together these three items deliver strongly on each of the Council priorities and also contribute almost £375,000 to closing the revenue funding gap set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Turning to modernisation of Council service delivery, provision of digital options for businesses and residents as a means of offering more choice for accessing services have been progressed in this first year of the Council Plan. Customers can access Council services more conveniently via a range of online self-serve tools, whilst still having access to an advisor on the phone or face to face if preferred.

Central to this digitalisation of Council services is the Salesforce platform which has enabled the following:

- Salesforce BOT available 24/7 to answer customer queries or signposts to necessary information. It can transfer the enquiry to Customer Services if unanswered. 80% of all enquiries have been answered by the BOT without any need for transfer to Customer Services demonstrating efficiency. The BOT's performance will be continually monitored and its configuration modified as new services are added to its functionality.
- Salesforce Live Chat capability launched on the Council's website allowing customers to interact in real time with Customer Services. This was particularly valuable in supporting the CS team to handle the Covid-19 demand as well as particular events such as the change to the waste contract.
- Support the administration of the Discretionary Business Grants under Covid-19. An online form/flow was built in less than 2 weeks to perform eligibility checks so we only received valid grant applications. Salesforce was used by both Customer Services and back office staff to process applications and create necessary payment files for progressing through the General Ledger and our BACS payment systems.

The Business Grants system built in Salesforce will continue to evolve to keep pace with Government changes to grants. Of particular note is the evolution from single payment functionality to allow multiple payments per application. In total £39,595,446 was paid out in the 2020-21 financial year to local businesses.

The roll out of Civica system has enabled modernisation of our Revenues and Benefits system. This will help to streamline processes and improve efficiency by having one annual billing and one benefit uprating process. Additionally, Civica has functionality for customers to be able to self-serve.

### **What's on the Horizon?**

- Council to take a decision on integrating Salesforce with a new digital Waste Management System (Yotta) to enable monitoring of missed bin collections and a means for customer requests for replacement containers. Ubico (waste contractor) is able to via use of tablets in their service trucks to update progress of rounds and identify any exceptions, e.g. households who have not presented their bins for collection.



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT:  
**January 2021 - March 2021**

## KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS LIST

Finance and Management O & S Committee	Economic and Social O & S Committee	Environment O & S Committee
Customer satisfaction – face to face	Number of households living in emergency accommodation for under 28 days	Number of fly tips collected
Customer satisfaction – web	Number of households living in emergency accommodation for over 28 days	Percentage of fly tips that result in an enforcement action taking place
Customer satisfaction – telephone	Number of Long Term Empty properties	Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within one working day
Customer satisfaction - email	Percentage of major planning applications determined	Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales
Percentage of calls responded to within 20 seconds	Percentage of minor planning applications determined	Residual household waste per household (kg)
Percentage of telephone calls abandoned by the customer	Percentage of other planning applications determined	(Cumulative) Percentage of household waste recycled
(Cumulative) Percentage of council tax collected	Percentage of planning appeals allowed	(Cumulative) Percentage of household waste by waste streams
(Cumulative) Percentage of business rates collected	(Cumulative) Number of affordable homes delivered	Number of missed bin per 100,000 scheduled collections
(Cumulative) Average number of days taken to process new housing benefit claims	Percentage of land charge searches dispatched within 10 working days	Total hours spent undertaking on and off-street parking enforcement visits
(Cumulative) Average number of days taken to process housing benefit change of circumstances	Number of visits to leisure centres	
(Cumulative) Percentage of housing benefit overpayment due to LA error/Admin delay	Number of gym memberships	

## A note on performance benchmarking

Benchmarking can be a useful tool for driving improvement; by comparing our performance with other similar organisations, we can start a discussion about what good performance might look like, and why there might be variations, as well as learning from other organisations about how they operate (process benchmarking).

A selection of publicly available benchmarking data has been included in the 2020-21 Q4 performance report on a trial basis. Two comparator groups that are commonly used to benchmark Councils' performance are: all shire district councils and CIPFA Nearest Neighbours (NN). The CIPFA NN Model is based on family groups; it adopts a scientific approach to measuring the similarity between councils taking into account a range of demographic and socio-economic characteristics. The standard model provides the 15 nearest neighbours to each council. In contrast, the all shire districts comparator group is a much larger dataset of 192 councils, and there will inevitably be a much greater variation between the councils in this group.

When we embark on performance benchmarking, it is important to understand that we are often looking at one aspect of performance i.e. the level of performance achieved. Although the CIPFA NN Model groups councils on the basis of similarity, these factors are external and based on 'place'. The model does not take into account how services are resourced or compare in terms of quality or level of service delivered, for example, how satisfied are residents and customers? Furthermore, each council is unique with its own vision, aim and priorities, and services operate within this context.

Therefore, the benchmarking data provided in this report should be viewed as a 'guide' and as a starting point for discussion. It is important to understand performance within context, and there will be a variety of internal factors that determine performance including costs, workloads and quality.

### Note

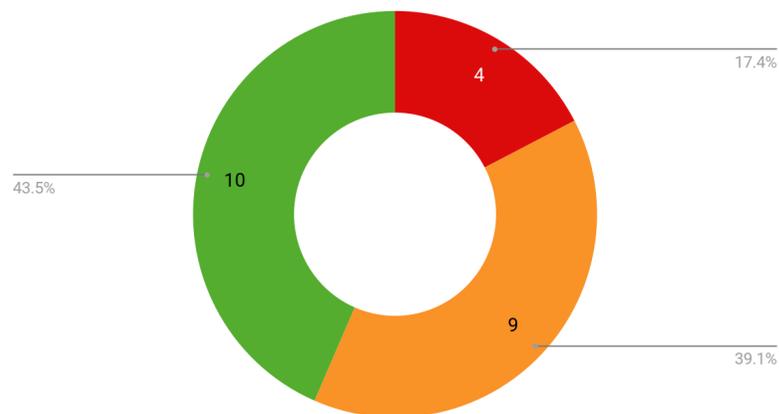
The data has been extracted from LG Inform, a benchmarking tool, which contains a range of routinely published data. It should be noted that:

- the extracted data may differ from the Council's own data;
- the median and top (best 25%) quartile lines are based on annual outturns but applied to the quarterly data;;
- 2020/21 benchmarks are not yet available, so the previous year's benchmarks have been used

# KEY PERFORMANCE METRICS

## At a glance...

Summary of Performance



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### OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Many services have been impacted by Covid-19, and have had to either cease or find new ways of working during multiple national lockdowns. Other services have experienced higher workloads to meet customer/client demand or are supporting communities and businesses which are affected by the pandemic.

Some services continue to be significantly impacted by Covid-19 such as business rates collection, leisure facilities and food safety inspections. In addition, the implementation of a new revenues and benefits system combined with year end activities, has placed additional burdens on the service.

To comply with Covid-19 guidance and restrictions, the majority of staff are still working from home. Although many services have been able to deliver services 'virtually' and customer satisfaction for services delivered by phone remains high, other services such as Planning have found the process less efficient

Indicator	Status
Customer satisfaction - phones	Green
Customer satisfaction - F2F	n/a
Customer satisfaction - website	Orange
Customer satisfaction - email	no target set
% calls responded within 20 secs	Red
% abandoned calls	Red
CT collection rate	Orange
NNDR collection rate	Orange
Average days to process HB new claims	Red
Average days to process HB change events	Green
% HB overpayment	Orange
Households in Emergency Accommodation under 28 days	Orange
Households in Emergency Accommodation over 28 days	Orange
% major applications determined within time	Green
% minor applications determined within time	Green
% others applications determined within time	Red
% planning appeals allowed	Green
Affordable homes delivered	Green
% land charge searches dispatched within time	Green
% high risk notifications assessed within time	Green
% high risk food premises inspected within time	Orange
Residual waste per household (kg)	Green
% overall recycling rate	Green
Missed bins per 100,000	Orange
Leisure visits	no target set
Gym memberships	no target set
Parking enforcement hours	Orange

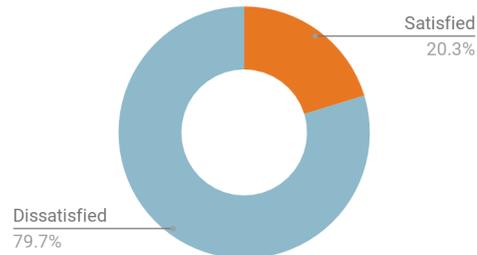
# CUSTOMER SERVICE

## Customer satisfaction

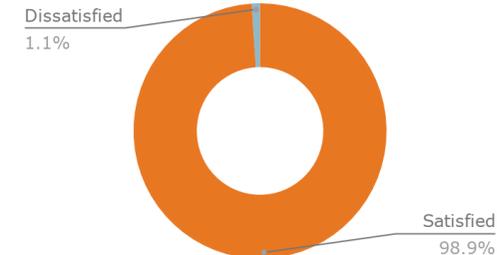
Face to face - no surveys due to Covid19



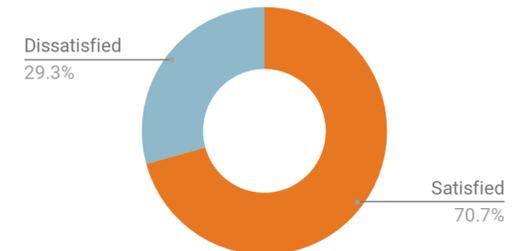
Website - 148 respondents



Phone - 1023 respondents

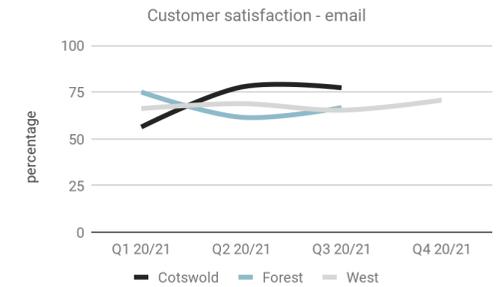
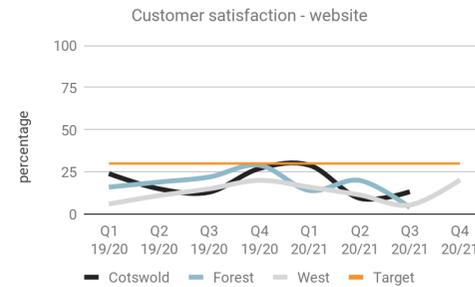
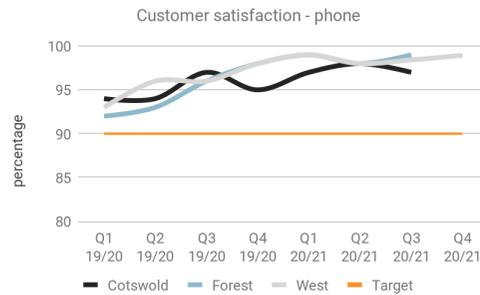


Email - 266 respondents



## What's the trend?

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### OBSERVATION

The nation emerged from the third lockdown on the 29 March 2021 in phased stages. Although Woodgreen and the Town Centre shop re-opened to customers from 12 April 2021, footfall is currently low. Satisfaction surveys for services delivered by phone, website and email continue to be conducted.

Satisfaction for services delivered by the Council's website has shown improvements this quarter. Projects to review web content and improve the customer experience are in progress. However, the number of responses to the website survey, although up on the previous quarter at 345 (from 56) remains an extremely small proportion of the 594,893 visitors despite the process for rating the website and leaving feedback being simple. It is likely that the results from the survey are unrepresentative. An analysis of the survey data was completed to understand the issues and to determine whether satisfaction is with service provision or the website. A significant proportion of the qualitative feedback was found to be about service provision or were categorised as user error e.g. mistyping a postcode rather than comments about content or website functionality improvements. Therefore, this indicator has been set to 'Amber'. A new framework to measure the effectiveness of the Council's website and gather customer feedback is planned.

Satisfaction ratings for services delivered by phone continue to be high.

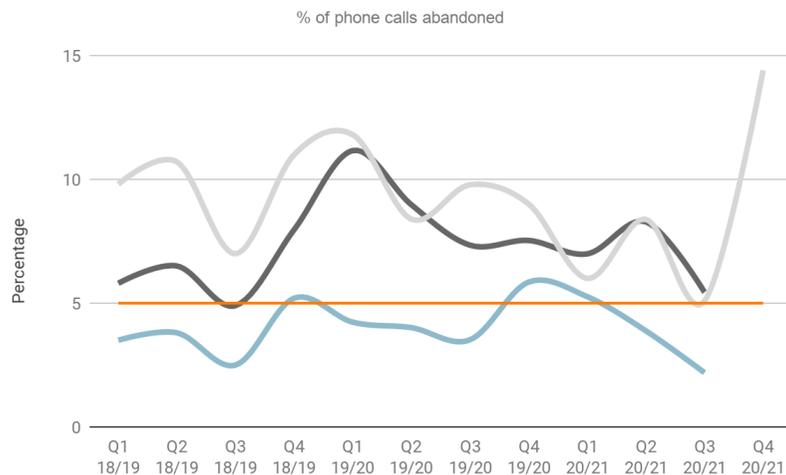
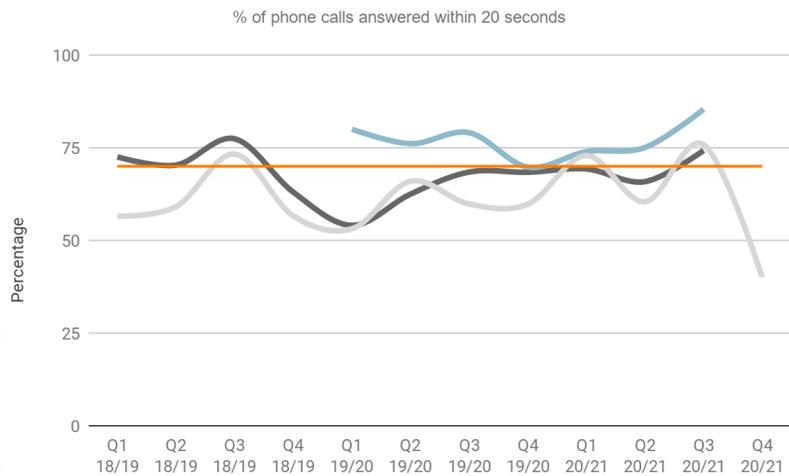
## Telephone calls - response and abandonment

Target

Cotswold

Forest of Dean

West Oxfordshire



### OBSERVATION

The service is currently reviewing its indicators and targets in preparation for 2021/22 to ensure that they are appropriate to customers' needs; so for example, ensuring that satisfaction for our services remains high while also taking into account the benefits of channel shift and providing more options for accessing our services.

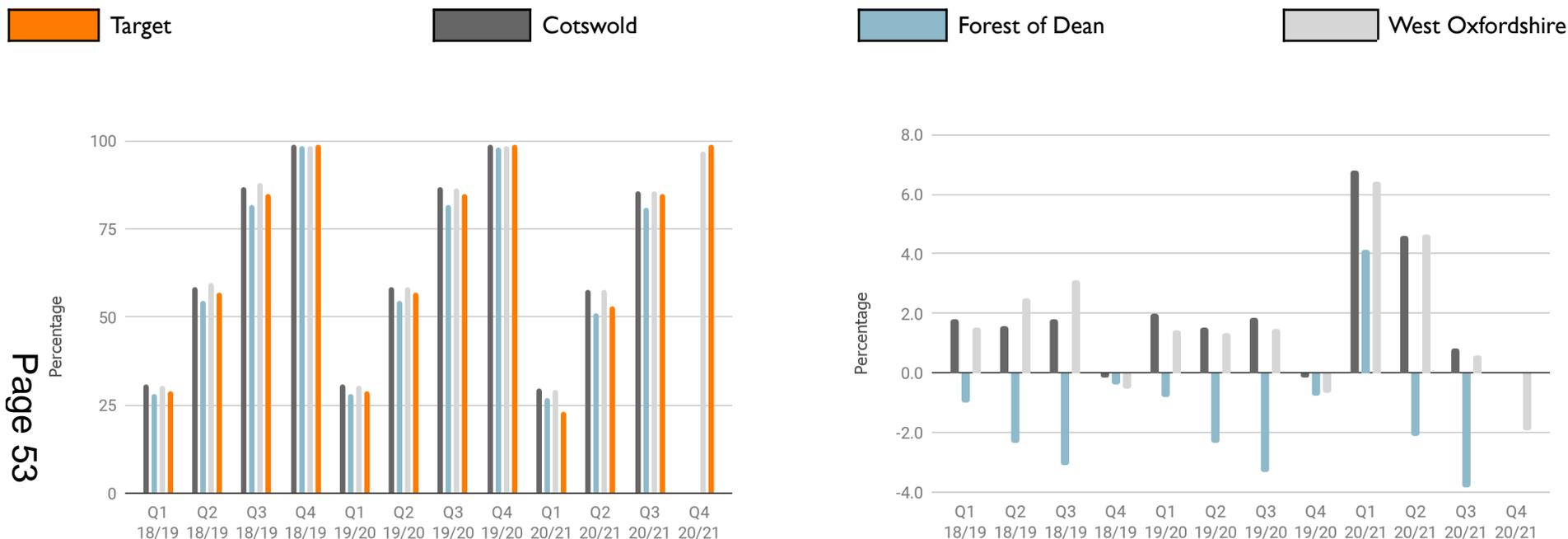
Workloads are generally higher in Q4 due to normal annual billing processes. However, performance has reduced significantly due to staff turnover during the quarter and higher call volumes related to Covid-19, for example, responding to Covid-19 business grants calls and supporting calls to the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, as well as taking garden waste payments and queries.

In addition, the time spent on a call increased as staff supported calls from revenues and benefit customers which involved the manual collection of information while the new system was being implemented. The call abandon rate increased due to the service managing call volumes by revising call waiting messages which provided advice /sign post customers to alternative ways to complete their transactions. Advisors are working to reduce the backlog of voicemails and emails that have built up; and recruitment to vacant posts has just taken place.

Note: a high abandon rate is not a sign of poor performance as customers may abandon their calls for many reasons including completing their transactions on the Council's website

## Revenues and Benefit

### (Cumulative) Percentage of council tax collected & the difference between the percentage of council tax collected and the target



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#### OBSERVATION:

At the end of Q4, the collection rate was just over one percentage point lower than previous years.

Due to the impact of Covid-19, all recovery action was paused initially following government guidance and Member decision; and the service worked with customers to re-align payment instalments. The service had the go-ahead at the end of September 2020 to re-commence recovery actions such as reminders and final payment letters. Some householders' income will have been impacted by job loss and furlough; the service is contacting customers by phone and email, as well as including a letter with reminders to encourage customers to contact the Council if they are experiencing problems with council tax payments. Furthermore, those residents in receipt of council tax support received an additional payment to their accounts from the government's Covid-19 Council Tax hardship fund.

Currently, the Magistrates Courts are not holding any liability order hearings which will mean the Council is unable to enforce any debts incurred in 2020/21. The debt will be rolled over into the new financial year, and added to residents' new payment schedules; and recovery action will continue

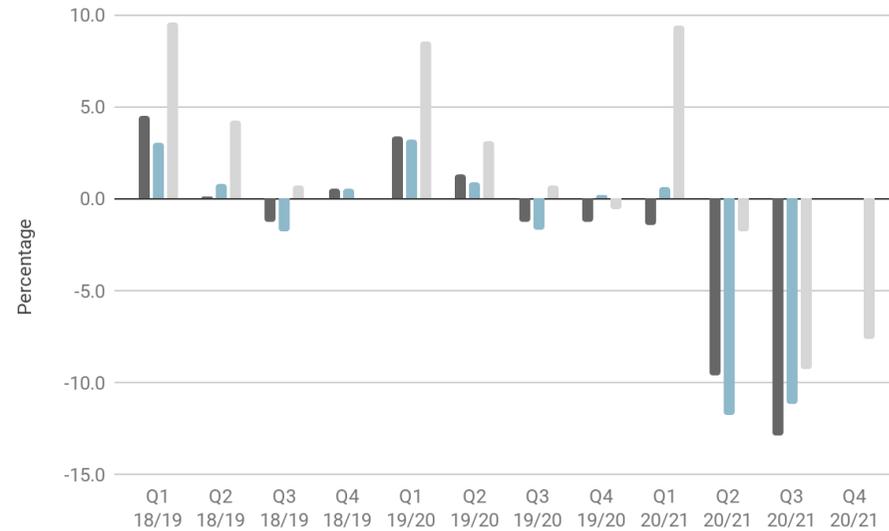
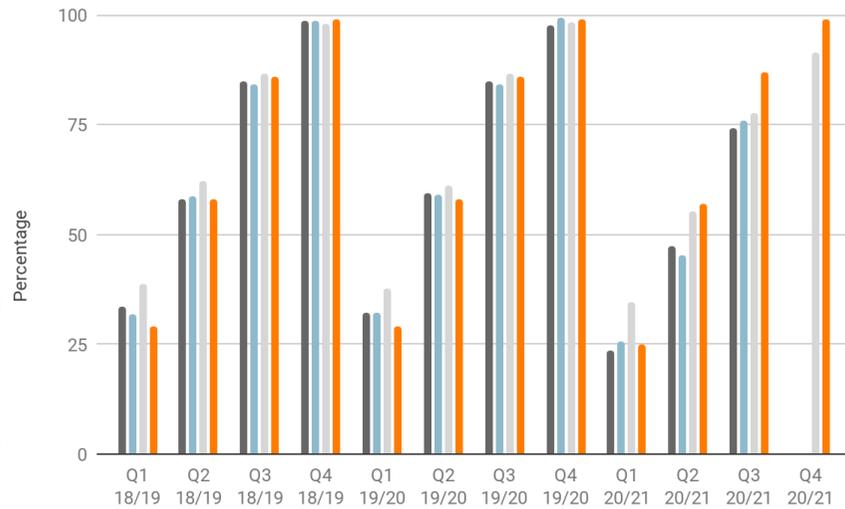
**(Cumulative) Percentage of business rates collected & the difference between the percentage of business rates collected and the target**

Target

Cotswold

Forest of Dean

West Oxfordshire



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**OBSERVATION:**

The collection rate at the end of Q4 was around six percentage points lower than previous year; Covid-19 is having a major impact on business rate collection figures throughout the country.

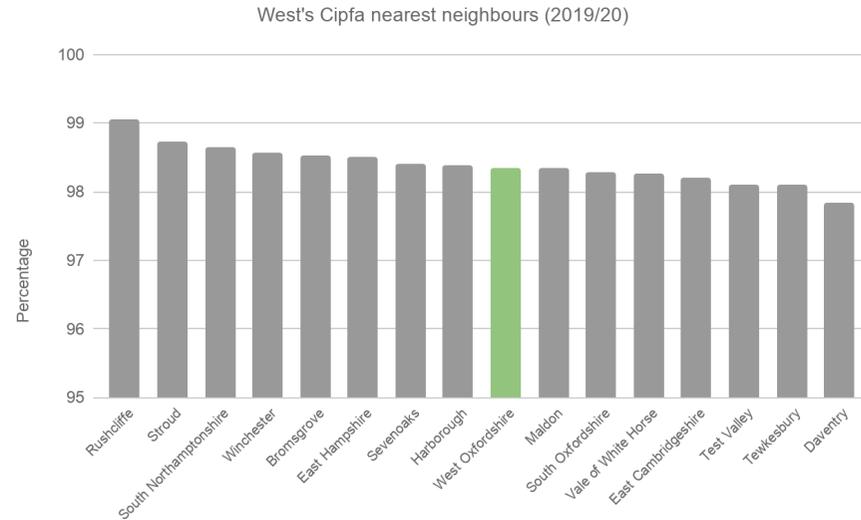
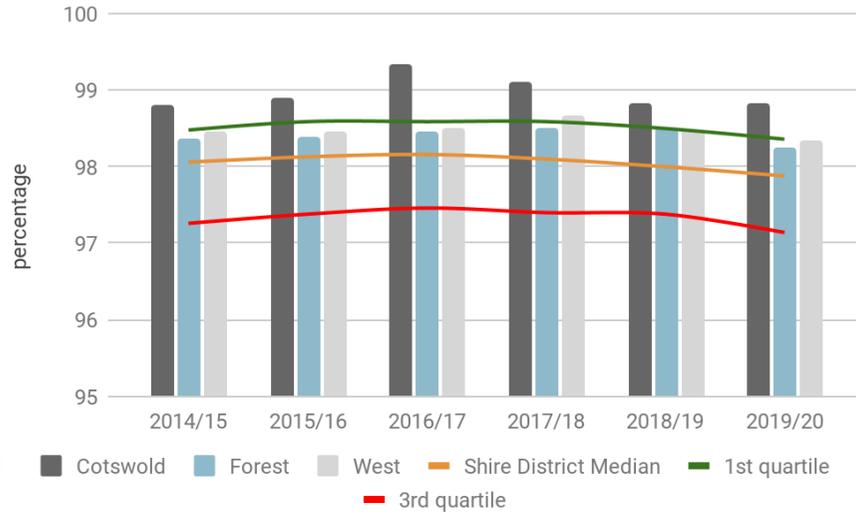
Due to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions and three national lockdowns, many businesses had to close for several months of the year or operate under restrictions. Following an initial pause in undertaking recovery action, the service is sending out reminders, phoning and emailing businesses to encourage them to contact the Council so that we can support them via manageable repayment plans. Currently, the Magistrates Courts are not holding any liability order hearings which will mean the Council is unable to enforce any debts incurred in 2020/21, so the debt will be rolled forward into the next financial year, and added to the new payment instalments for 2021-22.

Government has gone some way in helping certain businesses with 100% business rate relief, but there are still those businesses which have seen an impact on their out turn which have not received any assistance and are therefore struggling financially. A further tranche of business grants became available to cover the second and third lockdowns, and the Council is continuing to distribute a number of grants that are available to eligible businesses.

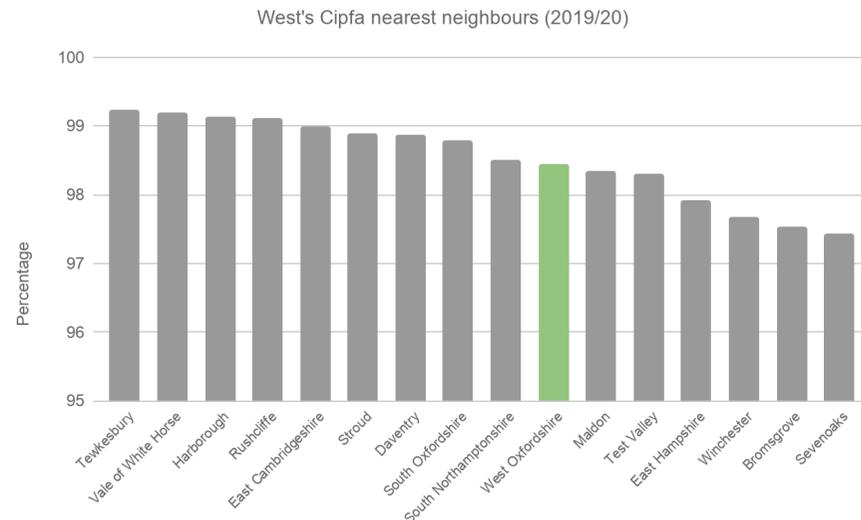
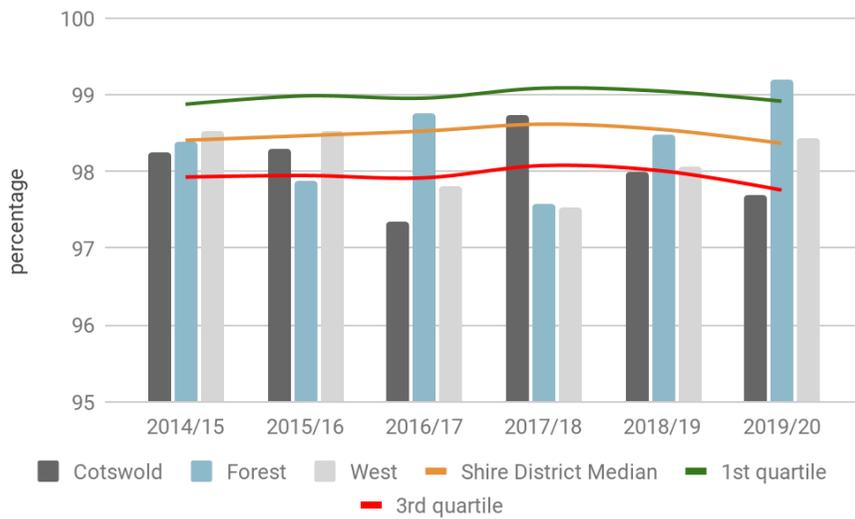
Note: central government funding to cover business rates relief is not included in the outturn

# Benchmarks against all Shire Districts and Cipfa nearest neighbours for council tax collection rates and business rates collection rates

## Percentage of council tax collected



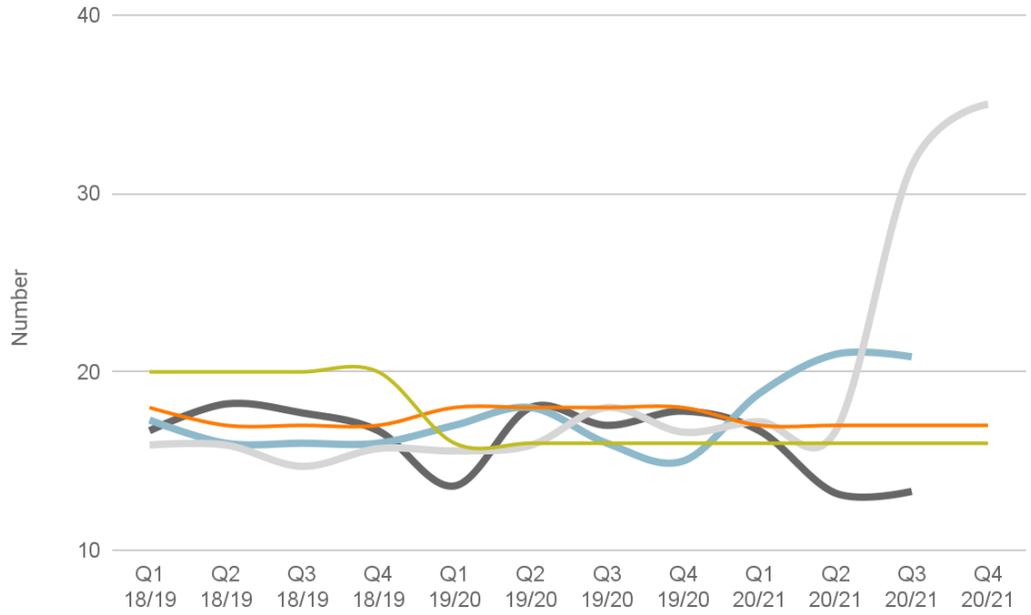
## Percentage of business rates collected



**(Cumulative) Average number of days taken to process new housing benefit claims**

Target
  Cotswold
  Forest of Dean
  West Oxfordshire
  Shire Districts' Median

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**OBSERVATION:**

At the end of Q4, processing times have increased significantly due to the implementation of a new revenues and benefits system on 4 February. Prior to 'go live', there was a period of downtime between switching the old system off and the new system on, which created a backlog of applications which staff have been working through. During Q4, a range of end of year activities are administered including the benefit uprating and rent increases which require system parameter changes and testing, which has placed additional burdens on staff.

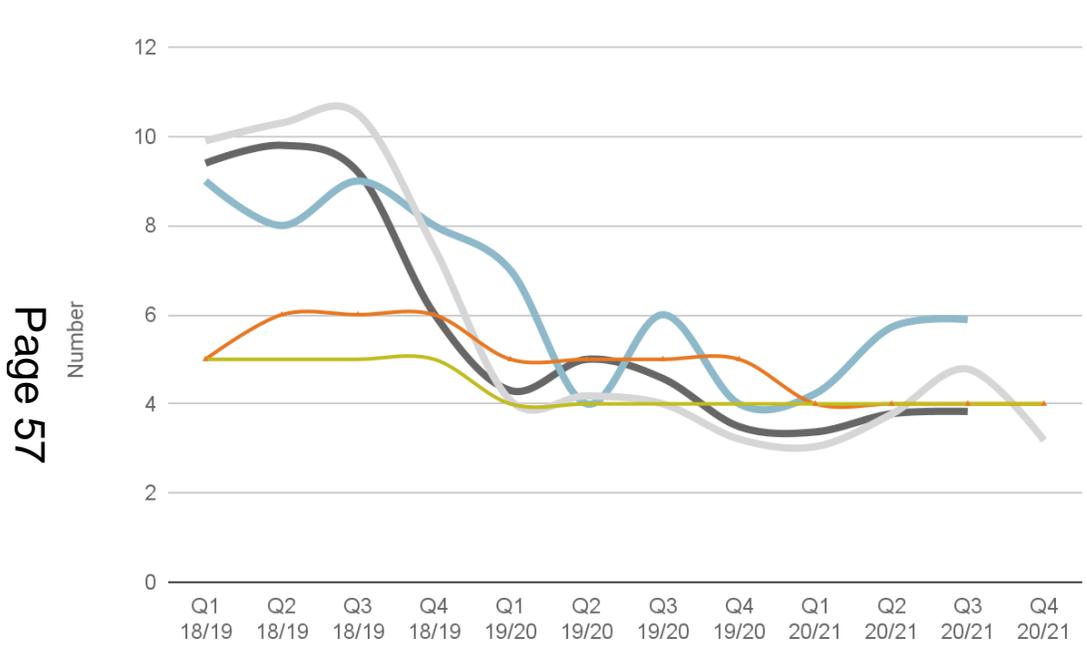
Furthermore, capacity has been reduced in the service as staff have taken time out to train Customer Services Advisors, while other officers have supported 'Track and Trace'. However, there are benefits of the new system including the ability to make online applications, and once the open portal is implemented later in the year, the back office system will be automatically updated.

Although performance was off target due to many external factors, assurances can be given that not one claimant suffered any financial loss or experienced any threat to their new or ongoing tenancy. If there was any threat to the claimant because of delays in administering their claim, the Council would have provided an emergency payment.

To manage workloads, the service has accessed support on demand from an external source.

Note: due to the significant reduction (over 70%) in new housing benefit claims since the implementation of Universal Credit in November 2017 in West Oxfordshire District, this indicator has become obsolete. It is proposed that a new indicator to measure Council Tax Support processing times is introduced as the majority of Universal Credit claims will have an associated CTS claim

**(Cumulative) Average number of days taken to process housing benefit change of circumstances**



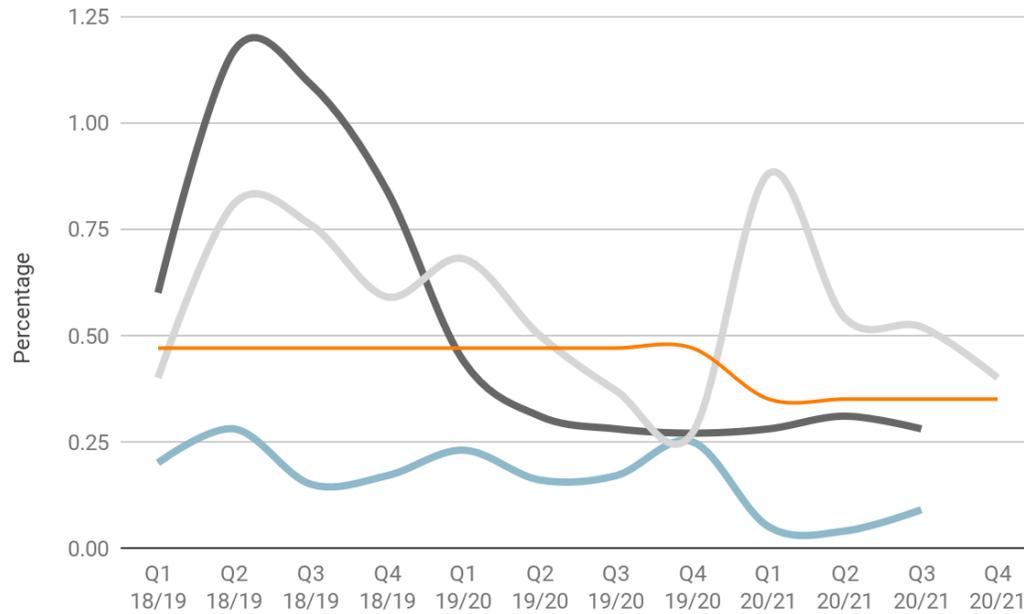
**OBSERVATION:**

Despite the additional workloads associated with the implementation of a new revenues and benefits system and year end activities, performance has come in on target at the end of Q4.

Some of the annual changes such as rent increases are simple to process and can be applied in bulk which has helped to reduce the average processing time

Page 57

**(Cumulative) Percentage of housing benefit overpayment due to LA error/Admin delay**



**OBSERVATION:**

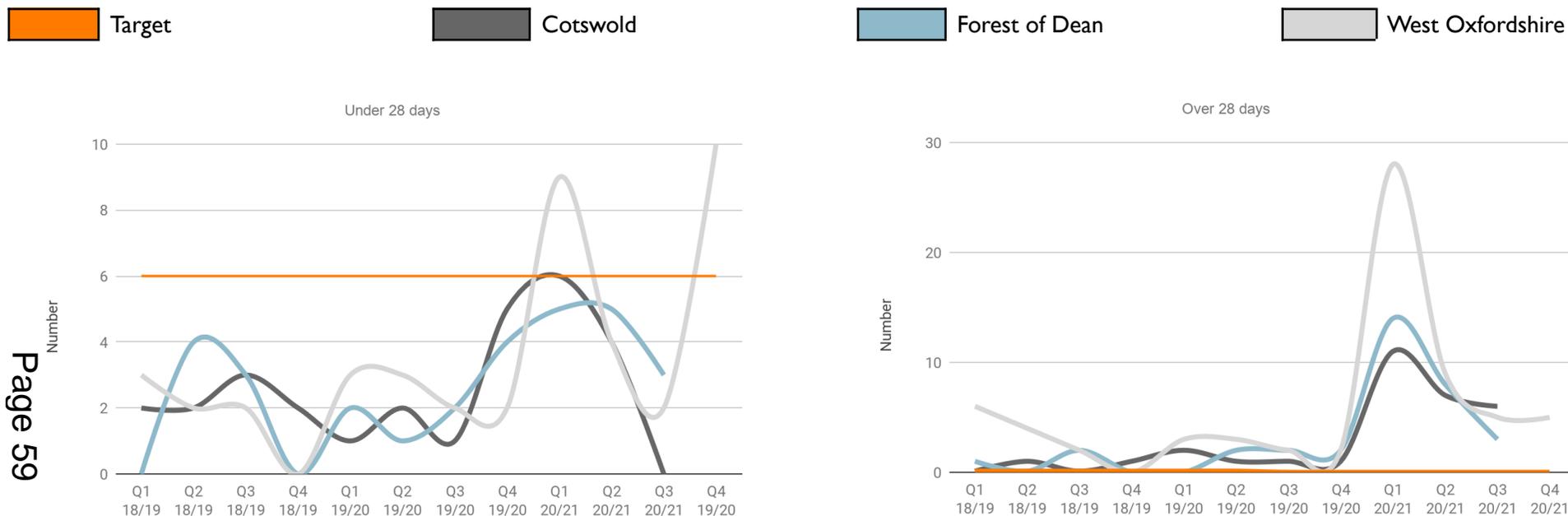
The service continues to involve a number of staff in quality assurance. Due to the high volume of change of circumstances, a sampling approach is taken, and areas which have high error rates such as calculation of earnings, are targeted

There was a small number of errors relating to high value overpayments in Q4 of the previous year which were amended in Q1. We were expecting the spike to flatten out over the course of the year, and to achieve the annual target; however, the backlog created by the implementation of the new revenues and benefits system resulted in an increase in admin delay.

The bulk processing of some end of year changes in Q4 such as rent increases has helped to bring the outturn closer to the target

## Housing Support

### (Snapshot) Number of households living in emergency accommodation for under 28 days & over 28 days



Page 59

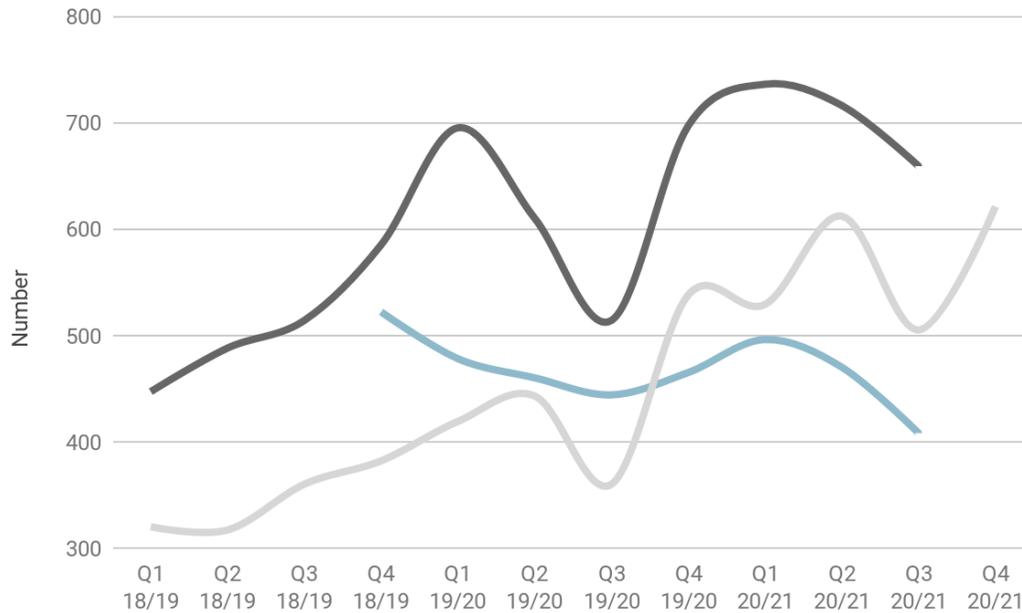
#### OBSERVATION:

At the beginning of the first lockdown, councils were required to place all clients who are rough sleeping or at risk of imminent homelessness regardless of priority need who have approached the Council, into emergency accommodation, which resulted in a spike in numbers.

The number of households living in emergency accommodation started to decrease as exit plans were created to move households into more secure tenancies including private rented, housing association, and supported accommodation. In addition, some households and rough sleepers chose to leave emergency accommodation.

In Q4, the number of homelessness presentations started to increase again as the nation entered the third lockdown, and as a result of the cold weather. The majority of the households in emergency accommodation over 28 days tend to be single people affected by the pandemic (rather than in priority need) who are difficult to move on due to the lack of one bedroom accommodation. The Oxfordshire councils are working together to the same standards; and hostels are helping to move people on creating greater fluidity and throughput

**(Snapshot) Number of Long Term Empty properties**



**OBSERVATION:**

Overall, the number of long term empty properties in the District is increasing which is likely to be due to a number of factors.

Initially, there was a pause in house moves which is likely to have contributed to the increase. In addition, no site visits to inspect properties were being undertaken by the LTE officer due to Covid-19.

The LTE post is responsible for monitoring properties and working with landlords to support them to bring their properties back into use. This post became vacant in September but has recently been recruited to. The new post will concentrate on those properties where the Council might be able to influence or take action, rather than on those properties that are being well maintained.

Cottsway has re-commenced the planned demolition of housing association properties, but there are still some retirement properties that have not sold

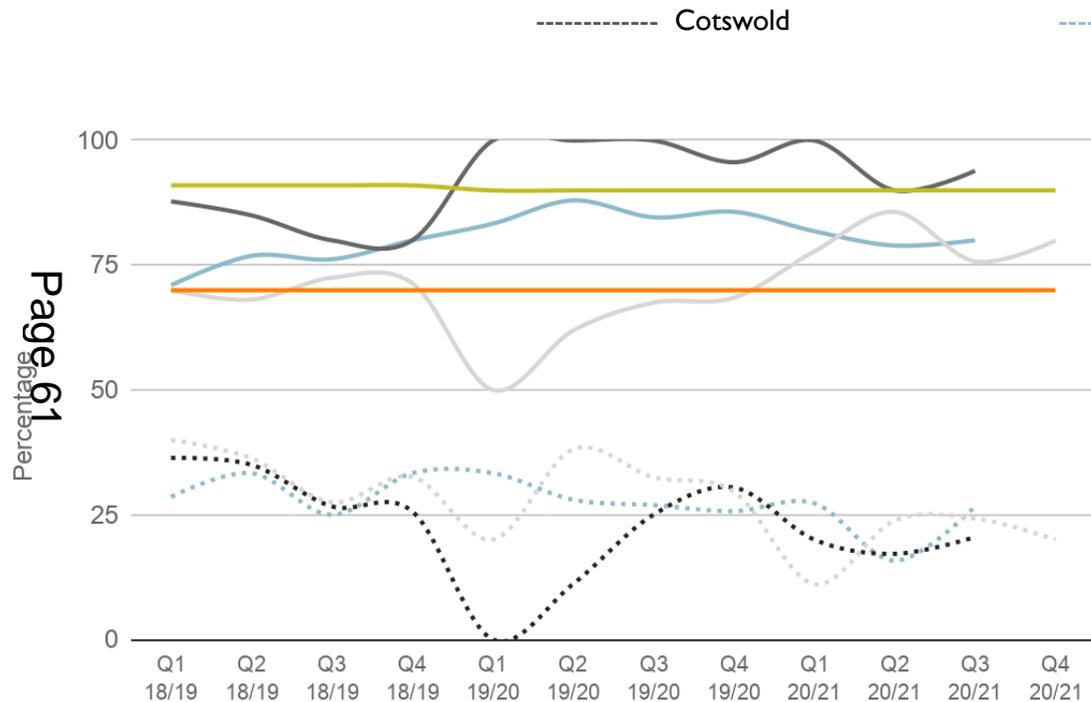
## Planning and Strategic Housing

### (Cumulative) Percentage of major planning applications determined

% of all applications completed within an agreed timeframe



% of all application completed within 13 weeks



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#### Note

The charts for the planning performance measures have been separated to demonstrate the number of applications that are completed within the set time frames and the number that are completed as a result of an agreed extension of time.

Extensions of times are often a result of consultees requesting changes to the scheme or because the consultee response is essential but has not been received within the timetable. They are also used where officers are working proactively with applicants to improve schemes and make developments acceptable

#### OBSERVATION:

Seven major applications were determined in the quarter; and 40 for the year compared to 54 for the same period a year ago.

The service has reported that the number of applications received over the summer and then throughout the rest of the year has been a record nationally and that this trend is reflected locally. The increasing numbers coming through combined with reduced efficiency in the planning process as a result of Covid-19 has created a backlog. The departure of two senior planners and a planner has placed additional pressure on the team which is already overstretched. Recruitment is in hand but performance is slipping, and recruitment of agency staff is under consideration to fill the gaps.

The Planning team has found home working and the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 has created additional burdens as not all aspects of this statutory process can be or are best achieved electronically. In addition, home working has reduced communication between officers, and therefore there is less support for officers which is affecting morale. Validating planning applications for accuracy has proved particularly problematic as a home based exercise as details of the application have to be cross checked against a number of plans and maps which can be achieved much easier using paper versions in the office. A new validation process was implemented over the Christmas/New Year at all three partner Council sites which should help to improve performance generally. Other tasks that are achieved more easily in the office include redacting and printing documents e.g. site notices.

The restrictions imposed by Covid-19 have resulted in additional preparation time required for committee meetings, and site visits which need to be unaccompanied and pre-arranged, often with a follow up online meeting or phone call.

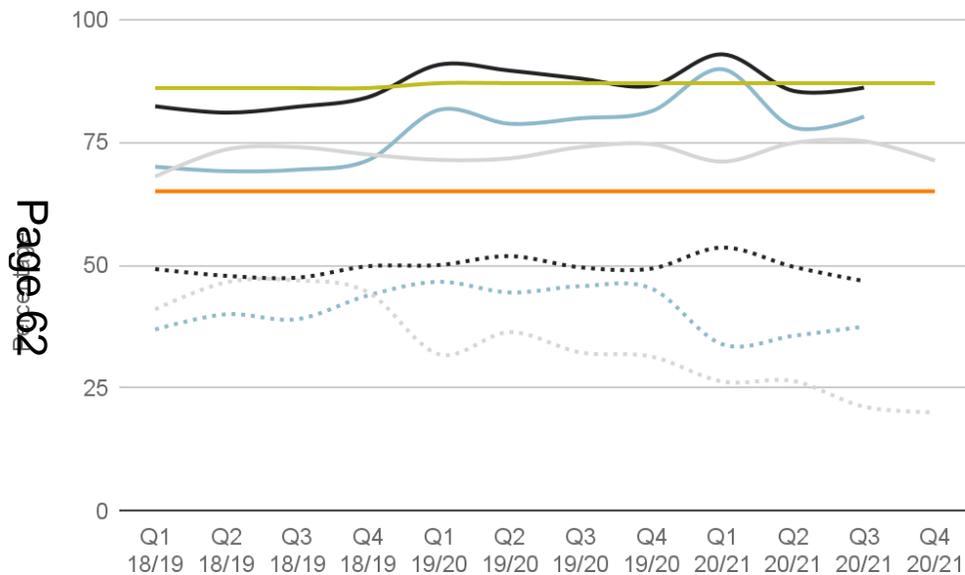
Some consultees such as the County and the Environment Agency are struggling to meet response target dates which is also impacting on determination times.

## (Cumulative) Percentage of minor planning applications determined

% of all applications completed within agreed timescales



% of all applications completed within 8 weeks



### OBSERVATION:

Eighty-four minor applications were determined in the quarter and 334 for the year compared to 382 for the previous year.

The challenging work conditions coupled with vacant planning posts and higher volumes of applications coming through has created a backlog which is impacting on performance. Planning officers are typically dealing with twice as many 'live' applications than in pre-covid times.

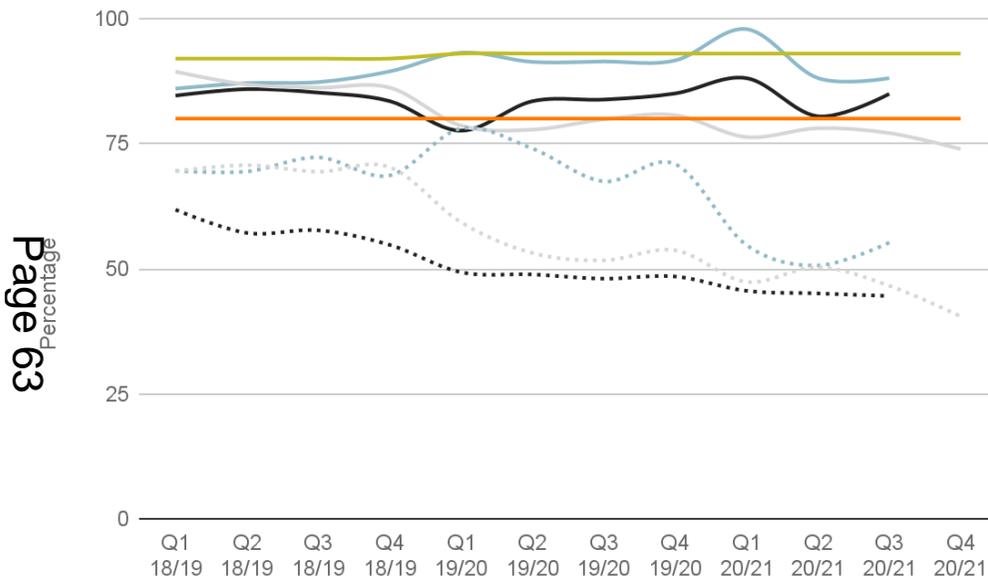
Registration/validation has proved particularly problematic as a home based exercise; although a new validation process was implemented at all three partner Council development management services over the Christmas/New Year period which once embedded should help increase resilience and performance generally. In addition, a number of improvement projects are scheduled which the Customer Experience Improvement Team (CEIT) will help deliver alongside the planning service. However, with such high workloads in the Planning service, the current focus for both the CEIT and the Planning teams is to clear the backlog of applications awaiting validation

## (Cumulative) Percentage of other planning applications determined

% of all applications completed within agreed timescales



% of all applications completed within 8 weeks



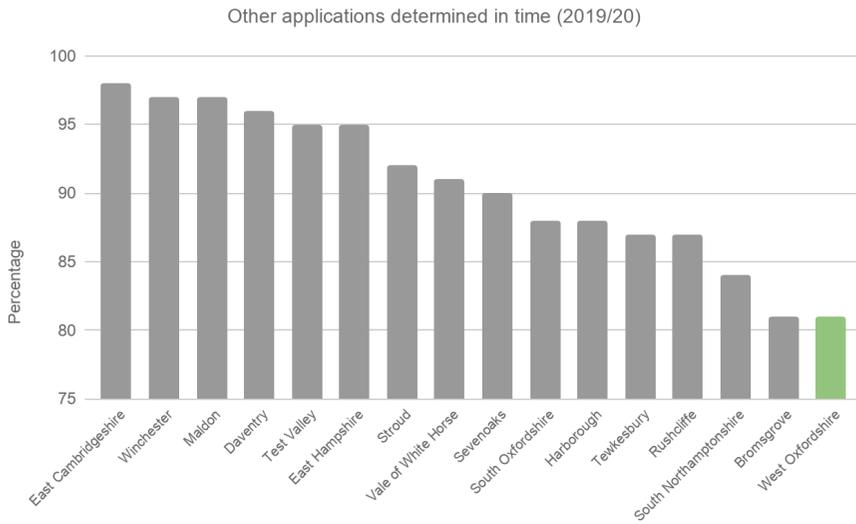
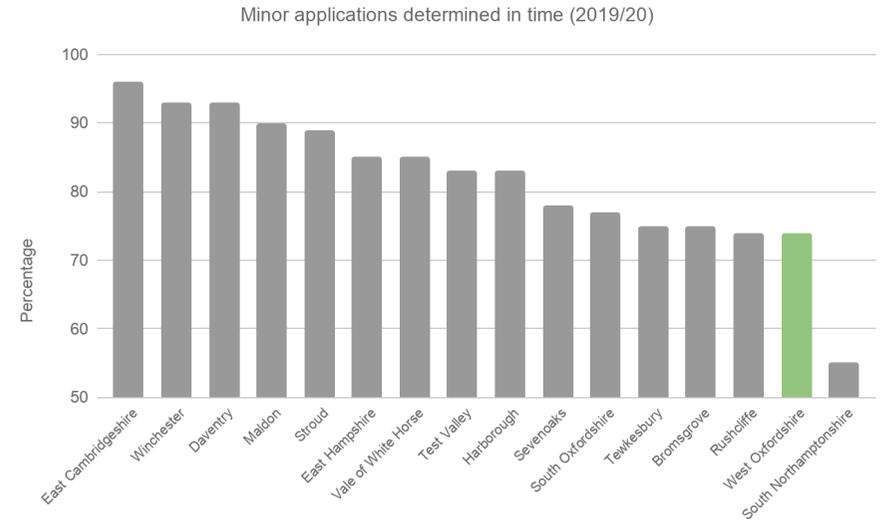
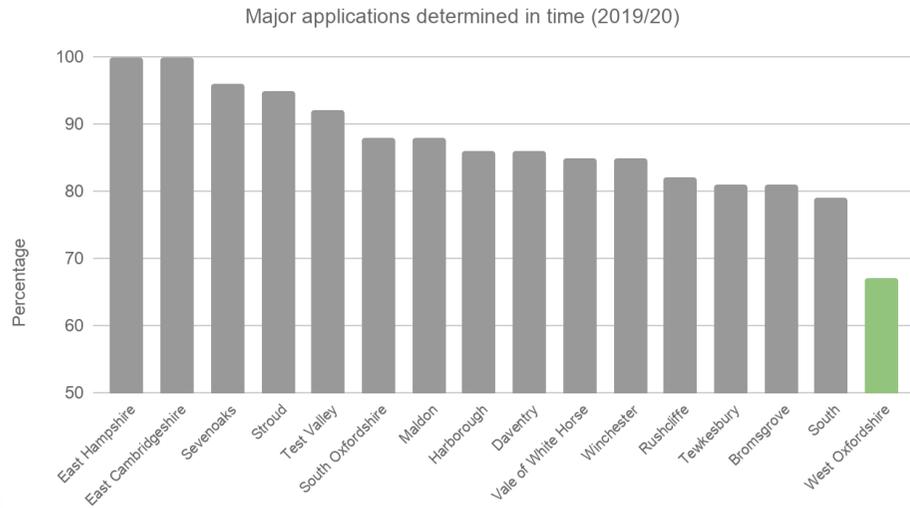
### OBSERVATION:

283 other applications were determined in the quarter and 991 for the year compared to 895 for the previous year.

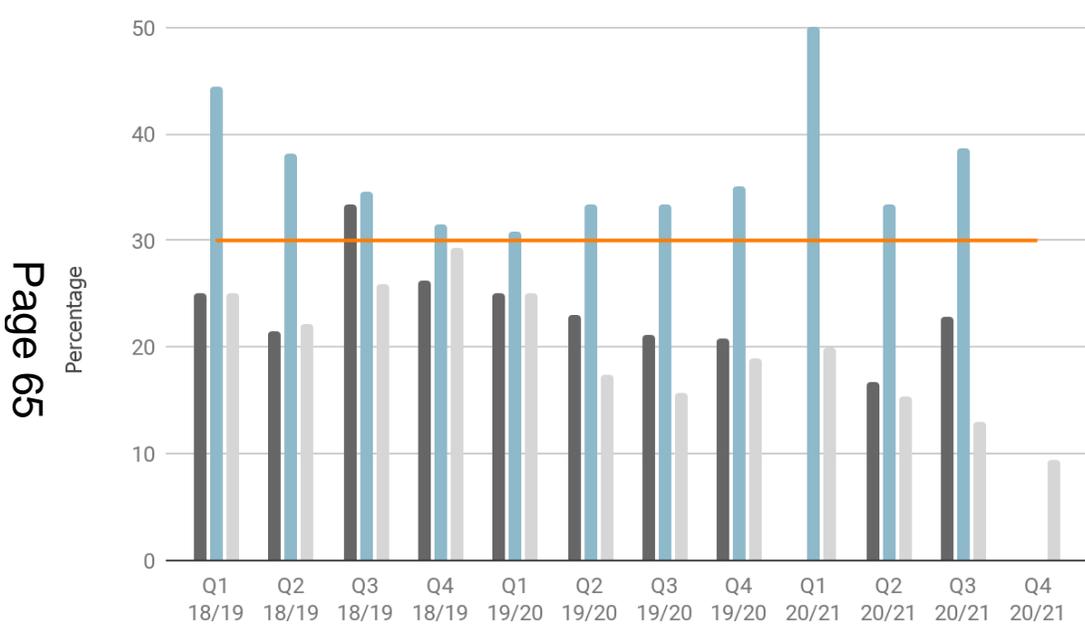
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## Benchmarks against Cipa nearest neighbours for % of planning application determined within agreed timescales

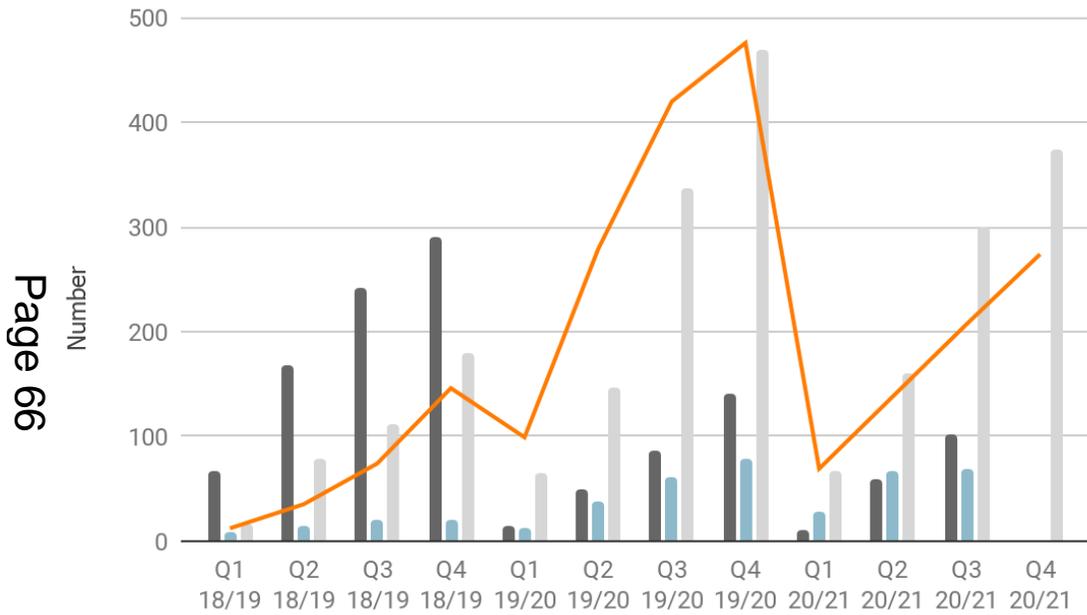


**(Cumulative) Percentage of planning appeals allowed**



**OBSERVATION:**  
 None of the fifteen planning appeals determined in Q4 were allowed.  
 During 2020-21, three out of 32 appeals were allowed

**(Cumulative) Number of affordable homes delivered**

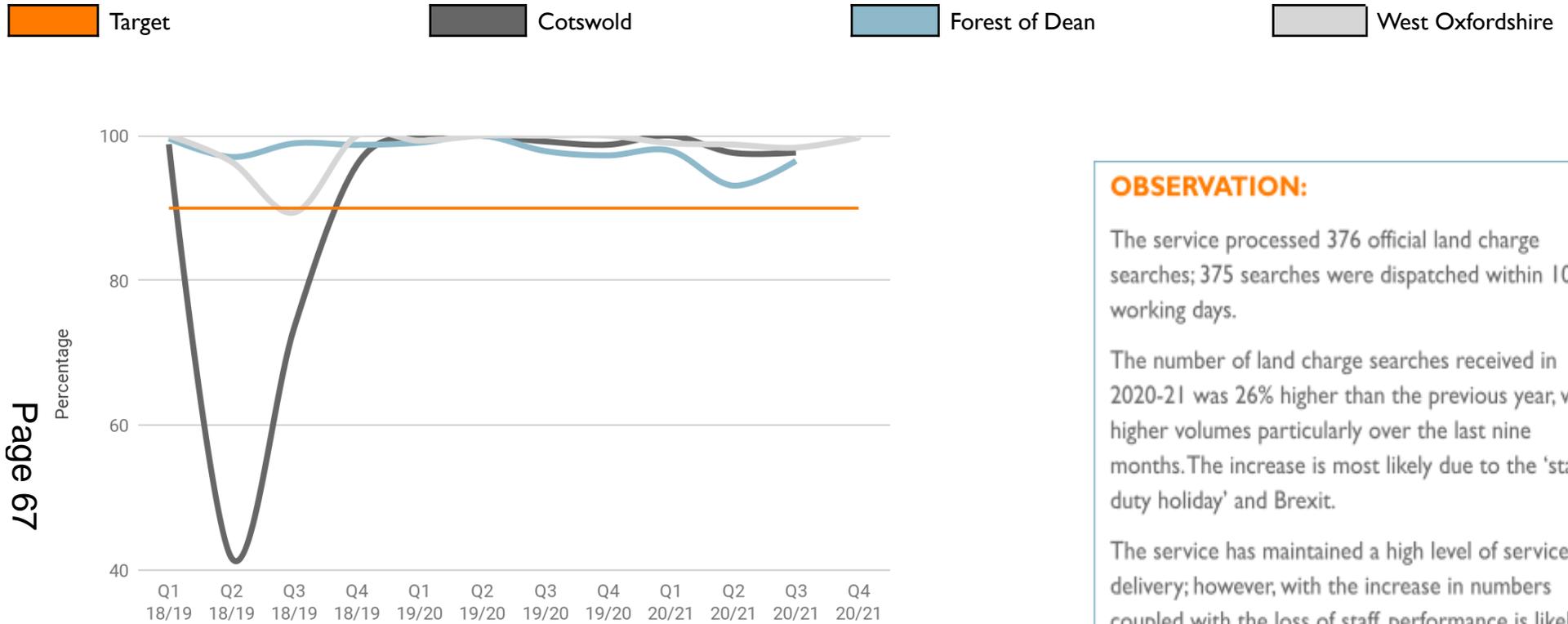


**OBSERVATION:**

Seventy-four affordable homes reached practical completion in Q4 for rent (53) and low cost home ownership (21), and a total of 374 for the year. 116 affordable homes were delivered by Cotswold, 123 by Sage, and 51 by Aster. The remaining units were delivered by Sovereign, Clarion and Blenheim (10 homes at Long Hanborough). Additionally, seven discount market sales have been delivered in Witney.

Clarion and Greensquare report that their Q4 completions for sites in Minster Lovell and Burford are lower than expected due to issues with material supply and staffing related to Covid-19 and a general labour shortage. These homes are now likely to be completed in the first six months of 2021/22

## Percentage of land charge searches dispatched within 10 working days



### OBSERVATION:

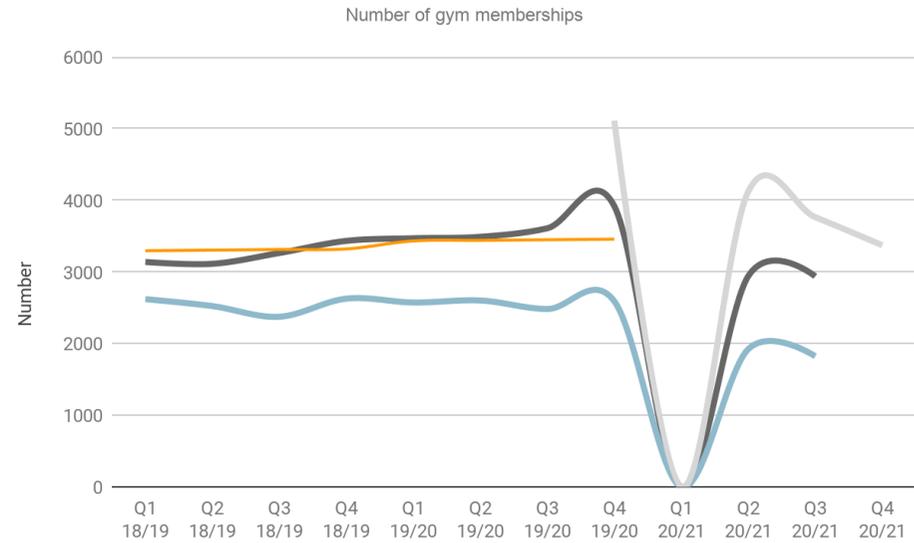
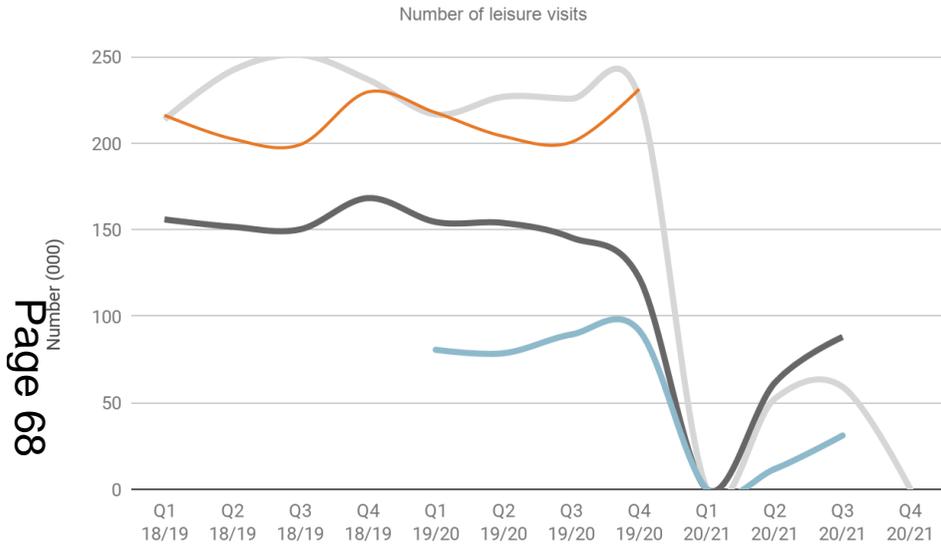
The service processed 376 official land charge searches; 375 searches were dispatched within 10 working days.

The number of land charge searches received in 2020-21 was 26% higher than the previous year, with higher volumes particularly over the last nine months. The increase is most likely due to the 'stamp duty holiday' and Brexit.

The service has maintained a high level of service delivery; however, with the increase in numbers coupled with the loss of staff, performance is likely to fall

## Leisure

### Number of visits to leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships



Page 68

**OBSERVATION:**

During the 2020/21, there have been three national lockdowns; March to June 2020, November 2020, and January to March 2021 which resulted in the closure of the Council's leisure facilities.

The Government set out the roadmap for 2021 for emerging out of the third lockdown which allowed leisure centres to re-open from 29 March (for outdoor activities with limited numbers and social distancing), this was followed by the return of indoor swimming and gym sessions from 12 April 2021. The current forecast is for a full return of all activities with no social restrictions from 21 June.

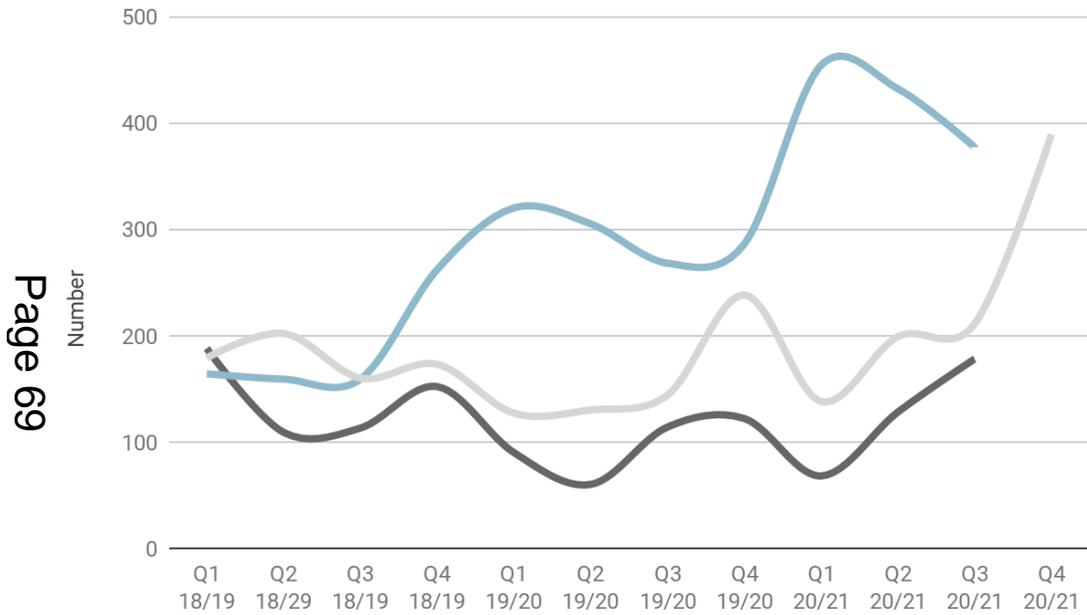
During 2020/21, the Council has given financial support packages to leisure operators to ease cash flow issues. Some grant funding has also been available from the government to cover Council losses through waiving management fees. A further tranche of funding was made available through Sport England that was directly applied to covering costs that the leisure operators were experiencing in lockdown, and to support re-opening.

Note: Gym memberships were frozen during the first and third lockdowns. No targets were set for 2020-21

## Environmental and Regulatory

### Number of fly tips collected

Cotswold      Forest of Dean      West Oxfordshire



#### OBSERVATION:

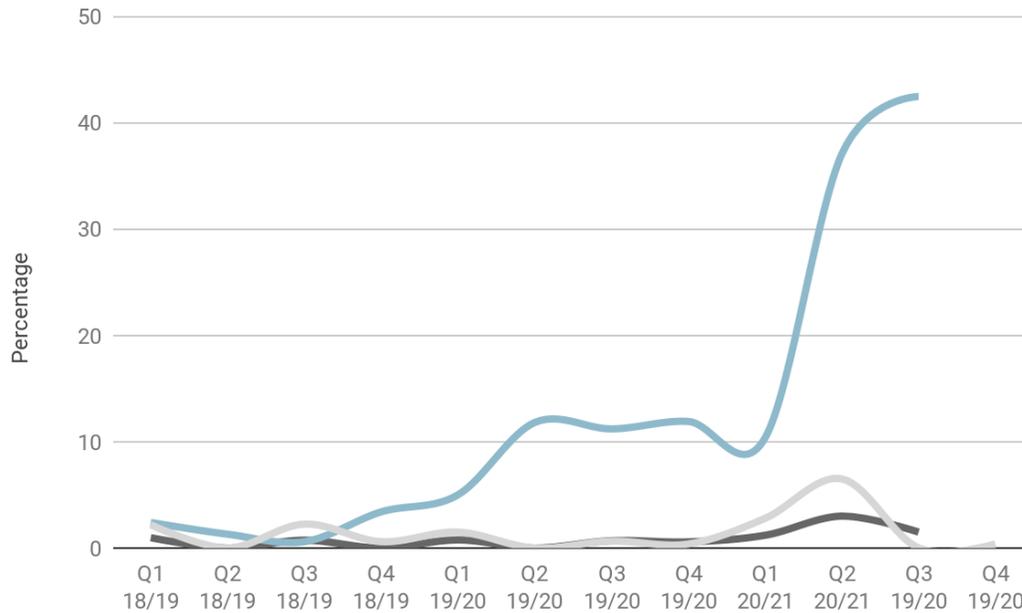
Due to Covid-19, increases in fly tips have been reported nationally which appears to be reflected locally in particular over the last quarter. Recycling centres were closed in the first lockdown but have since been operating a booking system.

In addition, the fly tipping service was redesigned in Q3 with the introduction of new on-line forms and web pages making it easier and quicker for residents to report fly tips.

A high percentage of the fly tips at the Forest of Dean are at recycling sites, which are not counted by West and Cotswold

Percentage of fly tips that result in an enforcement action taking place (defined as a warning letter, fixed penalty notice, simple caution or prosecution)

Cotswold
  Forest of Dean
  West Oxfordshire



**OBSERVATION:**

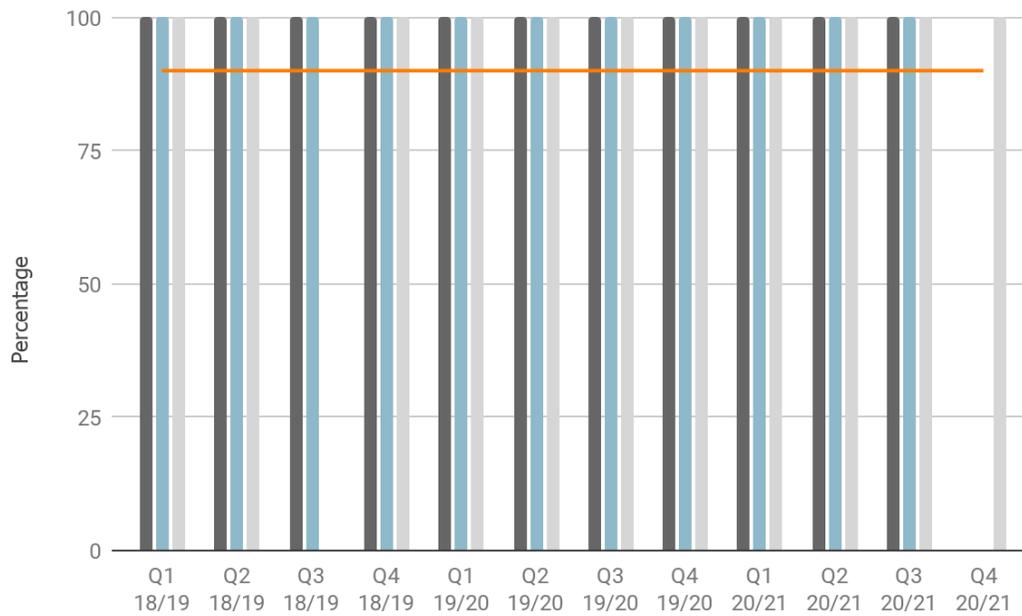
In Q4, there were 521 notifications of fly tips, up from 301 notifications in the previous quarter. Two enforcement actions were issued, one Fixed Penalty Notice and one warning letter. In addition, officers have been focussing on tackling fly tips at bring banks, and issuing letters to residents.

There was an increase in enforcement activity in Q2 following the implementation of a new enforcement pack allowing cautions to be issued via the post. However, a short term loss of experienced resources in the team has resulted in less enforcement activity over the last six months. Recruitment to the vacant post is expected to commence shortly.

In addition, the fly tipping service was re-designed for Cotswold and West. A 'support service triage' has been set up to free up specialist officer time to deal with the fly tips that can be investigated further. In Q4, 34 fly tips were referred to ERS specialists for further investigation. The change in service will require time to 'bed in', and it is likely that the referral criteria will need to be broadened to ensure that a sufficient number of referrals come through for investigation.

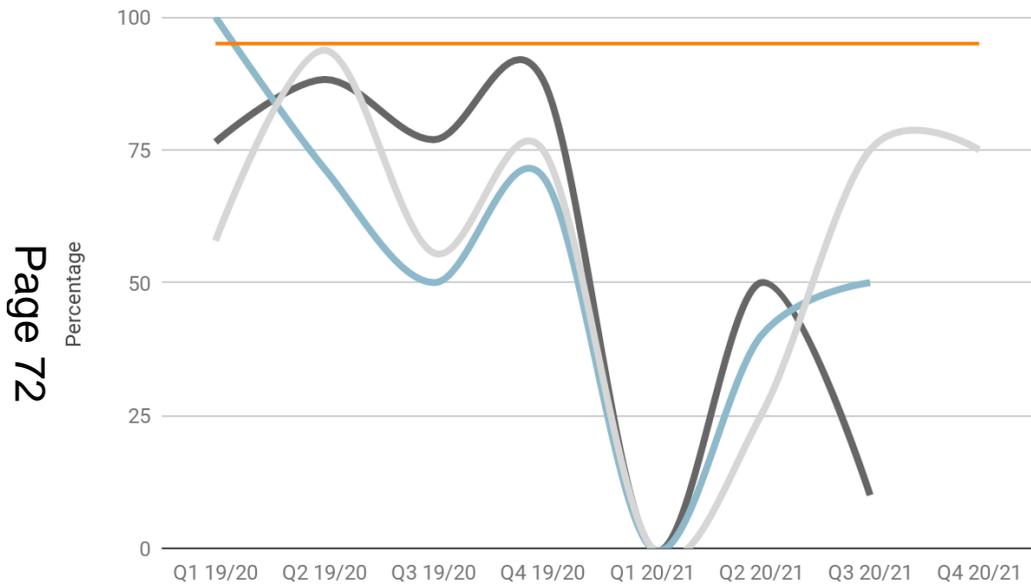
Cotswold and West operate a small multidisciplinary team. In contrast, at Forest of Dean, there is a dedicated Community Warden team, which has also implemented a new enforcement pack

**Percentage of high risk notifications (including food poisoning outbreaks, anti-social behaviour, contaminated private water supplies, workplace fatalities or multiple serious injuries) risk assessed within 1 working day**



**OBSERVATION:**  
 Five notifications in Q4, one oil spill, one report of flooding, two reports of sewage problems and one campylobacter case.  
 All notifications were assessed within one day

## Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales



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### OBSERVATION:

This indicator has been set to 'amber' to recognise that the service has been impacted by Covid-19 restrictions.

During the year, there have been three national lockdowns. During these periods, remote inspections have been conducted, and site inspections were undertaken when the Covid infection rates had reduced to a level when it was safe to go out.

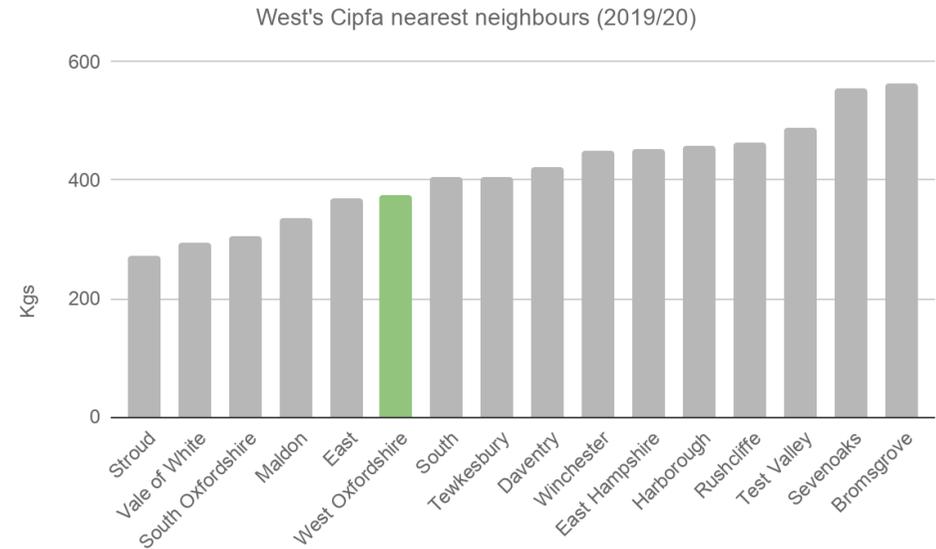
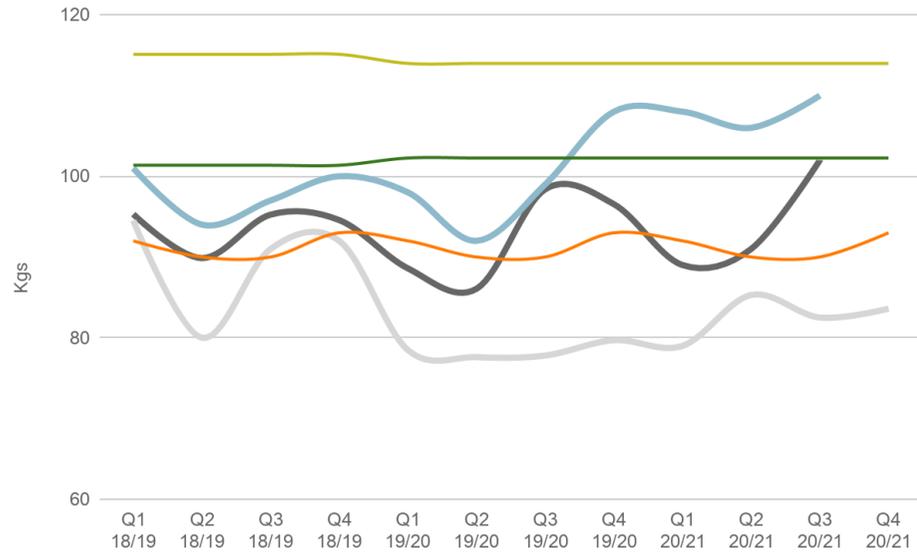
Four high risk food inspections were due in Q4, and all four received a remote inspection.

Following a risk assessment on site visits, and staff consultation, some staff commenced site inspections at the beginning of March 2021 (with the use of PPE) as the infection rate in Oxfordshire had reduced significantly. Two of the four food inspection due have been completed, although one was completed outside of the 28 day timescale. The two outstanding inspections relate to care homes which are excluded from site visits unless deemed necessary.

A backlog of other types of inspections including the inspection of new food businesses, has built up over the year, and the service is awaiting further guidance from the FSA in June on how to deal with the backlog.

All work deemed 'high priority' by the FSA has been undertaken and a site visit has taken place when required.

## Residual household waste per household (kg)



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### OBSERVATION:

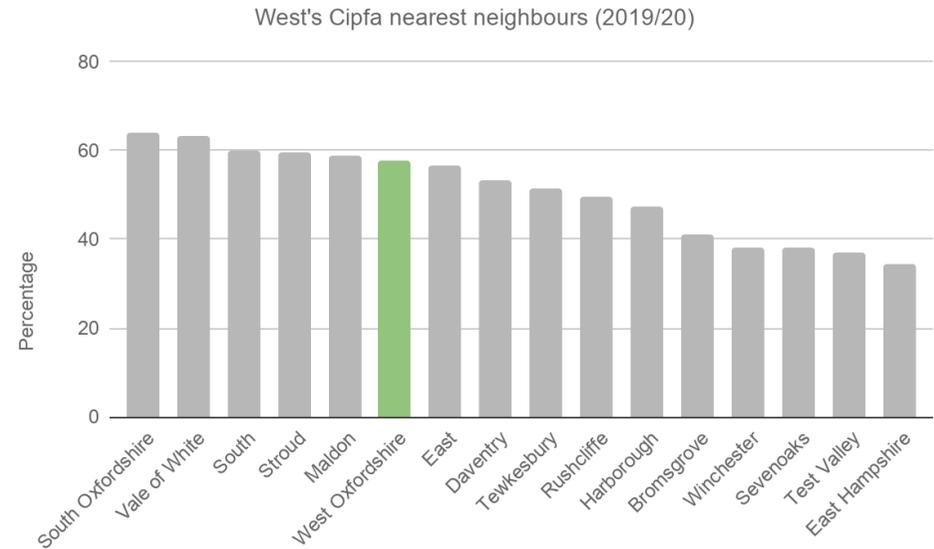
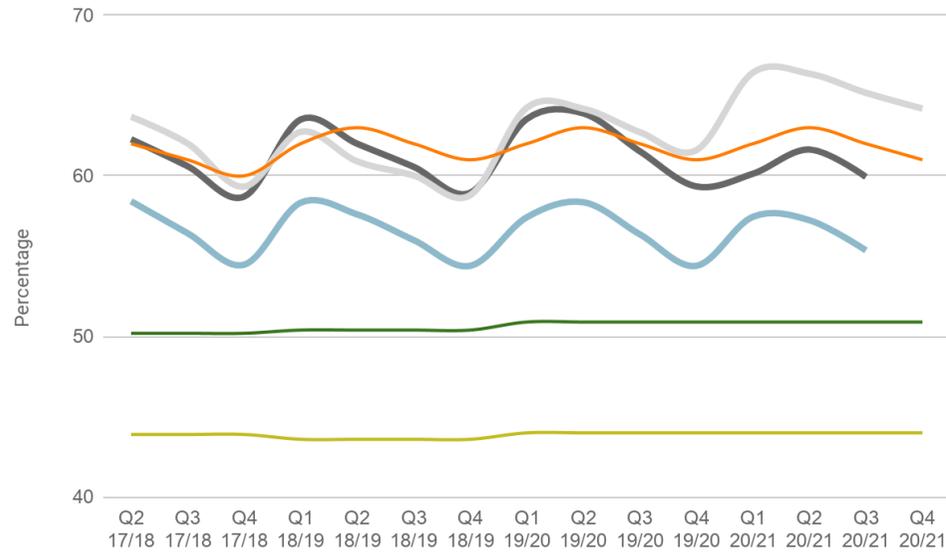
Due to the impact of Covid-19, all waste and recycling stream tonnages have increased, and reached a peak in October 2020 but appear to be slowly reducing again.

The amount of residual waste produced during the year increased by over 10% compared to the previous year. All excess recycling and food waste is being collected at the kerbside if presented correctly.

Both the Council and the Oxfordshire Recycles (OCC partnership work) are using their social media channels to promote waste reduction

Note: These figures are provisional

**(Cumulative) Percentage of household waste recycled**



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**OBSERVATION:**

Due to the impact of Covid-19, residents are presenting higher amounts of all types of waste.

Dry recycling tonnages for the year were up over 35% on the previous year, garden waste tonnages were up 15%, and food tonnages, nearly 16%.

The combined recycling rate for the year was 64.2% compared to 61.6% a year ago; the increase was mainly driven by the increase in dry recycling.

The dry recycling rate was 29.6% (up 2.7 percentage points on the previous year), the composting rate was 24.4% and food waste sent for anaerobic digestion was 10.2%. Note that these figures are provisional.

The service is working closely with UBICO; and all additional recycling and food waste presented correctly at the kerbside by residents is being collected.

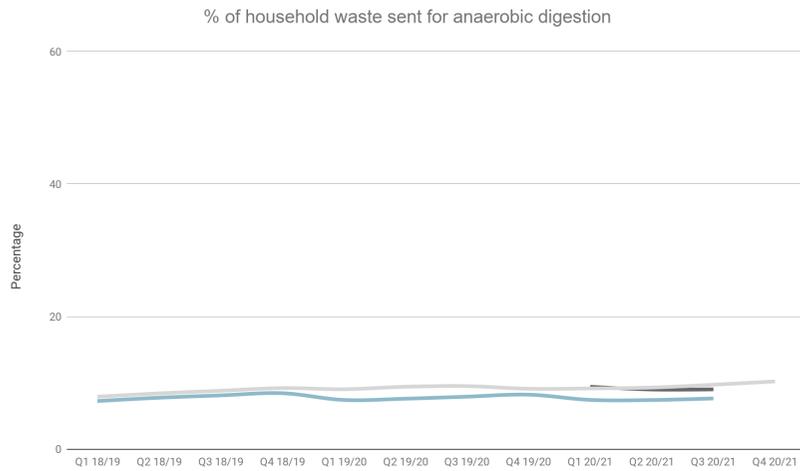
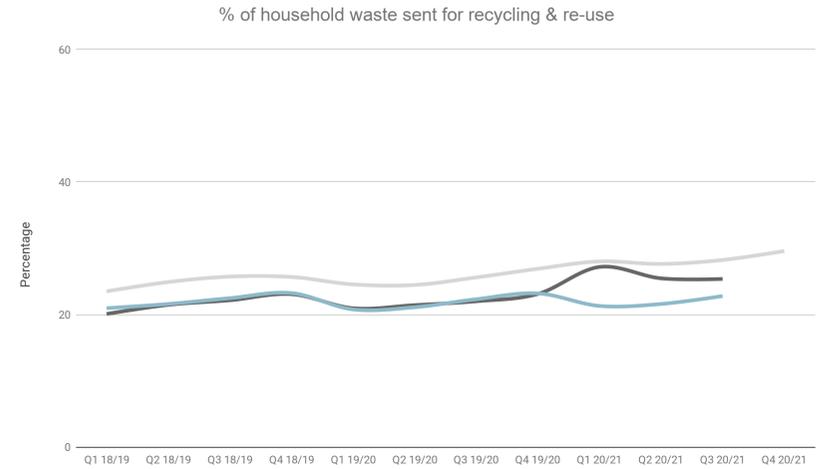
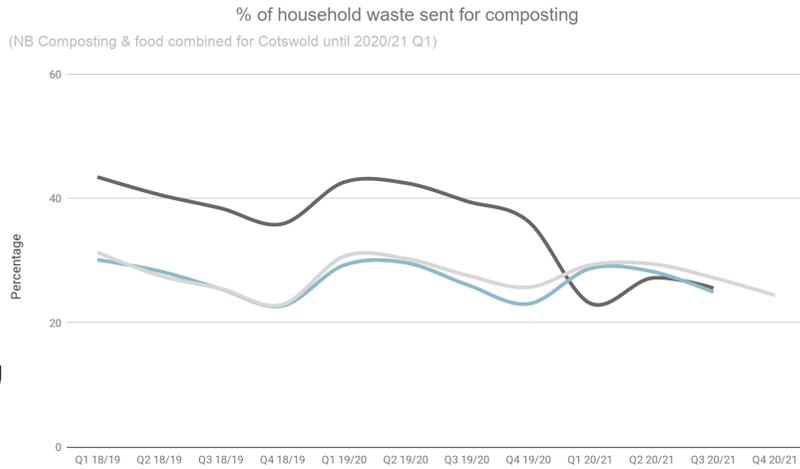
Note that the quarterly recycling targets are profiled to account for seasonal differences. The data is also presented cumulatively which will flatten out some of these differences

# (Cumulative) Percentage of household waste recycled by waste stream

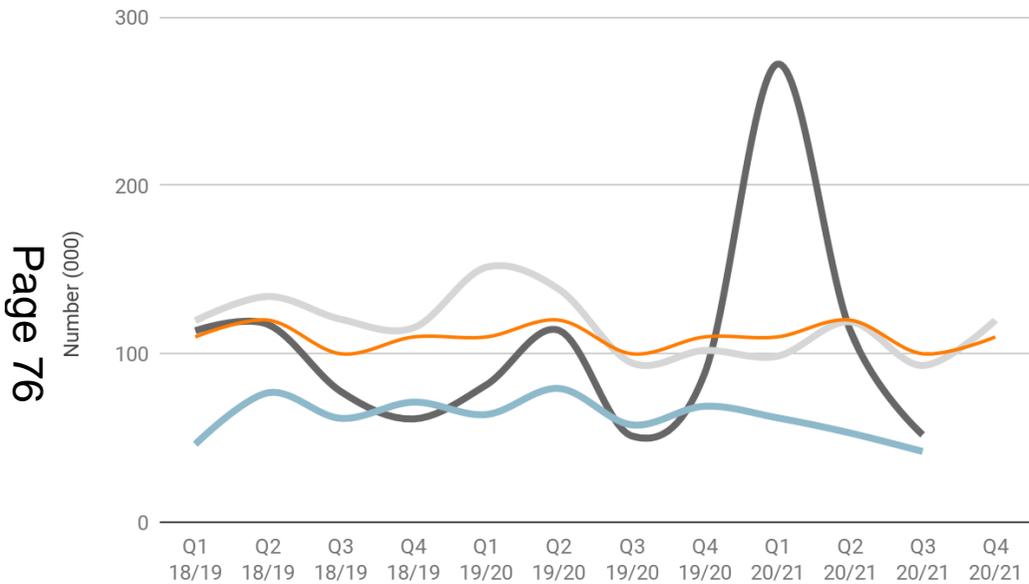
Cotswold

Forest of Dean

West Oxfordshire



## Number of missed bin per 100,000 scheduled collections



### OBSERVATION:

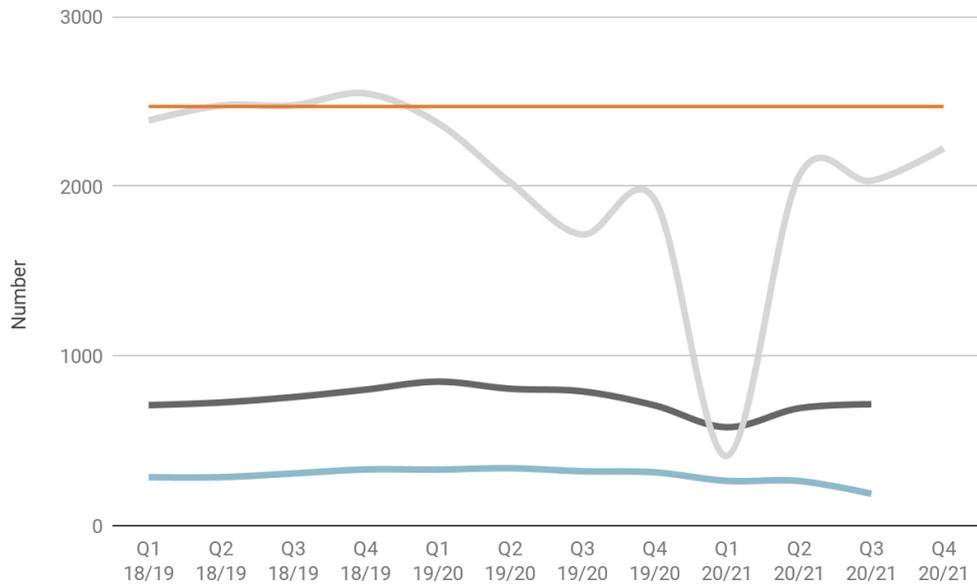
Overall, there have been improvements over the last year, and performance has generally remained within the target despite an increase in the number of misses in the early part of the financial year due to staff absences related to Covid-19, and the use of more agency staff who did not possess local knowledge.

The number of misses also increased in Q4 which was due to a lack of capacity in customer services who would usually challenge reports of missed bins where appropriate, as well as a delay in distributing waste and recycling containers which can result in residents leaving out excess waste in sacks for collection.

The service is working closely with UBICO to reduce the number of missed bins

## Parking

### Total hours spent undertaking on and off-street parking enforcement visits



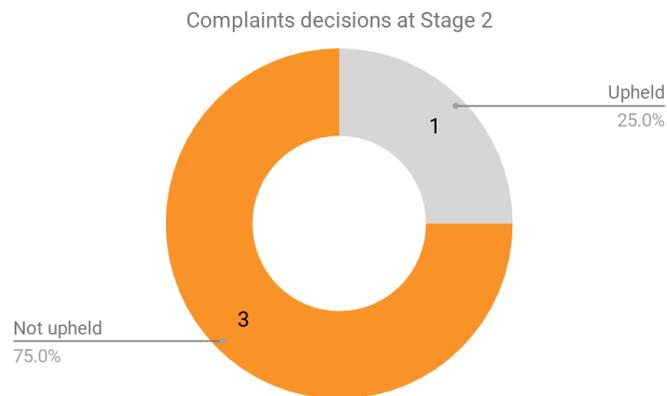
#### OBSERVATION:

All enforcement activities were suspended on 23 March until 15 June 2020 due to Covid-19. Following the first lockdown, enforcement officers have been taking a light touch approach to enforcement with the issuing of warning notices; and staff were redeployed to support communities.

The nation entered a third lockdown in January 2021. Although usage levels in car parks continue to be relatively low, enforcement officers have been patrolling the car parks and ensuring that they are safe, while supporting food deliveries and track and trace when requested.

From April 2021, there will be a return to full enforcement activities

## COMPLAINTS - ARE WE DOING THE 'DAY JOB' REALLY WELL FOR OUR COUNCILS?



### OBSERVATION:

A new Customer Feedback Procedure went live on the 1st July 2020. The Corporate Responsibility team is managing all complaints allowing services to focus on delivery.

The new process has the following stages:

Stage 1: Acknowledgement and Assessment

Stage 2: Investigation

Stage 3: Appeal

The complaints shown below only include upheld or partially upheld complaints

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Service area	Description	Outcome/learning	Stage	Decision	Response time (days)
Revenues & Benefits	Inaccurate advice on Covid Business Grants resulting in the complainant feeling unfairly disadvantaged	On investigation, it was found that some information regarding the case had not been logged on the system resulting in inaccurate advice being given. An apology was offered, and the Grant Assessment Team processed the application as a matter of urgency	II	Upheld	5



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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>Finance &amp; Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee 14 July 2021</b></p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p><b>Agenda Item No. 8</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>Committee Work Programme 2021/2022</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Senior Strategic Support Officer <a href="mailto:amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk">amy.bridgewater-carnall@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To provide the Committee with an update on its Work Programme</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Work Programme for 2021/2022</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the Committee notes the work programme and provides comment or updates where needed</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>To enable the Committee to review its Work Programme and 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. At the May meeting the Committee gave consideration to the development of its Work Programme for the year having regard to the changes to the approach to scrutiny work adopted by Council on 22 October 2008.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1. Attached at Annex A the Work Programme for 2021/2022 for discussion and approval.
- 2.2. Updates to note are:
- The Investment Policy T&F Group will have their first meeting booked in shortly & will submit a scoping document to the committee as soon as practicable.
- 2.3. In addition to the items contained in the Work Programme there will still be the opportunity to bring forward one-off reports and papers on particular issues of interest to the Committee but it will also be necessary to maintain a general overview of the ways in which external agencies are responding to community concerns. The inclusion of a standing agenda item for Members' questions also provides the opportunity to raise relevant issues.

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **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 Work Programme, there are none arising directly from this report.

## **7. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS**

- 7.1. In accordance with the Constitution of the Council, Committee has the power to investigate any matters it considers relevant to its work area, and to make recommendations to the Council, the Executive or any other Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council as it sees fit.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1. None

Work Programme – Finance & Management O&S**14 JULY 2021**

	Title	Format	Lead Officer / Cabinet Member	Next report / Anticipated Completion Date	Comments
1	Treasury Management Activity and Performance	Report and discussion	Elizabeth Griffiths / Councillor Coul	Quarterly report	To provide an update of the Council's investments. Representatives from Arlingclose to be invited
2	Treasury Outturn	Report	Elizabeth Griffiths / Andrew Sherbourne / Councillor Coul		Slipped from June 2021
3	Investment Property Outturn Report	Report	Jasmine McWilliams / Councillor Coul	Annual Report	To update Councillors on the performance of the Council's property investment portfolio
4	Task & Finish Group - Council's Investment Policy – Scoping Document	Report	Elizabeth Griffiths		To agree the scoping document for the group

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**6 OCTOBER 2021**

	Title	Format	Lead Officer / Cabinet Member	Next report / Anticipated Completion Date	Comments
1	Task & Finish Group - Council's Investment Policy - Update	Verbal update			

Work Programme – Finance & Management O&S

**1 DECEMBER 2021**

	Title	Format	Lead Officer / Cabinet Member	Next report / Anticipated Completion Date	Comments
I	Task & Finish Group - Council's Investment Policy - Update	Verbal update			

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Other Reports	Frequency	Comments
Introduction of Electric Vehicle Charging Points in Council Car Parks	On-going as required	Awaiting the Distribution Network Operator costs for the installation of any additional infrastructure to support the implementation strategy approved by Cabinet in February 2020. Update given at October meeting – officers looking at changing supplier.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORKSTREAMS**

 <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>Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Wednesday 14 July 2021</b></p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p><b>Agenda Item No. 9</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>Cabinet Work Programme</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable members</p>	<p>Michele Mead, Leader of the Council <a href="mailto:michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk">michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Keith Butler Head of Democratic Services Tel: 01993 861521 Email: <a href="mailto:keith.butler@westoxon.gov.uk">keith.butler@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To give the Committee the opportunity to comment on the Cabinet Work Programme published on 22 June 2021.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p><a href="#">Annex 1 – Cabinet Work Programme published 22 June 2021.</a></p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the Committee decides whether to express a view to Cabinet on relevant issues in the Work Programme for the period.</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>To maintain and enhance West Oxfordshire as one of the best places to live, work and visit in Great Britain and to meet the current and future needs of residents.</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 Cabinet Work Programme is produced on a monthly basis in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Regulations relating to publicity for Cabinet decisions that came into force on 10 September 2012. The programme sets out the Cabinet's work programme for the following three months, as applicable.
- 1.2. The programme [published on 22 June](#), covering the period to September 2021 is included in the [Annex to this report](#), for comment.

## **2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 2.1. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. None

## **4. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1. Not applicable

## **5. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS**

- 5.1. The Committee may take such action as it considers appropriate within its terms of reference

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 6.1. None

## Cabinet Work Programme published 22 June 2021

No.	Proposed Decision and (if applicable) reason(s) the matter is proposed to be considered in private	Key Decision (Yes/No)	Likely to be considered in private (Yes/No)	Decision-maker	Date of Decision	Documents	Notes
1.	Approval of proposed standard fees for Legal and Estates	No	No	Cabinet	21 July 2021	None	
2.	Approval of Oxfordshire Plan 2050 for consultation purposes	No	No	Cabinet	21 July 2021	None	Will first be considered by Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee
3.	Consideration of options for the future use of the Witney Town Centre Shop	Yes	No	Cabinet	21 July 2021	None	
4.	Consideration of options for the future of 33A High Street, Burford (Visitor Information Centre)	Yes	No	Cabinet	21 July 2021	None	
5.	Approval of charges for the delivery of waste and recycling containers	No	No	Cabinet then Council	21 July 2021	None	Will first be considered by Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

No.	Proposed Decision and (if applicable) reason(s) the matter is proposed to be considered in private	Key Decision (Yes/No)	Likely to be considered in private (Yes/No)	Decision-maker	Date of Decision	Documents	Notes
6.	Investment property in Poole - surrender and grant of new lease  Proposed to be considered in private because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 - "information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person".	Yes	Yes	Cabinet	21 July 2021	None	
7.	Finance outturn report 2020/21 and recommended additions to the capital programme	No	No	Cabinet then Council	21 July 2021	None	
8.	Approval of upgrade to West Oxfordshire's public space CCTV provision and monitoring arrangements	Yes	No	Cabinet	15 September 2021		Considered by Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 November 2020
9.	Adoption of Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document	No	No	Cabinet then Council	15 September 2021	None	consultation draft and consultation responses
10.	Approval of revised draft Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document for consultation	Yes	No	Cabinet	15 September 2021	None	consultation draft and consultation responses

 <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>FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b></p>
<p>Report Number</p>	<p><b>Agenda Item 10</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>INVESTMENT PROPERTY OUTTURN 20/21</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p><b>ALL</b></p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Coul Cabinet Member for Resources Email: <a href="mailto:suzi.coul@westoxon.gov.uk">suzi.coul@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Jasmine McWilliams, Asset Manager Tel: 01285 623255 Email: <a href="mailto:jasmine.mcwilliams@publicagroup.uk">jasmine.mcwilliams@publicagroup.uk</a> Elizabeth Griffiths Chief Finance Officer Tel: 01993 861188 Email <a href="mailto:Elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk">Elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To inform Committee of the performance of the Council's investment property portfolio</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Outturn report 2020/2021</p>
<p>Recommendation/s</p>	<p><i>a) To note the report</i></p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance: Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>Annex A Exempt only</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	

## **I. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. As a consequence of a strategic decision taken a number of years ago the Council holds a portfolio of property assets to help support the revenue budget via investment income. This decision was made as the Council had identified an over reliance on cash based investments in its reserves and, as a consequence, suffered a major risk at times of falling interest rates.
- 1.2. In addition it was identified that the approach of maintaining cash based investments risked the value of the capital deposited being diminished over time due to the effects of inflation.
- 1.3. As a consequence, a strategy was adopted and annually reviewed to allow the Council to take advantage of strategic and opportunistic investments in property that met the broad principles of improving the balance of the investment portfolio.
- 1.4. In 2019 a review of the Council's investment properties was carried out by Carter Jonas which was reported to this committee in 2020 along with the recommendations, which officers have now implemented. The advice at the time was to hold all properties and implement the asset management recommendations in respect of rent reviews and lease renewals.
- 1.5. Due to the changes in markets as a result of the pandemic officers within the Estates team, being Registered Valuers and Members of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, are starting a fresh review of the Council's investment property portfolio.

This report seeks to update the Committee on performance of the portfolio.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

### General Property Update

- 2.1. In September 2011 the Committee took a strategic view that the investment strategy, with continuing record low levels of interest rates, should adopt a target ratio of commercial property to finance assets of 65% property and 35% cash.
- 2.2. The total investment property portfolio (including strategic sites Woolgate etc) now stands at £51.6m out of a combined cash (excluding cash flow) and property portfolio of £77.3 , around 67% therefore, in a spread of property assets.
- 2.3. In addition to setting out the running yield on the properties (rent v total cost of acquisition), the report also tries to give a view on the overall return on property by taking account of any appreciation or diminution in asset values. This also has the effect of accounting for losses incurred as acquisition costs are deleted from valuations.
- 2.4. The table at Annex A shows that the property values are in some cases lower than the purchase price. The principal reasons for this are the acquisition costs associated with such investments and the natural diminishing length of lease term that has an impact on

asset values for investment purposes. Typical acquisition costs are 5% to cover stamp duty, fees and survey costs. On the portfolio overall this has now been offset by capital appreciation.

- 2.5. It must be stressed that these gains (and losses) remain unrealised and are based on RICS Red Book valuations calculated to comply with CIPFA requirements for asset valuation. Annex A identifies the overall return on property assets taking account of the issues set out in 2.4 above.
- 2.6. As mentioned above, the principal reason for the move into commercial property was to protect the Council's income stream from the volatility of interest rates rather than capital appreciation, although appreciation remains a longer term possibility. The financial implications section gives a commentary on the success in respect of the income stream relative to cash
- 2.7. The investment properties are subject to differing lengths of lease terms and these are set out in Annex A. The industrial estates at Newman Court and Swain Court have been excluded as these are not capital assets of the Council (they are held under head leases). Also excluded is Greystones, which is due to be reviewed and other buildings which are in part leased by Ubico for operational purposes, and garages which are viewed as deminimus.
- 2.8. Given the high proportion of long term ground rents within the portfolio (Carterton, Woolgate, Marriotts and Mill Walk) the average unexpired lease term is longer when compared to many portfolios, at around 14 years, and this provides further assurance to the Council of a relatively stable long term return. Of course this can mask a range of leases expiring in a short time period and the table below shows the rental income attributable to leases by reference to expiry dates and consequent risk to revenue streams.

Lease Expiry @ 31/03/2021	Rental Income @ 31/03/2021
Within a year /vacant	£491,102
1 year – 2 years	£140,115
2 year – 5 years	£961,710
5 years – 10 years	£199,198
10+ years	£718,222

- 2.9. A major focus over the coming year is to continue to make progress on leases within the 1 year, 1-2 year categories and 2-5 year category. Given the potential risk of voids in this scenario the council has made provision within its reserves for such risk. Attached at Annex A is the outturn report including all of the council's investment properties

2.10 To support the Council's commercial tenants during the Covid 19 pandemic the Council agreed deferral schemes, on qualifying criteria, in March 2020 and December 2020 to cover the national lockdowns. On 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021 Cabinet approved a set of tools to be used in respect of those tenants who have been unable to trade. These were further rent deferrals, lease re-gear and finally in exceptional circumstances a rent free period. These tools can be used by the Cabinet Member for Finance on a case by case basis. Officers are currently in discussion with two tenants that wish to make an application for further assistance.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. This report is seeking to give the committee additional information by detailing yield not just compared to purchase price (running yield), but also, to consider the overall return on property by taking into account unrealised capital gains and losses (overall yield).

3.2. The net running yield on the commercial property portfolio (excluding Marriotts, Woolgate and Mill Walk which were not purchased as part of the property strategy and are ground rents only) is currently around 6.57%. (7.5% on original cost).

3.3. The uplift in net running yield being achieved on the commercial property compared to cash is around 3.47% being the difference in the net running yield (6.57%) and the return in long dated cash in pooled funds and housing associations (3.1%). UK 10 year gilts currently attract a return of 0.73%.

3.4. In financial terms this 3.47% uplift in performance from property is worth around £1.55m per annum (£44.8m @ 3.47%). To date the change in strategy has saved the Council in excess of £19m on a cumulative basis compared to cash and is likely to save £1.5m -£2m annually over the next one to two years given the outlook for cash rates.

3.5. Some individual properties remain underperforming on an overall return basis - this is in the main part because the acquisition costs have been amortised (written down) over a shorter period of time than the older properties.

3.6. The overall return on property can be summarised as:-

(A)Overall Acquisition Price (incl costs)	£40.2m
(B)Latest Valuation	£44.8m
(C)Unrealised valuation gain (B-A)	£ 4.6m
(D)Overall Rental Stream (multi-year)	£ 30.8
(E) Total Return (D+C)	£ 35.4m
(F) Rental Yield (D/A)	76.6%
(G)Unrealised Capital Gain (C/A)	11.4%

(H)Overall Yield (E/A)

88.0%

- 3.8. The above analysis shows that despite acquisition costs the portfolio has now achieved an unrealised valuation gain and this together with the rental performance of the portfolio has led to, in overall terms, an extremely positive performance.
- 3.9. In October 2020 Cabinet approved an Investment Strategy for the Recover of West Oxfordshire which sets out a framework within which the council can consider future investment opportunities that deliver on the agreed corporate priorities.

#### **4. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1. Holding any asset has an element of risk associated with that holding. Whilst property has the security of 'bricks and mortar' compared to financial assets it does come with risks if that asset is not occupied or if the occupation market suffers due to difficult market conditions.
- 4.2. The purpose of the annual report is to enable a regular review of the asset holding to enable a view to be taken on the current risks associated with the holding.
- 4.3. The Council has mitigated the risk of its property holding by having a broad portfolio of assets covering a range of sectors including Industrial, Office, Retail and Leisure. It also has a mix of ground rents and full occupational leases which underpin the returns by providing longer term stability.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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