

Public Document Pack



Tuesday, 14 June 2022

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CABINET

You are summoned to a meeting of the Cabinet which will be held in the Council Chamber, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 22 June 2022 at 2.00 pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Cabinet

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Dan Levy, Mathew Parkinson, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett and Geoff Saul.

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

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

AGENDA

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 8)**
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022.
2. **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. **Receipt of Announcements**
Purpose:
To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council or Members of the Cabinet.
6. **Community Facilities Grants - 1st Round 2022/23 (Pages 9 - 14)**
Purpose:
To consider applications for grant aid from the Community Facilities Grant Scheme.

Recommendation:
That the Council agrees to award grants in accordance with the recommendations set out in ANNEX A.
7. **Performance Monitoring Report Q4 - 2021/22 (Pages 15 - 44)**
Purpose:
This report provides details of the Council's financial and operational performance at the end of 2021-22 Quarter Four (Q4)

Recommendation:
That the Annual Statement of the Council Plan and 2021/22 Q4 service performance be noted
8. **Cleaning & Maintenance of Public Conveniences (Pages 45 - 50)**
Purpose
The purpose of this report is to provide options for delivery of the public convenience cleaning and maintenance service at the end of the current contract with Danfo.

Recommendations
That the Cabinet:
 - a) Approve a one-year contract extension for the cleaning and maintenance of the Public Conveniences with Danfo; and
 - b) That a further review is carried out early in 2023 with the outcome of the review reported to Cabinet.

9. **Sustainable Warmth - Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Phase 3 and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) (Pages 51 - 56)**

Purpose

To provide an overview of the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) 3 Sustainable Warmth and Home Upgrade Grants due to be made available to West Oxfordshire residents in 2022/23 via funding secured from BEIS through the Greater SouthEast Net Zero Hub; and

To request delegated authority for the Head of Paid Service to enter into the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council and as a “Participating Authority” in the scheme.

Recommendations

- a) Note the briefing provided on Sustainable Warmth in Annex I; and
- b) Agree delegated authority be given to the Head of Paid Service to enter into the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council and as a “Participating Authority” in the LAD 3 scheme.

10. **Acquisition of Amenity Land in Witney (Pages 57 - 88)**

Purpose

To confirm the action taken by officers to progress the acquisition of amenity land at Cogges in Witney and approve appropriate funding as detailed in the report.

Recommendations

That Cabinet,

- a) approves the action taken by officers in relation to the acquisition of the land on the terms at Annex B and the Community Funding Agreement on the terms at Annex C.
- b) grants delegated authority to the Interim Head of Legal Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Locality Director and the Group Manager for Commissioning to approve the final terms of the transactions.

11. **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

If Cabinet wishes to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the item on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for Cabinet to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining all exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

12. **Acquisition of Amenity Land in Witney (Pages 89 - 120)**

Purpose

To confirm the action taken by officers to progress the acquisition of amenity land at Cogges in Witney and approve appropriate funding as detailed in the report.

Recommendations

That Cabinet,

- a) approves the action taken by officers in relation to the acquisition of the land on the terms at Annex B and the Community Funding Agreement on the terms at Annex C.
- b) grants delegated authority to the Interim Head of Legal Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Locality Director and the Group Manager for Commissioning to approve the final terms of the transactions.

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet

Held in the Council Chamber at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 25 May 2022**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Joy Aitman (Cabinet Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities), Lidia Arciszewska (Cabinet Member for Environment), Dan Levy (Cabinet Member for Finance), Mathew Parkinson (Cabinet Member for Customer Delivery), Andrew Prosser (Cabinet Member for Climate Change), Carl Rylett (Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Development), Geoff Saul (Cabinet Member for Housing and Social Welfare).

Officers: Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Susan Sale (Monitoring Officer), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Michelle Ouzman (Strategic support Officer) and Anne Learmonth (Strategic Support Officer).

108 Notice of Decisions

The notice of decisions taken at the meeting held on 20 April were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

109 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

110 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

111 Participation of the Public

There were no participation of the public received.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andy Graham stated he was really keen on the members of the public attending and participating in committee meetings. He went on to say he was going to introduce a scheme, to encourage members of the public to attend in future.

112 Receipt of Announcements

The Leader of the council Councillor Andy Graham, welcomed everyone to the Cabinet Committee meeting especially those members of the public that had attended. He then went on to introduce the new cabinet membership and their roles:

Councillor Duncan Enright (Labour) Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Councillor Dan Levy (Lib Dem) Cabinet Member for Finance

Councillor Carl Rylett (Lib Dem) Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Development

Councillor Mathew Parkinson (Lib Dem) Cabinet Member for Customer Delivery

Councillor Joy Aitman (Labour) Cabinet Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities

Councillor Geoff Saul (Labour) Cabinet Member for Housing and Social Welfare

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska (Lib Dem) Cabinet Member for Environment

Councillor Andrew Prosser (Green) Cabinet Member for Climate Change

The Chair had three key announcements:

1. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), the Council had received a conditional £1m to be spent staggered over the next three years. The primary goal of the UK SPF is to increase pride of place and increase life chances across the UK, intended to reduce inequalities between communities. The Cabinet will be developing an investment plan to show how we propose to spend the allocation, following stakeholder engagement. This should come to the Cabinet in July for approval.
2. Food strategy, yesterday the cabinet at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), endorsed the OCC food funding, and agreed to award grant funding of £32.500 to West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC). This money will be used to tackle the challenges in the health and wellbeing, climate and biodiversity, fair incomes of employment and sustainable food system. We look forward to working with the OCC and other partners on these issues.
3. Gardening communities funding, earlier in the week the Government announced funding to support gardening communities across England. WODC has received £50,000 which will be allocated to the Salt Cross Village, this will ensure an exemplar development with high quality of design.

The Chair stated that in future this is the item where any grants or funding that was received by Council, would be announced in order to keep residents informed and to be transparent.

113 Whistle-Blowing Policy

Members received a Whistle-Blowing Policy report, from the Head of Service, Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit, Emma Cathcart.

The Chair introduced the policy which was on pages 9-26 on the agenda and explained that it is in keeping with all councils following similar directives, the purpose of bringing it forward to cabinet is the recommendation to approve and adopt the policy, and the cabinet authorises the Chief Executive to approve future minor amendments to the policy, in consultation with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit, Legal Services and the Leader of the Council. Other councils are adopting the same policy, it has been through committees prior to coming to this Cabinet, on that basis, the Chair asked the Cabinet if they were happy to approve.

Resolved the Cabinet approved as per recommendation in the report.

114 Discretionary Funding Policy - Energy Council Tax Rebate 2022

Members received a report for Discretionary Funding Policy – Energy Council Tax Rebate, from Mandy Fathers the Business Manager for Operations and Enabling.

The Chair introduced the report, and read out the purpose from the report:

The Government has announced a package of support known as the Energy Bills rebate. There are two elements to the support. One being a mandatory scheme and the second being a discretionary scheme. The purpose of this report is to formally agree the criteria for the discretionary scheme and approve the Policy.

Councillor Dan Levy the Cabinet Member for Finance thanked the officers for putting the report together. Some residents that were not in Council Tax band A to D but were still deserving, needed help with their energy bills. These people need to be identified, some of which have already come forward and have been identified. However there were still people out there to be identified, there is a campaign to reach out using old fashioned contact

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methods, and new social media methods by early July. By the 23 July 2022 we are confident all those will be identified that are still in need, and monies can be distributed, as we would have the policy and process in place.

The Chair asked the Cabinet if they had any questions and are they in agreement to approve the policy.

Resolved the Cabinet approved the policy as stated in the original report.

115 Community Infrastructure Levy

Members received a report for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), from Chris Hargraves the Planning Policy Manager.

Councillor Rylett the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Development introduced the report and thanked the officers for the work that had been done. There were four options detailed within the report:

1. Progress Straight to Submission and Examination
2. Viability Evidence Partial Update
3. Commission New Viability Evidence and Prepare a new Draft Charging Schedule for Consultation
4. Continue to Defer Any Further Progress

The Cabinet is recommended to approve option two as laid out in the original report.

The Chair asked the Cabinet if the recommendation for option two be approved.

Resolved that option two within the original report was approved by Cabinet.

116 Disposal and development of land at Walterbush Road, Chipping Norton for

Custom Build Zero Carbon Homes

The members received a report for Disposal and development of land at Walterbush Road, Chipping Norton for Custom Build Zero Carbon Homes, from Claire Locke, the Group Manager for Commissioning, Leadership and Management.

Councillor Saul the Cabinet Member for Housing and Social Welfare introduced the report, an exciting project to develop a former playground area on Walterbush road, chipping Norton, to develop eight custom built, zero carbon homes, which will also be affordable homes in perpetuity. Councillor Saul thought that officers had worked incredibly hard to come up with a scheme that meets so many of the councils aims and objectives. This deliver and promote additional affordable housing and using section 106 monies, it will promote custom built homes, of which affordable plots are in very short supply and gives us the ability to module built examples using our net zero carbon tool kit. There are already 13 on the custom build register, in Chipping Norton, and 19 across the district.

Councillor Saul then proposed that the Cabinet approves options set out in the original report.

Councillor St John asked if the Section 106 money was coming from unallocated Section 106 monies and if so how much is left in that fund, as he thought Section 106 money were allocated to specific sites.

Councillor Saul thought Section 106 monies that could not be spent to provide affordable homes on developers site, left the Council to apply for these funds to be used on other

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affordable housing schemes. He added he would ask officers how much was in the Section 106 pot and would get back to Councillor St John.

The Chair asked members if they approved the report's recommendations a) to f).

Resolved that the Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the original report.

117 Appointment of Representatives to Outside Bodies 2022/23

The Chair introduced the updated copy of the outside bodies report.

The Chair stated he would page the report.

Councillor Al-Yousuf referred to number 11 as he was listed as the representative incorrectly, he had ended his three year term a year ago. This was noted to be amended.

The Chair noted number 7 should read London Oxford Consultative Committee. This was noted to be amended.

Councillor Enright the Cabinet Member for Economic Development noted number 31 the term in brackets to December 2020 should be deleted. This was noted to be amended.

The Chair explained that number 38 had three vacancies and that they were still in discussion and had yet to be appointed.

The Chair also wanted to add that representative to outside bodies was important, and that some were more statutory than others.

A process proposal is being drawn up on how to feedback from these meetings and who would be the contacts at these bodies. Also we are going to ask the chairs of the outside bodies to give a briefing to the Councillors so that they can be informed fully about the organisations purpose.

A further list of outside bodies that are not contained within the report being looked at today will be brought to a future Cabinet Committee meeting.

Therefore the Cabinet

Resolved that the current report with amendments be noted.

The Meeting closed at 2.22 pm

CHAIR

| | |
|--|---|
|  <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> | <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> |
| <p>Name and date of Committee</p> | <p>CABINET – 22nd June 2022, 2pm</p> |
| <p>Report Number</p> | <p>Agenda Item 6</p> |
| <p>Subject</p> | <p>COMMUNITY FACILITIES GRANT 1st ROUND 2022/23</p> |
| <p>Wards affected</p> | <p>Charlbury and Chipping Norton</p> |
| <p>Accountable member</p> | <p>Cllr Joy Aitman, Cabinet Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities Email: joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk</p> |
| <p>Accountable officer</p> | <p>Scott Williams, Business Manager - Contracts Tel: 01285 623654 Email: scott.williams@publicagroup.uk</p> |
| <p>Summary/Purpose</p> | <p>To consider applications for grant aid from the Community Facilities Grant Scheme.</p> |
| <p>Annexes</p> | <p>ANNEX A – Community Facilities Grant Applications 2022/23 – Round 1</p> |
| <p>Recommendation/s</p> | <p>a) That the Council agrees to award grants in accordance with the recommendations set out in ANNEX A.</p> |
| <p>Corporate priorities</p> | <p>Working with communities to meet the current and future needs and aspirations of residents.</p> |
| <p>Key Decision</p> | <p>YES</p> |
| <p>Exempt</p> | <p>No</p> |
| <p>Consultees/ Consultation</p> | <p>None</p> |

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. This report represents the first of two rounds of funding for the Community Facilities Grant scheme.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. All Members are invited to submit additional information or comments in respect of any of the applications prior to or at the meeting.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The proposed costs arising from this report are detailed in ANNEX A. If all the grants are approved as recommended the total financial commitment will equal **£41,551** and all grants can be met from the existing capital budget. ANNEX A also indicates the closing balance for the grant budget if all the proposals are accepted.

- 3.2. Detailed in the following table is the financial commitment if all applications are taken into account and the amounts recommended are approved:

| Reference | Applicant | Recommended |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| CFG/2223/01 | Charlbury Bowls Club | £40,677 |
| CFG/2223/02 | Chipping Norton Swifts FC | £874 |
| Total Grant Allocation | | £41,551 |

- 3.3. This grant award results in a total investment of **£41,511** into local schemes, with the leverage effect of the Council's grant being that for every pound grant aided **£2.83** of external or community funding is being released into the District's economy and cultural facilities infrastructure.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The main risk to the Council is allocating funding to these projects, while the applications to the various other funding partners are unsuccessful. In mitigation the Community Facilities Grant criteria states that the grant will only be paid following successful awards from funding partners.

- 5.2. Risk to the Council will be mitigated by making payment only on satisfactory completion of key stages of the project and upon the provision of relevant invoices and certification by the applicant.

- 5.3. Should Members decide not to grant fund these projects a gap will be left within the project funding which could affect the successful draw down of external grants which ultimately could cause the project to be cancelled.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT (IF REQUIRED)

6.1. None

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)

7.1. None

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

8.1. The Cabinet could choose to offer differing levels of grant aid than those proposed in ANNEX A, but within the budgets established for these purposes, although this may result in the projects not being viable due to insufficient funding.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1. None.

ANNEX A
Community Facilities Grant Applications 2022/23 – Round 1
(Annual Grant Allocation £200,000 – unallocated grant balance £200,000)

| Amount Requested | Total Scheme Cost | WODC Contribution | | Rate Relief received | Applicant and Grant Use Additional notes and recommendations |
|---|-------------------|--|-----------------|-------------------------|--|
| £40,677 | £162,711 | £40,677 (20% of annual grant allocation) | | Y – 100% | <p>CFG/2223/01 – Charlbury Bowls Club Extension to Building (Phases 1&2)</p> <p>A four-year plan entitled ‘Prospectus for the Development of Charlbury Bowls Club’ was approved by the club committee in September 2020 following twelve months consultation.</p> <p>The Prospectus details 22 actions to be achieved, and identified the need to expand the club building with two extensions to enhance the playing area for short-mat bowls, enable full participation by disabled players, provide storage areas, improved spectator capacity and comfort, and for a multi-purpose social, meeting, and storage area. Working towards carbon-neutrality is also a cornerstone of this work.</p> <p>Charlbury Bowls Club is a vibrant, growing, Community Amateur Sports Club and the overall project is required to meet the identified need of additional space to play their sport, and to become a fully inclusive community club. Growth in membership, increased community use and greater diversity has created the requirement for more space.</p> <p><i>An award will be made subject to achieving the required partnership funding</i></p> |
| Funding Breakdown | | | | | |
| Funding Source | | Status | Amount | % of Scheme Cost | |
| West Oxfordshire District Council | | Applied | £40,677 | 25% | |
| Applicant Organisation | | Confirmed | £38,001 | 23% | |
| Charlbury Town Council | | Estimated | £5,000 | 3% | |
| Sustainable Charlbury | | Estimated | £4,960 | 3% | |
| FCC Community Action Fund | | Estimated | £17,000 | 10% | |
| The Greaves and Withey Foundation | | Estimated | £10,000 | 6% | |
| Sport England Community Asset Fund | | Estimated | £40,000 | 25% | |
| Bartlett Taylor Charitable Trust, PF Charitable Trust, Peter Harris Foundation etc. | | Estimated | £7,073 | 5% | |
| Total | | | £162,711 | 100% | |

| Amount Requested | Total Scheme Cost | WODC Contribution | Rate Relief received | Applicant and Grant Use Additional notes and recommendations |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|--|-------------------------|--|
| £874 | £3495 | £874 (0.5% of annual grant allocation) | Y – 100% | <p>CFG/2223/02 – Chipping Norton Swifts FC</p> <p>New Goalposts for newly formed Girls Team</p> <p>Chipping Norton Swifts have introduced three all girls teams. They have partnered with Chipping Norton school who are providing much needed space, but require new goals and nets in readiness for next season. All other equipment and start up costs have been self financed from their own resources.</p> <p>One of the teams moves up to U12's next season and the current goals at the school do not meet the FA regulations.</p> <p>The creation of the teams has been well received with over 50 girls turning up for trials and training.</p> <p>The Club have also been working with the Oxfordshire FA who support this project.</p> <p>An award will be made subject to achieving the required partnership funding</p> |
| Funding Breakdown | | | | |
| Funding Source | Status | Amount | % of Scheme Cost | |
| West Oxfordshire District Council | Applied | £874 | 25% | |
| Applicant Organisation | Definite | £1181 | 34% | |
| Oxfordshire FA | Applied | £1440 | 41% | |
| Total | | £3,495 | | |

Grant balance unallocated: £158,449

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Agenda Item 7

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|  <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> | <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> |
| <p>Name and date of Committee</p> | <p>Cabinet: Wednesday 22 June 2022</p> |
| <p>Report Number</p> | <p>Agenda Item No. 7</p> |
| <p>Subject</p> | <p>Council Priorities and Service Performance Report 2021-22 Quarter Four</p> |
| <p>Wards affected</p> | <p>All</p> |
| <p>Accountable member</p> | <p>All Cabinet members</p> |
| <p>Accountable officers</p> | <p>Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Tel: (01993) 861658 Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk Elizabeth Griffiths, Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer Tel: (01993) 861188 Email: elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk</p> |
| <p>Summary/Purpose</p> | <p>This report provides details of the Council’s financial and operational performance at the end of 2021-22 Quarter Four (Q4)</p> |
| <p>Annexes</p> | <p>Annex A – Annual Statement of the Council Plan 2020-24 Annex B – Service Dashboards</p> |
| <p>Recommendation</p> | <p>That the Annual Statement of the Council Plan and 2021/22 Q4 service performance be noted</p> |
| <p>Corporate priorities</p> | <p>Climate Action: Leading the way in protecting and enhancing the environment by taking action locally on climate change and biodiversity Healthy Towns and Villages: Facilitating healthy lifestyles and better wellbeing for everyone 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 Strong Local Communities: Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities 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 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

- I.1. The Council monitors service performance each quarter and a report on progress towards achieving the aim and priorities set out in the Corporate Plan is produced at the end of Q2 and Q4.
- I.2. A high level Commissioning Framework was approved by Cabinet in October 2020 which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica must ensure that it provides the necessary information, including a range of performance indicators, 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.
- I.3. The Council's Chief Executive has received a report on service performance and has assessed it in line with the high level Commissioning Statement. Particular attention has been drawn to the following:
 - i. Following the surge in the Omicron variant in November 2021, the government announced the move back to Plan A on the 19 January 2022; and staff were no longer being asked to work from home and face masks were no longer mandatory. On 24 February 2022, the government confirmed the ending of domestic legal restrictions for Covid-19 including the legal requirement to self-isolate. Staff were reminded to be cautious and retain the good habits learned over the last 20-24 months, especially as infection rates were high.
 - ii. The rising energy prices and higher cost of living is affecting householders, in particular those on low incomes. The Council has started to administer the £150 council tax rebate for homeowners in bands A-D, and those more vulnerable residents in Council Tax bands E to H.
 - iii. The Council's business rates collection figure (in year) continues to be affected by the cumulative impact of Covid-19 on businesses. The Government supported certain businesses with extended retail relief during the year, and the Council recently received £2.27m of Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) to be distributed to those businesses that are not eligible for the extended retail relief but have been affected by Covid-19. In addition, the Council administered 1252 Omicron mandatory grants to businesses (mainly leisure and hospitality) totalling £1,325,051 during Q4;
 - iv. In addition to supporting the Syrian and Afghan Resettlement programmes, the Council is standing with Ukraine. A special email address has been set up as dedicated point of contact to help deal with the volume of enquiries. The Council is supporting the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme in which people in the UK will be able to sponsor/host a Ukrainian individual or family. The Council is working with the County Council to ensure that sponsoring households' properties are inspected and the necessary safeguarding checks are completed; and together with Asylum Welcome, they are providing support for sponsors and guests. Currently, 87 sponsors have been registered in the District.
 - v. One hundred and fifty-six affordable homes reached practical completion in Q4, totalling 378 for the year, well ahead of the target of 274. The success of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal schemes is becoming apparent with 80 homes completed in

Q4 on the Housing 21 affordable extra care scheme at Chipping Norton, and two Cottsway schemes in Carterton and Bampton that have been funded by Growth Deal are expected in the next quarter providing homes at social rent. An additional 17 homes were completed at Cottsway's site at Upavon Way, Carterton, which is part of a larger all-affordable site that is due in Q1 2022/23.

- vi. The Planning team returned to full capacity in Q4 including the two additional posts that the Council approved in August 2021, and is having a positive impact on planning determination times and caseloads.

2. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

2.1. A comprehensive update of progress towards delivery of the Council Plan 2020-24 and Covid-19 Recovery Plan during 2021-22 can be found at **Annex A**. Some of the highlights are presented below:

- The Council's [broadband rollout project with Gigaclear](#) was formally completed in December 2021. WODC and HM Government each invested £1.6m in the project, contracting Gigaclear to connect 4,788 of the most rural premises in West Oxfordshire with Fibre to the Premises broadband. The Council's investment levered a further £6.7m funding from Gigaclear to extend the network resulting in access of a total of over 12,000 properties in the District to ultra-fast broadband as a result of the project.
- The Council successfully bid to Homes England for a 3 year Housing Development and Community Facilitator to enable housing delivery of Salt Cross Garden Village. The post holder is focussing on projects developing community led housing and self-build housing at the Garden Village.
- The Council successfully bid to the government's PropTech fund for £125k to develop a new digital engagement platform that makes readily available information on community infrastructure and developer contributions that exist (or can be created) into a single, accessible and visually engaging repository.
- Four thousand responses have been received from young people across the District to a survey that will inform the West Oxfordshire Youth Needs Assessment. This will inform a comprehensive understanding of the priorities of young people in order to ensure that future services and infrastructure provision meets their needs and that the significant impact on young people in terms of their education, employment options, development opportunities and social skills can be mitigated against.
- Five-year Biodiversity Land Management Plans for twelve Council-owned natural green spaces have been developed, consulted on and subsequently embedded within Ubico's contract renewal 2022 as cost-neutral changes.
- Working in partnership with Cottsway Housing and benefitting from Growth Deal Funding, the Council has worked to enable redevelopment of 49 units for affordable social rent which were no longer fit for purpose at two sites: 18 units at Lavender Place, Bampton and 31 units at Blenheim Court, Carterton.
- An award of £78k from the government's 'Brownfield Land Release Fund' has been made to the Council which will unlock a Council owned site in Chipping Norton for eight affordable net-zero carbon custom built homes. A planning application is forthcoming for the homes and associated sustainable amenities including e-vehicle club with car charging points.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

3.1. During Q4, performance continued to improve in some key areas such as benefits and planning. The Council has previously been made aware of the issues caused by a lack of capacity due to both high workloads as a result of both internal (improvement work /new systems) and external factors (Covid-19 related, economic) and vacant posts in some services which has affected service delivery during the year. These issues have been addressed by an injection of additional resources, in particular over the last six months to support services to reduce the backlog of work. There are early signs that performance in the Benefits service is returning to more normal levels which should be evident in the next quarter.

3.2. Concurrently, improvement work and programmes are on-going. The Planning service's improvement programme has already delivered significant improvements in the validation of applications, and a new planning checklist, designed to improve the quality of applications submitted, is being created. The launch of the OpenPortal will in time reduce workloads in the Revenues and Benefits service as well as Customer services, as more residents/clients are able to self-serve. In addition, the implementation of In-Cab technology in September 2021 is continuing to reduce the number of missed waste bins, and work to embed the technology is expected to deliver further improvements over the coming months.

3.3. Some of the performance indicators that have fallen short of their targets are considered below together with rectifying actions:

- Processing times for all three Benefit indicators showed significant improvements at the end of Q4. The average days to process Council Tax Support (CTS) new claims improved by six days, while the average days to process changes for CTS and Housing Benefit, improved by 10 days and 8.5 days respectively. The increase in processing times was primarily due to high workloads related to the increase in Universal Credit claims since the start of the pandemic (with much of the New Claims time delays beyond our control), the implementation of the new benefits system, Covid-19 related work, and supporting the administration of discretionary housing grants to the most vulnerable residents in the District. The backlog of work that was created following the implementation of the new benefits system was exacerbated by a software failure that prevented the automatic upload of changes of circumstances. A partial fix was applied nationally, but still required some cases to be processed manually; and was finally resolved in January 2022.

Resolution: Additional resources were brought in during Q3 to deal with the backlog and support the service; and a recovery plan is being developed to improve performance. The OpenPortal was officially launched in January 2022 and clients are now able to start self-serving. Other benefits of the new system are increased automation and better monitoring of workflows and individual workloads which will help the service to actively manage resources and identify any training requirements.

Although it will take time for the system to be fully exploited, the initial signs are promising with performance starting to return to previous levels.

- Both the in-year Council Tax collection rate and Business Rates collection rate continue to be lower than the pre-Covid years. The Council collected 96.3% of council tax due in the

year, one percentage point lower than the previous year; while the in-year business rates collection rate was over one percentage point up on the previous year at 93.4%.

The pausing of recovery action during 2020-21 and waiting for Magistrates courts to re-open for liability order hearings resulted in recovery action only recommencing in August 2021 which will have affected the collection rates. Overall, there are relatively few options available for the recovery of business rates and the process is lengthy, as shown by the extended time taken to recover last year's non payment.

Resolution: Many businesses have been supported by extended retail relief and a range of mandatory and discretionary grants including the Omicron mandatory grant in Q4. Extended retail relief will continue through 2022-23 at a relief of 50%, and for those businesses that are not eligible for extended retail relief and have been impacted by Covid-19, there is £2.27m in Covid-19 additional relief fund (CARF) to support them. A large proportion of these businesses have already been identified although the window for applying will remain open until September 2022. These businesses will have their business rates accounts credited which will help to reduce the debt owed in 2021-22.

Some homeowners will receive a council tax rebate to help with the rising cost of living. This process started in April 2022, and the rebate will be administered via their bank accounts or other means, rather than as a credit on the council tax account.

The service is continuing to support homeowners and businesses; sending out reminders, phoning and emailing to encourage them to contact the Council so that they can be supported via manageable repayment plans, or refer them on to other services both internally and externally. The debt, however, can only be secured through recovery action and issuing of a liability order. There is a dedicated team in place for the recovery of rates who are up to date on cases so all possible steps have been taken.

- The number of missed bins per 100,000 scheduled collections has improved for a second consecutive quarter in spite of some staffing issues related to high rates of Covid-19 infection, and relatively high levels of waste due to home working. Some collection rounds had to be postponed due to Storm Eunice which resulted in some pockets of missed bins when re-scheduled, but the use of In-Cab technology is likely to have reduced the impact (implemented on 29 September).

Resolution: The service reports that the number of missed bins is continuing to reduce, and that crews are fully trained up to use In-Cab technology. However, further work, supported by Ubico Management is being undertaken to embed the system and ensure it is fully utilised so that any training issues can be identified. The new technology is expected to improve efficiency in service delivery including reducing the number of misses by providing crew members with assistance to find all of the properties on their particular round.

3.4. Some service areas have performed well or are showing improvements including:

- The Council's customers are highly satisfied with services delivered by phone, with over 98% of customers responding positively.
- Through the Council's policies and partnership working, 156 affordable homes reached practical completion in Q4; 97 for affordable rent and 59. In addition to the 80 completed on the Housing 21 scheme, and 17 at Upavon Way, Carterton during the quarter; 12 were completed in East Carterton (Bloor), 10 in West Witney (Persimmon), nine in Burford

Road, Minster Lovell, and seven in Witney Road, Freeland. The forecast for 2022/23 is healthy at 336 completions subject to changes in programme; and no Registered Providers have indicated issues with delivery due to a shortage of materials at this point.

- Overall, planning performance has started to improve. The percentage of applications determined within eight weeks or an agreed timescale achieved its target in March 2022. High workloads in line with the national trend combined with a number of vacant posts had resulted in a lower level of performance. The team has now reached full capacity with all vacant posts filled including two additional posts, which is having a positive impact on officer caseloads, but also reflects the build up of a small backlog of applications awaiting registration/validation. The validation team has already delivered good improvements in the time from receipt to validation, with further improvements expected when the new planning checklist and guidance to applicants to improve the quality of applications submitted, is implemented. Other plans include implementing the next phase of the Enterprise software to improve case management, as well as exploring how customer contact can be improved using customer services 'champions' embedded within the planning service who can also support case officers.
- Residual waste per household has reduced over the last six months with the final lifting of restrictions. Households produced 379 kg each during 2021-22 compared to 405 kg in the previous year but remains higher than the pre-Covid year (369 kg). In order to highlight the importance of reduce and reuse before recycling, the Council has been running a comprehensive communications programme throughout the year which included ensuring that all our leaflets and promotions are up to date and operational changes are communicated widely as well as supporting key national recycling and waste campaigns, including the Waste and Resources Action Programme's (WRAP) Recycling Week last September, and the Food Waste Action Week in March 2022. In addition, the Council is a member of the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership, and has just embarked on a programme of promoting food waste participation in low performing areas which will be followed up by door knocking at the end of May 2022. Increasing food waste participation is important for the environmental benefits it brings, and will also improve the Council's recycling rate.
- There was a net reduction in Long Term Empty homes over six months, with 170 properties removed from the Long Term Empty list, and 163 added. A three month rolling action plan is in place, and includes tackling some of the complex cases (property on LTE levy, accounts in arrears, and unresponsive owner), and contacting those householders whose properties are about to slip into LTE status or an increased levy.

3.5. The service dashboards are attached at **Annex B**.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. None

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1. None

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1. None

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1. None



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL PLAN ANNUAL STATEMENT
April 2021 - March 2022

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

Two years have passed since the launch of the [West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2020 – 24](#) in January 2020 when the Council 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 the following priorities:

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 well being 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 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 a wide range of households 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

During this period and in tandem with delivering the Council Plan, efforts initially pivoted towards responding to the sudden challenges posed by the pandemic, principally supporting West Oxfordshire residents, its business and economy, and community and voluntary sector and latterly to developing the West Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery Plan through cross-party engagement and delivering the Themes of this plan: Economy, Community, Climate and Council, Service Delivery & Finance.

This agility and ability to adapt to the unprecedented pandemic, 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’. The Covid-19 Recovery Fund invested by the Council to deliver the Covid-19 Recovery Plan has had the dual benefit of making a meaningful contribution to Council Plan delivery due to the close alignment of these Themes with the six Council Plan Priorities. The Covid-19 Recovery Plan has provided the Council with a helpful framework for ensuring that the wide ranging impacts of the pandemic have been mitigated against.

The Council undertook a wide range of activities, providing support to individuals, charities and communities throughout 2021-22 which included:

- Working closely with NHS colleagues to:
 - Host and resource 3 x ‘walk in’ vaccination centres based in the Welch Way Office, where boosters as well as 1st / 2nd Jabs were given to 12-15s & 16 plus. Just under 8,500 vaccinations were given
 - Set up and manage a community symptom free testing site in Carterton – just under 1800 test carried out and 800 kits handed
 - Facilitate the establishment and running of the Covid test site that was based in Woodford Way Car Park
 - Support the running of a vaccination centre in Elmfield for vulnerable children
 - Operate a Community Collect Scheme for test kits from the Welch Way Office– over 1,000 handed out

- Supporting the local Test and Trace scheme in Oxfordshire – Over 640 visits carried out as well as undertaking over 230 requests for desktop checks
- Co-ordinating the operation of the Mobile Testing Unit (MTU) in Carterton
- Provided a dedicated support Hub with Resident Support Workers in place to respond to calls from residents in need and provide complex support, help with food, signposting and referrals, conducting 844 Test and Trace support calls and 324 contact tracing visits
- Funding support:
 - Distribution of funding (£44,850) to all food groups in the District
 - Distributing food support through the Household support fund (£100,000) to residents in need through Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire.
 - Administration of the extended Winter Support Grant, working closely with Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire
 - Additional food support for those in temporary accommodation
 - Provision of additional food support to those receiving the Test and Trace payment
 - Securing £40,000 for a grants programme for West Oxfordshire community food projects administered by Good Food Oxfordshire
 - Securing and allocating Contain Outbreak Management funding (£103,450) towards:
 - APCAM and the Help Hub for Mental health services for young people and families
 - Volunteer Link Up for vaccination transport support
 - Citizens Advice for an additional debt and welfare adviser
 - Reducing the risk to provide domestic abuse training for community groups and professionals
- Offering free training to VCS including food groups, which covered topics such as governance, GDPR, vision writing, working with volunteers etc
- Provision of emergency food parcels to vulnerable families
- Actively supporting local community groups and helping to develop food groups.

This Annual Statement details progress against each of the 6 Council Plan priorities and achievements against the aims of the Covid-19 Recovery Plan. It should be read in conjunction with the [WODC Annual Monitoring Report for the period 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021](#). 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, numbers of affordable homes delivered, visitor numbers to leisure centres, and local workforce structure.

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

The Council has been working on its commitment to proactively respond to the climate and ecological emergency as set out in its Carbon Action Plan (the Pathway to Achieving Carbon Neutral by 2030) and Climate Change Strategy through a wide ranging work programme. The work has been further supported by 3 fixed-term posts resourced through the Councils Covid-19 Recovery Fund: Carbon Action Plan Officer, Biodiversity and Countryside Land Management Officer and a Development Management Sustainability Officer. These posts have added capacity and expertise to complement existing capacity to take action towards addressing the climate and ecological emergency identified as a priority in the Council Plan and Recovery Plan. An overview of deliverables over the 2021-22 year are provided below.

- The [WODC Sustainability Standards Checklist](#) was launched in May 2021, providing a framework of standards for assessing planning applications against in terms of their sustainability on a range of criteria relating to water use and flood risk; biodiversity; green and active travel; aligning with net-zero carbon; sustainable construction; and materials and waste. From launch until 31 March 2022 66 major and 26 minor planning applications have been assessed against the criteria and a focus has been given to raising the sustainability of development proposed. To further embed the benefits of assessing planning applications against sustainability criteria, the Validation Checklist against which all planning applications are checked prior to registration and determination has been updated to require submission of a Sustainability Statement demonstrating how the sustainability measures are met.
- Landscape and biodiversity assessments of 12 key WODC owned sites has been undertaken, informing the production of five year [Land Management Plans](#) for each with a view to restoring and improving the existing natural habitats and biodiversity of the sites and/or creating new wildlife habitats to increase their ecological value. The LMP's are designed to achieve multiple benefits as a result of changes to the way the land is maintained, improving natural capital assets across the Council's estate including carbon storage, flood management and pollination.
- Delivery of two externally funded projects to improve energy efficiency in private rented properties, providing energy efficiency assessments and guidance to landlords to implement improvements to energy efficiency. In a further contribution towards improving energy efficiency of homes and those at risk of fuel poverty in the District, the Council continues to fund the Better Housing, Better Health service, providing low income households access to grants for energy efficiency improvements, and a further range of Fuel Poverty Grants for those on means tested benefits to make essential energy efficiency improvements. In the latter half of 2021 – 22 34 assessments were undertaken and 5 energy-efficiency installations were completed.
- In November 2021 the Royal Assent of the Environment Act mandated a Biodiversity Net Gain of 10%, with the aim of ensuring development, and/or land management leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. [The Interim Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance for Developers and Ecological Consultants](#) was updated in July 2021 providing guidance to developers to ensure that sufficient information is submitted to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain. Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre continues to support WODC to screen biodiversity metric calculations submitted to ensure that they achieve a Net Gain for Biodiversity. In the 2021 – 22 period 13 applications were submitted with Biodiversity Net Gain calculations. Of these, 2 secured a Biodiversity Net Gain on site and 1 offsite, with 9 pending a decision and one application being refused.

- WODC continued to play an active role on the [Oxfordshire Nature Partnership](#) which has the purpose 'to radically enhance nature, its positive impact on our climate and the priority it is given, helping to make Oxfordshire an exemplar county for people and nature to thrive'. This strategic forum exists to guide nature recovery in an integrated way to produce multiple benefits for local people, the economy and the environment. At a County level WODC also sits on the [Environment Advisory Group of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership](#) which exists to embed critical environmental thinking across the Future Oxfordshire Partnerships and to link closely with the Oxfordshire Nature Partnership. At a cross county level WODC sits on the [Cotswolds National Landscape Board](#) and [the Oxford to Cambridge Arc](#) to represent West Oxfordshire's environment in this wider strategic context.
- The Council commissioned the [Witney Flood Investigation Report \(January 2022\)](#) into the floods at Christmas 2020 to inform understanding of the event. WODC works collaboratively through an informal agency agreement with Oxfordshire County Council (as the Lead Local Flood Authority), undertaking flood investigations, enforcement and consent functions on behalf of the LLFA for West Oxfordshire. It has been confirmed that an updated flood risk model for the River Windrush and its tributaries through the town is to be carried out by the Environment Agency which will be informed, in part, by the findings of the Witney Flood Investigation Report.
- WODC continues to partner others through the Windrush and Evenlode Catchment Partnerships. This approach aims to build better functioning river catchments by:
 - Recognising catchments as interconnected systems
 - Working in partnership to tackle multiple challenges together
 - Harnessing natural processes wherever possible
 - Capitalising on opportunities for solutions on a catchment scale

Under the Thames Water Smarter Catchment Initiative, a £3million fund has been made for the [Evenlode Catchment Partnership](#) for delivery of projects between 2020-25 focussing on: water quality and advocacy; landscape, habitat and biodiversity; natural flood management; and education, access and recreation.

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

Recovery Theme: Communities

The value of adopting a 'Healthy Place Shaping' approach in new and existing developments is highlighted in the Council Plan. In February 2022 the Council further expressed their commitment to this by passing the motion that *'Each Member commits to being a champion for Healthy Place Shaping (HPS) utilising the core principles (and the tools available to them) to influence and underpin all aspects of their work. To recognise that within their role as Members, their commitment is crucial to the organisation of HPS. Actively encouraging/challenging one another, officers, Parish and Town Councils to use HPS approaches, to influence future decisions for council services, ensuring that they have the best possible outcomes for the health and wellbeing of all residents of West Oxfordshire.'*

Healthy Place Shaping activity falls under three branches:

- Community Activation – connecting local people and community groups, schools and businesses to enable them to enjoy healthier lifestyles and create activities, facilities and services which make their communities healthy, resilient and sustainable
- Built Environment – ensuring homes, streets and other buildings are healthier, people can easily access green spaces, and are enabled to cycle, walk and socially interact in order to improve health and wellbeing
- New Models of Care – re-shaping and developing local health, wellbeing and care services, and the infrastructure which supports people to achieve physical and/or mental health benefits.

Examples of the Healthy Place Shaping approach being put into action by the Council are:

- The Built Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy reached its final draft stage in March 2022, informed by an audit of current indoor leisure facilities stock across the District and Sport England modelling leisure facility need against projected population growth. Stakeholder consultation was also undertaken, including a Focus Group looking at the scope for a relocated Windrush Leisure Centre ('Windrush 2') and a residents' online survey to inform the required facility mix for any new Windrush 2. This activity has sought to address the current, latent and unmet need for built leisure facilities across West Oxfordshire. Following adoption of the Built Indoor Leisure Facilities Strategy, an associated Action Plan will establish a programme of delivery for the Strategy.
- Consultants have produced a Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan for the District that provides robust justification for the provision of outdoor playing pitches and sport facilities that meet the needs of existing and future residents and visitors to West Oxfordshire. It also provides the evidence required to help protect playing fields to ensure sufficient land is available to meet existing and projected future pitch requirements. This important document will form part of the evidence base for the forthcoming Local Plan Review by ensuring that existing facilities are the most appropriate in terms of quantity, quality and location and gives consideration to how to best meet the additional needs generated by planned housing and economic growth. Furthermore, the Strategy identifies a number of sites for development to meet the District's need for Playing Pitches.

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 economy of the district has been greatly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and a reframing of efforts to address recovery and renewal of the economy has been the focus over the last year, as set out in the Covid-19 Recovery Plan. This is in addition to making progress on the actions identified in the Council Plan, for example the roll out of the Electric Vehicle Charging Point programme and early consideration toward a Masterplan and Station Travel Plan for Hanborough Station. This dual approach to proactively addressing the short and long term challenges facing the local economy is described below.

The Council's Covid-19 Recovery Fund resourced 2 full time posts to increase capacity for supporting local businesses impacted negatively by the pandemic and associated restrictions, recognising the acute impact of these on town centres and employers. Specific initiatives to counter this impact include:-

- A Welcome Back Fund allocation of £195k has been invested across the District to support the safe return to the high streets and help build back better from the pandemic. A range of public realm improvements (e.g. better signage, amenity landscape and seating) and promotional activity and events benefitted Witney, Burford, Carterton, Charlbury, Chipping Norton, Eynsham and Long Hanborough. These were delivered in partnership with local Town and Parish Councils, Wake up to Woodstock, Marriots and Woolgate Shopping Centres and local businesses.
- The Council used Welcome Back funding to procure the LoyalFree 'place promotion app' to support local businesses. The app is connected to a platform that any town centre retailer in the district can use to promote offers, discounts and loyalty schemes. The scheme has been promoted through the 'Love West Oxfordshire' campaign and helps footfall across town centres by encouraging repeat purchases, discounts and other offers as well as listing events and interactive trails to entice new visitors to West Oxfordshire. To date there are 3015 users of LoyalFree and the app has promoted 290 businesses.
- The Council has been working with other districts and Makespace Oxford on the Oxfordshire-wide [Meanwhile in Oxfordshire Project](#). The purpose of the project was to try and fill selected vacant units in our high streets with a variety of offerings to mitigate the negative impact of empty units. A number of premises were considered as part of this, but, positively and in a sign that the local economy was recovering, did not proceed because long term tenants were found. The Guildhall in Chipping Norton has been successfully taken on by the project and is filled partly by the [Chippy Larder](#), thus making a meaningful contribution to addressing the issue of food security in the town, with the remaining space available as a co-working space and small offices.
- In the fourth quarter of the 2021-22 year the Council distributed 1,252 one-off grants of up to £6,000 on behalf of government to businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors to counter impacts of the Omicron variant of Covid-19. The total distributed was £1,325,051. The Council also used

part of its Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) allocation to run a 'Business Growth Support' scheme (BGS) which provided one to one advice sessions and cash grants to 86 businesses. The advice sessions were delivered by OxLEP.

The value of the provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) was specified in the Council Plan as a means of improving public realm in our town centres and an action to be taken towards achieving a vibrant district economy. Under the roll out of the [Park and Charge Oxfordshire](#) project into West Oxfordshire, a total of 32 electric vehicle charging points serving 64 parking bays have been installed in five of the Council owned car parks at: Woodford Way in Witney; New Street in Chipping Norton; Black Bourton Road in Carterton; Hensington Road in Woodstock and Back Lane in Eynsham. This contributes to delivering Electric Vehicle Infrastructure at sites in Council ownership and also to meeting the ambitions of the Oxfordshire EV Infrastructure Strategy to reach a target of 7.5% of local authority managed car parks providing Electric Vehicle charged spaces by 2025. A 7.5% target is equivalent to 263 charged parking bays in Council owned car parks across the District. The 64 bays delivered under Park and Charge Oxfordshire represent 24% of this target. This, alongside public realm improvements, will enable town centres to evolve to meet the changing expectations of resident shoppers, businesses and visitors alike.

Hanborough Station was identified in the Council Plan as a focus for partnership effort to secure new and upgraded infrastructure to increase use of sustainable transport and improve connectivity. WODC and Oxfordshire County Council are now jointly commissioning the preparation of a Station Masterplan and Station Travel Plan (STP) in order to identify and deliver improvements to Hanborough Station, including consideration of accessibility improvements to the station. The bespoke STP will bring about a range of outputs including consideration of 'stewardship' issues, acting as a vehicle for change and planning a 'legacy'. The exercise will take a 'community led' approach to tap into local knowledge, enthusiasm and making use of local skills to help develop a robust rationale for investment. It is anticipated evidence will be gathered to understand:

- The profile of new developments and existing populations
- Stated preferences of travel
- Key routes and data of the locality/visitor patterns
- Scope for alternative travel such as cross promotion of the Liftshare scheme

Improved infrastructure at Hanborough Station will also benefit the 40 hectare Salt Cross Science and Technology Park allocated in the Local Plan which is in close proximity to the station. The delivery of the Salt Cross Science Park is a key ambition of the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy and will make an unprecedented contribution to the economic development of West Oxfordshire.

Turning to broadband infrastructure, the Council's [broadband rollout project with Gigaclear](#) was formally completed in December 2021. WODC and HM Government each invested £1.6m in the project, contracting Gigaclear to connect 4,788 of the most rural premises in West Oxfordshire with Fibre to the Premises broadband. The Council's investment levered a further £6.7m funding from Gigaclear to extend the network resulting in access of a total of over 12,000 properties in the district to ultra-fast broadband as a result of the project.

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

Recovery Theme: Communities

Two years into the pandemic and the importance of the Council Plan 'Strong Local Communities' priority has not diminished. The dynamic and inspiring community sector response across West Oxfordshire to the challenges introduced by the pandemic has provided a strong foundation from which to further develop a range of approaches to support the district's communities. The Council committed in the West Oxfordshire Covid-19 Recovery Plan to taking an active role in improving the health and wellbeing of its communities, investing resources in two particular strands of activity:-

Wellbeing Hubs: research with 48 community organisations and statutory service providers has been undertaken to explore the scope of and potential model for hubs as a means of providing a mix of services in partnership with other service providers, including advice, housing and welfare support for the community either through networking or co-locating or embedding staff in a local area. This research has been complemented by an asset mapping exercise to understand fixed buildings and greenspaces available in primary settlements alongside people/community groups.

Three models have been identified: Model 1: A Building, Model 2: A Person or People and Model 3: A Connected Way of Working. A 12 month 'test and learn pilot' of Model 2 has been funded with the appointment of a 'Carterton Hub Worker', in partnership with Carterton Connects, who is based in the Carterton Family Centre to connect people with services and providing advice. Similarly, a 'Community Builder' has been put in post for Witney Central focussing on supporting the community on the Smiths Estate. Finally, the Council has implemented Model 3 by facilitating the Witney Forum, bringing together local organisations and statutory services in Witney to share information and network. 50 organisations are in contact through the forum. This meets the Council Plan aim to 'help build resilience in communities with more effective joint working and intelligence sharing.'

Active Lives: the Council identified the need for a focus on helping people, especially those who are alone or with long term health conditions, to improve levels of physical activity in light of severe restrictions on movement by the pandemic. This reduced mobility was identified as a risk factor leading to physical decline, the consequences of which could lead to additional burdens on the NHS and which the Council seeks to mitigate against. A dedicated person centred activity programme called 'Move Together' has been offered to all residents who have shielded during the pandemic. A targeted 'Go Active Get Healthy' project has also been offered to help people with diabetes manage their condition through greater levels of activity.

Beyond these two strands of activity, the Council's Response Hub, established at the outset of the pandemic in March 2020 has been able to extend its reach with the appointment of staff funded through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to provide direct support and signposting to those residents requiring assistance and a specialist outreach function to further develop relationships between the Council and neighbourhood response groups and other voluntary and community sector partners.

A Youth Needs Assessment is underway to develop a comprehensive understanding of the priorities of young people in order to ensure that future services and infrastructure provision meets their needs and that the significant impact on young people in terms of their education, employment options, development

opportunities and social skills can be mitigated against. 4,000 survey responses have been received by young people which are being categorised into themes. Focus Groups will be held to explore these themes further to provide a robust evidence base for the Youth Needs Assessment.

Moving to activity not emanating from the Covid-19 Recovery Plan, attention has been given to longer term planning for the District's communities and their infrastructure needs in the years ahead as the Strategic Development Areas identified in the Local Plan, and smaller sites, are delivered to ensure that existing and incoming residents benefit and that the approach promotes social integration and cohesion. The Council successfully bid to the government's PropTech fund for £125k to develop a new digital engagement platform that makes readily available information on community infrastructure and developer contributions that exist (or can be created) into a single, accessible and visually engaging repository.

The benefit of this platform is that it will enable communities to better understand and interrogate local community infrastructure priorities. It will present:

- What development is proposed for their local area
- What infrastructure improvements have already been provided or are proposed to be provided as a result of new development in their local area
- The overall process of developer contributions including how they are negotiated, the differences between Section 106 legal agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy
- How to put forward suggestions for infrastructure improvements needed locally (eg by being able to drop a pin on a map or plot out a new pedestrian or cycle route which would benefit the community)

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. Given the significant contribution the visitor economy makes to West Oxfordshire communities, it is evident that there is a particularly acute need for support to recover and renew in the wake of the pandemic and the Cotswolds Tourism team have been working directly with tourism businesses to enable adaptation by improving their online capabilities. Partnership work with Wake up to Woodstock, the Witney Chamber of Trade and local businesses has focussed on enhancing destination marketing of Witney and Woodstock through www.cotswolds.com/witney and www.cotswolds.com/woodstock

Options for encouragement of sustainable tourism practices within the visitor economy have been investigated. The Sustainable Tourism Survey elicited 60 responses from local businesses and demonstrates a strong interest in improving the sustainability of their businesses.

The Council is also committed to supporting, through the distribution of grants, voluntary and community activity and partnership actions which help to progress delivery of the Council Plan and thereby benefiting West Oxfordshire communities. In the 2021 – 22 year £187,851 was granted to 15 organisations and/or projects and detail of these can be viewed on pages 279 – 298 of the [Cabinet Paper - March 2022](#).

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

In October 2021 the Council formally adopted the [West Oxfordshire Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document](#) (AH SPD) which will steer the successful delivery of West Oxfordshire Local Plan Policy H3 'Affordable Housing' by providing detailed guidance on the delivery of affordable housing in West Oxfordshire for the Council, developers, housing providers and local communities. The AH SPD is now 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.

In 2021-22, 378 new affordable homes have completed in the District, far greater than the Local Plan identified average annual need of 274. Of this total, 241 are affordable rent and 137 are shared ownership. These are located in Freeland, Minster Lovell, Chipping Norton, Carterton, Burford, Long Hanborough, Woodstock, Witney, North Leigh and Bampton. It is anticipated that this target will again be exceeded in 2022-23 with a non-binding forecast of 336 completions.

Schemes of particular note which meet the housing needs of our changing population, as required by this Council Plan priority include:

- Delivery in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, and with the use of Growth Deal Funding, of 80 extra care affordable homes in Chipping Norton.
- An award of £78k from the government's 'Brownfield Land Release Fund' has been made to the Council which will unlock a Council owned site in Chipping Norton for eight affordable net-zero carbon custom built homes. A planning application is forthcoming for the homes and associated sustainable amenities including e-vehicle club with car charging points.
- In partnership with Cottsway Housing and benefitting from Growth Deal Funding, the redevelopment of 49 units for affordable social rent which were no longer fit for purpose at two sites: 18 units at Lavender Place, Bampton and 31 units at Blenheim Court, Carterton.

- In partnership with Registered Provider Heylo Housing and the Oxfordshire Growth Deal, the Council has benefited from Heylo Housings ability to negotiate bulk purchase of new homes from developers for use as shared ownership housing. 43 properties have been secured with 32 of these sold and 11 in the process of completion.

The rollout of the 'Blenheim Approach' in partnership with Blenheim Estate continues apace. This innovative 'affordable rent' housing model seeks to deliver affordable housing available at between 60 – 80% of market rental costs. It is the intention of Blenheim Estate to retain ownership of the rental properties so they can be held in perpetuity for local people, especially those within the key worker categories. At the Park View development in Woodstock, 11 affordable homes have been delivered out of a total of 150, with completions set to increase substantially in 2022-23.

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 on these. These include Rent to Buy, Build to Rent and Discount Market Sale and First Homes which are defined in the AH SPD on pages 14, 15 and 16 respectively. A number of Rent to Buy properties are scheduled to come forward at the Milestone Road site in Carterton and 4 properties as First Homes at Discount Market Sale are being developed in Long Hanborough. The [Pre-submission Area Action Plan for Salt Cross Garden Village](#) includes a Policy 24 'Build to Rent' (at page 174) in support of Build to Rent proposals coming forward at Salt Cross Garden Village.

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. Policy 25 'Custom and Self-Build Housing' contained within the Pre-submission Area Action Plan for Salt Cross Garden Village supports delivery of this specialist type of housing within the site and demonstrates the Council's commitment to support this alternative type of housing as a means of meeting the housing needs of our changing population. A successful bid was made to Homes England for a 3 year Housing Development and Community Facilitator to enable housing delivery of Salt Cross Garden Village. The post-holder will focus on projects developing community led housing and self-build housing at the Garden Village.

The Council continues to pursue opportunities for working in partnership with legacy landowners to accelerate delivery of affordable housing in the district. 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 the Council to explore the scope for delivering affordable housing through rural exception sites. Furthermore the Council is collaborating with Parish Councils, Registered Providers and developers to bring forward smaller schemes to help meet local need for affordable housing.

The Council is also working proactively to address the issue of rough sleeping and in mid-2021 purchased the Old Court House in Witney to provide safe, flexible accommodation for adults who are rough sleeping or at risk of it. The property contains 15 units of high quality, self-contained bedsits. By being able to offer homeless clients direct access to accommodation at the Old Court House it mitigates the need to fund more costly B&B accommodation which is often out of area. This approach is much more cost effective to the council and beneficial to the client as they are placed close to existing support networks. A partnership with employment charity and social enterprise [Aspire](#) provides bespoke onsite support to assist residents to move on successfully at the right

time into long term accommodation and provides one to one support to ensure access to services including health, mental health and addiction agencies as well as employment, training/education opportunities

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. Previous budgetary constraints have been amplified by the pandemic (greater draw on Council services, extraordinary service costs and lost revenue streams) and so the challenge of matching delivery ambitions to the Council's revenue stream makes this final Council Plan priority of delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council a key priority.

The WODC Recovery [Investment Strategy](#) 2020 – 24 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, with 6 delivery themes in the Investment Strategy defined as: · The provision of adequate and affordable housing · Green Energy & Carbon Reduction; · Delivering Infrastructure for Jobs & Economic Growth; · Reinvigorating Commercial Centres to ensure our economic vibrancy; · Maximising existing and new income streams from service delivery; · Developing a commercial culture to our decision making whilst retaining a public service ethos.

A £2.4million acquisition has been completed in the 2021 – 22 year of a commercial building in Carterton currently occupied by The Garden Trading Centre and was an opportunity to consolidate the land and buildings into single ownership. Further investment will be made to substantially improve the asset with repairs to the roof. The return is in line with the requirement that any investment generates a return in the order of 3.5% above the borrowing cost and thus makes a contribution towards closing the revenue funding gap set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Further detail of activity under the Investment Strategy can be found in the [Investment Strategy Report 2022-23](#).

Two areas of particular focus are the Agile Working Project (Office Rationalisation) and the Environmental Services Innovation Programme. The Council has embarked on an office rationalisation exercise to look at ways of generating revenue from Council owned offices. New office layouts have been proposed which reduce the office footprints by 40%, enabling vacated areas to be tenanted. This has been made possible by the adoption of an 'Agile Working Strategy' which requires staff to become 'hybrid workers', mixing the remote working that was the 'norm' during the pandemic with in office working. Additional benefits to this approach are an estimated 40 – 50% reduction in carbon emissions from reduced staff mileage and opportunities for enhanced 'work/life balance' for staff.

The Environmental Services Innovation Programme was launched in June 2021 with a focus on delivering efficiency measures relating to three criteria: service cost, performance and climate (including carbon savings/biodiversity impact mitigation). In the early phase of the ESIP, 39 lower level projects have been delivered eg in-cab digital waste management system (Yotta), rationalisation of dog waste/litter bins, change to grounds maintenance practices to mitigate wildlife habitat loss. The next phase of the ESIP for West Oxfordshire is the Council's waste service review which will consider environmental and CO2 impacts. An options appraisal will explore opportunities which may be brought about by cross boundary working and/or the sharing of a depot with a

neighbouring waste collection authority. The options appraisal will in turn feed into waste vehicle replacement plans in readiness for the Council's current Waste and Recycling Collection Contract with Ubico ending in 2024, and which coincides with the majority of the current collection vehicles being 7 years old and at end of life. Ahead of this, an electric waste vehicle was added to the Council's Waste Vehicle Fleet in 2021.

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 has continued to progress in this second 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. In Witney, this can be at the relaunched Customer Service Centre on Welch Way where Customer Services, Housing and Benefits Officers are based. The launch of [OpenPortal](#) in 2022 enables 24/7 online self-service of Council Tax and Business Rates accounts and the claiming of Benefits.

Central to the digitalisation of Council services is the Salesforce platform which has further evolved to meet a variety of service needs:-

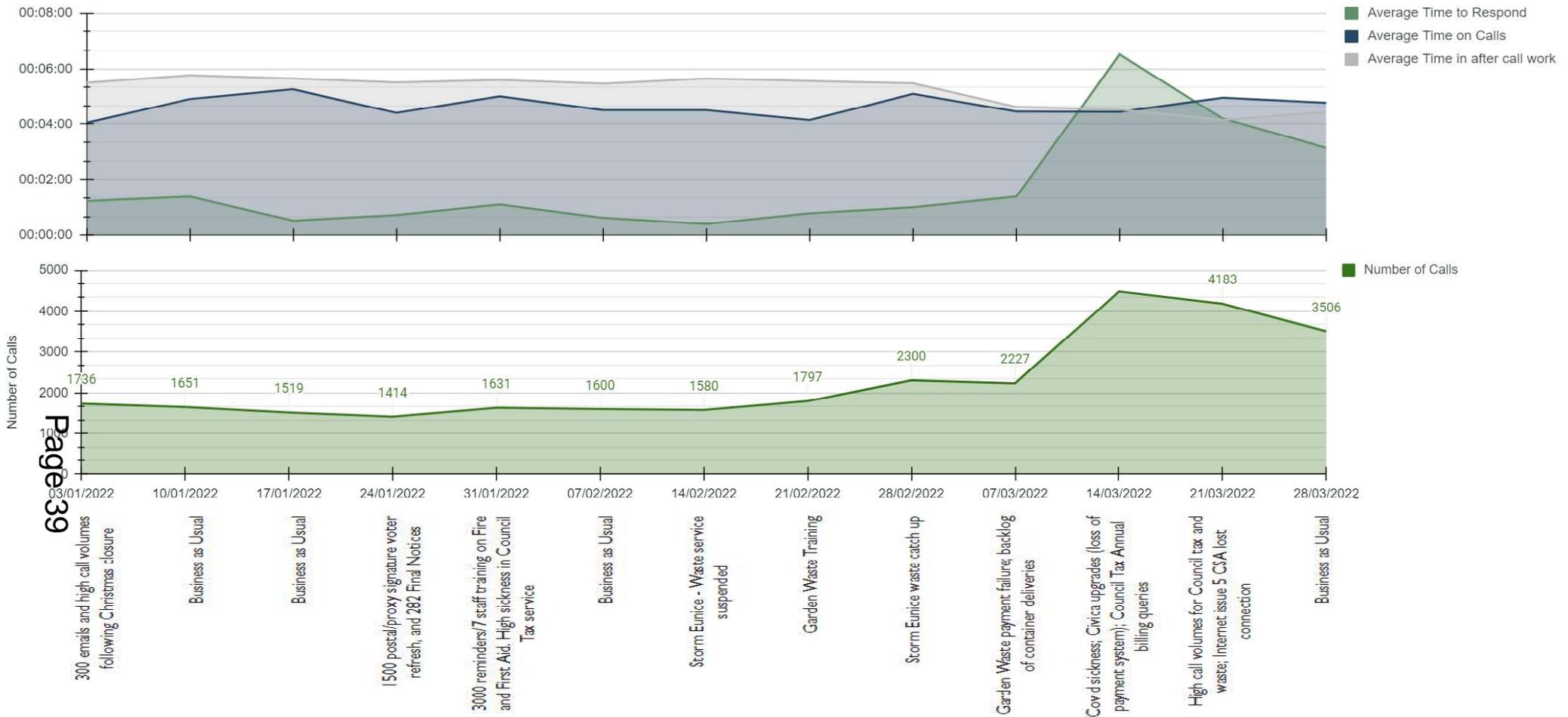
- Integration of Salesforce with a new digital Waste Management System (Yotta) to enable monitoring of bulky household, clinical and commercial waste as well as missed bin collections and replacement container requests. Ubico is able to access information updates via use of tablets in their service trucks on route.
- Platform enhancements to increase efficiencies through better transparency and case management, including the addition of high priority queues to expedite response rate to urgent queries
- Distribution of a variety of Covid-19 related business grants including: Additional (Covid-19) Restrictions Grant to previous applicants paid under the Restart:Strand 2 (Hospitality and Leisure) scheme, the WODC Business Growth Support Scheme and the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grants.

The aforementioned successful application for £125k of PropTech funding to establish a new digital engagement platform will enable the Council to greatly improve its digital engagement capacity through the establishment of a new digital engagement platform using software '[CommonPlace](#)'. This centralised, transparent and accessible web-based resource can also be downloaded as an app, enabling communities to better understand and interrogate local community infrastructure priorities and funding opportunities, as well as providing the means of submitting infrastructure priorities to the Council for their local area. The Council will benefit through improved engagement and knowledge sharing but via reduced resource burden as local communities will be enabled to 'self-serve' and establish information requirements themselves.



Satisfied

Customer Services Quarter 4



Service delivery can be affected by a range of factors both within the service such as staff absence and in other services such as the implementation of new software which requires advisors to be trained up; as well as mass comms sent to residents /clients such as council tax reminders, garden renewals and election registration. There was a spike in the volume of phone calls during the last three weeks of March, which related primarily to queries about garden waste renewals and council tax annual billing. An issue with the 3D secure authentication of the Civica Payment solution resulted in a number of failed customer payments. This issue affected all Councils who are using the Civica webpay solution. The ICT team immediately flagged up the issue with the company and an interim 'fix' was rolled out shortly afterwards. Due to the

disruption caused to residents a meeting was held with senior managers from Civica and a claim for compensation has been submitted. A permanent solution will be rolled out after the summer when a new 3D secure gateway is implemented. Council tax annual bills generated from the new system resulted in additional calls. Although the wording was identical to last year's bill, the format was slightly different. Next year's annual bills will be revised to improve clarity. During this busy period, 12 staff in the service contracted Covid-19 including nine advisors, some advisors temporarily lost IT connectivity during one lunchtime, and Civica scheduled a software upgrade during annual billing (outside of the Council's control)

which reduced capacity in the service while increasing additional/repeat calls. It has been acknowledged that garden waste renewals coinciding with the annual CT billing creates a spike in call volumes which can be difficult to manage; the service will be reviewing the scheduling of garden waste renewals later this year, as well as collaborating with key service areas on the comms going out to residents/businesses and building a timeline of events to better manage the demand for Customer Services. Note: The response time, on call time, and after call time data include data for West Oxfordshire specific staff and shared staff, based on a 60% - 40% split respectively. This arrangement helps to improve resilience in the service.

Development Management Quarter 4

Average Planner Caseload

40
TARGET 50

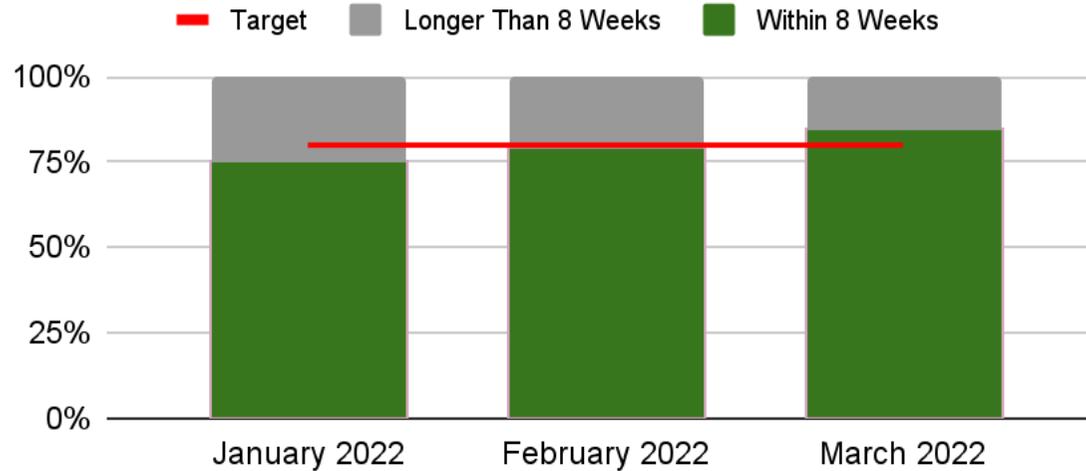
Average Senior Planner Caseload

27
TARGET 35

Average Principal Planner Caseload

17
TARGET 20

Planning Decisions (PS1/PS2) made within 8 weeks or agreed time (Excludes applications for discharge of conditions, pre application advice and general enquiries)



Average Cases closed per Planner in Quarter

49
TARGET 50

Average Cases closed per Senior Planner in Quarter

19
TARGET 40

Average Cases closed per Principal Planner in Quarter

20
TARGET 25

Average days from receipt to validation

8
TARGET 7

Customer Satisfaction



90.5%

The central bar chart shows planning determination performance is gradually improving and exceeded its target in March 2022. The team has reached full capacity with all vacant posts filled including two additional posts, which is having a positive impact on officer caseloads. This has allowed the team to revert to their intended structure, ensuring that Principal and Senior Planners caseloads have decreased as a result of not trying to cover the work of vacancies in addition to their own complex caseload. Senior Officer closure rates have been impacted by a vacancy arising at the end of Q3, which was filled in March 2022.

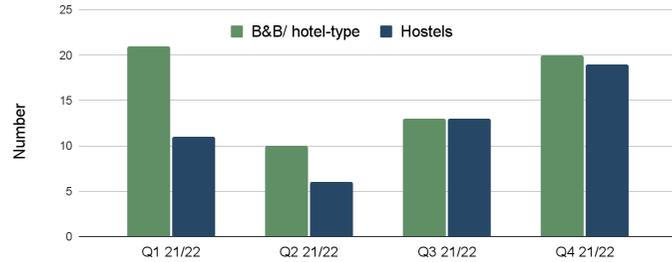
The decision to enter into a shared partnership arrangement for the technical administrative part of the service has paid dividends as nearly half of the team at West left during the first part of the quarter. The arrangements prevented the development of a large backlog of applications awaiting registration/validation. The average days from receipt to validation was impacted by a higher volume of applications in March, ending just outside of the target at eight days. It is expected to return to within seven days in the next quarter, as a result of filling vacancies in the planning admin team.



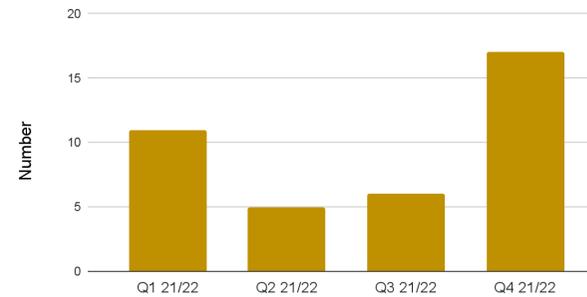
Housing Quarter 4

The Number of households in Emergency Accommodation (B&B/hotel type; and hostels owned and managed by the Council) at the end of each quarter

** 22 bed spaces available in hostels

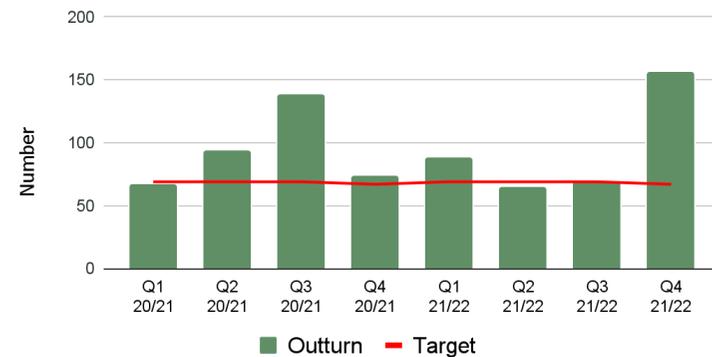


The number of successful 'move ons' from Emergency Accommodation to long term accommodation



The number of affordable homes reaching practical completion

*practical completion is when the property is ready for occupation; Target is from Local Plan



The number of people contacting the Council as homeless or threatened with homelessness increased in Q3 and into Q4 due to the ending of Covid related financial incentives and the new Government request to accommodate all rough sleepers under Protect and Vaccinate directive in December 2021 in response to concerns surrounding the impact of the Omicron variant.

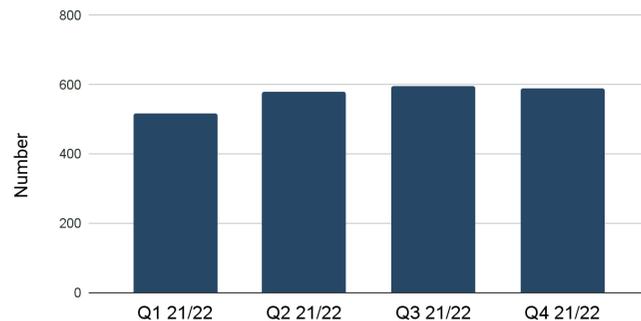
Going forward, the Housing Team is refocusing more resources on the Prevention approach with the recruitment of specialist Complex Needs officers as well as moving people on from emergency accommodation as quickly as possible using Specialist Temporary Accommodation officers who are able to offer dedicated support and bespoke solutions.

The availability of social housing stock however remains low, partially due to prevention measures in place to assist those affected by the financial implications of Covid and the increasing cost of energy to remain in their own home. Accessing the Private Rented Sector remains difficult due to affordability.

The lifting of the eviction ban on 1 October 2021 has resulted in an increase in both the number of families and domestic abuse cases approaching for assistance with their housing. During Q4, targeted provision for rough sleepers has been provided as part of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. Over the coming months, the Council will need to be mindful of potential future demand resulting from asylum dispersal and the impacts on services.

Through negotiation with developers, the Council is able to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing. 156 homes were completed for affordable rent and shared ownership making a total of 378 for the year, well ahead of the target. The success of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal schemes is becoming apparent with 80 homes completed in Q4 on the Housing 21 affordable extra care scheme at Chipping Norton. In addition, a range of proactive work is being undertaken to reduce the number of LTE properties in the District. The Council's Long Term Empty officer contacts property owners to offer advice on the options available to them, and during Q4 removed 170 properties from the LTE list, although 163 were added. A three month rolling action plan is in place to reduce the number of LTE properties

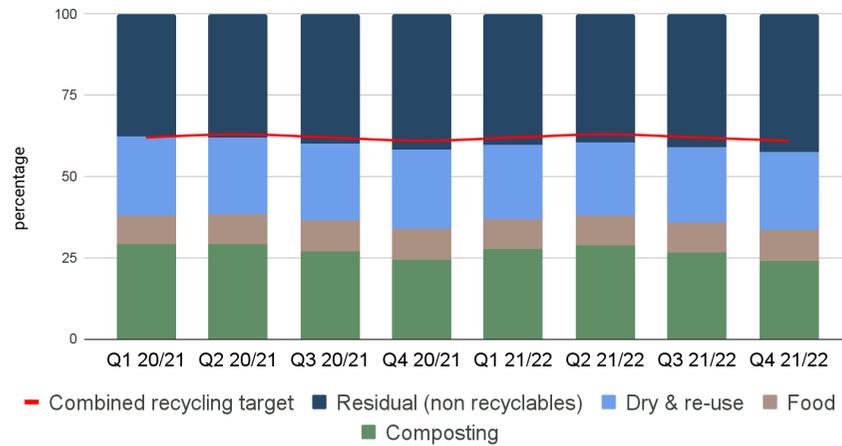
The number of Long Term Empty Properties (6 months plus) in the District



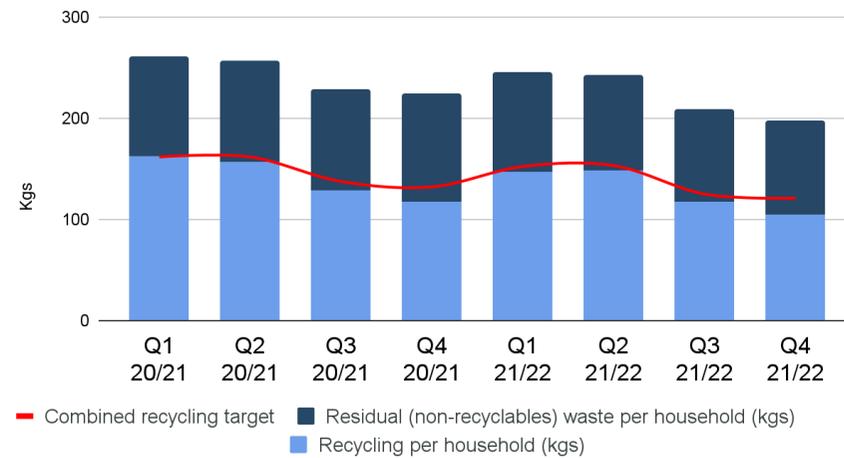


Waste and Environment Quarter 4

(Cumulative) Household waste collected composition



Household waste collected per household



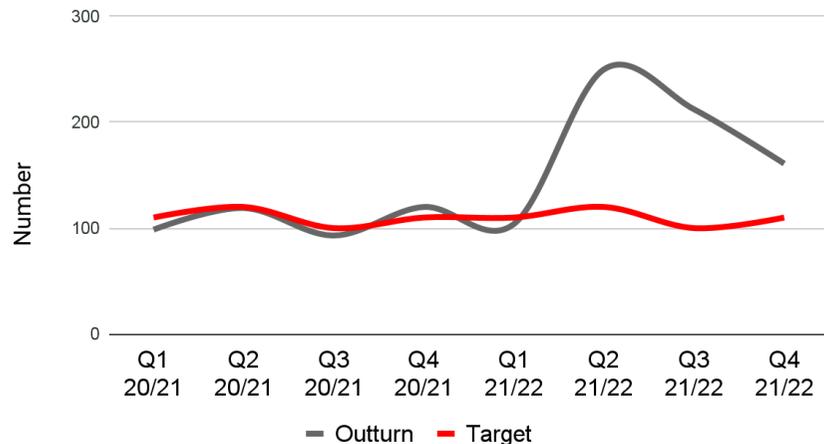
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The combined recycling for 2021-22 was 57.74%, and has varied by about half a percentage point over the last three years. All recycling streams (tonnages) have fallen compared to the previous year but are still higher than the pre-Covid year, in particular for the early part of 2021-22 when restrictions were just lifting. Residual waste per household has reduced significantly over the last six months.

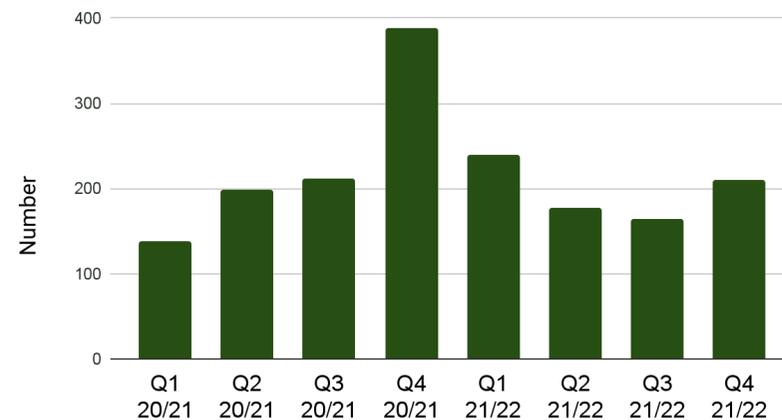
The number missed bins per 100,000 scheduled collections is continuing to improve in spite of some staffing issues related to high rates of Covid-19 infection and relatively high levels of waste. The postponement of some rounds due to Storm Eunice resulted in some pockets of missed bins when rescheduled; the impact of which was reduced by the use of In-Cab technology. Further improvements are expected as crews are fully trained in the new technology and work to embed the system is taking place.

The number of fly tips peaked during the final national lockdown and have decreased which may reflect the lifting of restrictions. There was a small spike during Q4 which may relate to the 'Stay at home' message in response to the Omicron variant. As part of the budget 2022/23, Cabinet agreed to additional resources to increase enforcement activities around fly tipping and improving our response to issues raised. Work to recruit to the post has commenced.

Missed bins per 100,000 scheduled collections

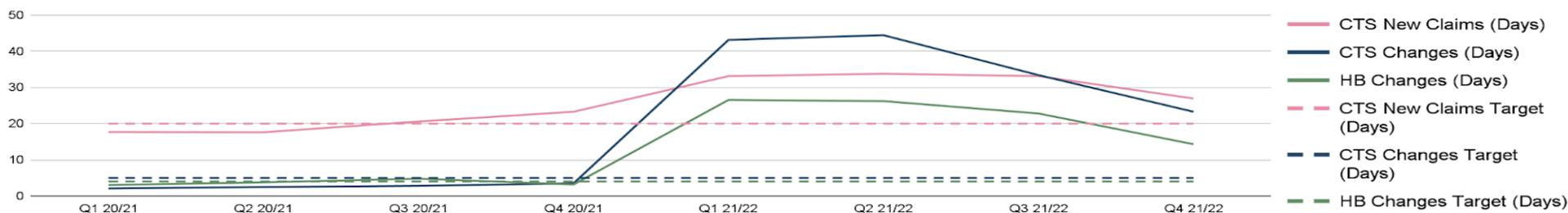


Number of flytips collected

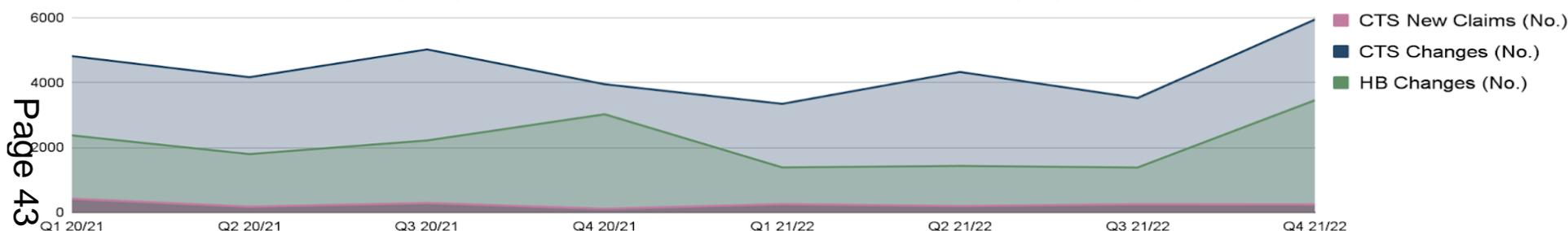


Revenues and Benefits Quarter 4

Average Processing Times For Council Tax Support (CTS) New Claims and Changes and Housing Benefit (HB) Changes



Number of Council Tax Support (CTS) New Claims and Changes and Housing Benefit (HB) Changes Assessed

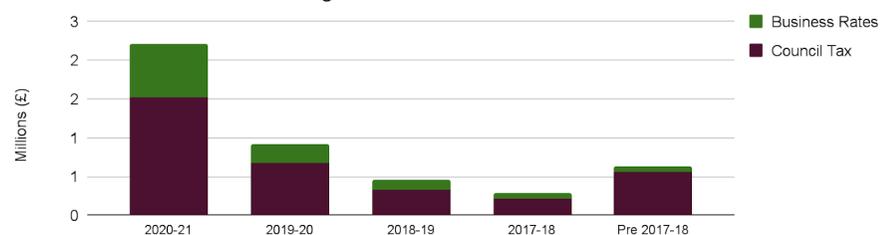


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21/22 Collection Rates

| | Council Tax | | Business Rates | |
|-----|-------------|--------|----------------|--------|
| | Actual | Target | Actual | Target |
| QTR | 6.1% | 14% | 16.3% | 12% |
| YTD | 96.3% | 99% | 93.4% | 99% |

Council Tax & Business Rates Aged Debt



Qtrly Aged Debt

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| % Change Council Tax | -27.2% |
| % Change Bus. Rates | -21.9% |

Benefit processing times have improved over the last six months and early signs indicate we should see a return to more normal levels in Q1. The improvement was aided by an injection of additional resources and the resolution of a software failure following the implementation of the new benefits system. As usual, workloads increased during Q4 due to annual uprating which requires the re-assessment of every claim.

Both council tax and business rates collection rates have been depressed over the last two years due to the impact of Covid-19 on households and businesses, and the pause in recovery action (recommencing in August 2021) and delay in the re-opening of Magistrates Courts. During this time, the service has supported homeowners and businesses and encouraged them to make contact to discuss options. Government has recently announced a council tax rebate for some homeowners to help with the rising cost of living, and has made available a range of business grants throughout the pandemic including the most recent £2.27m Covid-19 additional relief; these businesses will have their business rates accounts credited which will help to reduce the debt owed in 2021-22. There is a dedicated team in place for the recovery of rates who are up to date on cases (following the pause); and reduced the previous years' council tax debt by £1.1m and business rates by £311k since the previous quarter.



WODC FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

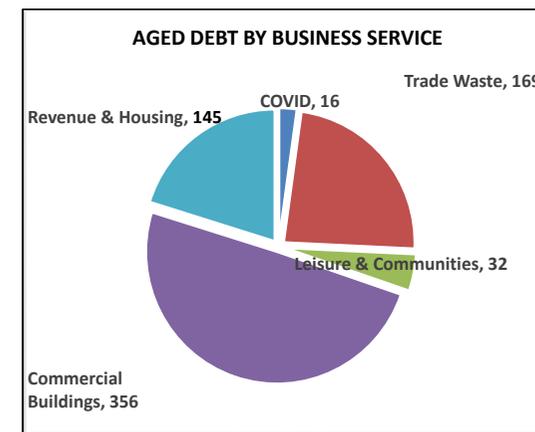
| Service Area | £k | | | Variance (under) / over |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| | Original Budget | Profiled Budget | Actual Exp. | |
| Democratic and Committee Services | 953 | 927 | 961 | 33 |
| Environmental & Regulatory Services | 479 | 746 | 432 | (44) |
| Environmental Services | 7,088 | 6,925 | 6,893 | (32) |
| Finance, Human Resources & Procurement | 890 | 899 | 895 | (3) |
| ICT, Change & Customer Services | 1,802 | 1,819 | 1,772 | (48) |
| Land, Legal & Property | 863 | 807 | 776 | (31) |
| Leisure & Communities | 2,058 | 2,055 | 1,980 | (76) |
| Planning & Strategic Housing | 712 | 778 | 720 | (58) |
| Revenues & Housing Support | 895 | 749 | 790 | 41 |
| Investment Property and Retained Services | (1,871) | (1,800) | (425) | (245) |
| Total cost of services | 13,868 | 13,905 | 14,794 | (463) |
| Plus: | | | | |
| Investment income receipts | (788) | (788) | (794) | (6) |
| Cost of services before financing: | 13,081 | 13,117 | 14,000 | (469) |

AGED DEBT SUMMARY

| | Mar-22 | Dec-21 | Sep-21 | Movement vs. prior period | | |
|----------|--------|--------|--------|---------------------------|-----|---|
| Invoices | 1,241 | 1,244 | 1,356 | 3 | 0% | ↓ |
| £k | 718 | 1,093 | 1,426 | 375 | 52% | ↓ |

Aged Debt Summary:

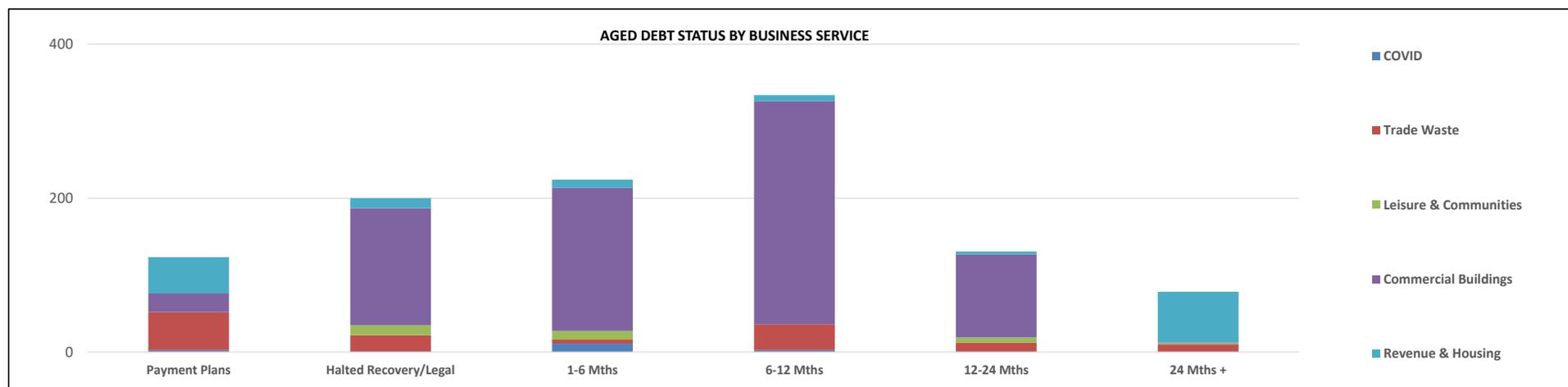
- Q4 position has improved versus Q3 with a significant reduction in total aged debt of £375,000.
- Our aim is to bring every case to a conclusion.
- A lot of effort has been successfully put into making sure that invoices do not become overdue by proactively liaising with customers. The success of this strategy is evidenced by an increase of 25% of invoices in Payment Plans vs Q3.



Overall Summary:

The Council faced continued pressure on income budgets in 2021/22 with in year reporting highlighting Car Parking and Land Charges. A prudent approach was taken in the 2021/22 budget with the inclusion of £1.8m of income contingencies against our Leisure Contract and Investment Properties. Investment Property rents performed above target by £249,563 aided by the purchase of additional units at Carterton Industrial Estate in Q2 and a material fall in bad debt necessitated a £212,000 reduction in Bad Debt provision.

Both of our major contractors - Publica & Ubico returned a contract refund to the Council at the end of the year, a great achievement against the backdrop of high inflation & fuel prices and the lack of agency workers, providing the Council with a benefit of £67,819 (Publica) and £137,278 (Ubico). Combined with Council Service areas controlling costs and additional grant income from the Government, the Q4 outturn position is very positive, giving the Council the opportunity to place surplus funds into earmarked reserves to offset unavoidable inflationary increases in 22/23.



| | |
|---|---|
|  WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL Council name | WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL |
| Name and date of Committee | CABINET – 22 JUNE 2022 |
| Report Number | AGENDA ITEM 8 |
| Subject | CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES |
| Wards affected | Bampton and Clanfield, Burford, Carterton South, Charlbury and Finstock, Chipping Norton, Carterton North West, Eynsham and Cassington, Witney Central, Witney south, Woodstock and Bladon. |
| Accountable member | Cllr Lidia Arciszewska - Cabinet Member for Environment Email: lidia.arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk |
| Accountable officer | Mandy Fathers – Business Manager for Operations and Enabling Email: mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk |
| Summary/Purpose | The purpose of this report is to provide options for delivery of the public convenience cleaning and maintenance service at the end of the current contract with Danfo. |
| Annexes | None |
| Recommendation(s) | That the Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Approve a one-year contract extension for the cleaning and maintenance of the Public Conveniences with Danfo; b) That a further review is carried out early in 2023 with the outcome of the review reported to Cabinet. |
| Corporate priorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council. |
| Key Decision | NO |
| Exempt | NO |
| Consultees/ Consultation | Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer, Interim Head of Legal Services, Finance Business Partner, Group Manager, Director of Finance (Publica) |

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The current contract for cleaning and maintenance of public conveniences was awarded in Sept 2020 to Danfo and covers 13 public convenience sites across the West Oxfordshire District and 15 sites across the Cotswold District. The contract includes cleaning, maintenance, locking, unlocking, and some administration duties such as meter readings, electrical testing and legionella testing.
- 1.2 There was an open tender process with the Danto submission being the highest score and the contract was awarded for 2 years with an option to extend for a further year. The contract began 1st October 2020 and will expire 31st September 2022. While there is an option to extend for a further year, it is prudent at this stage to carry out an assessment of options available.
- 1.3 Whilst there was a joint procurement process, a separate contract is in place for each authority.
- 1.4 Danfo have performed well over the last 2 years, and they have ensured that both local authorities have won awards for an excellent standard of service. These awards are given after un-announced spot inspections have been completed.
- 1.5 The contract covers 364 days of the year with an on-call service included when the facilities are open. Danfo works in partnership with the Councils, responding to any issues promptly, ensuring the reputation of all organisations are maintained.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 Danfo have expressed a desire to extend the contract but are seeking a cost increase due to the impact of inflation over recent months.
- 2.2 An option appraisal has been undertaken into the possible future provision of this service and the outcome is as follows:

Option A – Extend the current Danfo contract for a further 1-year period to 31 September 2023

| Pros | Cons |
|---|---|
| Danfo are a professional public facility provider and have extensive knowledge and many years experience in the provision of public facilities. They have industry knowledge and keep up with current technology. | Without 'testing the market', there is no proof of value for money. |
| Able to extend the contract with no gaps in service delivery | Pricing includes a contractors return or profit |
| Already a 'trusted' partner with confidence in their abilities | Revised price is above current budget |
| Access to back office reporting system detailing times premises were cleaned and reported maintenance issues | |
| Danfo have full responsibility of staff, recruitment/retention, training, sick/holiday cover reducing burden on in-house resources | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Economies of scale for purchasing cleaning produce | |
| Capability and capacity to carry out maintenance works as per contract specification | |
| Carry risk of further cost pressures beyond the latest agreed price | |

Option B – Ubico take on responsibility for Public Conveniences cleaning and maintenance

| Pros | Cons |
|---|--|
| Ubico are a trusted partner | Limited capability and capacity to deliver maintenance specification |
| They have experience of managing operational teams | Further cost pressure risk transferred to the Council |
| They have experience in the cleaning provision of public conveniences | May divert company from key strategic projects relating to waste and recycling contracts |
| Ability to vary the specification by agreement at cost price only | No back office ICT to monitor |
| No contractors return | Would require 'one-off' capital expenditure for set up costs for purchases of vehicles, back office systems etc. |

Option C – End the current contract and re-tender

** If this option were pursued Councils would need to give the required notice to Danfo by 30 June 2022

| Pros | Cons |
|---|--|
| Will test the current market position | Timelines would be extremely tight with a risk of not meeting the timeframe required to ensure a new contract in place on 1 October 2022 |
| Will embed further inflation risk with supplier | With the uncertainty of increasing inflation any new contract may increase significantly to cover increased costs |
| | |

Option D – Bring the service provision 'in-house' with directly employed staff under Publica

| Pros | Cons |
|---|--|
| Increased flexibility and able to target resource | Increase resources required plus additional management/supervision |
| Direct control of staff and activities | No back office ICT to monitor |
| Ability to vary the specification by agreement at cost price only | Limited capability and capacity to deliver maintenance specification |
| No contractors return | Would require 'one-off' capital expenditure for set up costs for purchases of vehicles, back office systems etc. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | Further cost pressure risk transferred to the Council |
|--|---|

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The relative cost of each option is shown below. The one-year extension of the Danfo contract represents an increase of £22,301 on the 21/22 contract cost or 21%.

| Option A (extend Danfo) | Revised Contract Price (2022/23) | Budget (2022/2023) | Revised Contract above Budget |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| | £128,400 | £106,500 | £21,900 |

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|-----------------------------|---|
| Option B (Ubico) | Still awaiting a firm price but as a Teckal company pricing assumed to be in line with Publica/In-House pricing |
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|---------------------------------|--|
| Option C (Re-Tender) | Without 'testing' the market, it would be difficult to estimate any costings. Due to the uncertainty with the current and future unknown increases in inflation this option is considered a potential financial risk and therefore it is not proposed to proceed with this option. |
|---------------------------------|--|

| | | |
|--|--|----------|
| Option D (Bring service provision 'in-house') | Cost / description | |
| | Annual Revenue Costs | |
| | Staff (incl o/heads) | £104,313 |
| | Vehicle Leasing Costs | £9,215 |
| | Direct costs (Consumables, replacement uniforms, equipment, fuel costs etc.) | £26,680 |
| | Total | £144,209 |
| | Excess to Contract Price (Option A) | £15,809 |
| | | |

3.2 The overall financial comparison to the Council’s budget is shown below. It is proposed that an extension of the existing contract with Danfo is accepted for a further year, given the price differential and the risk transfer to the Council of any further inflationary pressures in the current economic environment if Ubico or Publica were awarded the contract. Note this is a mid year contract renewal so budget impact is half year only in 22/23.

| Option | Danfo | Ubico* | Publica |
|---------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Contract Price | £128,400 | £144,209 | £144,209 |
| 22/23 Budget Impact | +£10,950 | + £18,854 | + £18,854 |

* To be confirmed

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The current contract with Danfo stipulates that either party must give 3 months’ notice before the expiry of the initial term of the extension period if it wishes to extend or end the service provision. This means that the Council must give notice of its intentions to Danfo by 30 June 2022.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 The risks that have been identified and are in the body of the report.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

6.1 There are no unacceptable adverse effects on the protected characteristics covered by the Equalities Act that have been identified.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none associated to this report

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

8.1 Due to the current economic environment it is proposed that the alternative options considered in this report be reviewed in more detail at the beginning on the new calendar year with alternative options brought back to Cabinet for further consideration.

(END)

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Agenda Item 9

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|  <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> | <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> |
| <p>Name and date of Committee</p> | <p>CABINET – 22nd JUNE 2022</p> |
| <p>Report Number</p> | <p>Agenda Item 9</p> |
| <p>Subject</p> | <p>SUSTAINABLE WARMTH - LOCAL AUTHORITY DELIVERY (LAD) PHASE 3 AND HOME UPGRADE GRANT (HUG)</p> |
| <p>Wards affected</p> | <p>All</p> |
| <p>Accountable member</p> | <p>Cllr Andrew Prosser, Cabinet Member for Climate Change Email: andrew.prosser@westoxon.gov.uk</p> |
| <p>Accountable officer</p> | <p>Ness Scott, Climate Change Manager Email: Vanessa.Scott@publicagroup.uk</p> |
| <p>Summary/Purpose</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide an overview of the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) 3 Sustainable Warmth and Home Upgrade Grants due to be made available to West Oxfordshire residents in 2022/23 via funding secured from BEIS through the Greater SouthEast Net Zero Hub; • To request delegated authority for the Head of Paid Service to enter into the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council and as a “Participating Authority” in the scheme. |
| <p>Annexes</p> | <p>Annex 1: Sustainable Warmth Briefing</p> |
| <p>Recommendation/s</p> | <p>a) Note the briefing provided on Sustainable Warmth in Annex 1. b) Agree delegated authority be given to the Head of Paid Service to enter into the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council and as a “Participating Authority” in the LAD 3 scheme.</p> |
| <p>Corporate priorities</p> | <p>The Council Plan 2020-2024 has: a vision to support West Oxfordshire to be fit for the future through delivery of the following priorities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. |
| <p>Key Decision</p> | <p>YES</p> |
| <p>Exempt</p> | <p>NO</p> |
| <p>Consultees/ Consultation</p> | |

1. BACKGROUND

This report has been prepared:

1.1. To provide an overview of the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) 3 Sustainable Warmth and Home Upgrade Grants due to be made available to West Oxfordshire residents in 2022/23 via funding secured from BEIS through the Greater SouthEast Net Zero Hub;

1.2 To request delegated authority for the Head of Paid Service to enter into the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council and as a “Participating Authority” in the scheme.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1 Sustainable Warmth builds on Phase 1 and 2 of LAD (Local Authority Delivery) schemes, with the majority of eligibility rules staying consistent with the earlier phases. The most prominent change to these previous phases is refining the scope to mains-gas fuelled homes only. In addition, £150m has been made available to support low-income households off the gas grid through the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) Phase 1. Both these fuel poverty categories have now been brought into a single funding delivery for Local Authorities. The two schemes that make up the Sustainable Warmth funding have a shared goal to:

- a. Tackle fuel poverty by increasing low-income homes’ energy efficiency rating while reducing their energy bills.
- b. Deliver cost effective carbon savings to carbon budgets and progress towards the UK’s target for net zero by 2050.
- c. Support clean growth and ensure homes are thermally comfortable, efficient, and well-adapted to climate change.
- d. Support economic resilience and a green recovery in response to the economic impacts of Covid19.

2.2 Via the GSE Net Zero Hub, WODC submitted as part of a SE regional application to BEIS, an additional £1million funding allocation under the scheme for specific take up by homeowners in West Oxfordshire. Owing to the fact the Home Upgrade Grant, Phase 1, is targeted towards rural areas and householders off gas, added capacity and funding to deliver energy retrofit and decarbonisation for householders in fuel poverty was viewed as beneficial.

2.3 The funding was subsequently awarded by BEIS to GSE Net Zero Hub to deliver Sustainable Warmth in the financial year 2022/23, which includes the £1million allocation made to West Oxfordshire. Warm Works went on to be commissioned by the Lead Authority as Managing Agent responsible for the roll-out of energy retrofit across the South East.

2.4 Under the scheme, WODC have requested and will be given £10,000 of “capacity and capability grant funding” from the GSEEH as contribution towards the marketing and promotions of Sustainable Warmth to West Oxfordshire’s residents. This amount is the only funding through the scheme that the Council will be directly responsible for.

2.5 The Council is not required to contribute any money towards the Sustainable Warmth programme; its in-kind contribution will be in the form of staff time spent carrying out a

targeted communications campaign and direct marketing to householders in areas of fuel poverty and off-gas areas who are eligible for the grant funding.

2.6 An Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) has recently been shared with all participating Local Authorities across the South East, which has been reviewed by the Council's legal services team to ensure there are no major concerns in terms of content and obligations.

2.7 The Council has previously submitted to GSE Net Zero Hub its details confirming that there is no resource to implement energy retrofit in-house. The Council has signposted the existing National Energy Foundation-run, Better Housing Better Health service in Oxfordshire that delivers the Council's ECOFlex obligations, carries out warm and well assessments and already coordinates local energy improvements through their pre-existing local installers network. In delivering Sustainable Warmth, Warm Works would need to liaise with the NEF to coordinate on, and maximise, their reach across the District.

2.8 There is no funding requirement from the Council towards the project, only in-kind support in the form of staff time from the Climate and Communications teams. There is also no policy decision to be taken. The risk to the Council is primarily reputational, i.e. the Council logo will be on the Managing Agent's - Warm Works' - correspondence to householders advertising the available funding to those eligible. In effect, if the energy retrofit works were for any reason carried out badly, the Council may in some way be associated with this.

2.9 The IAA requires a signature on behalf of the Council to enter into the Sustainable Warmth scheme and ensure the allocated funding remains within the District. This has been requested from all the Participating Authorities.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications to the Council in signing an IAA, and no funding requirement from the Council.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Through a legal review, no significant legal risks to the Council are identified through the IAA.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 The primary risk to the Council is reputational.

6. ECOLOGICAL AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Sustainable Warmth will positively contribute towards the Council's strategic objectives under Theme 2: Energy of the West Oxfordshire Climate Change Strategy by:

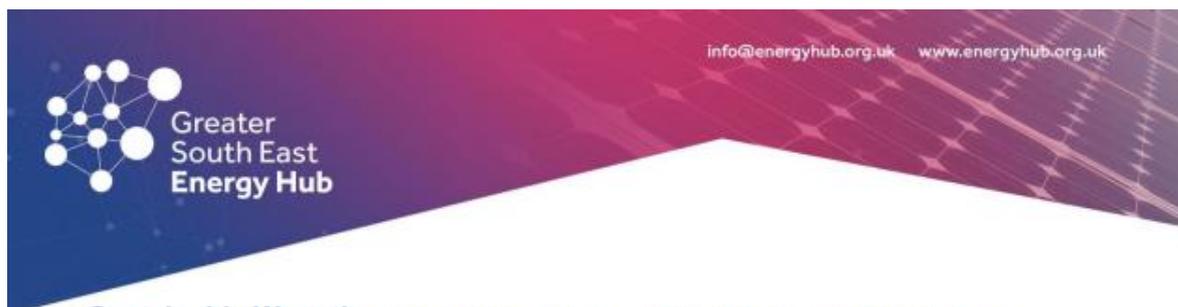
- a. Tackling fuel poverty by increasing low-income homes' energy efficiency rating while reducing their energy bills.
- b. Delivering cost effective carbon savings to carbon budgets, progressing towards the UK's target for net zero by 2050.

- c. Supporting clean growth and ensuring homes are thermally comfortable, efficient, and well-adapted to climate change.
- d. Supporting economic resilience and a green recovery in response to the economic impacts of Covid19.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

7.1 The alternative option is to not enter in the IAA and allow the GSE Net Zero Hub to reallocate the grant funding to another local authority area within the South East.

DRAFT



Sustainable Warmth – Local Authority Delivery Phase 3 and Home Upgrade Grant
(for LA CEO and Lead Members only)

For many years our poorest and most vulnerable households have been affected by fuel poverty but now many households are choosing to use their heating less due to imminent rise in fuel bills and other cost of living.

We understand the pressures that Councils are in to resource energy schemes and we are committed to help you meet fuel poverty and net zero targets.

Your Council is one of many in the South East area that have been successful through our bid for Sustainable Warmth through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

The Greater South East Energy Hub (GSEEH) has on behalf of 66 Local Authorities, secured funding for:

LAD Phase 3 £84,335,893
HUG Phase 1 £34,053,132

Who are we?

The Greater South East Energy Hub is a public body hosted by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). We provide support to 64 local authorities across the South East of England to administer the Sustainable Warmth scheme.

We are continually sourcing installers for retrofit works from our Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) – this is suitable for all Trustmark accredited businesses, whether large or small.

The scheme overview

In March 2021, the Government announced £200m for low-income households heated by mains gas through a third phase of Local Authority Delivery (LAD) funding. This funding builds on Phase 1 and 2 of LAD, with the majority of eligibility rules staying consistent with the earlier phases –with the most prominent change refining the scope to mains gas fuelled homes only.

Also, £150m available to support for low-income households off the gas grid through the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) Phase 1.

Sustainable Warmth brings together both these fuel poverty into a single funding delivery for Local Authorities.

The two schemes that make up the Sustainable Warmth funding have a shared goal to:

- a. Tackle fuel poverty by increasing low-income homes' energy efficiency rating while reducing their energy bills –a key principle of the Sustainable Warmth: Protecting Vulnerable Households in England Strategy 2021.
- b. Deliver cost effective carbon savings to carbon budgets and progress towards the UK's target for net zero by 2050.
- c. Support clean growth and ensure homes are thermally comfortable, efficient, and well-adapted to climate change.

- d. Support economic resilience and a green recovery in response to the economic impacts of Covid-19.

Sustainable Warmth funding have to be completed by the delivery deadline of 31 March 2023.

Our Managing Agent, Warm Works will oversee the customer journey and installation process.

Grant eligibility

The primary focus of both the LAD Phase 3 and HUG Phase 1 schemes is to upgrade privately owned housing occupied by low-income households. Some social housing is permitted as tenure "in-fill" when part of area-based schemes

For LAD3 owner occupiers, the grant is up to £10,000 to help pay for the cost of installing insulation upgrades, low carbon heating or renewables.

For LAD3 privately rented properties, the grant is up to £5000. In order to qualify the tenant must meet the income eligibility and the landlord will need to contribute one third towards the cost of the upgrades.

Properties will need to have an EPC rating of band D (30% cap), E, F and G homes.

For HUG1: Rented properties (either with a private or social landlord), maximum subsidy will be £5000 with the landlord funding one third of the overall costs.

| Owner Occupiers | F & G | E | D |
|---|------------------|----------|----------|
| Electric | £20,000 | £15,000 | £10,000 |
| | F & G | E | D |
| Off-Gas Grid Fossil Fuel (oil, LPG, coal) | £25,000 | £20,000 | £15,000 |
| Park Homes (off the mains agas grid) | £15,000 | | |

Implications for your authority

We will continue to work with your officers to promote, support and deliver the scheme in collaboration with you. GSEEH are the lead authority so will oversee the contractual and delivery tasks.

The aim is to also ensure we focus on capacity and capability building on each local authority and bridge gaps where required. We have found that Local authorities can add significant value to the programme by engaging with the comms to promote the scheme locally. A data sharing agreement may be required to get the best out of marketing and to drive referrals of eligible households. We would welcome working with you and your officers on this basis to make the scheme success.

It is equally important to ensure that your Planning Policy meets the requirement under the Council's Net Zero commitments. This can have significant impact when delivering whole house retrofit scheme.

For further information, please email the team: lad2@energyhub.org.uk



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy



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|  <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> | <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> |
| <p>Name and date of Committee</p> | <p>Cabinet – 22 June 2022</p> |
| <p>Report Number</p> | <p>Agenda Item 10</p> |
| <p>Subject</p> | <p>ACQUISITION OF AMENITY LAND IN WITNEY</p> |
| <p>Wards affected</p> | <p>Witney East</p> |
| <p>Accountable member</p> | <p>Councillor Carl Rylett, Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Development Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk</p> |
| <p>Accountable officer</p> | <p>Andrew Turner, Business Manager for Assets and Council Priorities Email: andrew.turner@publicagroup.uk Jasmine McWilliams, Asset Manager Email: jasmine.mcwilliams@publicagroup.uk</p> |
| <p>Summary/Purpose</p> | <p>To confirm the action taken by officers to progress the acquisition of amenity land at Cogges in Witney and approve appropriate funding as detailed in the report</p> |
| <p>Annexes</p> | <p>Annex A – Plans Exempt Annex B - Heads of Terms for Purchase Exempt Annex C - Heads of Terms for Community Funding Agreement Exempt Annex D– Report on Title</p> |
| <p>Recommendation(s)</p> | <p>That Cabinet,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) approves the action taken by officers in relation to the acquisition of the land on the terms at Annex B and the Community Funding Agreement on the terms at Annex C. (b) grants delegated authority to the Interim Head of Legal Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Locality Director and the Group Manager for Commissioning to approve the final terms of the transactions. |
| <p>Corporate priorities</p> | <p>Protect the environment whilst supporting the local economy</p> |

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| | Working with communities to meet the current and future needs and aspirations of residents |
| Key Decision | NO |
| Exempt | NO (however exempt Annexes B-E) Not for publication by virtue of paragraph (3) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 |
| Consultees/ Consultation | Chief Finance Officer, Group Manager for Commissioning, Group Finance Director (Publica) |

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 The Council has the maintenance responsibility for parts of Langel Common shown shaded green at Annex A1 under Byelaws from 1949. The Council also owns the freehold of other land and car parks in the area shown shaded brown on plans at Annex A3.
- 1.2 The overall ownership and maintenance arrangements for the common in its entirety are complicated by multiple ownerships and the Council has had a longstanding desire to simplify these in time as set out when it acquired land near Bishop's Mill some years ago.
- 1.3 The Common forms a significant space of historic green space through the centre of the floodplain in Witney and is an important ecological and biodiverse site although heavily used by the community.
- 1.4 In March 2022 the Council were made aware of plans by the owner of one of the plots on the edge of the common to sell their site at auction and this created significant public concern given its siting adjacent to the Cogges Conservation Area.

2. MAIN POINTS

Land Sale

- 2.1 The owner of the land shown edged red at Annex A2 wished to sell the land. They entered the land into an Auction which drew the interest and concern of local residents, users of the land as public open space and community groups as well as the Town Council and the District Council due to the sensitive nature of the site.
- 2.2 After discussions with the community groups, the Town Council and other interested organisations it was agreed in principle that the District Council should purchase the land to preserve its use as public open space managed for nature in perpetuity.
- 2.3 After negotiations the owner of the land agreed to withdraw the land from the auction and offered to sell the land to the District Council on the terms detailed at Annex B.

Funding from the Community

- 2.4 The local community have raised funds to assist in the purchase of the land for the use as public open space in perpetuity and have agreed to the principle of the Council taking the freehold subject to appropriate safeguards being put in place in respect of access and safeguarding the site. Terms for the Community Grant Agreement are shown at Annex C.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The purchase price of the land is set out in the confidential annex. In addition to this there is a requirement to fund seller's costs of £1,000 and appropriate valuation and due diligence costs carried out by our agents. It is anticipated that the overall acquisition costs after application of the local fundraising will be in the order of £30,000 and it is proposed that this be financed through the application of s.106 funds available for such purpose.
- 3.2 It is envisaged that the land will be leased to a suitable conservation charity or other appropriate organisation who will then be responsible for the cost of maintenance but there may be a maintenance cost to the Council in the future in respect of site should a lease not

proceed. These costs are not anticipated to be significant as the land management plan is likely to be minimal maintenance and will be met from existing budgets.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council would acquire the freehold of the property and would be responsible for the repair and maintenance of the property as a whole.
- 4.2 The Legal Team would undertake legal due diligence and would provide a detailed report on title. Local Search and other appropriate legal searches would be obtained and assessed.
- 4.3 In accepting the Community funding, the Council will have to comply with the terms of use as set out in the proposed Funding Agreement or risk re-paying the Community funding and further action for breach of contract.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 There is a risk that the Council would retain the maintenance responsibility for the land if a suitable conservation charity or other appropriate organisation does not take a lease of the land.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1 The purchase of the land will retain it as natural public open space in perpetuity. No equalities impact is envisaged.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There will be no negative climate-related impacts as a result of the site's purchase, the site indeed has the potential for floodplain meadow restoration and small scale planting that would increase the site's carbon sequestration abilities.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1 The Council could decide not to purchase the land.

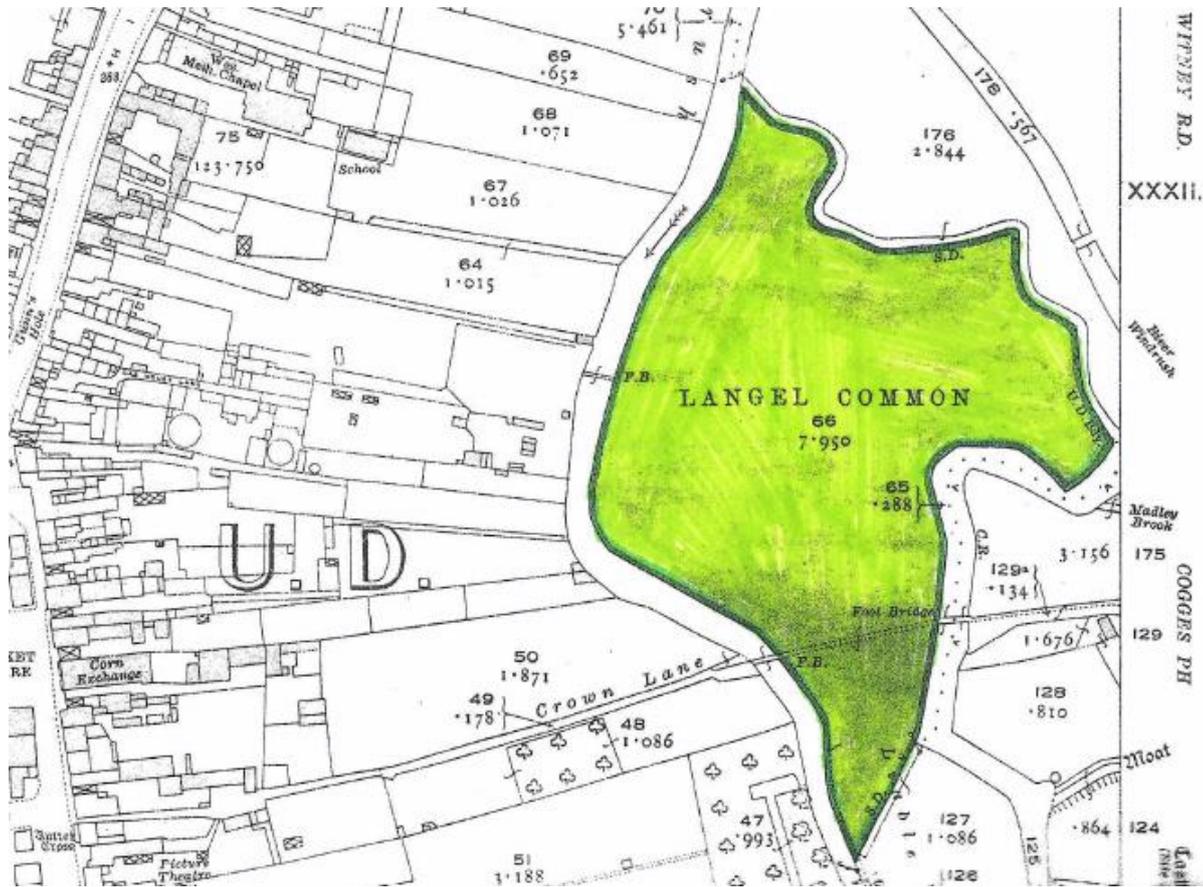
9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

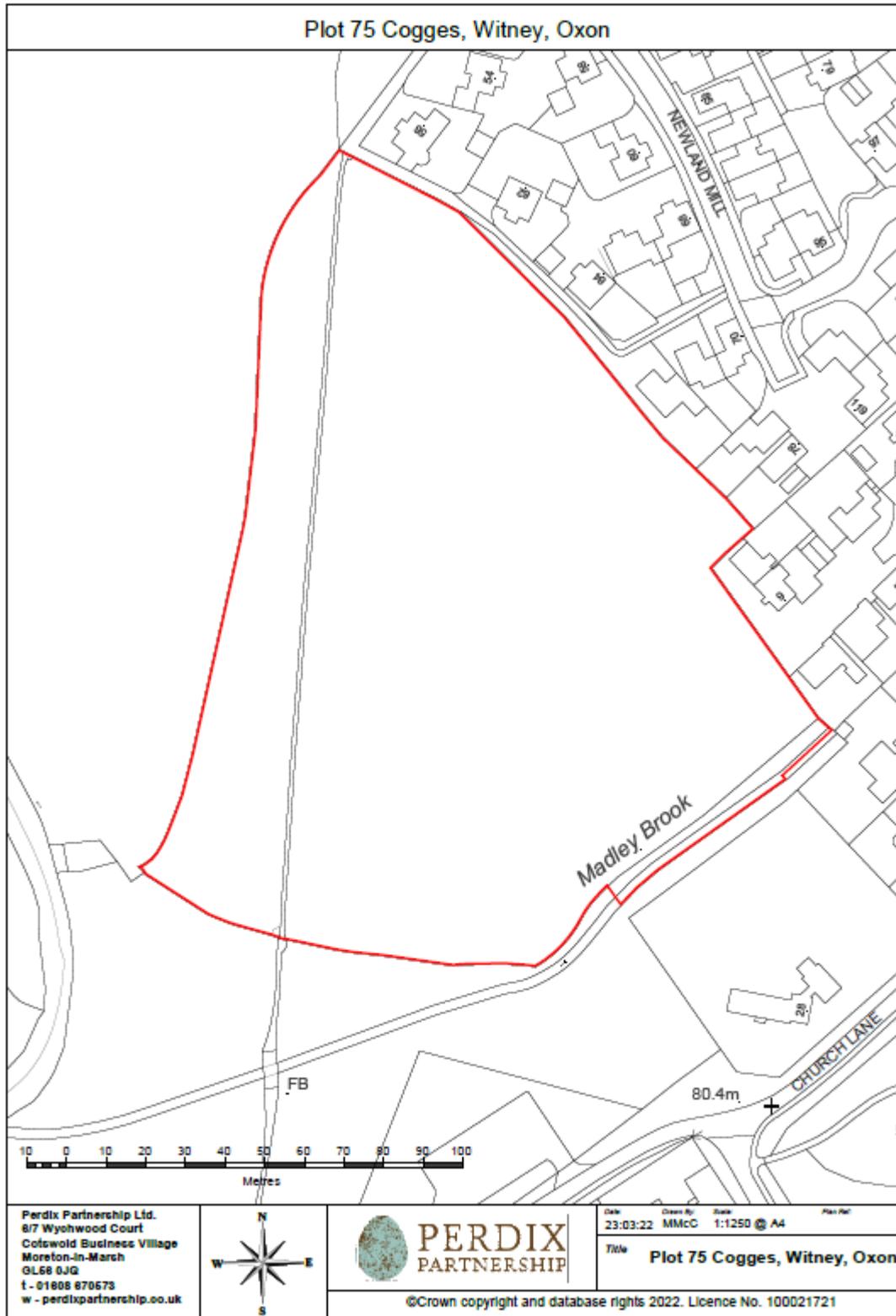
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Annex A1

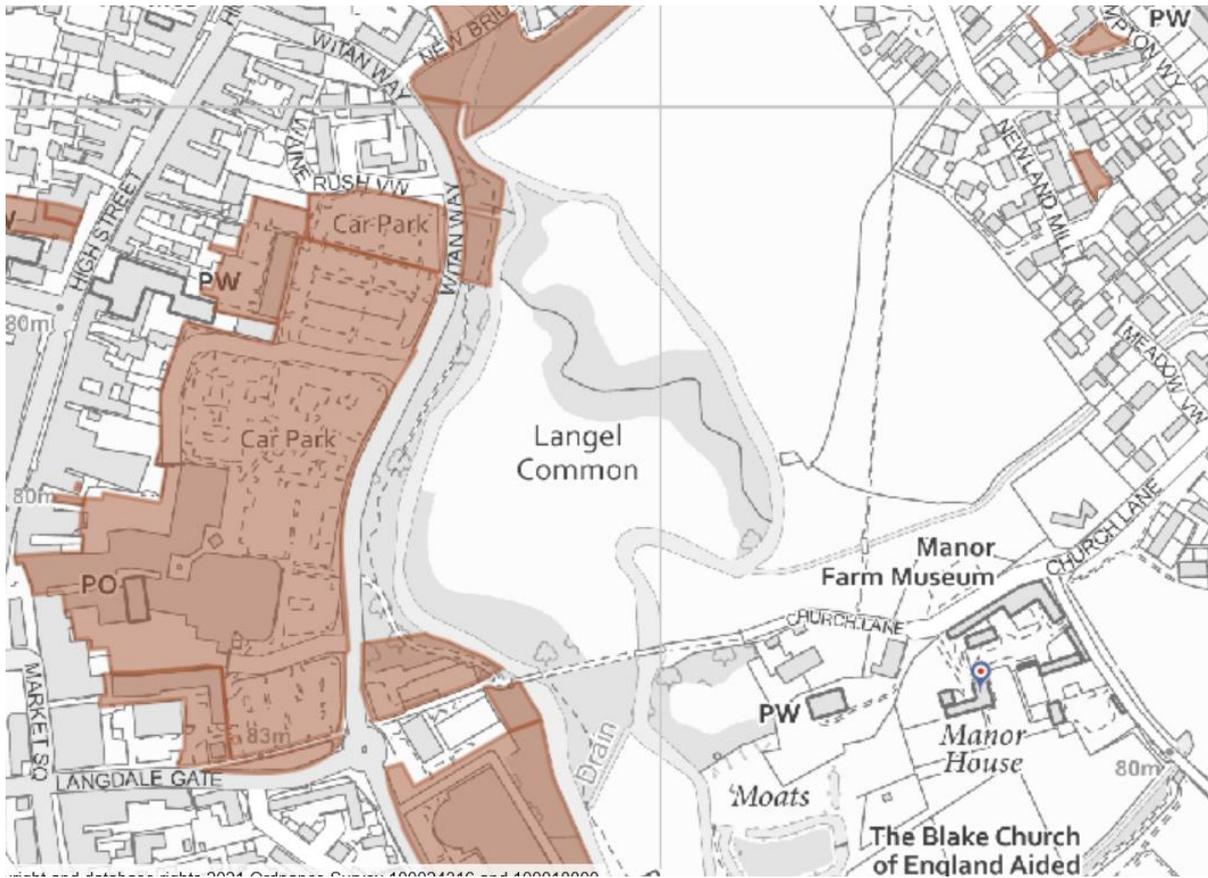
Langel Common



A2 Land for Purchase



A3 Council's ownership in the Area



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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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|  <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> | <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> |
| <p>Name and date of Committee</p> | <p>Cabinet – 22 June 2022</p> |
| <p>Report Number</p> | <p>Agenda Item 10</p> |
| <p>Subject</p> | <p>ACQUISITION OF AMENITY LAND IN WITNEY</p> |
| <p>Wards affected</p> | <p>Witney East</p> |
| <p>Accountable member</p> | <p>Councillor Carl Rylett, Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Development Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk</p> |
| <p>Accountable officer</p> | <p>Andrew Turner, Business Manager for Assets and Council Priorities Email: andrew.turner@publicagroup.uk Jasmine McWilliams, Asset Manager Email: jasmine.mcwilliams@publicagroup.uk</p> |
| <p>Summary/Purpose</p> | <p>To confirm the action taken by officers to progress the acquisition of amenity land at Cogges in Witney and approve appropriate funding as detailed in the report</p> |
| <p>Annexes</p> | <p>Annex A – Plans Exempt Annex B - Heads of Terms for Purchase Exempt Annex C - Heads of Terms for Community Funding Agreement Exempt Annex D– Report on Title</p> |
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| <p>Corporate priorities</p> | <p>Protect the environment whilst supporting the local economy</p> |

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| | Working with communities to meet the current and future needs and aspirations of residents |
| Key Decision | NO |
| Exempt | NO (however exempt Annexes B-E) Not for publication by virtue of paragraph (3) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 |
| Consultees/ Consultation | Chief Finance Officer, Group Manager for Commissioning, Group Finance Director (Publica) |

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 The Council has the maintenance responsibility for parts of Langel Common shown shaded green at Annex A1 under Byelaws from 1949. The Council also owns the freehold of other land and car parks in the area shown shaded brown on plans at Annex A3.
- 1.2 The overall ownership and maintenance arrangements for the common in its entirety are complicated by multiple ownerships and the Council has had a longstanding desire to simplify these in time as set out when it acquired land near Bishop's Mill some years ago.
- 1.3 The Common forms a significant space of historic green space through the centre of the floodplain in Witney and is an important ecological and biodiverse site although heavily used by the community.
- 1.4 In March 2022 the Council were made aware of plans by the owner of one of the plots on the edge of the common to sell their site at auction and this created significant public concern given its siting adjacent to the Cogges Conservation Area.

2. MAIN POINTS

Land Sale

- 2.1 The owner of the land shown edged red at Annex A2 wished to sell the land. They entered the land into an Auction which drew the interest and concern of local residents, users of the land as public open space and community groups as well as the Town Council and the District Council due to the sensitive nature of the site.
- 2.2 After discussions with the community groups, the Town Council and other interested organisations it was agreed in principle that the District Council should purchase the land to preserve its use as public open space managed for nature in perpetuity.
- 2.3 After negotiations the owner of the land agreed to withdraw the land from the auction and offered to sell the land to the District Council on the terms detailed at Annex B.

Funding from the Community

- 2.4 The local community have raised funds to assist in the purchase of the land for the use as public open space in perpetuity and have agreed to the principle of the Council taking the freehold subject to appropriate safeguards being put in place in respect of access and safeguarding the site. Terms for the Community Grant Agreement are shown at Annex C.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The purchase price of the land is set out in the confidential annex. In addition to this there is a requirement to fund seller's costs of £1,000 and appropriate valuation and due diligence costs carried out by our agents. It is anticipated that the overall acquisition costs after application of the local fundraising will be in the order of £30,000 and it is proposed that this be financed through the application of s.106 funds available for such purpose.
- 3.2 It is envisaged that the land will be leased to a suitable conservation charity or other appropriate organisation who will then be responsible for the cost of maintenance but there may be a maintenance cost to the Council in the future in respect of site should a lease not

proceed. These costs are not anticipated to be significant as the land management plan is likely to be minimal maintenance and will be met from existing budgets.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council would acquire the freehold of the property and would be responsible for the repair and maintenance of the property as a whole.
- 4.2 The Legal Team would undertake legal due diligence and would provide a detailed report on title. Local Search and other appropriate legal searches would be obtained and assessed.
- 4.3 In accepting the Community funding, the Council will have to comply with the terms of use as set out in the proposed Funding Agreement or risk re-paying the Community funding and further action for breach of contract.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 There is a risk that the Council would retain the maintenance responsibility for the land if a suitable conservation charity or other appropriate organisation does not take a lease of the land.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1 The purchase of the land will retain it as natural public open space in perpetuity. No equalities impact is envisaged.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There will be no negative climate-related impacts as a result of the site's purchase, the site indeed has the potential for floodplain meadow restoration and small scale planting that would increase the site's carbon sequestration abilities.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

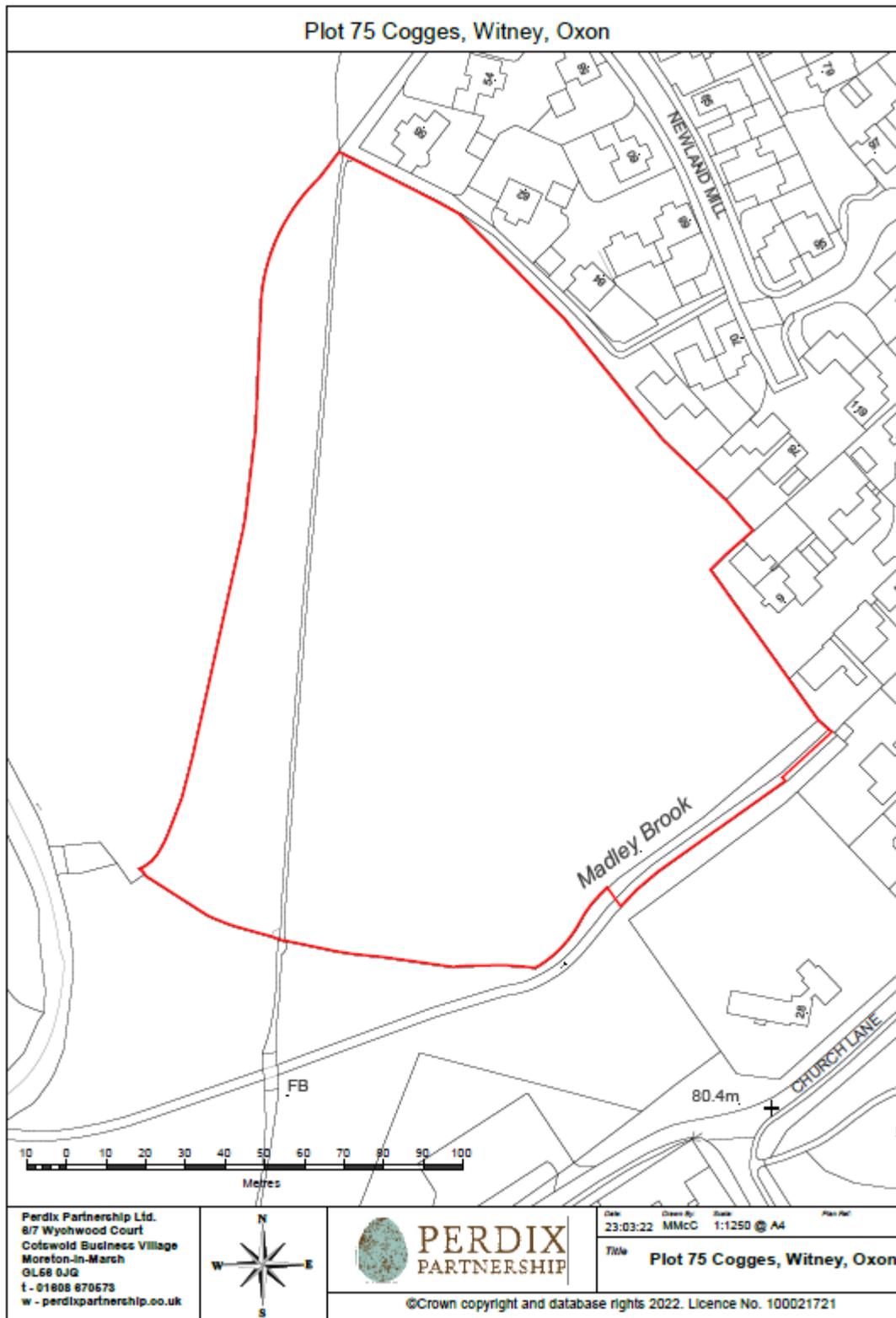
- 8.1 The Council could decide not to purchase the land.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

(END)

A2 Land for Purchase



A3 Council's ownership in the Area



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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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