

Tuesday, 28 February 2023

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EXECUTIVE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Executive which will be held in Carterton Community Centre, Marigold Square, Carterton, OX18 1AX on **Wednesday, 8 March 2023 at 2.00 pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Executive

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, Executive, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted. By participating in this meeting, you are consenting to be filmed.

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

AGENDA

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 12)**
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023.
2. **Apologies for Absence**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations from Members of the Executive on any items to be considered at the meeting.
4. **Participation of the Public**
Members of the public may ask a question at a meeting of the Executive for up to three minutes on any item of business for decision at the meeting or on any issue that affects the district or its people. Members of the public wishing to speak at an Executive meeting must notify democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk, including their name and the agenda item or topic they wish to speak on, by 2.00pm two clear working days before the meeting (e.g. for a Wednesday meeting, the deadline would be 2.00pm on the Friday before). If the topic of the question is not within the remit of the Council, advice will be provided on where best to direct the question. The relevant Executive Member will either respond verbally at the meeting or provide a written response which will be included in the minutes of the meeting.
5. **Receipt of Announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council or Members of the Executive.
6. **Service Performance Report 2022/23 Quarter Three (Pages 13 - 28)**
Purpose:
This report provides details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2022-23 Quarter Three (Q3)

Recommendations:
That the Executive resolves to note the 2022/23 Q3 service performance.
7. **Financial Performance Report 2022/23 Quarter Three (Pages 29 - 44)**
Purpose:
To provide the details of the Council's Financial Performance at the end of Quarter 3, 2022/23.

Recommendations:
The Executive resolves to note the content of the report.
8. **Flood Management Service Review (Pages 45 - 52)**
Purpose:
The purpose of the report is to provide the Executive with a structured summary of the review, the areas explored, relevant findings and a proposed way forward that will not only meet current but future challenges facing the District and its residents regarding the risk from flooding.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Note the outcomes of the review; and
- b) Agree the recommendations outlined within the report.

9. **Review of Community Grant Schemes (Pages 53 - 92)**

Purposes:

This report proposes a new approach to community grant funding, better aligned to the outcomes intended from the Council Plan and fostering greater community engagement and involvement.

Recommendations:

That the Executive is recommended to resolve to:

- a) Introduce a new approach to revenue grant funding from 2024/25, aligned to four lots and supported by three year service level agreements.
- b) Agree the four lots as:
 - 1. Improving our natural environment and the access to it, so that we enable physical and mental wellbeing and cohesive, connected communities
 - 2. Taking action towards the climate and ecological emergencies, so that we reduce carbon footprints and encourage nature recovery
 - 3. Increasing community resilience and amplifying the voice of the seldom heard, so that we take action on issues most important to our residents and their needs, such as access to food, supporting young people and cultural provision
 - 4. Providing residents with high quality, independent housing advice, welfare and debt advice services, so that they are empowered to tackle their problems and we support those who are unable to deal with difficult circumstances on their own
- c) Request officers to consider potential outline allocations within each of the lots and report back on proposals.
- d) Agree that the community revenue grant funding awarded in 2022-23 be awarded again in 2023-24 to the same recipients and at the same level to allow a managed transition.
- e) Approve civic crowdfunding as an alternative to community facilities grants and make up to £120,000 available to pledge against proposed projects.
- f) Agree the proposed procurement route to appoint Spacehive as the Council's civic crowdfunding platform provider on a three year contract.
- g) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Executive Members for Stronger Healthy Communities, Planning and Sustainable Development, Environment, and Climate Change to agree the type of projects to be supported and the pledge criteria for crowdfunding.
- h) Approve the allocation of £25,000 to increase the Council's grants capability, as

described in the report.

10. **West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA) Masterplan Addendum (Pages 93 - 124)**

Purpose:

To consider an addendum to the West Eynsham SDA masterplan which has been produced by the four main landowner/developers in response to further engagement with third party landowners.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Note the content of the report; and
- b) Agree to approve the West Eynsham SDA masterplan addendum attached at Annex A as a material planning consideration for any current or future planning applications that come forward in relation to the West Eynsham SDA.

11. **Council Tax Premiums - Second Homes (Pages 125 - 128)**

Purpose:

To consider the proposals to implement a Council Tax Premium on second homes.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Note the report and agrees in principle to the implementation of charging 100% premium for second homes and reducing term for applying charge for empty properties from 2 years to one year, subject to the emerging legislation being passed; and
- b) Instruct officers to bring a further report back to the Executive when the legislation has been passed providing detail on the legislative implications and proposed implementation.

12. **Business Rates Relief 2023/2024: Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Scheme (Pages 129 - 136)**

Purpose:

To consider a scheme of rate relief for retail premises as outlined by Government in the Autumn Statement 2022

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Note the contents of the report;
- b) Endorse the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Scheme as detailed in Annex A; and
- c) Delegate Authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services to award such relief.

13. **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Update (Pages 137 - 142)**

Purpose:

To provide an update on the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in West Oxfordshire.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Note the content of the report; and
- b) Agree that new viability evidence is commissioned to inform both a draft CIL charging schedule and the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041.

14. **Waste Service Review and Update and Ubico Contract Extension (Pages 143 - 154)**

Purpose:

To update the Executive on the waste service review and the Ubico contract for waste and recycling and associated collections and services, street cleansing and grounds maintenance services.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Endorse the proposal contained in this report and
- b) Recommend to Council that the current contract with Ubico is extended until 31 March 2026.

15. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

If the Executive wishes to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for the Executive to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of the 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.

16. **Waste Service Review Item 14 - Appendix C - Value for Money Assessment (Pages 155 - 168)**

17. **Section 13A Discretionary Council Tax Appeal (Pages 169 - 172)**

Purpose:

To consider a S13A Discretionary Council Tax discount appeal application

Recommendations:

That Executive resolves to:

- a) Consider the appeal for Council Tax Section 13A Discretionary discount submitted under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

Executive

Held in the Council Chamber, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 8 February 2023**

PRESENT

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

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Bill Oddy (Group Manager - Commercial Development), Andrew Brown (Democratic Services Business Manager), Caroline Clissold (Housing Manager), Georgina Dyer (Business Partner Accountant) and Hannah Kenyon (Sustainable Planning Specialist)

Other Councillors in attendance: Alaa Al-Yousuf, Norman MacRae MBE and Michele Mead

1 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous 'Cabinet' meeting, held on Wednesday 11 January 2023, were approved by the Executive, and signed by Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, as an accurate record.

2 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded by the Executive.

4 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation at the meeting.

5 Receipt of Announcements

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andy Graham, highlighted that the LBGTIQ+ flag was raised and above the Council's Woodgreen offices. This was in order to recognise LBGTIQ+ History Month, and raise awareness of experiences that members of the community had experienced in the past.

Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, rose to inform the Executive and those present that the Council's Leisure Projects Officer post, funded by the Council's Priority Fund, had been advertised externally on the internet. The role would coordinate the delivery of the Council's new Playing Pitch Strategy alongside Town and Parish Councils, and local communities across the West Oxfordshire District.

6 Budget 2023/24 and Medium Term Financial Plan

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andy Graham, highlighted that an amendment to recommendation '//', listed within the agenda item report, was subject to agreement by the Executive. The amendment sought agreement that the Council's Biodiversity Land Management Post, be a permanent post and not a 1-year fixed term contract.

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Councillor Levy introduced the report that provided an update on the developing budget for 2023/24. The report was for the Executive to consider the draft base budgets for 2023/24, the Council's Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2031/32, the level of Council Tax for 2023/24, the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the response from the statutory budget consultation.

Councillor Levy paid tribute to the work of the Council's Chief Finance Officer and the wider finance team for the work that they had put into bringing the Budget resolutions together.

Councillor Norman MacRae MBE asked about potential anomalies within the report relating to salaries of individual posts, and funding of play parks within the district. Councillor Levy responded stating that figures contained within the document were total post costs, and that some were shared across the Publica partnership and estimated employment costs. The Chief Finance Officer also highlighted that any funds in the capital programme not spent on play parks within the current financial year, would rollover into the next financial year. If extra funds were desired, this would be recommended for approval by the appropriate committee.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, highlighted that there was a mixture of shared and non-shared posts within the report, and that some of the project costs were also included within the figures regarding the Leisure Strategy. Councillor Enright also mentioned that the upkeep and maintenance of play parks were largely the responsibility of Town and Parish Councils, although much larger parks, such as Kilkenny in Carterton, were a District Council responsibility.

The Council's Chief Executive Officer highlighted the work of Tony Galloway, who was overseeing scoping work to address issues surrounding leisure, and the contracted partnership with GLL.

Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf sought to confirm if the Biodiversity Land Management Post was being funded by additional money received from central Government. The Chief Executive confirmed that this cost was taken into consideration when listing the salary costs for the upcoming budget. Further costs on the post will be added to base budget and included in Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

An additional supplementary paper for this item was circulated to Members ahead of the meeting. Within the paper, there was an additional recommendation for the Executive to recommend to Council to approve the level of District Council Tax for 2023/24 for a Band D property of £119.38.

The amendment for agreement was proposed by Councillor Graham, and seconded by Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance. This was voted upon and agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Councillor Levy proposed to agree the recommendations to Council, inclusive of the aforementioned amendment, regarding the update on the developing budget. This was seconded by Councillor Graham, was voted on and agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to recommend the following to Council for approval:

- i) The General Fund revenue budgets as summarised in Annex B;
- ii) The updated Medium Term Financial Strategy in Annex E;
- iii) The Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2031/32 as set out in Annex D;
- iv) Fees and Charges, as previously circulated and set out in Annex H;

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- v) The Council's Pay Policy Statement as set out in Annex J;
- vi) The level of District Council Tax for 2023/24 for a Band D property of £119.38 as shown in Annex G;
- vii) Approve the level of District Council Tax for 2023/24 for a Band D property of £119.38.

and **Resolved** to recommend the following to Council for noting:

1. viii) The Parish Precepts and Tax Levels set out in Annex G.

7 Planned Expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant 2023-2025

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, introduced the report, which was to consider the planned expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2023 – 2025 (incorporating the Domestic Abuse New Burden's allocations for 2023 – 2025).

Councillor Saul gave an overview of the grant and the current situation regarding the pressures that are being felt locally within the district. DLUHC has awarded West Oxfordshire District Council through the Homelessness Prevention Grant £269,927 for 2023-24 rising to £282,704 in 2024-25. A further sum of £35,268 in 2023-24 rising to £35,932 in 2024-25 has been awarded to meet the Housing Domestic Abuse New Burdens.

Councillor Saul paid tribute to the work of Publica officers working in this area, particularly Caroline Clissold, Business Manager for Housing.

Councillor Saul proposed to agree the recommendations surrounding the planned expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant for 2023–2025 (incorporating the Domestic Abuse New Burden's allocations for 2023–2025).

This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Prosser, was voted on and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the expenditure detailed within section 2 of this report;
2. Approve expenditure for the Fixed Term Contract posts until 2025, as detailed in paragraph 2.7;
3. Approve the delegation of any amendments to these allocations to the Business Manager - Housing in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and the Chief Finance Officer subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions;
4. Delegate authority to the Business Manager – Housing, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Chief Finance Officer, decisions on any other uplifts or grants that may be given over the financial years 2023-24 to 2024-25 to address increased demands on the Housing Service, subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions.

8 Renewal or non-Renewal of LoyalFree

Councillor Duncan Enright, Executive Member for Economic Development, introduced the report, which sought to determine whether or not the Council should continue to fund the LoyalFree app.

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Councillor Enright gave a brief explanation of what the App's purpose and how it came into existence. LoyalFree is a place promotion mobile application (app) designed to support the local economy by encouraging people to save money when they 'shop local' and to explore their local area. The app would soon be reaching the end of its licensed period.

Councillor Michele Mead rose to pass on her thanks to Council's Communications Team for their tireless work in initially bringing the app into existence, adding that the app had recently served its purpose.

Councillor Enright proposed that the recommendation to Executive be adopted, whereby the Executive resolves to agree not to renew the contract with LoyalFree. This was seconded by Councillor Joy Aitman, was voted on and was agreed unanimously by Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree not to renew the contract with LoyalFree.

9

Consideration of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: Reforms to National Planning Policy

Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, introduced the report, which was to consider and agree a response to the Government's proposed changes to national planning policy.

Councillor Rylett gave an overview of the proposed changes and explained the Council's response to the consultation which runs until 2 March 2023. The Government remains committed to levelling up across the country and a Levelling Up White Paper was published in February 2022. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill currently working its way through Parliament.

Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf stated that there were concerns about how much of the Levelling-Up agenda would actually come to fruition at the end of the parliamentary process, and that there was a clear need for a strategy from Officers regarding land supply and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) following a planning case with the Freeland area of the District. Councillor Al-Yousuf further stated that he had written to Councillor Rylett on this matter in January 2023, but a response had not yet been received. Councillor Rylett committed to responding to Councillor Al-Yousuf.

Councillor Rylett proposed that the recommendations in the report be agreed to by the Executive. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was voted on and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the content of the report including the summary overview of proposed changes attached at Annex A;
2. Agree that the draft response attached at Annex B be submitted as the District Council's formal response to the consultation.

10

Consideration of Local Authority Housing Fund

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, introduced the report, which was to consider whether to support an application to the Local Authority Housing Fund and to sign the associated Memorandum of Understanding.

Councillor Saul gave an overview of the scheme which aims to support local authorities who are facing challenges in providing move on and settled accommodation for Afghan and Ukraine

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families. The scheme, which Councillor Saul stated was a very positive one, also aimed to relieve pressures on short term accommodation and bridging hotels with a longer term of objective to see the housing being used for more general affordable purposes.

Councillor Saul proposed to agree the recommendations to support an application to the Local Authority Housing Fund and to sign the associated Memorandum of Understanding. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was voted on and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.


Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve that an application to the Housing Support Fund be made;
2. Authorise the Chief Executive to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (attached at Annex B);
3. Agree that further due diligence be conducted to determine the most appropriate delivery mechanism for the Council and a further report be brought back to the Executive to consider this;
4. Recommend to Council to allocate Capital Funding of £2m to match fund the capital grant payable by Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Local Government in the event of a direct acquisition approach;
5. Recommend to Council to allocate Section 106 funding to support the business case up to a maximum of £40,000 per unit to gap fund the scheme to deliver affordable rents in the event of a direct acquisition approach.

The Meeting closed at 2.39 pm

CHAIRMAN

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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE - WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH 2023
Subject	SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022-23 QUARTER THREE
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance Email: dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	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
Summary/Purpose	This report provides details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2022-23 Quarter Three (Q3)
Annexes	Annex A – Service Dashboards
Recommendation	That the Executive resolves to note the 2022/23 Q3 service performance.
Corporate priorities	Putting Residents First Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No

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. On 13 July 2022, the Executive agreed to revise the Council Plan and develop an Action Plan that will set out how the priorities in the Council Plan will be delivered. Following consultation with stakeholders, a final draft was presented to the Executive on 11 January 2023 and adopted at Full Council on 18 January 2023.
- I.2. A high level Commissioning Framework was approved by the Executive in October 2020 which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica 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. The rising energy prices and higher cost of living is affecting householders, in particular those on low incomes. At the end of Q3, the council tax collection rate was similar to the previous year but could still be impacted as we move into the final quarter of the year. The Council has completed the £150 Council Tax rebate programme. At the end of December 2022, the Council had paid out £5,045,550 (core scheme), and an additional £179,625 (discretionary scheme) to 33,989 households. Looking further ahead, the revised Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for the next financial year was approved by the Executive and Council in November 2022. There is also an Exceptional Hardship Fund to support those residents who are struggling to pay any remaining council tax following the application and award of CTS.
 - ii. The business rates collection rate improved by around five percentage points on the previous two years but has not returned to pre-Covid levels. Recovery is expected to take longer due to the impact of the cost of living crisis. The government is continuing to support certain businesses with extended retail relief of 50% during this financial year, and will increase to 75% in 2023-24 for leisure and retail businesses. However, the criteria for eligibility is more stringent than during Covid times so some businesses will miss out. The service will be writing to those businesses affected. In addition, some businesses will see their rates increase as a result of the business rates revaluation 2023-24;
 - iii. The Council is continuing to support the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme in which people in the UK are sponsoring/hosting a Ukrainian individual or family. As at 22 December 2022 there were 178 sponsors. Re-matching guests with new sponsors is continuing as relationships break down or the sponsor does not wish to continue in the scheme. Since government increased the monthly sponsor payments to £500, more sponsors have agreed to continue to support their families past the initial 6-month period;
 - iv. Affordable housing completions are ahead of the year to date target (Actual: 234; Target: 207). Working in partnership with housing associations and developers to bring forward more affordable homes will help to alleviate some of the pressures in Housing Support created by the cost of living crisis, the Ukraine situation, and the cold weather. The

Council has received additional Winter Pressures funding to support the increase in homeless cases;

- v. The Executive agreed to additional resources in the budget 2022-23 to increase enforcement activities around fly tipping and improving its response to issues raised. The new post holder commenced in October 2022 and is undertaking a range of reactive and proactive work. During Q3, 25 fly tips were investigated resulting in six Fixed Penalty Notices.

2. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 2.1. The West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 – 27 was adopted at Full Council on 18 January 2023. This presents five strategic priorities, of equal importance, for the District:
 - Putting Residents First
 - A Good Quality of Life for All
 - A Better Environment for People and Wildlife
 - Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
 - Working Together for West Oxfordshire
- 2.2. Portfolio Holders will work with Officers to develop an Action Plan that will identify a range of actions to be taken over the next 12 months and beyond to make progress on the delivery of the Council Plan priorities.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

- 3.1. Overall, performance for the quarter appears mixed. Some services including Revenues and Benefits, and Housing Support are reporting increased workloads due to the cost of living crisis which is beginning to impact performance. Consequently some of the improvement that had been made in benefit processing times has slipped in particular for Council Tax Support new claims and Housing Benefit changes, although this was exacerbated by a shortage of staff.
- 3.2. Some areas that have performed well include planning determination times, average time to respond to calls in customer services, and delivery of affordable homes.
- 3.3. The council tax collection rate is where we would expect it to be, and may have been helped by the £150 council tax/energy rebate to some households. Some households will have had their accounts credited if there was no facility to return the rebate. Business rates collection rate has improved compared to the previous two years but is lower than historical levels. We will have to await the end of the year to understand better the impact of Covid Additional Relief Fund payments on the business rates collection rate.
- 3.4. Overall, resource levels appear to be more stable. Some recruitment has taken place in a number of services during the quarter including customer services, benefits and planning with further recruitment expected in these services.
- 3.5. There are a number of improvement programmes in progress across services including Planning and Revenues and Benefits, as well as specific actions to return performance to previous levels. Much of the work is focussed on improving the way services communicate with customers, increasing automation and self-serve options for customers.

3.6. Key points by service area themes

3.7. Customer services

- Service delivery can be affected by a range of factors both within the service and in other services. For example, shortage of staff, new systems, how the Council communicates with residents/clients.
- The Customer Services team made a significant improvement in the average time to respond to calls, from two minutes and 51 seconds in the previous quarter to 65 seconds in Q3. A lower volume of calls into the Council (as expected at this time of the year), and recruitment to vacant posts during the quarter contributed to this improvement, although these staff are still training up.
- Retention of staff is an issue and further recruitment is currently taking place as there are leavers in Q4. Furthermore, workloads will be higher in Q4 due to annual billing, garden waste renewals in addition to the introduction of voter ids.
- During the quarter, there were short periods when the average time to respond was elevated, for example, towards the end of October 2022 when call volumes rose following the mail out of CT reminders (delayed by postal strike) which coincided with a shortage of staff. Call volumes continued to fall throughout November and December 2022. The average time to respond increased in the week before Christmas due to a slight elevation in call volumes as the council offices were due to close at 12.30pm on the Friday and more staff on annual leave.
- The service has recently implemented a new process for managing demand through improved engagement with other services. This will mean that communications with residents and customers will be staggered so that workloads are 'smoothed' and can be dealt with more effectively by the team.
- Further work on automation and integration of forms to the back office systems is continuing, aimed at improving the on-line offer for customers and reducing call volumes and call length time. For example during Q3, the bulky waste online form was integrated with Salesforce and a new sign up to waste alerts was introduced which provides information on waste collection days and changes.
- The response time, on call time, and after call time data include data for West Oxfordshire specific staff and share staff, based on a 60%-40% split respectively. The arrangement helps to improve resilience in the service.

3.8. Development Management

- Last quarter, a due diligence check of both the Planning dash and PS2 government return identified a system error in the Council's Uniform system which has been corrected. This error resulted in the determination date [of planning applications] being set incorrectly to add on extra days for Bank holidays thereby understating performance. As Planning officers work to the determination date/target date, some applications were assessed as 'determined out of time' although officers have actually performed to the 'official' standard set. The error has now worked its way through the system (as it can take eight weeks to determine a minor or other planning application) and December's outturn in the Planning dash and PS2 government return are aligned.
- Planning determinations times for 'Minors' and 'Others' are continuing to improve and are some way ahead of the target, and caseloads have become more manageable. The service reports that the number of applications has slowed but still exceeds historical levels in line

with the national trend. Overall, staff capacity has improved since the beginning of this financial year, although two planning officers left the organisation during the latter part of Q2, adding to the two existing vacant enforcement posts. During the quarter, one vacant senior officer post was filled (working half time in DM and half time in enforcement); and there was a restructure of the existing team to improve capacity. The remaining vacant DM post will become an enforcement post which will commence in mid-February 2023 which will reduce the need for DM officers to take on enforcement work in addition to their current workloads which is not reflected in the average caseload metrics.

- The average caseload targets were set when the number of applications coming into the service was rising and there was insufficient staff capacity which impacted on work allocations and the team structure, which was further exacerbated by the lack senior case officers. The dashboard style report was introduced a year ago, and the context has since changed. An improved DM dash will be designed for 2023-24 to provide more useful metrics to gauge performance. Some of the proposals are:
 - The introduction of a metric that gives a better reflection of throughput;
 - Caseload targets to be replaced with a range (recommended minimum and maximum) which would reflect current workloads and team structure;
 - The introduction of a trend chart aligned to the indicator that local planning authorities are measured on by the government.

The changes will be agreed with West Oxfordshire District Council.

- There is an improvement programme and roadmap in place. The recent focus has been on clearing the backlog of enforcement cases; and a new Planning Checklist designed to improve the quality of the applications submitted and reduce the impact of invalid applications on the validation team went live on 1 February 2023.

3.9. Housing

- The pressures on Housing services, systems and pathways remain high. The number of people contacting the Housing Team continues to rise due to the cost of living crisis, the evolving Homes for Ukraine situation and the cold weather during December 2022.

The cold weather, along with the cost of living crisis has resulted in some people who would normally be staying between family and friends becoming homeless which has required greater use of hotel placements. Although the Housing Team is able to recover some of the costs of emergency accommodation through claiming housing benefits, the Council loses part of this through subsidy loss. The Council's owned and managed hostels are operating at full capacity.

The Council has received additional Winter Pressures funding to support the increase in homeless cases and resulting pressures on services which is being used for temporary resources to assist with 'moving on' people who were accommodated during the recent severe cold weather. Specialist Temporary Accommodation officers offer dedicated support and bespoke solutions for helping clients move on successfully from emergency accommodation.

The availability of social housing stock remains low across the District due partially to prevention measures being put in place to assist those affected by the financial implications of the increasing cost of living. These measures are aimed at working with households to enable them to remain in their own home, with reducing rent arrears or covering the

costs of increased bills. Accessing the private rented sector in West Oxfordshire District remains difficult due to affordability.

The specialist Ukraine Housing Officer (funded by the County) is working with families and hosts to prevent homelessness wherever possible and assist families to secure their own accommodation in the private sector. Where this is not possible, the Officer will source either rematches to different Hosts through the Homes for Ukraine scheme or source emergency accommodation when needed until a longer term solution can be found;

- Seventy-six affordable homes (41 affordable rent and 35 shared ownership) reached practical completion in Q3. The affordable housing provision at Shilton Road, Burford has now concluded.

Cottsway negotiated affordable housing on the additional phases at West Witney (additional areas identified by the developers has created additional phases to this development). The first 13 of these homes were completed in Q3. Platform Housing Group has purchased some of the market housing on the West Witney site which will provide additional shared ownership affordable homes; the first two completed in Q3 with a further six forecast for Q4.

Overall, a total of 234 for the year has been completed against a target of 207. Registered Providers report that a number of completions scheduled for Q3 have now been reforecast for Q4 although year end forecast is unaffected at this stage.

The annual target is based on the current 2018 local plan, which was informed by the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment and more recent evidence. It identifies a need for 274 affordable homes per year.

3.10. Revenues and Benefits

- The Revenues and Benefits service reports that the cost of living crisis has started to increase overall customer contact and workloads in the service.

At the end of Q3, the year to date council tax collection rate was similar to the previous year while the year to date business rates collection rate has improved since emerging from the pandemic but is not back to pre-Covid levels, and is now expected to take longer to recover due to the impact of the cost of living crisis. The service is monitoring insolvencies to understand the impact of the cost of living crisis on businesses. Last year, the Council wrote off £35k in business rates due to insolvency/bankruptcy compared to £63k this year, indicating that more businesses are failing.

On a more positive note, the latest data (at 14 February 2023) indicates that business rates collection rate is continuing to improve at 91.04% (up from 87.9% a year ago), with six further instalments to collect. Council tax collection rate was 95.23% (up from 94.11% a year ago).

The service is continuing to support homeowners and businesses including encouraging customers 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. The service is up to date with in year processes for the recovery of both council tax and business rates. In addition, the Council has asked enforcement agents to put in additional steps during the early stages of debt recovery to help avert court action and higher costs later in the process. The service is also planning to redesign the recovery process during the first six months of 2023-24 with scoping work starting at the end of March 2023.

It was previously reported that there would be fluctuations in business rates outstanding debt during the year caused by Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) payments. There was a significant increase in business rates outstanding debt since the end of Q2 which related primarily to CARF payments applied to 2021-22 accounts. Outstanding debt for 2021-22 is expected to stabilise over the coming months.

- An increase in the number of benefit applications and reduced staffing during the quarter has resulted in longer processing times. The average days to process CTS new claims increased by 2.7 days to 23 days since the end of the previous quarter while the average days to process HB changes increased by one day to 8.4 days. The CTS changes indicator remained comfortably within the target at 3.7 days.

The team has been prioritising new claims as far as possible as these households are likely to be in the greatest needs while also being mindful of the impact of delays to processing changes in particular HB changes. Plans are being implemented to secure and restore/increase resources to deal with increased workloads and improve processing times including the use of overtime and accessing Civica On Demand. Furthermore, £20k from the cost of living associated activities fund has been agreed for additional resources for West Oxfordshire only. It will be used to procure further resources to help the service manage growing demand and reduce the potential impact of delays in processing claims on other services such as Housing Support. These actions are expected to reduce processing times for CTS new claims to be within or close to the 20 day target at the end of Q4, as well as reducing the processing times for HB changes which will also be helped by the auto processing of pension credit up ratings and new year rent increases from landlords which are applied during Q4.

- Workloads are expected to increase during Q4 due to annual billing and the usual end of year activities. Furthermore, both the Revenues and Benefits teams will be implementing the additional £25 payment (as a credit on council tax accounts) to all working age and pension age individuals who are in receipt of Council Tax Support; as well as the alternative energy payments (on behalf of Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) to those households who do not have a direct contract with an energy supplier e.g. park homes and other shared communities, and therefore did not receive the £400 payment.
- The OpenPortal which provides a facility for customers to self-serve their council tax accounts, business rates accounts and benefit claims is being promoted by both Revenues and Benefits service and Customer Services, which should help to reduce customer contact. The annual bills going out in March 2023 will display the link prominently, and further work on improving benefit forms to make them more customer friendly and accessible through the OpenPortal is planned.

3.11. Waste and environment

- Households produced 10% less household waste in the first nine months of 2022-23 than the same period of the previous year. Since emerging from the pandemic, all household waste streams (tonnages) have fallen. Composting tonnages, which are largely affected by the weather conditions, has fallen the most, while residual waste tonnages have fallen more slowly but remain 3.5% higher than the pre-Covid year. However, taking into account the increase in households in the District, residual waste per household is falling and is generally lower than pre-Covid levels.

Between April and December 2022, the combined recycling rate was 57.25%, around two percentage points lower than the previous year. The lower combined recycling rate was due to a lower composting rate as a result of a prolonged period of hot weather and lack of rainfall during the summer months. The dry recycling rate and food recycling rate were unchanged.

The Council supported national 'Recycle Week 2022' in October 2022. This year's theme was 'Let's Get Real' and challenged perceptions and myths around recycling, and targeted contamination to improve recycling behaviours; and the Council produced a 'behind the scenes' video for social media showing residents what happens to their recycling once Ubico has collected it. During Q3, there was also a focus on food waste recycling at both Halloween and Christmas as well as other specific messages on recycling and reduction at Christmas time.

- The number of missed bins per 100,000 scheduled collections reduced from 149 in Q2 to 137 in Q3. The number of misses was expected to start falling in Q3 following the implementation of a range of improvement work. However, the extent of the improvement was reduced due to the severe weather conditions in December 2022 which impacted on collections. During the cold spell, collections ran daily and messages to the public went out each afternoon to advise residents to leave their bins out. The crews were able to access most of the District although the Chipping Norton area was inaccessible for some days. The cold weather increased the number of vehicle breakdowns and particularly affected the hydraulics/bin lifts.

During the severe weather conditions, supervisors were out every day to assess the conditions; and the crews did Saturday collections in order to catch up with delayed rounds as well as collect additional waste produced at Christmas time (side waste amnesty). Previous shortages of staff caused by illness/absence and challenges in securing agency staff appear did not present a problem this quarter. The supervisors have improved team working and overall management of the rounds facilitated by In-Cab technology. Crews are now fully trained up in its use.

- The number of fly tips has remained fairly stable over the last few quarters (since falling post Covid-19) and is not showing any indication that they may increase as a result of the cost of living crisis and an inability or reluctance to pay for the disposal of both household and business waste.

An additional Environmental Support Officer started in Q3; this post is aimed at tackling environmental crime such as fly tipping. Some of the areas of work being considered include the potential use of surveillance cameras to help with enforcement as well as working with the Neighbourhood Policing teams and Rural Crimes Taskforce to expand the Council's coverage and its ability to clamp down on fly tipping, and keep neighbourhoods clean.

3.12. Finance

- Further detail on the Council's financial performance will be provided as a separate item on this agenda.

3.13. The service dashboards are attached at **Annex A**.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. None

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1. None

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1. None

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1. None

(END)

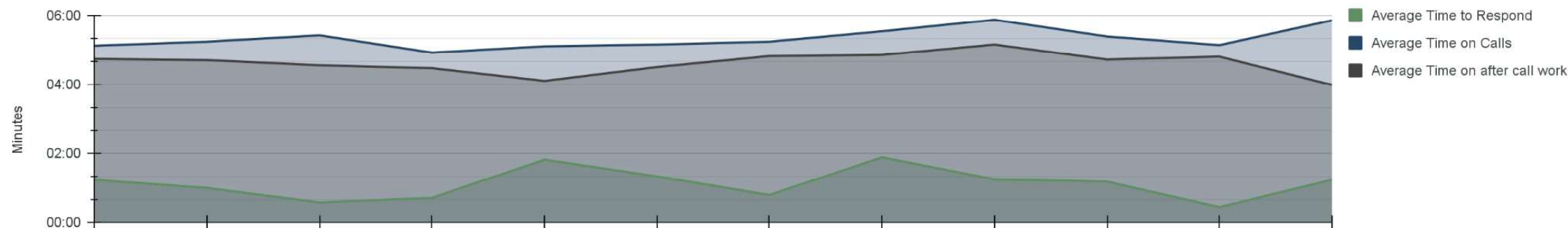
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Satisfied

Customer Services Quarter 3

Average time to respond, on calls, and on after call work



Call volumes



Business as Usual

Business as Usual

Business as Usual

2479 CT reminders
(Postal Strike)3 CSAs sick, 2 hybrids
late due to emergencies

Business as Usual

Business as Usual

Business as Usual

Business as Usual

Training for all staff on
system changesSnow disrupts some
waste collectionsFinish 12.30pm on
Friday for Christmas

The Customer services team made a significant improvement in the average time to respond to calls from two minutes and 51 seconds in the previous quarter to 65 seconds in Q3. Lower call volumes (as expected at this time of the year), and recruitment to vacant posts during the quarter contributed to this improvement, although new staff are still training up.

Over the quarter, there were short periods when the average time to respond was elevated, for example, towards the end of October 2022 when call volumes rose following the mail out of

CT reminders which coincided with a shortage of staff. Call volumes continued to fall throughout November and December. The average time to respond increased in the week before Christmas as more staff were on annual leave and call volume was slightly raised due to the council offices closing at 12.30pm on the Friday.

There was no identifiable cause for the spike in average time to respond in November 2022.

The service has recently implemented a new process for

managing demand through improved engagement with other services. This will mean that communications with residents and customers will be staggered so that workloads are 'smoothed' and can be dealt with more effectively by the team.

Further work on automation and integration of forms to the back office systems is continuing, aimed at improving the on-line offer for customers and reducing call volumes and call length time. For example during Q3, the bulky waste online form was integrated with Salesforce and a new sign up to waste alerts was introduced which provides information on waste collection days and changes.

Development Management Quarter 3

Average Planner
Caseload

38

TARGET 50

Average Senior
Planner Caseload

41

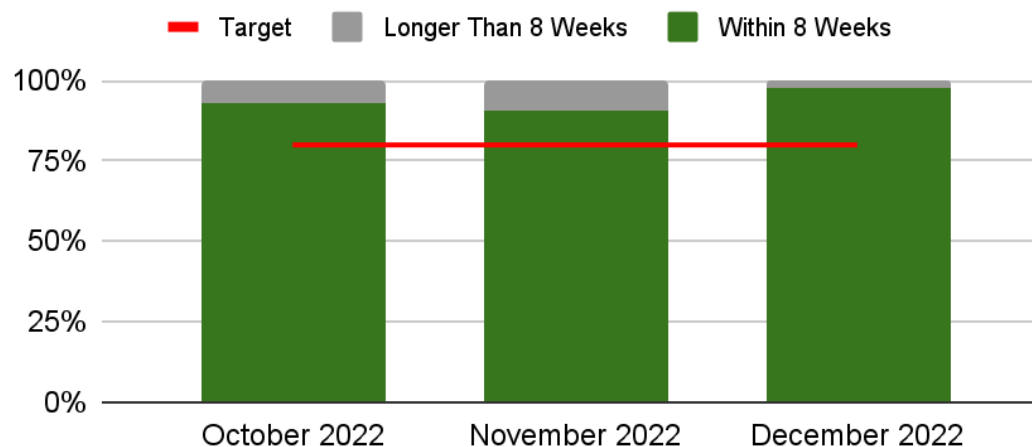
TARGET 35

Average Principal
Planner Caseload

21

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

45

TARGET 50

Average Cases
closed per Senior
Planner in Quarter

39

TARGET 40

Average Cases
closed per
Principal Planner in
Quarter

19

TARGET 25

Average days from
receipt to
validation

7

TARGET 7

Customer
Satisfaction



n/a

Planning determination times for 'Minors' and 'Others' are continuing to improve and caseloads have become more manageable. The service reports that the number of applications coming into the service has slowed but still exceeds historical levels which is in line with the national trend.

Overall staff capacity has improved since the beginning of this financial year, although two planning officers left the organisation during the latter part of Q2, adding to the two existing vacant enforcement posts. During the quarter, one vacant senior officer post was filled (working half time in DM and half time in enforcement); and there was a restructure of the existing team to improve capacity. The remaining vacant DM post will become an enforcement post which will commence in mid-February 2023. This will have a positive impact on performance as it will reduce the need for DM officers to take on enforcement work in addition to their current workloads which is not reflected in the average caseload metrics.

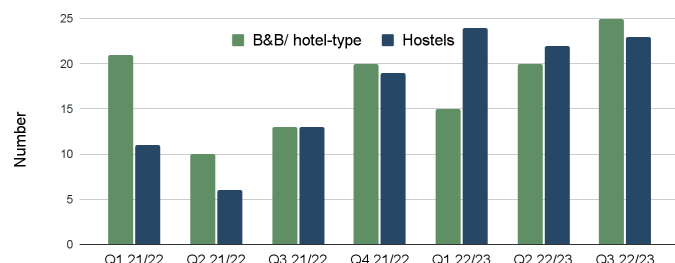
An improved DM dash will be designed for 2023-24 to provide more useful metrics to gauge performance as well as throughput, and which better reflects the current context.



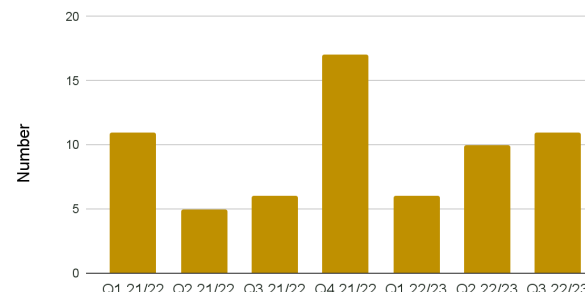
Housing Quarter 3

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

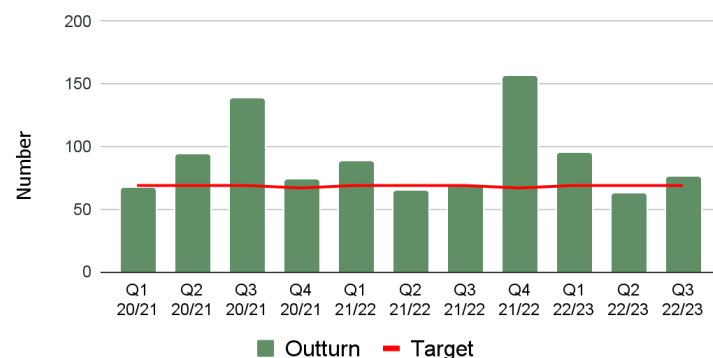


The number of successful 'move ons' from Emergency Accommodation to long term accommodation



The number of affordable homes reaching practical completion

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



The pressures on Housing services, systems and pathways remain high. The numbers of people contacting the Housing team continues to rise due to the cost of living crisis, the evolving Homes for Ukraine situation and the cold weather during December 2022.

The cold weather, along with the cost of living crisis has resulted in some people who would normally be staying between family and friends becoming homeless which has required greater use of hotel placements. The use of this type of placement impacts on the Council's budget as not all of the costs can be recovered by claiming Housing Benefit. The Council's owned and managed hostels are operating at capacity.

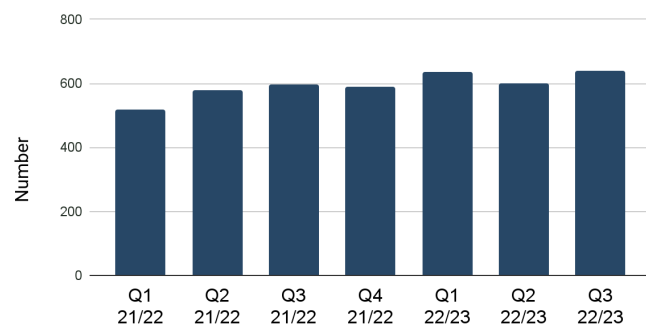
The Council has received additional Winter Pressures funding to support the increase in homeless cases and resulting pressures on services which is being used for temporary resources to assist with 'moving on' people who were accommodated during the recent severe cold weather.

The specialist Ukraine Housing Officer (funding secured from County) is working with families and hosts to prevent homelessness wherever possible and assist families to secure their own accommodation in the private sector.

Seventy-six affordable homes (41 affordable rent and 35 shared ownership) reached practical completion in Q3. The affordable housing provision at Shilton Road, Burford has now concluded. Registered Providers report that a number of completions scheduled for Q3 have now been reforecast for Q4 although the year end forecast is unaffected at this stage. Overall, a total of 234 for the year has been completed against a target of 207.

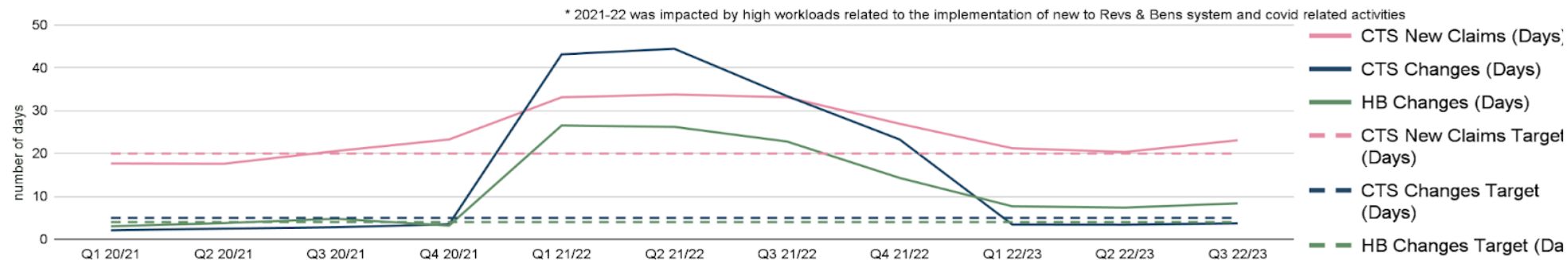
In addition, a range of proactive work is being undertaken to reduce the number of LTE properties in the District. During Q3, 137 properties were removed from the LTE list, although 175 were added. The two main strands of work are maintaining accurate LTE data, and then through improved reporting, better targeting properties to return them into use. Some of the work is resource intensive as the properties are owned by households. The cost of living crisis is likely to be having an impact on bringing LTE properties back into use.

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

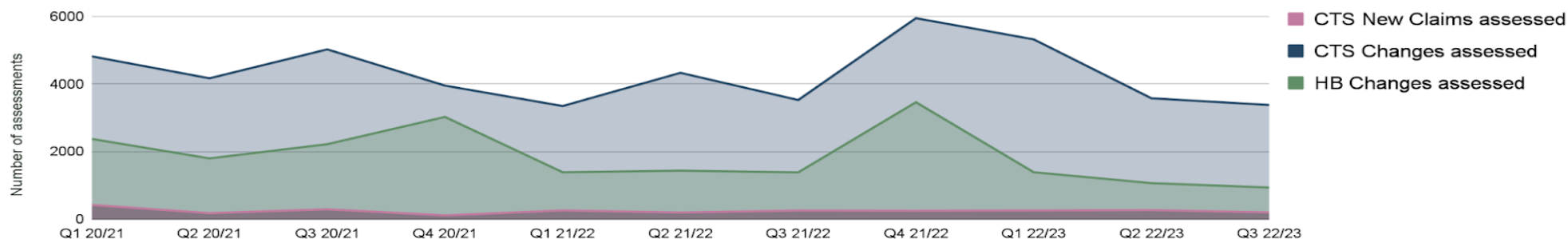


Revenues and Benefits Quarter 3

Average number of days to process Council Tax Support (CTS) New Claims and Changes and Housing Benefit (HB) Changes



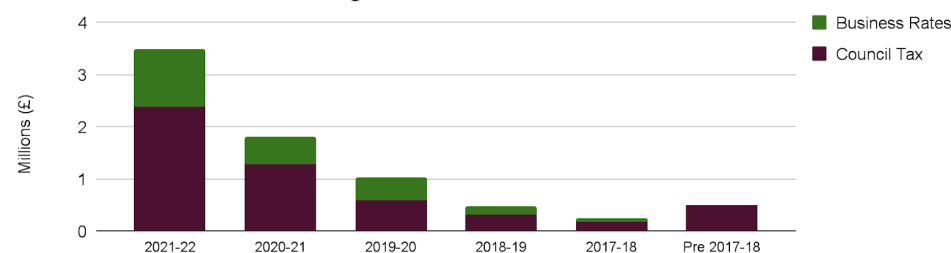
Number of assessments for Council Tax Support (CTS) New Claims and Changes and Housing Benefit (HB) Changes



22/23 Collection Rates

	Council Tax		Business Rates	
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
QTR	31.3%	32%	22.9%	30%
YTD	90.1%	85%	81.8%	87%

Council Tax & Business Rates Aged Debt



Qtrly Aged Debt

% Change Council Tax

-6.1%

% Change Bus. Rates

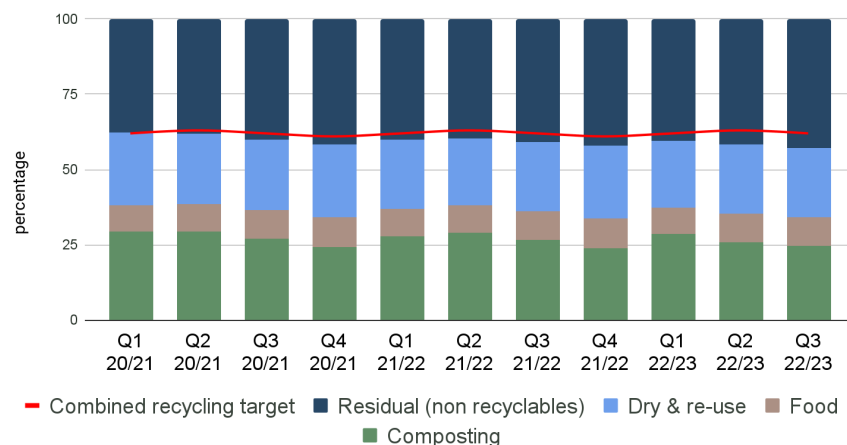
+190%

The Revenues and Benefit service reports that the cost of living crisis has started to increase overall customer contact and workloads. A combination of increased number of benefit applications and reduced staffing in the Benefits team during the quarter has resulted in longer processing times. Plans are being implemented to secure and restore/increase resources to deal with increased workloads including the use of overtime and accessing Civica On Demand. Furthermore, £20k from the cost of living associated activities fund has been agreed for additional resources for West Oxfordshire only to help the service manage growing demand and reduce the potential impact of delays on other services.

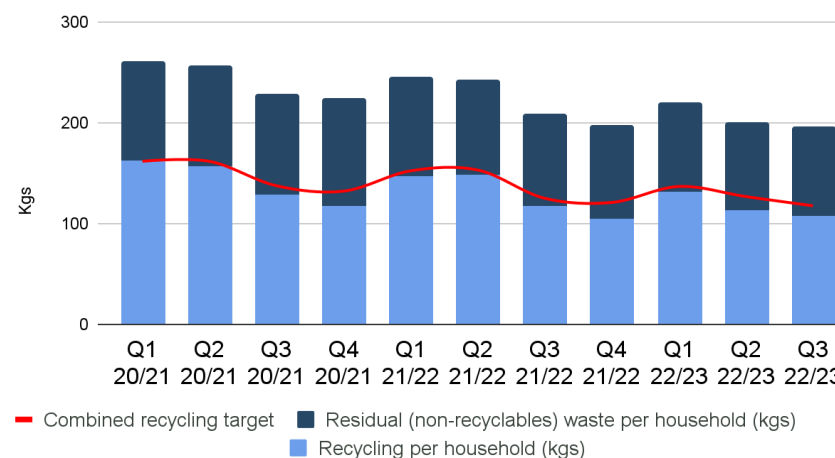
At the end of Q3, the year to date council tax collection rate was similar to the previous year while the year to date business rates collection rate has improved by almost five percentage points but is not back to pre-Covid levels. More recent data indicates that the in-year collection rates will exceed the rates achieved in 2021-22, however, we need to be mindful of the continuing impacts of the cost of living crisis. Plans are in place to re-design the recovery process during 2023-24 which should have a positive impact on collection rates. It was previously reported that there would be fluctuations in business rates outstanding debt during the year caused by Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) payments. There was a significant increase in business rates outstanding debt since the end of Q2 which related primarily to CARF payments applied to 2021-22 accounts.

Waste and Environment Quarter 3

(Cumulative) Household waste collected composition



Household waste collected per household

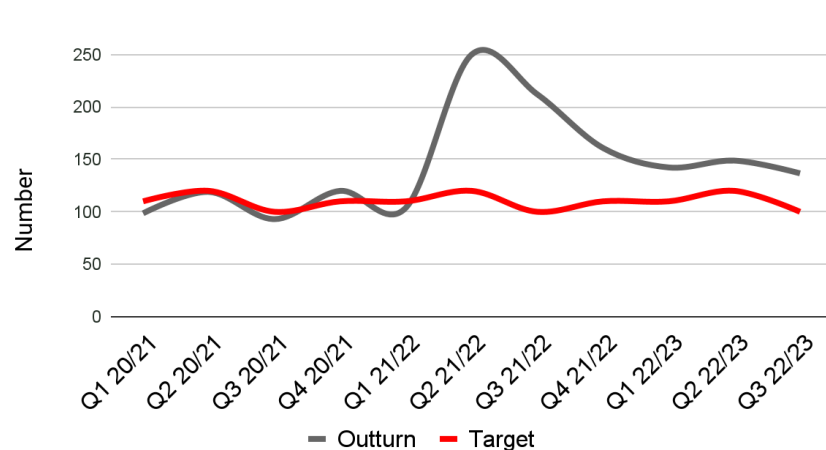


At the end of Q3, the combined recycling rate was lower than a year ago due to the prolonged period of hot weather and lack of rainfall in the summer months. Since emerging from Covid-19, households are producing less household waste, although residual waste tonnages have not reduced as much as other waste streams and is still 3.5% higher than the pre-Covid year. This position is clearly indicated in the top right hand chart which shows residual waste per household falling more slowly than recycling per household.

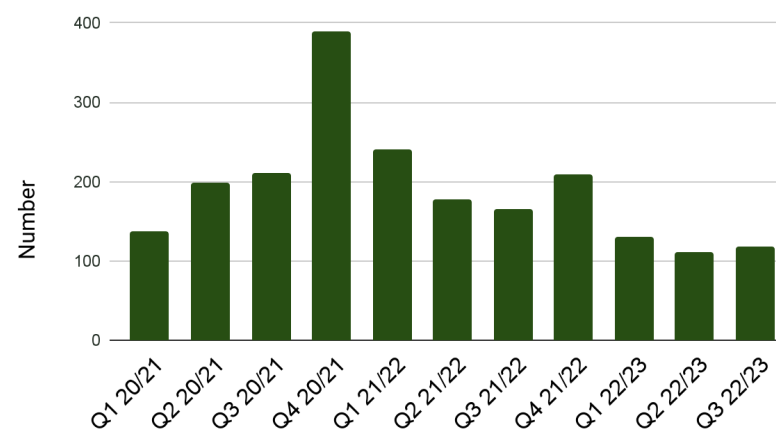
The number of missed bins has improved slightly following the implementation of a range of improvement work in the previous quarter. The severe weather conditions in December 2022 resulted in increased misses as some areas such as Chipping Norton were inaccessible, and there were more vehicle breakdowns. Good comms and the use of In-Cab to manage the collection rounds has helped, while crews did Saturday collections to catch up.

The number of fly tips reduced post Covid and appears to be relatively stable, and unaffected by the cost of living crisis. An additional Environmental Support Officer started in October 2023 to support and increase enforcement activities around fly tipping in West Oxfordshire District. During the quarter, there were 25 investigations resulting in six FPNs.

Missed bins per 100,000 scheduled collections



Number of flytips collected



WODC FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

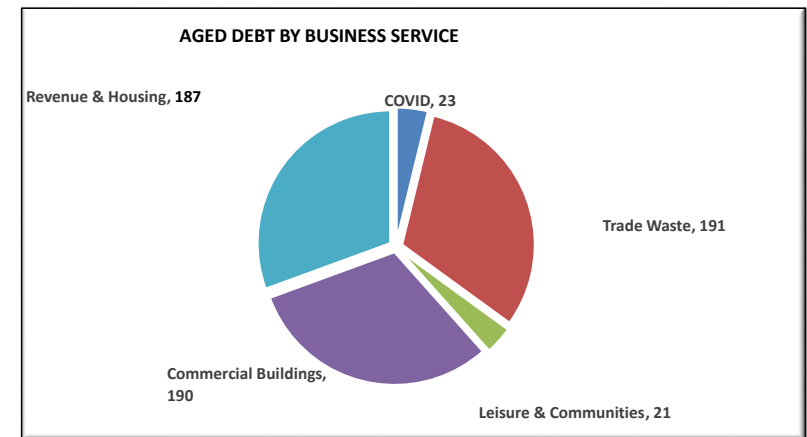
VARIANCE TO BUDGET		£k		
Service Area	Original Budget	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp.	Variance (under) / over
Democratic and Committee Services	1,059	860	928	68
Environmental & Regulatory Services	507	342	397	55
Environmental Services	7,107	4,519	4,823	304
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	922	723	704	(19)
ICT, Change & Customer Services	1,924	1,891	1,931	40
Land, Legal & Property	903	572	708	136
Leisure & Communities	661	(232)	(254)	(22)
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,528	779	811	32
Revenues & Housing Support	1,049	799	786	(13)
Investment Property and Retained Services	(2,218)	(2,217)	(1,449)	768
Total cost of services	13,442	8,036	9,385	1,349
Plus:				
Investment income receipts	(1,139)	(855)	(963)	(108)
Cost of services before financing:	12,303	7,181	8,422	1,241

AGED DEBT SUMMARY						
	Dec-22	Sep-22	Jun-22	Movement vs. prior period		
Invoices	1,297	1,180	1,140	117	10%	↑
£k	613	609	625	4	1%	↑

Aged Debt Summary:

Whilst there appears to have been slight deterioration in our overall Aged Debt position during the past quarter, the figures are heavily impacted by recent Trade Waste and Commercial Property subscriptions falling due. The profile of our debt has improved significantly during the quarter, with debt over 6mths old falling from 70% of aged debt in Q2 to 47% in Q3.

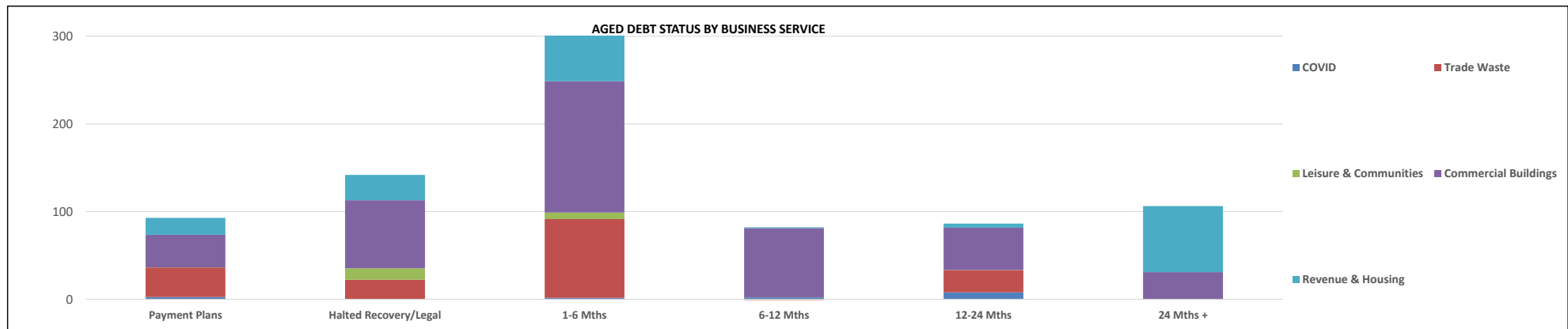
Credit Control has also identified a number of Write Off requests submitted prior to 2022 that did not meet approval criteria at that time, further inflating these stats. Members of the Finance Team have begun a collaborative effort to get as many of these cases reviewed and resolved by year end, with S151 Officer approval obtained, as required.




Overall Summary:

Q3 results show a significant deterioration from those reported in Q2 with losses across service areas. Many of the cost elements providing this shift are uncontrollable i.e. electricity prices, general inflation, pension contributions, property voids and a lack of demand for some of the Council's fee generating services. There is some cause for optimism, in that new tenants have been found for empty Investment Properties with rent levels expected to return to budgeted levels in 2023/24. The 2023/24 budget includes adjustments for utilities, inflation and fees but the emphasis for next year must be how we can effectively control our costs and review our fee earning services to best use our available resources. We are budgeted to make a £1.6m contribution to General Fund Reserves in this financial year, but it is now apparent that we may need to make a contribution from General Fund Reserves to fund our Revenue over spend. The budget set was realistic but could not have anticipated the catastrophic world events that have triggered the cost of living crisis, a rise in utilities and general inflation of 10%.

S151 Officer Write Off approved			
Cost Centre	Case Status	Days Overdue	Total W/O
Trade Waste	Debtor Bankrupt	1280	£11,646.68
Trade Waste	Debt Irrecoverable	1002	£1,435.76
Trade Waste	Debtor Bankrupt	915	£1,523.34
Trade Waste	Debtor Bankrupt	1229	£2,742.91



 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 8 MARCH 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 QUARTER THREE</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Dan Levy Executive Member for Finance Email: dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Elizabeth Griffiths, Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Tel: (01993) 861188 Email: Elizabeth.Griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Detailed Revenue budget comparison Annex B – Capital spend against budget</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>Council approved its Council Plan 2023-27 in January 2023. The Plan sets out a Council vision that is “to support West Oxfordshire to be fit for the future through action across a set of priority themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Putting Residents First 2. Enabling a good quality of life for all 3. Creating a better environment for people and wildlife 4. Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency 5. Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Summary

Q3 results, while reflecting the same downward trajectory as Q2, show a significant deterioration caused by anticipated but unwelcome increases in utility costs and further significant losses against budget in several service areas. There is continued underperformance from some key fee generating services such as Car Parking, Building Control and Land Charges, where there has been a material lack of demand in the first three quarters of the year. The forecast reported in Q2 was that a recovery in Building Control or Land Charges was unlikely this financial year and that continues to be the case. We plan to undertake a review of income generating services that are consistently underachieving compared to their budget and / or costing more to run than they generate in income as they represent an additional drain on the Council's finances which are already projecting an unsustainable position.

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - Budget Monitoring

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23 - Quarter 3, 1st April 2022 to 31st December 2022

Quarter 3			
Original Budget 2022/23	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£	£

Service Area

Democratic and Committee Services	1,058,971	860,003	928,477	68,474
Environmental & Regulatory Services	507,109	341,817	396,967	55,150
Environmental Services	7,106,814	4,518,032	4,822,736	304,704
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	922,288	723,244	703,807	(19,437)
ICT, Change & Customer Services	1,924,570	1,891,282	1,930,867	39,585
Land, Legal & Property	903,130	572,037	708,227	136,190
Leisure & Communities	661,071	(232,016)	(254,414)	(22,398)
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,528,061	779,390	811,665	32,275
Revenues & Housing Support	1,049,459	803,624	786,460	(17,164)
Investment Property and Retained Services	(2,218,585)	(2,217,190)	(1,449,386)	767,804
Total cost of services	13,442,888	8,040,222	9,385,405	1,345,183

Plus:

Investment income receipts (1,139,501) (854,626) (962,655) (108,029)

Cost of services before financing:		12,303,387	7,185,597	8,518,690	1,241,154
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In addition to the issues faced by some fee generating activities, the other main elements that have contributed to the overspend in Q3 are related to the reduction in Investment Property income caused by voids, inflation in electricity costs, additional expenditure across the waste service, additional pension payments and the settlement of an old legal case, the basis of which predates the formation of the Council in 1974.

On a positive note, tenants have now been found for our Investment Properties and the 2023/24 budget includes adjustments for some of our fee income, utilities, pension payments and general inflation.

The budget for this year, which was realistic but could not have anticipated the catastrophic world events that have triggered the rises in utilities, general inflation and the cost of living crisis which has hit virtually every provider of services, anticipated a £1.6m surplus contribution to General Fund reserves but it is now apparent that the outturn for 2022/23 is likely to consume that and more. This aligns with the forecast budget position for next year which continues on the same trajectory and unfortunately reinforces the expectation that, even without budget growth, our current expenditure is unsustainable beyond the very short term. With Govt funding expected to reduce even further with the withdrawal of grant schemes and the overdue Business Rates reset we will find ourselves in the position of having to constantly call on reserves to fund core services. This is neither advisable nor financially sustainable.

The executive continues to fund priority items from their £750k new initiatives fund which was approved by Council this year with multiple projects benefitting from it and ongoing work to combat the effect of the Cost of Living Crisis in the district.

New Initiatives Programme	Electric Vehicles £	Env & Community £	Youth Initiatives £	Cost of Living Crisis £	Business Development £	Residual £	Total £
	75,000	100,000	100,000	200,000	100,000	175,000	750,000
Committed:							
WODC Magazine		-17,000					
Water Day		-5,000					
Christmas Market					-4,500		
Playing Field Strategy			-50,000				
Refugees Clothing Support				-5,000			
2 x Sweepers	-75,000						
Market Town Officer						-6,173	
Climate Change Manager						-24,968	
Leaflet to signpost awareness of support services				-1,000			
VCS sector support				-39,000			
Project Worker to develop warm places network				-28,000			
Pavement licences					-1,700		
	0	78,000	50,000	127,000	93,800	143,859	492,659

SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES

A full list of variances by cost centre is included in Annex A

1.1. Car Parking

The Q3 income shortfall against budget in parking has worsened to £123,000 of which £77,000 relates to on street parking. On Street enforcement reverts to the County Council on 1st April 2023 and the 2023/24 budget has been updated to recognise the loss of budgeted income of £169,000. A review of the costs of the Parking Service is being undertaken.

1.2. Land Charges

The Q3 position is consistent with that reported in Q1 & Q2. Income is now £58,000 behind budget and as reported in Q2, demand for the service has fallen due to both general economic uncertainty, higher interest rates, projected falling house prices and the consistent use of free unofficial Personal Searches.

1.3. Development Management

Planning Fee income has, as expected, recovered significantly during Q3, due mostly to large scale applications. The income position is now £38,000 below target, a 70% improvement on the position reported in Q2 with Pre Application Advice £8,000 behind. The drop in demand for Pre Application Advice over the quarter may be indicative of the next financial year where domestic Planning Applications, Land Charges and Building Control are all expected to be affected by confidence in the economy, interest rates and the health of the housing market. Expenditure has been effectively controlled within Development Management which offsets £20k of the drop in fee income.

1.4. Waste Contract

Trade Waste - income is £30,000 above target, a £77,000 improvement on the same period last year, and tipping charges payable to the County Council are £40,000 underspent. This represents a significant improvement year on year in terms of the number of invoices raised. Historically the service has lost a lot of money due to unpaid invoices which slipped into aged debt and over time became irrecoverable. WODC engaged a credit controller to deal with these and other aged debt and to improve credit control processes generally. The aged element of these have now been recovered as far as possible and our Credit Controller is working proactively to ensure that invoices are settled as they become due. A significant piece of work has been undertaken this year by the service to improve this commercial income stream which was previously loss making but more work and continued support is required to ensure that improvements are sustained.

Green Waste – the service is £53,000 overspent, consistent with reporting in Q2. Garden Waste licences are £23,000 behind budget for this financial year with unbudgeted costs of £21,000 for the printing and postage of licences, which in previous years has been funded through surplus income. The forecast year end position for this service area is expected to be broadly the same as Q3.

Recycling - at the end of Q3 the over spend on the Suez contract has risen to £44,000 and is forecast to be £52,000 at year end. Bin purchases are £87,000 overspent and £22,000 of unbudgeted expenditure has been spent on consultancy work for the Waste Review, although this consultancy

work is expected to reap huge benefits by identifying ways to save significant amounts of money in the delivery of the waste service. There have been underspends of £50,000 to offset the additional costs in this service area but the forecast for year end is that Recycling will be £110,000 overspent.

Throughout the Waste Service there has been an over spend of £124,000 on new bins and containers, with further expenditure of £32,000 going through in January. 76% of the over spend is related to Recycling, 18% Household Waste and 6% Green Waste. This compares to a small underspend for bins in 2021/22 and represents an increase of £165,000 compared to last year. It's not currently clear, in the context that last year was underspent, what is driving this overspend and further work is being done to determine whether this additional level of spend will continue next year – which would necessitate an increase in that budget line.

1.5. Bank Charges

The consultancy work reported in Q2 has now finished and the procurement of a new contract for our card transaction charges is underway with achievable annual savings of more than £60,000. It is anticipated that the new contract will be in place for the start of the next financial year but control of the timing of the switch is in the hands of our new supplier. After lengthy discussions with our bank over the past few months, they have agreed that the Council have been overcharged by them in the amount of £35,000 which will be refunded in Q4. This refund reduces the overspend for Bank Charges to £65,000 and with the new Card Transaction contract coming into effect, it is expected that Bank Charges will return to budgeted levels in 2023/24.

1.6. Building Control

Income is £59,000 below target at the end of Q3, a £48,000 decline on the same period last year. The Service has struggled to recover from Covid, competition from the Private Sector and the general state of the economy. With forecasts for interest rates to keep rising until the end of the year and inflation remaining high it is possible that this service will not return to being on par with budget during 2023/24.

1.7. Democratic Services

Members Allowances are currently £41,000, overspent with some unbudgeted expenditure relating to ad hoc items and new schemes such as Honorary Alderman badges. The forecast overspend for this financial year is around £75,000 which includes posting out the Council Tax leaflet. There was an overspend last year of around half this amount. The additional spend this year is predominantly due to an increase in allowances and the additional number of members in the executive.

1.8 Investment Property

This financial year has proved challenging for some of our tenants with the result that we have had vacant units and have lost £308,000 of rental income in the first three quarters of the year. The Estates team have worked very hard to market our empty units and attract new tenants and have been successful in securing tenants for Talisman, Des Roches and Braintree, all of whom are undertaking improvement works in return for an initial rent free period. Rental incomes are expected to recover in 2023/24 with additional income coming from the phased renting out of the Elmfield offices. Income from our Investment Properties is crucial for the Council's budget as it funds 28% of our total cost of services. It brings in more income than Business Rates and Government Grants and is second only to Council Tax in the amount of income it generates to provide Council Services.

1.9 Admin Buildings

Across Admin Buildings there is an over spend of £74,000 for electricity. The significant inflationary increases that we have been expecting for the last 3 or 4 months have now hit with expenditure at the end of this quarter £100,000 more than the whole of last year. The forecast for year end is that electricity costs could be as high as £150,000 over budget. As part of the budget setting process for 2023/24 an additional £253,000 has been put into the budget for utilities which takes into account the further change to the fuel price cap in April.

2.0 Write Offs

In the first three quarters of the year a total of £25,123.13 of write offs relating to Council Tax and £64,640.46 relating to Business Rates have been requested of the S151 Officer by our Revenues Team.

Debts will normally only be considered for write off where the account is closed and there are no recurring debts. Only in exceptional circumstances will amounts on live accounts be considered where there is on-going accruing debt. Such cases must demonstrate that further recovery action will not achieve collection of the debt. It is not possible to list every scenario which could make a debt suitable for write off.

Requests are only put forward in the following circumstances:

Where recovery action is exhausted or at a point where write off becomes the only or most economical option (for example the debt is below the amount of costs we would add by issuing a summons)

Reasons include

- Bankruptcy
- Deceased
- Debt Relief Order (DRO)
- Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA)
- Insolvency (in the case of businesses)
- Unable to Trace (Absconders)

2.1 Housing Benefit Subsidy

While it is not possible to calculate the final outcome until the end of the year, the amount of Housing Benefit subsidy that the Council loses from housing people in temporary emergency accommodation is likely to cause another significant budget loss. The Council is only able to recover 90% of the Local Housing Allowance rate per week per person in Subsidy, which equates to £85 against potential costs of £250-£400 per week for Bed & Breakfast or Hotel accommodation.

The Homelessness Team are currently supporting 66 households presenting as homeless in temporary accommodation, more than during the Pandemic when it averaged around 50 households. The Old Court and Horsefair provide 22 units, only a third of our current requirement and we have no family accommodation at all. The total loss of Subsidy and therefore unbudgeted cost to the Council in 2020/21 was £90,000 and in 2021/22 this cost rose to £250,000. In 2022/23 it is likely to be higher given the number of households being supported and the expectation for 2023/24 is that it will be on par with this financial year. This continued overspend, and trend that does not appear to be reversing, may necessitate a late change to the 2023/24 Budget so that the likely additional cost in the Housing Benefits service can be recognised.

2.2 Pension Contributions

There are two elements to the Council's pension contributions, the first is the percentage of a person's salary that is paid in each month's payroll and the other is a monthly payment, paid directly to the Pension Scheme to maintain the percentage contribution in the first element at a particular level. The contribution element in the current financial year has been far in excess of what was anticipated and has exceeded budget by £122,000. We are in discussions with County about the level of contributions for the coming year but since the costs of both elements are expected to be broadly the same in 2023/24, it is likely that the revenue budget will need to be increased.

Annex A - Comparison of Q3 Budget Monitoring

Q3 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Democratic Services

DRM001-Democratic Representation and Mgmt	109,030	107,308	(1,722)
DRM002-Support To Elected Bodies	290,047	338,630	48,583
ELE001-Registration of Electors	53,863	77,676	23,813
ELE002-District Elections	75,700	75,700	(0)
ELE004-Parliamentary Elections	0	0	0
ELE005-Parish Elections	0	(0)	(0)
ELE006-County Elections	0	0	0
ELE007-European Elections	0	0	0
ELE008-Police & Crime Commissioner Elections	0	0	0
SUP001-Administration	331,363	329,165	(2,199)
Total - Democratic Services	860,003	928,477	68,474

DRM002 - Members allowances are currently £41k overspent

ELE001 - £24k overspend on postage relating to the annual canvass for electoral registration.

Q3 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Environmental & Regulatory Services

BUC001-Building Control - Fee Earning Work	(60,188)	2,188	62,376
BUC002-Building Control - Non Fee Earning Work	2,348	2,348	(0)
EMP001-Emergency Planning	10,232	5,590	(4,642)
ESM001-Environment - Service Mgmt & Supp Serv	71,836	71,934	98
PSH002-Private Sector Housing-Condition of Dwellings	2,250	0	(2,250)
REG001-Environmental Health General	0	0	0
REG002-Licensing	(14,342)	(21,546)	(7,205)
REG009-Environmental Protection	131,606	131,612	6
REG010-Noise Control	400	791	391
REG011-Authorised Process	(11,900)	(9,133)	2,767
REG013-Pollution Control	100,719	100,648	(71)
REG016-Food Safety	101,755	99,163	(2,592)
REG021-Statutory Burials	3,750	3,350	(400)
TAC309-Other Trading Services - Markets	3,350	10,023	6,673
Total - Environmental & Regulatory Services	341,817	396,967	55,150

BUC001 - Fee income is £59k below target in Q3 which represents a decline of £48k when compared to the same period in 2021/22

Q3 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Environmental Services

CCC001-Climate Change	124,190	127,383	3,194
COR301-Policy Initiatives - Shopmobility	16,222	14,700	(1,521)
CPK001-Car Parks - Off Street	89,202	149,465	60,263
CPK011-On Street Civil Parking Enforcement	3,845	74,953	71,108
ENI002-Grounds Maintenance	277,903	309,057	31,155
ENI303-Landscape Maintenance	56,530	61,673	5,144
FLD001-Flood Defence and Land Drainage	99,624	96,393	(3,231)
REG004-Dog Warden	44,040	56,362	12,322
REG005-Public Health Sewerage	(19)	(19)	(0)
REG018-Pest Control	10,500	12,923	2,423
REG019-Public Conveniences	85,771	103,094	17,322
REG023-Environmental Strategy	59,895	56,912	(2,983)
RYC001-Recycling	2,250,062	2,358,812	108,749
RYC002-Green Waste	(646,214)	(593,478)	52,736
STC004-Environmental Cleansing	790,348	794,867	4,519
STC011-Abandoned Vehicles	0	(811)	(811)
TRW001-Trade Waste	(121,133)	(192,217)	(71,084)
TRW002-Clinical Waste	(825)	(190)	635
WST001-Household Waste	1,366,500	1,390,010	23,509
WST004-Bulky Household Waste	22,716	19,798	(2,918)
WST301-Env. Services Depot, Downs Rd, Witney	(11,125)	(16,952)	(5,827)
Total - Environmental Services	4,518,032	4,822,736	304,704

CPK001 - Excess parking charges income (Off Street) is £46k behind target compared to £39k for the same period last year. The remainder of the over spend is due to inflationary increases of £6k for electricity and additional costs for the APCOA system.

CPK011 - Income from on street PCNs remains significantly down at £77k behind target compared to £72k for the same period last year.

ENI002 - Parish/town council grounds maintenance invoices are behind budget by £31k.

REG004 - Recovery of costs for the Dog Warden service is behind target by £12K

REG019 - Income from Public Conveniences is £13K behind target for Quarter 3 and has an overspend of £9k for electricity costs

RYC001 - Bin purchases are £87k over budget, there is a £44k overspend on the Suez contract and £22k has been spent on the options appraisal for the design phase of the Waste Review. Underspends include £13k for Marketing, £19k for Software and additional income from recycling credits of £12,000

RYC002 - Garden Waste licence Income is £23k below target for this financial year and there are £21k costs for printing and posting of annual licences which historically have been funded through excess licence fees but are now an overspend and another £9k overspend on bins

TRW001 - there is a £41k underspend for tipping charges, and an £30k overachievement of income. Trade Waste has historically had high levels of aged debt. Our Credit Controller is proactively working with customers to make sure invoices are paid when they become due.

WST001 - there is a £28k overspend resulting from additional bin purchases and £5k additional expenditure in supplies & services

Q3 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Finance, Human Resources & Procurement

SUP003-Human Resources	118,330	113,248	(5,082)
HLD302-Miscellaneous Cash	0	26	26
HLD313-Lease Cars	0	0	0
SUP009-Accountancy	246,915	246,856	(60)
SUP010-Internal Audit	167,479	162,414	(5,065)
SUP011-Creditors	29,741	27,257	(2,485)
SUP012-Debtors	41,749	37,010	(4,740)
SUP013-Payroll	39,815	37,640	(2,175)
SUP019-Health & Safety	24,017	24,017	0
SUP020-Training & Development	20,867	20,867	0
SUP033-Central Purchasing	27,324	27,324	0
SUP035-Insurances	7,008	7,008	(0)
Total - Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	723,244	703,807	(19,437)

Q3 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

ICT, Change & Customer Services

SUP002-Consultation, Policy & Research	114,802	114,970	168
SUP005-ICT	1,343,478	1,381,846	38,368
SUP006-Telephones	(5,000)	4,658	9,658
SUP008-Reception/Customer Services	355,502	356,060	558
SUP014-Cashiers	100	(259)	(359)
SUP041-Business Solutions	8,451	8,451	0
TMR001-Street Naming & Numbering	0	(571)	(571)
TMR002-Street Furniture & Equipment	(11,014)	(14,232)	(3,218)
TOU002-Tourist/Visitor Information Centre	84,963	79,944	(5,019)
Total - ICT, Change & Customer Services	1,891,282	1,930,867	39,585

SUP005 - £38k overspend for support & maintenance costs due to inflationary increases.

Q3 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Land, Legal & Property

ADB301-3 Welch Way (Town Centre Shop)	14,190	27,033	12,843
ADB302-Guildhall	8,521	15,905	7,384
ADB303-Woodgreen	136,954	157,099	20,145
ADB304-Elmfield	114,101	126,888	12,787
ADB305-Corporate Buildings	306,603	299,518	(7,085)
ADB306-Depot	(39,353)	(7,727)	31,625
LLC001-Local Land Charges	(135,022)	(77,096)	57,926
SUP004-Legal	187,969	196,848	8,879
TAC303-Swain Court & Newman Court Ind Est Witney	(21,926)	(30,241)	(8,314)

Total - Land, Legal & Property

572,037 708,227 136,190

ADB301 to ADB306 - Collective overspend of £74K due to electricity costs which are currently around double the cost compared to the previous year

LLC001 - There has been a steady rise in Personal Searches (unpaid non-official searches) over the last three years, causing the underachievement of income of £58K at the end of Q3.

Q3 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Leisure & Communities

CCR001-Community Safety (Crime Reduction)	62,360	65,531	3,170
CCR002-Building Safer Communities	21,061	12,610	(8,451)
CCR301 - Communities Revenue Grant	183,252	183,252	(0)
CCT001-CCTV	67,737	74,597	6,860
CSM001-Cultural Strategy	62,427	62,218	(209)
CUL001-Arts Development	37,567	31,164	(6,402)
ECD001-Economic Development	66,414	69,718	3,304
REC001-Sports Development	42,106	50,705	8,599
REC002-Recreational Facilities Development	39,572	39,415	(157)
REC003-Play	70,268	54,086	(16,183)
REC301-Village Halls	10,493	10,592	98
REC302-Contract Management	(1,099,965)	(1,119,320)	(19,355)
SUP016-Finance - Performance Review	78,020	78,313	293
TOU001-Tourism Strategy and Promotion	126,671	132,706	6,035
Total - Leisure & Communities	(232,016)	(254,414)	(22,398)

REC003 - there is an ongoing programme of works throughout this financial year to repair a number of Play Areas in the District. An additional £50k was included in the 22/23 budget for this exercise.

REC302 - There is a £10k underspend against Equipment Purchases and a further underspend of £9k for professional fees

Q3 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Planning & Strategic Housing

DEV001-Development Control - Applications	(255,980)	(217,812)	38,168
DEV002-Development Control - Appeals	59,852	60,244	391
DEV003-Development Control - Enforcement	122,202	122,886	684
ECD301-WOSP - West Oxon Strategic Partnership	6,750	0	(6,750)
ENA001-Housing Enabling	84,900	77,934	(6,966)
ENI301-Landscape Initiatives	40,708	44,201	3,493
HLD315-Growth Board Project (Planning)	147,571	147,569	(2)
PLP001-Planning Policy	398,963	402,325	3,362
PLP003-Implementation	(719)	(719)	0
PLP004-Conservation	76,245	75,890	(355)
PSM001-Planning Service Mgmt & Support Serv	98,898	99,147	250
Total - Planning & Strategic Housing	779,390	811,665	32,275

DEV001 - Planning Application income is currently £42k below target with Pre Application Advice £8k behind. The position has recovered significantly since Q2, with major applications received in December contributing an additional £100k of income.

Q3 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Revenues & Housing Support

HBP001-Rent Allowances	276,109	266,823	(9,286)
HBP003-Local Housing Allowance	0	55	55
HBP005-Benefit Fraud Investigation	4,108	4,167	59
HOM001-Homelessness	286,874	279,147	(7,727)
HOM002-Homelessness Grants	7,500	4,626	(2,874)
HOM003-Rent In Advance Scheme	0	(443)	(443)
HOM004-Refugees	6,633	6,634	1
HOM005-Homelessness Hostel Accommodation	0	(5,672)	(5,672)
HOM006 - The Old Court	0	5,251	5,251
HOM007 - Afghan Resettlement	(120,000)	(120,901)	(901)
LTC001-Council Tax Collection	282,642	282,214	(429)
LTC002-Council Tax Support Administration	4,977	5,528	551
LTC011-NNDR Collection	90,444	90,229	(215)
PSH001-Private Sector Housing Grants	36,489	37,566	1,077
PSH004-Home Improvement Service	(76,153)	(68,763)	7,390
Total - Revenues & Housing Support	799,624	786,460	(13,164)

Q3 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Retained Services

COR002-Chief Executive	255,295	259,692	4,396
COR003-Corporate Policy Making	53,020	53,200	180
COR004-Public Relations	9,067	9,309	242
COR005-Corporate Finance	336,117	566,399	230,282
COR006-Treasury Management	20,025	14,452	(5,573)
COR007-External Audit Fees	42,750	58,500	15,750
COR008-Bank Charges	51,900	115,913	64,013
COR302-Publica Group	(4,588)	14,219	18,807
FIE341-Town Centre Properties	(453,867)	(462,089)	(8,222)
FIE342-Miscellaneous Properties	(836,045)	(717,601)	118,444
FIE343-Talisman	(1,216,881)	(1,064,139)	152,742
FIE344-Des Roches Square	(373,200)	(336,090)	37,110
FIE345-Gables at Elmfield	(40,865)	(32,724)	8,141
NDC001-Non Distributed Costs	449,325	571,794	122,469
TAC304-Witney Industrial Estate	(125,940)	(123,735)	2,205
TAC305-Carterton Industrial Estate	(373,963)	(364,363)	9,599
TAC306-Greystones Industrial Estate	(14,404)	(13,811)	593
TAC308-Other Trading Services - Fairs	5,063	1,688	(3,375)
Total - Retained Services	(2,217,190)	(1,449,386)	767,804

COR005 - In this quarter there was the settlement of a legal case that predated the formation of the District Council in 1974 and a £23k underspend professional fees

COR007 - The additional requirements for external audit from a change in the Audit guidelines have resulted in additional work and therefore additional cost for both the audit of our Revenues & Benefits system undertaken by KPMG and of our Financial Statements, audited by Grant Thornton

FIE342 - The previous tenant of our Investment Property in Essex went into liquidation and the new tenant is undertaking refit works prior to occupying the building. The over spend in this cost centre represents lost rent for this property.

Annex B - Capital spend at Q3

Capital Programme - 2022/23

Project	2022/23 Budget	Actual Expenditure Q3
In-cab technology		5,633
Replacement dog and litter bins	25,000	16,257
Agile Working	0	191,946
Purchase of Land at Cogges	0	76,053
Ubico Fleet - Replace Vehicle Hire Costs	1,080,000	382,206
Welch Way building renovation project	51,197	2,233
Electric vehicle recharging points	200,000	
Investment Strategy for Recovery	22,599,538	
CCTV - Upgrading	300,000	
Shop Mobility - Replacement stock	10,000	
Cottsway - Blenheim Court Growth Deal	170,500	170,500
Cottsway - Lavender Place Growth Deal	99,000	99,000
Affordable Housing in Witney	1,761,875	
Improvement Grants (DFG)	807,750	663,110
Carterton Leisure Centre PSDS Project	1,300,000	
Deployment of High Speed Broadband	1,230,366	1,187,041
IT Provision - Systems & Strategy	100,000	68,493
Council Buildings Maintenance Programme	200,000	
Community Grants Fund	200,000	137,033
Madley Park playing Fields Project	6,165	6,742
Play Parks	100,000	
Chipping Norton Creative	28,297	20,000
Raleigh Crescent Play Area (s. 106)	75,000	0
Windrush Public Art	0	4,660
Developer Capital Contributions		748,068
	30,596,188	3,778,975

Overview of Capital Expenditure:

The Agile Working project was not budgeted for in the 2022/23 capital programme, but is included in 2023/24 at £2,150,000. The expenditure in this year will be part of the Capital slippage request presented to Cabinet in the Q4 outturn report.

There has been some progress in the delivery of replacement Ubico vehicles as we have taken delivery of vehicles that were ordered over a year ago. The manufacturers have advised that lead times are improving compared to the last 12-18 months, but we should only expect incremental improvement during 2023/24.

Final payments for Affordable Housing projects and to Gigaclear for the installation of High Speed Broadband across the District have been made in Q3. Final payment to Heylo for Affordable Housing in Witney has been made in January, which rounds off four very successful capital projects which impact positively on residents.

The Investment Strategy for Recovery is a bold programme designed to make the Council less dependent on Government funding which we anticipate reductions in. We completed the purchase of the Marriotts Walk Shopping Centre in January. This purchase allows the Council to influence and drive regeneration not only in that centre but through the whole high street.

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 8 MARCH 2023
Subject	FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICE REVIEW
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment Email: Lidia.Arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Phil Martin – Assistant Director Business Support Services Tel: 07764352360 Email: phil.martin@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	The purpose of the report is to provide the Executive with a structured summary of the review, the areas explored, relevant findings and a proposed way forward that will not only meet current but future challenges facing the District and its residents regarding the risk from flooding.
Annexes	Annex 1 – Flood Risk Management Final Proposal
Recommendation/s	That the Executive considers the outcomes of the review and agrees the recommendations outlined within the report.
Corporate priorities	The proposal in this report supports the following Council priorities: Priority 3 – Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife Priority 4 – Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	

1. BACKGROUND

A review of the current flood risk management arrangements that are in place and delivered by a single team who support West Oxfordshire, Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils was started in June 2022. The key purpose of the review was to -

‘Deliver a Flood Risk Management service that meets the needs of the partner Councils, residents and businesses within the legislative and budgetary constraints’.

The review group had representatives from the 3 Councils; Cllr Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment (WODC), Cllr Doherty - Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste and Recycling (CDC) and Cllr Tim Gwilliam - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Overall Strategy.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1. The review adopted a formal project management approach and was supported by not only the Lead Flood Risk Management Officer, Laurence King but also a trained project manager.

2.2. The approach was structured around –

- a) Clarifying the extent of the legislative requirements that fall on the Councils;
- b) Assessing the ambition, scope and capacity to deliver additional support locally beyond statutory duties;
- c) Reviewing the services capacity and capability to meet the statutory requirements and any additional requirements that the partners wish to deliver;
- d) Considering the opportunities to work with partners and other agencies

2.3. Clarifying the extent of the legislative requirements that fall on the Councils

2.3.1. The review established that actual legal responsibilities of the District Council under the Land Drainage Act 1991 are limited as major watercourses and rivers such as the River Windrush and Thames are designated "main rivers", which are under the control of the Environment Agency (EA).

2.3.2. Almost all other watercourses, including streams, ditches (whether dry or not), ponds, culverts, drains, pipes and any other passage through which water may flow, are defined as ‘ordinary watercourses’ and fall under County Councils, who in the majority of cases are also the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA).

2.3.3. The Council as a land owner does have a legal duty as a ‘riparian owner’ to maintain any watercourse that passes through its land to ensure the free flow of water is not impeded. However, whilst riparian owners must accept the natural flow from upstream they do not need not carry out work to cater for increased flows resulting from some types of works carried out upstream, for example a new housing developments. If a riparian owner fails to carry out their responsibilities under the Land Drainage Act, or if anyone else causes a watercourse to become blocked or obstructed, the County Council has powers of enforcement by serving a notice under section 25 of the Act.

2.4. Assessing the ambition, scope and capacity to deliver additional support locally beyond statutory duties

2.4.1. The Council currently provides more support to local residents & communities than required to satisfy its statutory duties, this includes the provision of sandbags for people so they can

protect their homes and businesses, as well as hosting events such as the Waterways Day to give local residents the opportunity to learn about the current status of our watercourses and to engage with the organisations that are responsible for their management.

2.4.2. The review established that whilst the Council was doing more than meeting its statutory obligation, as this was a key area of importance that had been recognised in the recently launched Council Plan more needed to be done such as the formalisation of the current ad-hoc liaison / lobbying role and monitoring of the performance of Thames Water (TW) and the Environment Agency (EA).

2.4.3. Taking a more pro-active stance in regards to carrying out inspections on critical ordinary watercourses and assets with a view to seeing riparian owners carry out work before watercourses become congested and assets become dilapidated was another area identified, which the review felt would make a significant impact and potential reduce the risk of flooding in some areas of the district.

2.5. Reviewing the services capacity and capability to meet the statutory requirements and any additional requirements that the partners wish to deliver

2.5.1. As part of current duties, the council's Flood Risk Management team provide expert advice to residents, councillors and internal teams, including major and minor planning applications in terms of land drainage. The Council has also carried out a number of flood alleviation schemes over the years.

2.5.2. The team currently operates as a 'shared service' across the 3 partner Councils, as this helps provide both resilience as well as shared learning and consistency when responding to planning applications. A key benefit of this approach is that as both Cotswold and West Oxfordshire share key waterways and catchment areas, interventions and solutions can be looked at in a more holistic way.

2.5.3. The Review looked at the current level of resources, skills and capacity of the team and undertook a detailed analysis of the activities they were undertaking. The results of this work highlighted that a significant element of the team's workload was associated with responding to planning consultations, thus ensuring that the appropriate flood risk management controls / mitigations are in place for all new developments. Other key activities included Section 23 consenting work, Planning / Section 25 enforcement enquiries and under taking site visits for flood risk problems across the districts.

2.6. Considering the opportunities to work with partners and other agencies

2.6.1. Due to the projects and schemes the team have either led or actively supported in the past the team has the skills, geographical knowledge and understanding of land drainage to not only continue to carry out the delegated functions as requested by OCC under the agency agreement but could take a greater role in the design of new schemes for them and the other district who inevitably have to rely on procuring consultants because of their lack of resource capability.

2.6.2. The team could also pro-actively explore Natural Flood Management schemes that either LLFA, EA or others do not intend to construct and respond to internal and external consultations (such as GWT, Water companies, upper Thames catchment, Severn estuary catchment etc), which will shape the future of the landscape and flood defence.

2.6.3. The review also identified that significant benefits could be had by working with the LLFA to ensure they are meeting their statutory duties, i.e. highways maintenance, as surface run off is a major cause of flooding in some parts of the district.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The review identified the additional resources and capabilities required to deliver a more pro-active and resilient service, having looked at various options. It was agreed that a new Senior Flood Risk Engineer post needed to be recruited to provide the team with the additional skills and capacity as well as a trainee post.
- 3.2. The review recognised that in the current employment climate where the demand for people with relevant flood risk management skills is strong and salary levels very high, it was important to start planning for the future and adopt a 'grow our own' approach to help with longer term resilience and capacity.
- 3.3. Originally all 3 partner Councils were going to fund the proposal but due to financial pressures CDC weren't able to progress with the proposal and therefore will not be accessing the additional capacity provided. As the team will continue to operate as a 'shared service' clear work plans will be put in place and monitored to avoid any risk of cross subsidisation.
- 3.4. An initial funding proposal of £39,000, which is the Council's contribution towards the posts as they will be jointly funded with FODDC, was presented as part of a wider package of opportunities to the Council's Chief Executive for consideration before Christmas, see Appendix 1. The proposal was included in the 2023/24 draft Budget that was presented to full Council on the 15th February 2023.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. All three Councils currently have paid agency agreements with the respected County Councils (Oxfordshire & Gloucestershire County Councils) for the consenting and enforcement of the Land Drainage Act including flood incident investigations. The current agreement with OCC is in the final stages of being renewed and will be in place for 3 years. All the District Councils across Oxfordshire are in a similar position and the terms of the agreements are consistent, however the funding offered does differ depending on the area of water courses covered and work involved.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The risks associated with not approving the funding proposal, thus not increasing both the capacity and skill base of the Flood Risk Management Team is that the service provided will continue to be re-active and their ability to reduce the impact of flooding and improve the water quality of the rivers and water courses across the district limited.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT (IF REQUIRED)

- 6.1. No equalities implications have been identified through the review.

7. ECOLOGICAL AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPLICATIONS (IF REQUIRED)

- 7.1. If the funding proposal was approved then the Flood Risk Management team will be able to take a more pro-active stance on not only monitoring the performance of organisations like Thames Water, whose recent storm discharge map has shown the volumes / number of times sewage is discharged into local rivers from the Sewage treatment works across the district, but to actively work with them on ensuring there is enough capacity within their network.

- 7.2. The team would also be able to explore and where viable introduce Natural Flood Management schemes thus reducing the impact of flooding on residents, whilst also protecting the local ecology and habitat.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1. The Executive could choose to not adopt the review's recommendation in regards to expanding the capacity and capability of the team to take on a more proactive approach choosing to continue with the status quo.
- 8.2. The down side of this decision would be that limited impact will be made in regards to improving the water quality across the district by lobbying / working closely with the likes of Thames Water and enforcement would continue to be ad hoc.
- 8.3. Alternatively the Executive could advocate looking at partners or community organisations to provide the capacity to delivery what's been identified, however as we know resources are stretched in the LLFA / EA this isn't feasible and community organisations would require funding support due to their limited capacity.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1. None

(END)

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Flood Risk Management Final Proposal

1. Background

At the last meeting the Group were presented with a breakdown of the key activities undertaken by the team and how their time was apportioned. The Group also considered a number of additional service options and the resourcing implications of them.

The Group acknowledged that even when the current vacant post is filled the current Flood Risk Management (FRM) team wouldn't have the capacity to undertake any extra work nor improve what is currently done.

2. Final Proposal

The Group has looked in detail at the level of resources and skills available, what the current team do and the volumes in regards to key tasks like responding on planning consultations. After taking all this into consideration the Group agreed in principle to increase the current capacity and skill base of the FRM team by two post; a Senior Flood Risk Engineer and a Trainee Flood Risk Engineer.

The expanded team will not only help to ensure that the Councils meet their statutory duties but are also able to more pro-active in –

- a) Carrying out inspections on critical ordinary watercourses and assets with a view to seeing riparian owners carry out work before watercourses become congested and assets become dilapidated
- b) Liaising / lobbying role and monitoring of the performance of Thames Water (TW), Welsh Water (WW), Sever Trent Water (STW) & the Environment Agency (EA)
- c) Developing / delivering flood prevention schemes
- d) Working with Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA) to ensure they are meeting their statutory duties, i.e. highways maintenance
- e) Leading and assisting external partners in forming bids for external funding as opportunities arise
- f) Exploring Natural Flood Management schemes that either LLFA, EA or others do not intend to construct
- g) Respond to internal and external consultations (such as GWT, Water companies, upper Thames catchment, Severn estuary catchment etc) which will shape the future of the landscape and flood defence.

In addition to the more proactive work outlined above the expanded team will also be able to improve many of the activities they current undertake but are compromised due to resource constraints such as –

- a) Following up on enforcement cases to ensure the agreed actions have been undertaken.
- b) Improving the time taken to respond to follow up queries raised once the team have formally responded to a planning consultation
- c) Ensuring the target for Land Drainage consent applications is always met
- d) Monitoring the maintenance of Council assets such as trash screens to ensure both the quality of the work and frequency meets requirements
- e) Taking a greater role in the design of new schemes as this has always been the main advantage that the team has had over the other districts (and County Council LLFA teams) who inevitably have to rely on procuring consultants because of their lack of resource capability.

- f) Exploring new income opportunities either through options like new street sign positioning for a fee and offering specific support to other organisation, which would then help subsidise the cost of a more resilient FRM team

A key associated benefit of the proposal is that by recruiting a trainee this is aligned with the Councils / Publica's 'grow our own' approach, which will help with resilience and long term capabilities in this area at a time where the demand for these role is strong and salary levels very high.

3. Break down of work the new resources will undertake

We have provided a breakdown of the work that we envisage the 2 new roles will undertake -

Proposed Senior FRM officer;


- 25%- Riparian maintenance (planned inspections, site meetings, required level surveys and other required surveys).
- 10%- Asset maintenance (trash screen inspections, bund inspections and council owned watercourses) including contractor procurement and supervision.
- 10%- Following up on opportunities to bid for funding towards delivering communal flood defence schemes but also water quality improvement schemes.
- 20%- Site inspections to check quality and compliance of new SUDS schemes being installed on new developments.
- 15%- Planning consultation responses.
- 10%- Assist with miscellaneous enquiries (internal and external).
- 10%- Create a liaison with GCC and OCC Highways on reported highway drainage issues.

Proposed Assistant FRM officer;

- 25%- Assist with delivering the consenting and enforcement agency work but also assist with the riparian maintenance reactive and pro-active workload.
- 20%- Planning application consultation responses.
- 10% Assist with site surveys
- 20%-Database updating, correspondence/technical admin, EIRs, FOIs, Land searches and utility searches.
- 10%- Assist with flood incident investigations
- 10%- Assist with liaison with Highway Depots.
- 5%- Assist with miscellaneous enquiries (internal and external).

4. Additional costs

The additional costs associated with the proposal are - Additional Senior Flood Risk Engineer - £52,000 pa New Flood Risk Apprentice / Trainee - £26,000pa. Both these figure are inclusive of both NI and pensions.

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	
Committee	EXECUTIVE – 8 MARCH 2023
Subject	REVIEW OF COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEMES
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities Email: joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Andy Barge, Assistant Director - Communities Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	This report proposes a new approach to community grant funding, better aligned to the outcomes intended from the Council Plan and fostering greater community engagement and involvement.
Annexes	Annex A – Community revenue grant recipients 2022-23 Annex B – Spacehive proposal Annex C – Equality Impact Assessment
Recommendation(s)	<p><i>That the Executive is recommended to resolve to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) Introduce a new approach to revenue grant funding from 2024/25, aligned to four lots and supported by three year service level agreements.</i> <i>b) Agree the four lots as:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Improving our natural environment and the access to it, so that we enable physical and mental wellbeing and cohesive, connected communities</i> <i>2. Taking action towards the climate and ecological emergencies, so that we reduce carbon footprints and encourage nature recovery</i> <i>3. Increasing community resilience and amplifying the voice of the seldom heard, so that we take action on issues most important to our residents and their needs, such as access to food, supporting young people and cultural provision</i> <i>4. Providing residents with high quality, independent housing advice, welfare and debt advice services, so that they are empowered to tackle their problems and we support those who are unable to deal with difficult circumstances on their own</i> <i>c) Request officers to consider potential outline allocations within each</i>

	<p><i>of the lots and report back on proposals.</i></p> <p><i>d) Agree that the community revenue grant funding awarded in 2022-23 be awarded again in 2023-24 to the same recipients and at the same level to allow a managed transition.</i></p> <p><i>e) Approve civic crowdfunding as an alternative to community facilities grants and make up to £120,000 available to pledge against proposed projects.</i></p> <p><i>f) Agree the proposed procurement route to appoint Spacehive as the Council's civic crowdfunding platform provider on a three year contract.</i></p> <p><i>g) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Executive Members for Stronger Healthy Communities, Planning and Sustainable Development, Environment, and Climate Change to agree the type of projects to be supported and the pledge criteria for crowdfunding.</i></p> <p><i>h) Approve the allocation of £25,000 to increase the Council's grants capability, as described in the report.</i></p>
Corporate priorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Putting Residents First 2. Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All 3. Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife 4. Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency 5. Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings from the 'Your Voice Counts' consultation on the Local Plan and Council Plan • Learning from other councils • Current community revenue grant recipients • Executive Members • Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive

I. BACKGROUND and SCOPE OF REVIEW

- I.1 West Oxfordshire District Council recognises that the voluntary and community sector provide a range of valued services and facilities to local communities in West Oxfordshire and wish to support this through grant funding schemes.

- 1.2 Executive asked for a review of the current arrangements with a view to adopting a new approach, better aligned to the strategic priorities and outcomes intended from the new Council Plan adopted in January 2023 and fostering greater community engagement and involvement. As stated in the Plan, this will target available Council grant budgets to proposals by other organisations that will deliver on Council priorities.
- 1.3 The Council currently operates three different types of community grants:
- Community Revenue Grants** usually between £1,000 and £10,000 are available to fund relevant organisations that contribute to the Council's priorities. Higher awards are possible but only where the activity offers significant benefits across an extensive part of the District, or in cases where the activity has a strong connection with achieving the Council's ambitions for the District through partnership working. These are available to constituted voluntary organisations, charities and community interest companies and currently operate on an annual application process.
 - Community Facilities Grants** of up to a maximum £50,000 (match funding is a requirement) to provide financial support for community led capital projects for the improvement or enhancement of existing community facilities and the procurement of new facilities or equipment.
 - Community Activity Grants** to a maximum of £500 to support grassroots community groups wishing to undertake community based activity that contributes to the health and wellbeing of residents and quality of community life.
- 1.4 The budget for community activity grants is £11,000 per year. In the current year, it is supporting not for profit community groups to deliver activities and services that meet the needs of residents most affected by the cost of living crisis. It is therefore outside the scope of this review.
- 1.5 The annual budget and historical spend for the community revenue and community facilities grants is summarised in the table below:

	Annual budget	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Community Revenue Grants	£188,000	£174,346	£188,260	£179,368	£187,851
Community Facilities Grants	£200,000	£146,989	£176,844	£146,035	£91,551*

* Projected spend for current financial year

- 1.6 In addition, an annual revenue budget of £80,000 is used to commission housing advice, welfare and debt advice services. The current provider is Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire and the service is due to be re-commissioned for April 2024.
- 1.7 The £200,000 community facilities grant is a capital budget (but funded from revenue contributions). It is focused on improving and enhancing existing community facilities and for buying new facilities or equipment such as village halls, play areas and sports club equipment. Whilst of community benefit, the capital only nature of the scheme could be perceived as restrictive if we consider community 'assets' in its broadest sense. A community asset is anything that can be used to improve the quality of community life.

- 1.8 A review of the community revenue grants last took place in 2018, which resulted in a more open application process and improved management of those revenue grants awarded. It also forged a stronger link between Council priorities and the activities funded.
- 1.9 Historical practice has been to award revenue grants for a period of one year. Many funding arrangements, however, are in fact long-standing. This annual cycle can result in a 'hand to mouth' approach for funding recipients and presents a significant administrative burden to the Council.
- 1.10 The current recipients of community revenue grants are summarised at Annex A.

2. GRANTS versus COMMISSIONING

- 2.1 A feature of this grants review has been to consider the activity and associated outcomes currently funded and assess whether it is best characterised as grant funded work, or if it would more appropriately be described as activity that should be defined and procured through commissioning.
- 2.2 The use of grants is most appropriate for funding that supports development to build capacity in the voluntary and community sector, to encourage innovation and/or to develop and support strategic partnerships between voluntary and community organisations and public bodies. Funding projects or initiatives, which are distinct from, but complement public services and which are in broad alignment with Council priorities and desired outcomes aligns well with grant awards.
- 2.3 HM Treasury guidance states, "A grant maker is not contracting for a service that forms part of its own business. It is offering financial support in an area of work, designed and proposed by the third sector organisation, which it wishes to sponsor. The work to be carried out by the third sector organisation would be deemed to add value to a public body's overall aims or objectives."
- 2.4 A commissioning approach is more applicable where there are multiple potential providers and the Council seeks to support a core service or activity to meet an identified need and where it wishes to specify the design and intended outcomes of the service. In this instance, the approach set out in the Council's commissioning framework should be followed, contract rules observed and the management process should be proportionate to the planned scale of expenditure.
- 2.5 The main determinant of the financial relationship is the nature of the intended outcomes and this is summarised as:

<p>Grant funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic development to build capacity in the VCS • To encourage innovation by the VCS and/or to develop and support key strategic partnerships between VCS organisations and statutory agencies • Services which are distinct from but complement public services and which are in broad alignment with public sector strategic objectives e.g. to promote community well-being 	<p>Commissioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the public sector is 'shopping' for a supplier to deliver a core service to meet an identified need • Where the public sector wish to specify closely the design and intended outcomes of the service • Where a decision has been taken to outsource a core service, which would otherwise need to be provided directly by the public sector to exercise statutory functions
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2.6 A range of supplementary factors can also be used to help inform the decision between grant funding or commissioning:

- a. The value of the agreement – the higher the value of the agreement, the more likely it is that a commissioning route is the best approach.
- b. Which funding mechanism will achieve best value for money?
- c. How competitive is the market? If there are only one or two potential providers a grant is more likely; if there are many then commissioning is likely to be more appropriate.
- d. What level of control over the agreement and outcomes is appropriate - the higher the level of control needed, the more likely a commissioning route is most applicable.
- e. How specific will the measurement of outcomes and outputs need to be? The more specific, the more likely a commissioning route is most applicable.

2.7 In most cases, grant funding is the appropriate future approach. However, two exceptions exist:

- 2.7.1** In the case of our residents having access to a high quality welfare advice and support service, currently provided by Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire, we are recommending a commissioning approach. This is based on the annual value of award (currently £62,800) and the level of control over the agreement and its outcomes.
- 2.7.2** Recognising the impact of firstly the Covid-19 pandemic and more recently the cost of living crisis have had on demand for advice services, the Executive wish to increase the level of support to £70,000 per annum.
- 2.7.3** Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), the Council has a statutory obligation to make sure all decisions have regard for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - now named the Cotswold National Landscape. In parallel with all other local authorities within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) the Council will pay its annual subscription to CNL to enable its functioning as the organisation with responsibility for conserving and enhancing this protected landscape within West Oxfordshire, and across the landscape as a whole, thereby fulfilling the Council's statutory obligation.

- 2.7.4** As the work of Cotswolds National Landscape supports a core service of the Council and helps it meet its statutory obligations, grant funding is not the appropriate approach. Instead, as the Council is contracting for a service that forms part of its own business, a commissioning approach will be adopted and an amount of £11,000 be moved to an appropriate revenue budget cost centre.

3. A NEW APPROACH ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

- 3.1** A conventional approach to awarding grant funding can be perceived as being:
- Transactional – a process to just fund projects, initiatives services to the same, long standing organisations and this can prevent wider collaboration in the voluntary and community sector and co-ownership in communities.
 - Centred on institutions rather than communities - with most of the ‘power’ centred on appointing organisations, even where co-production potential is strong.
 - Focused on metrics instead of outcomes – where the need for financial efficiency and value drives focus on measured inputs and outputs.
 - Services instead of creative solutions - predefining a solution for a ‘need’ where a cross-cutting approach for complex issues may work better.
- 3.2** Encouraging greater collaboration seeks to combat this and provide an ongoing way to empower communities and make creative use of resources around desired outcomes. It has core features such as approaches based on relationships and trust; and strong collaboration between organisations, professionals and people who access the service. This could be provider collaboration, with two or more organisations with a shared purpose coming together to deliver a common outcome; or a range of commissioners coming together e.g. local authority and health.
- 3.3** The proposed future approach to Council grant funding seeks to encourage innovation, create conversations with the Council to co-produce and co-design services and solutions and encourage potential providers to come together and submit consortia proposals.
- 3.4** A market place event is proposed to foster this intent. This would be widely publicised through our own voluntary and community sector networks and through Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action.

4. ACHIEVING OUTCOMES ALIGNED TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

- 4.1** Integral to this new approach are a number of suggested outcomes, or ‘lots’, all of which have been informed by the Council Plan adopted in January 2023. The Plan itself was shaped by the extensive ‘Your Voice Counts’ consultation and therefore reflects what’s most important to our residents.
- 4.2** The proposed lots are shown below and each would be allocated a lead officer:
- Lot 1** – Improving our natural environment and the access to it, so that we enable physical and mental wellbeing and cohesive, connected communities.

Lot 2 – Taking action towards the climate and ecological emergencies, so that we reduce carbon footprints and encourage nature recovery.

Lot 3 - Increasing community resilience and amplifying the voice of the seldom heard, so that we take action on issues most important to our residents and their needs, such as access to food, supporting young people and cultural provision.

Lot 4 – Providing residents with high quality, independent housing advice, welfare and debt advice services, so that they are empowered to tackle their problems and we support those who are unable to deal with difficult circumstances on their own.

- 4.3** Whilst the previous approach to community revenue grants was broadly aligned to Council priorities, it could be argued that it was as much about meeting grant recipient needs as it was about helping the Council deliver on its own objectives. As noted in 3.4, the new Council Plan has been shaped by community needs, so the message to potential grant recipients will be ‘these are the outcomes we’re looking to achieve for our community, how can you help us deliver these outcomes?’
- 4.4** It is notable that these lots focus on environment; climate and ecology; and community resilience and wellbeing. The Council Plan’s focus on supporting a vibrant local economy, which gives residents the opportunity to prosper and fulfil their ambitions through secure jobs, exciting careers and entrepreneurship, is not being overlooked.
- 4.5** This review has considered the other funding streams available to help deliver the Council’s strategic priorities and a vibrant local economy is the main focus of the £1 million UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the £716,216 Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). The former spread over 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25; and the latter over 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- 4.6** The Executive considered the intended focus of UKSPF in July 2022, with the main focus described as work that supports rural services to ensure people have access to what they need, and town centres and markets to help ensure their viability and the towns’ roles as vibrant service centres for residents and visitors. To see the Council’s investment plan summary:
- <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/v5kbqk5f/wodc-investment-plan-summary-feb-2023-v2.pdf>
- 4.7** Similarly, Executive considered REPF in November 2022, with its primary focus being helping small businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of benefit to the local economy; and providing new and improved community infrastructure. The Council’s investment plan for REPF has been submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and we are awaiting its approval.
- 4.8** The complementary nature of UKSPF and REPF to the Council’s own grant funding allows a holistic approach to be adopted and gain optimum leverage from the range of funding available.

5. ELIGIBILITY AND DECISION MAKING FOR GRANT FUNDING

- 5.1** It is proposed that applications aligned to delivering our desired outcomes in the four lots be accepted from:
- a. Constituted voluntary and community groups
 - b. Registered and excepted charities
 - c. Community Interest Companies (CICs)
 - d. Independent statutory bodies in appropriate circumstances
- 5.2** Commercial organisations and exempt charities would not be eligible to apply for funding and it will not be open to town and parish councils, other statutory bodies, organisations providing a statutory service on behalf of a statutory body, education providers or unincorporated groups and associations. More detailed information for applicants will be developed in readiness for opening the new approach in early autumn 2023.
- 5.3** It is proposed a grants panel appraises applications received, after each application has been screened for eligibility based on the qualifying criteria which will be detailed in the information for applicants.
- 5.4** The grants panel will consist of the lead officer assigned to each lot and the Executive Members with responsibility for environment, climate change and ecology, communities, and social welfare.
- 5.5** Eligible applications will be evaluated against criteria relating to:
- a. Evidence of financial need by the applicant body
 - b. Strategic fit and alignment to the relevant lot's outcome
 - c. Extent of impact, innovation and collaborative working
 - d. Fit with any existing provision to avoid duplication or displacement of activity
 - e. An assessment of risks associated with the proposed activity
 - f. Proposed monitoring and evaluation
- 5.6** After considering these factors the grants panels(s) will make recommendations as to the organisations to be funded. In line with the approach described at 3.3, the lead officers will liaise with those organisations to co-design and finesse the proposed services and solutions ensuring optimum fit with the lots' outcomes.
- 5.7** Final recommendations will be presented to the Executive's December 2023 meeting where the final allocations will be approved. The three year service level agreements will then be executed, ready for 1st April 2024 implementation.

6. AN ALTERNATIVE TO COMMUNITY FACILITIES GRANT FUNDING

- 6.1** An alternative to the Council's community facilities grant funding, particularly when supporting one off projects or initiatives, is civic crowdfunding. Investing in a civic crowdfunding platform could lever better outcomes than the current community facilities grants, whilst at the same time improving transparency and engaging with our communities by investing more in the projects and initiatives that matter most to them.

- 6.2 It provides a new and accessible way that our residents can be at the heart of civic change and this aligns directly with the key aims of this listening Council, which has a drive to be aspirational, innovative and bold; and sits well with our priorities of 'Putting Residents First' and 'Working Together for West Oxfordshire'.
- 6.3 Crowdfunding itself isn't something new, so much as a new term for something that is massively enabled through 'new' internet platforms. Many of our civic buildings were originally financed through public subscriptions and donations such as 'buy a brick', and more recently community share offers and donations have been used to support community shops in particular.
- 6.4 The term 'civic crowdfunding' refers to a subcategory of crowdfunding through which citizens, often in collaboration with government, propose, fund and deliver projects that aim to provide a community service or deliver public value through a local area improvement project.
- 6.5 Typically, project ideas are encouraged and sourced from community promoters and placed on a website, where potential funders are able to search and make financial contributions to projects that resonate with their areas of interest or values. These 'pledges' are generally only released when the target is reached and this conditionality is a key benefit of this approach, as it removes the risk that donations may be given, but not used. Anecdotally, successful community projects which have used a civic crowdfunding approach report that private funding is easier to elicit when greater confidence that a project will take place can be given.
- 6.6 The current approach for community facilities grants requires match funding, but this usually comes from other organisations or agencies, such as Sport England. A civic crowdfunding approach would not preclude this from happening, but does have the benefit of allowing individuals to pledge support too.
- 6.7 This approach levers investment, but also promotes community involvement, allowing people to take an active role in the physical and social improvement of neighbourhoods. The Council could support projects that fit its criteria through pledges, in place of our community facilities grants, which are restricted to capital projects only. This means that many more community projects seeking the Council's support would have to access the platform and would be automatically exposed to support from other backers.
- 6.8 So long as projects are presented legitimately, and are civic in nature, they can be submitted to the platform and assessed - this means the platform provides an opportunity for projects which the Council may choose not to support directly to access funding from other quarters.
- 6.9 Examples of the type of projects the Council would be willing to pledge support for and the outcomes the Council is looking for from its investment are suggested below. Equally, there will be a need to agree the maximum pledge the Council will make towards any one project and the maximum percentage of the project's target the Council is willing to pledge. It is recommended that delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Leader and relevant Executive Members, to agree the final criteria in line with the Council's priorities and the emerging Action Plans to deliver them.

Support projects that:

- Improve the physical and mental wellbeing of our local communities
- Directly address climate change
- Enhance lives through events and activities
- Support young people's ideas and ambitions
- Help to tackle the barriers and challenges many of us experience in life, such as poverty, ill health, distance from services, social isolation/loneliness
- Cultivate food equity, building a fair food system for everyone
- Protect and enhance our natural and built environment
- Invest in and maintain the facilities we rely on for these activities to take place

Delivering outcomes of:

- Community led change
- Improved health and food equity
- Well connected and resilient communities
- Improved mental and physical wellbeing across all age groups and backgrounds
- Improved essential local infrastructure that facilitates rural living
- Improved environmental outcomes, such as carbon reduction, improved biodiversity or green infrastructure

6.10 While there a number of crowdfunding platforms, the majority of these are targeted on commercial investment opportunities. A number of these do enable civic projects, but are not tailored to this process. 'Spacehive' is the only dedicated civic crowdfunding platform provider on Government's G Cloud procurement framework, which enables a direct call-off by the Council.

6.11 Spacehive's award winning platform provides a number of distinctive features which add value to the process:

- a. The platform of choice for over 40 other local authorities including recently appointed Cotswold, Malvern Hills and Wychavon districts and Worcestershire County Council.
- b. The only platform that allows partners to set their project criteria and be automatically matched with projects that fit those criteria, with the ability to assess projects before pledging funds to them.
- c. A verification process, operated independently by Locality, that checks the viability and feasibility of all projects on Spacehive thus de-risking projects for partners and supporters who pledge cash to them. They check for evidence on things like landowner consent, planning permissions, costs, project impact, risk and safety assessments, licences and agreements before a project can fund raise.
- d. Provides a boots-on-the-ground activation programme delivering face to face community engagement to generate awareness, facilitate workshops for would be project creators and provide ongoing project support via telephone, email and live chat.
- e. A comprehensive, annual social impact report is provided.

- f. The Spacehive platform allows projects to add offline contributions to meet their funding target. This enables communities to blend classic fund raising activities with online donations - ensuring that this platform offers an additional fundraising opportunity, rather than displacement.

6.12 The annual contract fee is £30,000, which is based on population size. In addition, there is a small management fee of 5% + VAT per project. This fee is added to a project's crowdfunding target at the outset and covered by the crowd, but only if that target is met and the project implemented.

6.13 If approved, a three year contract, with an annual break clause, would commence in early 2023-24, allowing a lead up to launch in May and workshops for project promoters in June, ready for the first round of projects to take place between July and September. A second round would take place in early 2024.

6.14 The current community facilities grant budget is £200,000 per annum. As noted at 1.5 there is a consistent underspend, so the proposed use of this budget for 2023-24 is summarised below. This would see no actual reduction in the amount of Council money being invested in community projects:

	£
Spacehive platform fee	30,000
Pledges to projects	120,000
Additional funding to 3-year SLA grants	25,000
Grants capability	25,000
TOTAL	200,000

6.15 Taking the learning from Cotswold District Council and others, every £1 of Council money pledged levers in £3 from other backers. This force multiplier could therefore see the Council's £120,000 achieve up to £500,000 of total investment in community projects, each year. To see examples of the types of project funded and how it all works visit:

<https://www.spacehive.com/movement/cc>

7. HOW WILL PLEDGE DECISIONS BE MADE?

7.1 All projects seeking support from each of the two rounds of pitching each year complete a set of questions when pitching to the fund. The grants panel(s) described at 5.4 will consider the responses to those questions to determine the eligibility of their projects.

7.2 Projects will also need to demonstrate they have local support for the activity proposed prior to the panel's assessment. This assessment will take place six weeks after the deadline to pitch. If a project has evidence of eligibility and local support the Council will consider a pledge towards the project, but retains its discretion to choose not to pledge against a project, or to pledge an amount higher or lower than indicated on the platform.

7.3 In line with the Council Plan, the pledge decisions made will be in the best interests of residents and accord with the Council's intent to act with outstanding levels of transparency and accountability, with high standards of governance and trustworthiness.

8. AN IMPROVED GRANTS CAPABILITY

- 8.1** Whilst Spacehive undertake a significant amount of the work to make the civic crowdfunding such a success, notably the workshops for promoters, due diligence, managing each funding round and ongoing project support, an improved grants capability is proposed as an outcome of this review.
- 8.2** Management and oversight of much of the outgoing Council grant schemes formed part of the duties of a post which was deleted from the establishment after it became vacant at the end of September 2022. Whilst other staff have absorbed the work to date, to ensure the success of the new approach outlined in this report a dedicated resource is advised and funded from the current grants budget.
- 8.3** As well as supporting the Council's grant schemes, namely the civic crowdfunding and revised approach to community revenue grants, resource is needed to better support those schemes enabled by external funding – such as Household Support Fund and food group funding.
- 8.4** To achieve this improved grants capability a 0.6 FTE Grants Officer post is recommended. Activity would include organising and promoting the market place event, voluntary and community sector liaison, administration of applications, organising the panels and transparently recording decisions made.
- 8.5** Once in place, the Grants Officer would undertake regular engagement with organisations the Council enters 3-year service level agreements (SLAs) with, conducting monitoring and evaluation to assure value for money. Supported by the lead officers, they will work with our providers to evolve the activity undertaken if there are material changes to need during the life of the SLAs. They would also lead on the civic crowdfunding platform implementation and its ongoing operation and success.
- 8.6** An improved grants capability would also present the opportunity to lever in external funding to support the Council's priorities – either directly, or by greater support to the voluntary and community sector, which has proved invaluable during the pandemic and latterly the cost of living crisis.

9. A MANAGED TRANSITION

- 9.1** Given that this proposed approach to grant funding represents a significant change, all current recipients of 2022-23 community revenue grants have been informed of the likely changes. Each was appreciative of the early engagement.
- 9.2** To ensure a managed transition for all parties, it is recommended that all current recipients receive the same level of funding in 2023-24 and at the same level.
- 9.3** Recognising the main focus will be on launching the civic crowdfunding in the first half of 2023-24, it is suggested the process for inviting proposals against the four agreed lots starts in September 2023, with award made by January 2024 ready for three year service level agreements to start from April 2024.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The current budgets used to fund the community revenue grants, community facilities grants and the commissioned housing advice, welfare and debt advice services are summarised in the table below. Alongside this the new proposals are summarised. This demonstrates the proposals are contained within existing approved budgets and represent no reduction in funding. Instead, it is suggested the available funding is being used in a more effective way to achieve greater community impact.

Current budget	£	Proposed budget	£
Community revenue grants	188,000	3-year service level agreements (lots 1 – 3)	132,000
Community facilities grants	200,000	Civic crowdfunding platform fee	30,000
		Civic crowdfunding pledges	120,000
Housing, welfare and debt advice services	80,000	Improved grants capability	25,000
		Housing, welfare and debt advice services (lot 4)	150,000
		Cotswold National Landscape	11,000
TOTAL	468,000		468,000

- 10.2 The current £200,000 community facilities grant is a capital budget, funded from revenue contributions. The change to a civic crowdfunding approach, with pledges to projects with a wider scope than just buildings and tangible assets will include both revenue and capital expenditure.
- 10.3 By entering in to three year service level agreements the Council is committing to an agreed level of funding to successful recipients for 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26. This commitment is covered in the 2023-24 budget approved by Council on 15 February 2023 and will need to be reflected in subsequent annual revenue budgets approved by Council, or met from reserves.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The proposals within this report all relate to the Council's discretionary grants budgets and not to any statutory schemes. The way in which this resource is invested is at the Council's discretion, subject to appropriate governance, transparency and financial safeguards. The Council's interests will be protected through its contract with the platform provider, backed up with appropriate conditions on the project initiators. Through this process, funding pledges are conditional upon the full sum necessary for a project to take place being raised, and recipients will be legally bound to deliver the stated activity or return the funding.
- 11.2 The government's G-Cloud Digital Marketplace allows for direct award to Spacehive using a framework agreement.

12. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 12.1** If the Council doesn't engage with current community revenue grant recipients, then there is a reputational risk to the Council and a potential negative impact on current providers. Well received engagement has taken place with all current recipients, many thankful for the long notice period for change, to mitigate this risk and a managed transition will be used.
- 12.2** Whilst the civic crowdfunding proposal, as an alternative to its current community facilities grants, would be a new initiative for this Council, the model is well-established and very successful in other council areas. The process whereby projects are promoted and supported is robust, with appropriate and independent verification checks undertaken at an early stage. The main risks are considered to be:
- a. Projects not signing up - For the platform to be effective, project creators and supporters will need to use it. There is a strong incentive for projects to sign up, in terms of the resource the Council will channel through this route, and the opportunity to campaign for further support. The platform will need to be promoted, by the Council and by the platform provider, to recruit individuals and organisations to pledge toward projects. However, project creators are a key ally in this task, as it is their interests to direct their own contacts to the platform.
 - b. Projects not meeting their targets - There is a risk that projects will sign up and not reach their funding target - and consequently will not draw down funds. However this is already a risk that community projects face as shown by the annual underspend on community facilities grant. Widening the scope of eligibility through the crowdfunding approach helps mitigate the risk.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 13.1** The Council is a signatory to the Oxfordshire Compact and the supporting funding code and it will wish to ensure adherence to the key provisions in this around consultation and the provision of appropriate notice around the introduction of changes. The managed transition described a section 5 allows for this.
- 13.2** The proposed approach of three year grant funding, supported by service level agreements to provide a framework for all parties on areas such as delivery, quality and agreed outcomes also accords with the Compact.
- 13.3** The proposals do not negatively impact on any protected characteristics. The new proposals increase accessibility to funding for community projects and this should enable applications from a wider cohort of applicants that have traditionally accessed our grants. Supporting a platform to help groups fundraise beyond our own contribution will open grants up to new and 'non-establishment' groups.
- 13.4** An equalities impact assessment can be found at Annex C.

14. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1** The inclusion of lots 1 and 2, with a focus on environment, climate and ecology, supported by three year service level agreements, provides good potential for a positive impact on

tackling the climate and ecological emergencies. Likewise, the crowdfunding approach paves the way for the Council to pledge funding to projects well aligned to doing the same.

15. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

15.1 Executive could choose to maintain the current system of community grants.

15.2 Whilst not recommended, Executive could cease grant funding. This would save approaching £470,000 each year but place the authority in an unusual position in it not offering any form of grant support and remove the scope to achieve Council Plan priority outcomes through grant funding. It would also have significant, negative community impact.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

None

(END)

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ANNEX A

Community Revenue Grants 2022/23

Organisation	Nature of grant	Awarded	First award made
Thomas Gifford Trust	Provision of community activities	£5,700	2019/20
Wild Oxfordshire	to deliver training, advice and information to WODC and community groups on nature recovery	£2,000	2019/20
Community First Oxfordshire	to support local communities to find community led solutions to community challenges	£12,000	2010/11 or earlier
Cotswold Conservation Board	Support for core activities and to deliver its statutory purposes	£10,300	2010/11 or earlier
Volunteer Link Up	Support with core activities	£12,000	2010/11 or earlier
Homestart Oxford	Continuation of family wellbeing groups in person and online in and around Witney/south of district	£5,000	2019/20
My Life My Choice	Monthly mail out to members with advice, support and activities to those with learning difficulties	£4,251	2019/20
Chipping Norton Theatre	Ongoing provision of arts, entertainment and wellbeing activities for local residents	£25,900	2010/11 or earlier
Lower Windrush Valley Project	protection and conservation of biodiversity and increase opportunities for people to access the countryside	£5,000	2010/11 or earlier
Homestart Banbury, Bicester and Chipping Norton	Supporting vulnerable families in the north of the district	£2,900	2022/23
Wychwood Forest Trust	to enhance quality of the environment for residents and wildlife	£30,000	2010/11 or earlier
Age UK Oxfordshire	to fund role of community development worker	£10,000	2010/11 or earlier
Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire	Core service and central costs	£62,800	2010/11 or earlier

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spacehive

the home of community fundraising



About Spacehive



Spacehive is the home of Community Fundraising and our mission is to make it easy for everyone to improve their local area.

We are specialists in fundraising for civic and community impact and encourage a ground up approach to place-shaping that empowers local people.

We work with local authority partners to foster a collaborative approach in bringing forward external funding streams to complement and leverage existing funds.



Benefits of Crowdfunding



Spacehive's model and platform has been co-designed with local authorities, specifically for local authorities, to provide robust governance and help them administer funds efficiently.

We have delivered unrivalled crowdfunding solutions to more than 50 local authorities including Cheshire West and Chester, Cotswold, Swansea, Kent and the Mayor of London.

Spacehive is the only dedicated civic and community crowdfunding platform in the UK bringing an experienced team with the skills and expertise to set up campaigns, have maximum impact and give people access to a wider range and larger amount of funds.

We take the time to build capacity at a grassroots level and create networks of amplifier organisations to help bring forward ideas and to boost funding for your programme.

By partnering with us you will

- Be easily connected with communities on the things that matter to them
- Foster a collaborative approach to tackling strategic issues and bring in external funding streams
- Leverage your funds – typically an additional £3 for every £1 you pledge
- Bring forward projects that have a tangible impact on their communities which is reported back via Impact Reports
- Ensure projects align to your strategic objectives – you set the eligibility criteria for your funds

We understand how to make local ideas happen

- Over 2,000 community projects successfully delivered
- The highest success rate of any funding platform in the UK at 85%
- Thousands of people every month supporting projects across the country
- 70% of projects impact on those areas most in need
- 50% of projects are created by people new to community improvement - helping to build capacity and improve people's skills

How it Works



Spacehive has a unique local authority model proven to deliver high quality and successful programmes for local authority partners.

- We provide you with a bespoke, council branded, crowdfunding [microsite](#) that promotes your fund, hosts project ideas and receives pledges. We automatically match projects to your fund and provide automated impact reporting.
- Your programme will be managed by a dedicated Programme Director who will develop a programme strategy to bring forward creative ideas from all demographic groups.
- We promote the programme widely and use events such as an annual launch event and project creator workshops to create an effective funnel from initial idea generation to campaign success.
- All projects are comprehensively checked and verified before they can go ahead so that the council and other supporters are assured that a project is fit for purpose, deliverable and has the necessary agreements, permissions, licences in place to be delivered.

- All project creators receive as much dedicated 1-2-1 support as they need in order to refine their ideas, get them delivery ready and maximise their funding potential. The technology in the Spacehive platform such as the Grantmaker App and [Impact Reporting tool](#) makes it simple to assess projects, make pledges and see the difference they have made.
- Spacehive provides mentorship and guidance to the council throughout the programme including regular bi-weekly operational review calls and half-yearly programme review meetings.
- Spacehive builds an ecosystem of support from local people, organisations, grant-makers, businesses, and council stakeholders who want to support grassroots community projects – and will provide briefings to network organisations who can amplify and signpost to the programme.
- You will be able to access peer learning events and share best practice with our other partners

Your Fund



- Your Fund or Pot is an amount of money you make available to pledge to projects within the council's area. It is based on your strategic objectives so that any projects pitching for your funds must demonstrate they will help meet those objectives. Examples of fund criteria that our partners use include (but are not limited to)
- Protecting the environment and tackling climate change
- Building community resilience, inclusion & growing local economic prosperity,
- Improving health and wellbeing,
- Repurposing, transformation and regeneration of public assets. Preserving culture and heritage and embracing the arts.
- Improving or increasing access to local amenities such as parks and green spaces. Providing activity and leisure facilities,
- Projects aimed at particular cohorts e.g young or older people

Setting up your fund in the right way is one of the biggest factors that will define the impact of your programme. Key considerations include:

- The size of your fund - this acts as a magnet to draw ideas from the public. You may not actually pledge all of this fund (although it is possible that this of course could happen) but it's important to set the right tone and show your commitment to people by having a large fund that really attracts people to generate ideas
- Setting your criteria as broad as possible to encourage community creativity
- Ensuring crowdfunding is the most attractive option - it is important to reward people who raise funds from communities rather than make a grant application
- Your fund is not necessarily about finding new money - in fact most of partners make the commitment to use their existing funds in a more efficient way
- Our partners use a range of funds from council areas such as Communities, Economic Development, Health & Social Care, Community Infrastructure Levy, Ward budgets and also from external sources such as the LEP, the CCG, Public health or Government funds like environmental grants or UKSPF.

Projects & Themes

[Walala Parade](#) - Revitalising High Streets

Local businesses partnered together to create a public art piece & brighten up a north London High Street



[Play & Learn](#) - Accessible, safer spaces

Turning a little used road into a playground, classroom & community art space

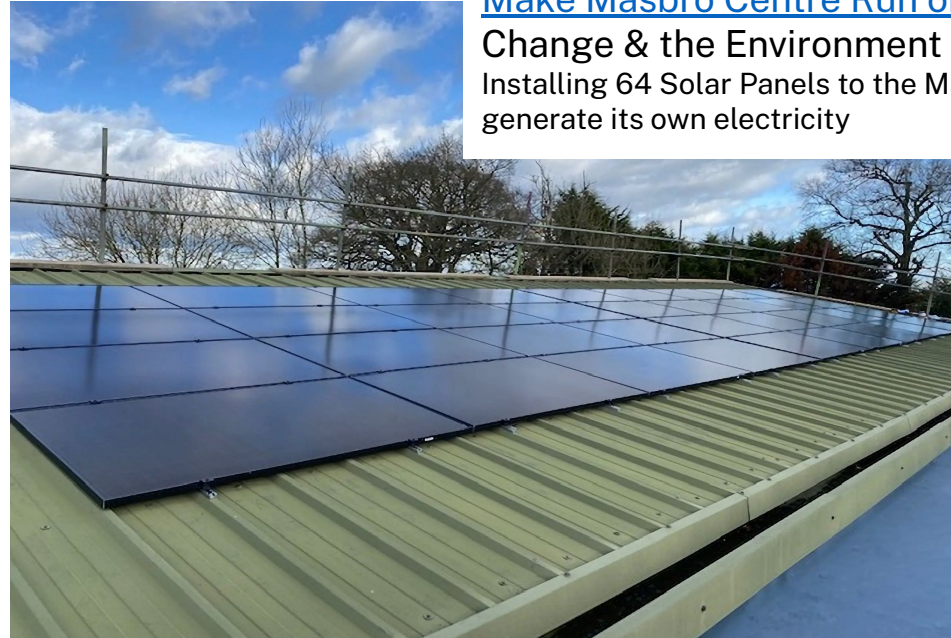


[Copley Common](#) - Transforming Green Spaces

Rejuvenate an overgrown green space creating an eco-friendly community space with nature walks

[Make Masbro Centre Run on Sunshine](#) - Climate Change & the Environment

Installing 64 Solar Panels to the Masbro Community Centre to generate its own electricity





[A New Stage for Crystal Palace Bowl](#) - Promoting the Arts and preserving Heritage

A new stage for the iconic Crystal Palace Bowl. A community space for live music

[xChange Studios](#) - Youth Employment & Education

Transform a disused building into a centre for creative & cultural education for disadvantaged youth.



[Cafe Connect](#) - Repurposing Community Buildings

Creating a multipurpose community building & cafe from an old bowling green. Connecting people & reducing social isolation.



[Sweet Pickings](#) - Improving Health & Wellbeing

Harvesting fresh fruit from unpicked trees to give to food banks in the community



Crowdfund Cotswold

Inspired by their community's response to Covid 19, Cotswold District Council transformed their traditional grants programme into a crowdfunding programme.



In doing so they moved from something that was remote, hard to access and not very transparent to something inclusive, connected and led by the community



'We have moved from a telling role to a listening role as a council. Partnering with Spacehive has given us a platform that makes it as simple as possible for people with ideas to make those ideas a reality'

Councillor Jenny Forde, Cotswold District Council, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing



[Crowdfund Cotswold](#) – Cotswold DC launched their programme in February 2021 as part of its vision to create a greener, more connected and healthier district, moving away from grants to a more transparent and collaborative funding model. With a £90k fund in year 1, they've seen 18 successful projects raising £312,000 with £219,000 coming from the crowd. The programme helped Cotswold win the LGC Award 2022 for Community Involvement.

[Crowdfund Kent](#) - Kent County Council have provided a £500k fund to help communities recover from Covid 19 and increase its community asset base. In year 1 it saw 36 successful projects with £683,000 raised of which £468,000 came from the crowd.

[Crowdfund Sunderland](#) - Launched in 2020 Sunderland City Council have collaborated with the CCG and Public Health to provide funds for projects that meet the vision of Sunderland as a Dynamic, Prosperous and Health City. In two years it has seen 37 successful projects with £383,000 raised of which £223,000 came from the crowd.

[Cheshire West Crowd](#) – Cheshire West and Chester Council launched their programme in Summer 2021 with a £320k fund covering a range of criteria including Heritage, Mental Health Wellbeing, Environment & Climate Change and Covid 19 recovery. In the first 18 months they have seen over 40 successful projects raising £507,000 with £300,000 coming from the crowd.

PROGRAMME COSTS AND PROCUREMENT

Spacehive's model is uniquely designed to maximise the impact of your fund by attracting as many quality projects as possible and giving them the highest possible chance of being successful (over 80% success rate compared to industry standard of 35%-40%). To achieve this our programme includes

- A bespoke crowdfunding microsite, council branded, including automatic project matching to your fund, automated reporting, digital grant agreement software, a simple and intuitive process for project creators to upload ideas and a back office dashboard to track and manage your programme.
- Management of your programme including a comprehensive programme strategy and partner programme guide, bi-weekly review meetings and half yearly strategy reviews, management of the campaign funding windows, training for fund holders within the council and frontline staff.
- A programme of project creator and supporter activation including promotion via social media, an annual launch event, programme workshops, briefings for key stakeholders (e.g. third sector, CCG, local businesses etc) with unlimited 121 support and verification for each project creator.
- Building a local ecosystem of external funders to complement and leverage your funds
- The cost for your programme is fixed at £30,000 per annum for the duration of your contract.

Spacehive is an approved supplier on the Government's Digital Market Place ([G-Cloud](#)) which enables public sector organisations to purchase services in a simple and quick way without the need for a lengthy and expensive tender process.

As specialists in community crowdfunding, you can make a direct award via G cloud as per the buyer's reference guide <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/g-cloud-buyers-guide>. Our services are listed under Cloud Software – so the best way to search is

1. Access digital marketplace - <https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/>
2. Click on “Find your service (Cloud Hosting, Software and Support)” - <https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/buyers/direct-award/g-cloud/start>
3. Start a new search and then Select Cloud Software - <https://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/buyers/direct-award/g-cloud/choose-lot>
4. Type Crowdfunding into the key word search and select Spacehive for place-based funders - <https://www.applytosupply.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/g-cloud/services/310394256630551>



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

"Our partnership puts communities in the driving seat of change and gives many more people, groups and companies the opportunity to shape their city."



Mark Sesnan
Managing Director, GLL

"Spacehive powers our Community Foundation activity and is central to our approach as a social enterprise. Supporting crowdfunding projects brings us closer to the communities that live and work where we operate."



Jenny Forde
Councillor, Cotswold Council

"Partnering with Spacehive has given us a platform that makes it simple for people with ideas to make those ideas a reality. There is real power in the fact that people have invested in the projects. They feel more connected to them and are more likely to engage with them in the future."

spacehive

the home of community fundraising

Greg Dewhirst
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T: 07786 767179



Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form

When completing this form you will need to provide evidence that you have considered how the 'protected characteristics' may be impacted upon by this decision. In line with the General Equality Duty the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance document available on the Intranet

Once completed a copy should be emailed to cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk to be signed off by an equalities officer before being published.

1. Person responsible for this assessment:

Name: **Andy Barge, Assistant Director – Communities**

Date of assessment: **20 February 2023**

Telephone: **01594 812290**

Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

West Oxfordshire District Council – Grants Review

Is this a new or existing one? Existing

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

West Oxfordshire District Council recognises that the voluntary and community sector provides a range of valued services and facilities to local communities in West Oxfordshire and wish to continue this support through grant funding schemes.

This grants review has considered the most effective way to use the grants budgets available and to look for opportunities to widen its reach and impact. It proposes an approach better aligned to the outcomes intended from the new [Council Plan 2023 -2027](#) and fostering greater community engagement and involvement.

The Council Plan itself was shaped by an extensive 'Your Voice Counts' consultation and therefore reflects what's most important to our residents, so there was a desire for this to be reflected in the new approach.

4. Are there any external considerations? (e.g. Legislation/government directives)

No, the proposals all relate to the Council's discretionary grants budgets and not to any statutory schemes. The way in which this resource is invested is at the Council's discretion, subject to appropriate governance, transparency and financial safeguards.

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings		
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	✓	The learning from firstly the Covid-19 pandemic and latterly the cost of living crisis shows the ability of the voluntary and community sector to understand and meet community need. The Council should therefore support and where possible improve its resilience and ability to deliver.
Results of recent consultations and surveys	✓	An extensive 'Your Voice' consultation informed the new Council Plan 2023-2027, which has in turn defined the four 'lots' or outcomes intended from its revenue grants programme, supported by 3-year service level agreements. Youth Needs Assessment 2021
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data		
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Oxfordshire		
Comparisons between similar functions or policies elsewhere	✓	The award winning success of Crowdfund Cotswold
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	✓	Community grants audit October 2020
Other:	✓	The total budget available to support the Council's approach to grant funding is not proposed to reduce as part of this review

6. Please specify how intend to gather evidence to fill any gaps identified above:

No gaps have been identified for the purposes of conducting this review. Its implementation can be informed by demographic and deprivation data when reviewing and assessing applications received for grant funding, or for projects pitched for crowdfunding and asking for a Council pledge of support.

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

Yes - please see section 5 above

If No, please outline any planned activities

N/A

8. What level of impact either directly or indirectly will the proposal have upon the general public / staff? (Please quantify where possible)

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	✓
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	
<p>Comments: The revenue grants programme is focussed on the broad themes of environment; climate and ecology; and community resilience and wellbeing. Equally, the civic crowdfunding will invite projects from across the District and be focussed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the physical and mental wellbeing of our local communities Directly addressing climate change Enhancing lives through events and activities Supporting young peoples' ideas and ambitions Helping to tackle the barriers and challenges many of us experience in life, such as poverty, ill health, distance from services, social isolation/loneliness Cultivating food equity, building a fair food system for everyone Protecting and enhancing our natural and built environment Investing in and maintaining the facilities we rely on for these activities to take place 	

9. Considering the available evidence, what type of impact could this function have on any of the protected characteristics?

Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People		✓		Lot 3 of the revenue grants programme has an intended outcome of “Increasing community resilience and amplifying the voice of the seldom heard, so that we take action on issues most important to our residents and their needs, such as access to food, supporting young people and cultural provision” Intended outcomes from civic crowdfunding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community led change • Improved health and food equity • Well connected and resilient communities • Improved mental and physical wellbeing across all age groups and backgrounds • Improved essential local infrastructure that facilitates rural living • Improved environmental outcomes, such as carbon reduction, improved biodiversity or green infrastructure 	No adverse impacts identified
Age – Old People		✓			
Disability		✓			
Sex – Male			✓		
Sex – Female			✓		
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓		
Religion or Belief			✓		
Sexual Orientation			✓		
Gender Reassignment			✓		
Pregnancy and maternity			✓		
Geographical impacts on one area		✓			
Other Groups			✓		
Rural considerations: i.e. Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.		✓			

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)

Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
Use demographic and deprivation data when reviewing and assessing applications received for grant funding, or for projects pitched for crowdfunding and asking for a Council pledge of support.	Grants Officer	Time Oxfordshire Insight	September 2023 – January 2024 for grant funding September 2023 – March 2026 for civic crowdfunding

11. Is there is anything else that you wish to add?


N/A

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function and where an negative impact has been identified actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact. We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed By:	Andy Barge, Assistant Director – Communities	Date:	20 February 2023
Line Manager:	Jan Britton, Managing Director	Date:	20 February 2023
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:	Cheryl Sloan, Business Manager - Business Continuity, Governance and Risk	Date:	20 February 2023

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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 8 MARCH 2023
Subject	WEST EYNHAM SDA MASTERPLAN ADDENDUM
Wards affected	Eynham
Accountable member	Cllr Carl Rylett Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Andy Barge, Assistant Director Communities Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Report author	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider an addendum to the West Eynham SDA masterplan which has been produced by the four main landowner/developers in response to further engagement with third party landowners.
Annexes	Annex A – West Eynham SDA masterplan addendum
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: a) Note the content of the report; and b) Agree to approve the West Eynham SDA masterplan addendum attached at Annex A as a material planning consideration for any current or future planning applications that come forward in relation to the West Eynham SDA.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No

<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>The original West Eynsham SDA masterplan was subject to a process of stakeholder engagement from August 2021 including the establishment of a dedicated liaison group, a community newsletter delivered to all Eynsham households, a dedicated website and virtual and face to face exhibitions held in November 2021.</p> <p>The masterplan addendum document has been subject to more focused consultation with a number of third party landowners that were not engaged when the original masterplan document was prepared. Further discussions have also taken place with Eynsham Parish Council.</p>
-------------------------------------	--

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Members will be aware that the land to the west of Eynsham is allocated as a strategic development area (SDA) in the Local Plan 2031 and is anticipated to deliver about 1,000 homes.
- 1.2** In June 2021, the four main SDA landowners began work on a masterplan for the SDA to ensure a co-ordinated approach to delivery and a high quality, sustainable development.
- 1.3** The masterplan was considered at a Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 March 2022 and subsequently at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet on 16 March 2022 where it was formally agreed as a material planning consideration.
- 1.4** Subsequent to the decision of Cabinet, the District Council received correspondence on behalf of a landowner whose land falls within the boundary of the SDA, but who had not been engaged in the preparation of the masterplan document.
- 1.5** As an outcome of legal advice and discussions that followed, in July 2022, Cabinet agreed that the four main landowners/developers responsible for the masterplan should be invited to engage with all third party landowners within the SDA, with any updates/consequential amendments to the masterplan to be reconsidered at a future meeting of the Cabinet.
- 1.6** The purpose of this report is to summarise the process and outcomes of that focused, third party engagement.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 allocates the land to the west of Eynsham as one of a number of strategic development areas (SDAs) with the site expected to deliver about 1,000 homes. Of these, 237 have already been completed or are under construction and there is a current outline planning application for 180 homes in the northern part of the site. Planning applications for the rest of the SDA are expected to come forward later this year.
- 2.2** To ensure a co-ordinated approach to delivery and a high quality development, Policy EW2 of the Local Plan requires *'comprehensive development to be led by an agreed masterplan'*.
- 2.3** To fulfil this policy requirement, in June 2021, the four main SDA landowner/developers (Jansons, Berkeley Homes, Oxfordshire County Council Property and Facilities and Blenheim Strategic Partners) assembled a technical team to prepare a masterplan for the SDA.
- 2.4** Further to ongoing stakeholder engagement during the second half of 2021, the final draft masterplan document was submitted to the District Council in February 2022. Having first been considered at a Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 March 2022, the masterplan was subsequently agreed as a material planning consideration at a meeting of Cabinet held on 16 March 2022.

- 2.5 However, following that decision the District Council received correspondence on behalf of a landowner whose land falls within the boundary of the SDA, but who had not been engaged in the preparation of the masterplan document. The correspondence related to the Council's decision to approve the masterplan and took the form of a letter before claim in accordance with the judicial review pre-action protocol.
- 2.6 The District Council subsequently took its own legal advice and it was agreed that the Council would reconsider the masterplan having first given the claimant and any other landowners who were not involved in its preparation, the opportunity to submit representations to the Council by 23 June 2022.
- 2.7 In light of the correspondence received and the existence of other third parties which had not been involved in the process, in July 2022, Cabinet agreed that the four main landowners/developers should be invited to engage with all other third party landowners within the SDA boundary with any updates/consequential amendments to the masterplan to be reconsidered at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

3. MASTERPLAN ADDENDUM

- 3.1 Following the decision of Cabinet in July 2022, the four main landowners/developers, through their consultants Chess Engage, began a process of engagement with the relevant third parties who own land within the SDA boundary – specifically to seek views on the content of the masterplan document.
- 3.2 Hard copies of the masterplan were sent on 29 August 2022, requesting comments to be returned by 23 September 2022.
- 3.3 The comments received were considered by the main developer/landowner team and reflected in a number of proposed updates/amendments as set out in a masterplan addendum document.
- 3.4 The addendum was shared with the third party landowners in December 2022/January 2023 and also with Eynsham Parish Council and WODC Officers. The final version was submitted to the District Council on 2 February 2023 and is attached to this report at Annex A.
- 3.5 As can be seen, the addendum is concise at just 23 pages long. The main changes to the original masterplan document can be summarised as follows:
- **The land ownership plan** (Figure 1 in the addendum, Figure 12 in the original masterplan) has been updated to more clearly indicate which parcels of land are within the control of the four main landowners/developers and which parcels are owned by other 'third parties' or is unregistered land;
 - **Ecology and biodiversity** – the text has been amended to clarify that the former orchard, west of Fruitlands in the north of the site, is partially covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and is designated as a priority habitat (Deciduous Woodland);
 - **Existing Green Infrastructure and ecology plan** (Figure 2 in the addendum, Figure 21 in the original masterplan) has been updated to show the confirmed extent of the

Fruitlands Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and to show the updated Natural England designations within the Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory mapping for Deciduous Woodland. The plan has also been updated to show the Local Green Spaces designated in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan. An inset map has been provided to show these amendments at a closer scale;

- **Site constraints and opportunities plan** (Figure 3 in the addendum, Figure 26 in the original masterplan) has been updated to reflect the confirmed extent of the Fruitlands TPO, the areas of National Forest Inventory and Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland and Local Greenspace Designation 'LGS 6 - Fruitlands Wood', as set out in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan. The opportunities plan has been updated to show less additional woodland in the northern part of the site and a reduction in the extent of the proposed linear park in the eastern part of the site;
- **Masterplan** (Figure 5 in the addendum, Figure 27 in the original masterplan) has been updated to illustrate third party land in the north and east of the site as *potential development land* (although possible land uses are not indicated) subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the Local Plan and other material considerations. This supersedes the previous Figure 27 of the masterplan which retained these areas in their current land use.
- **Land-Use Strategy plan** (Figure 6 in the addendum, Figure 28 in the original masterplan) has been updated in line with the amendments to Figure 5/27 referred to above;
- **Landscape Strategy plan** (Figure 7 in the addendum, Figure 29 in the original masterplan) has been updated to clarify the area of retained woodland proposed within the masterplan area and the confirmed extent of the Fruitlands TPO. Also updated to show the areas of *potential development land* referred to above with the supporting text amended to clarify that any such third party land has been treated separately for the purposes of establishing landscaping quantum for the four main landowners/developers;
- **Indicative Phasing Strategy plan** (Figure 8 in the addendum, Figure 61 in the original masterplan) has been updated to illustrate third party land in the north and east of the site as *potential development land* (possible land uses not indicated) subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the Local Plan and other material considerations.

4. SUMMARY

- 4.1** Following the decision of Cabinet in July 2022, the four main landowners/developers have engaged with all third party landowners within the SDA boundary in order to ensure that their views have been properly taken into account in the masterplan.
- 4.2** That process of engagement has resulted in a number of relatively minor amendments to the masterplan as set out in the addendum document attached at Annex A and summarised in Section 3 above.
- 4.3** Perhaps the most notable amendment is the delineation of two small parcels of land in the north and east of the SDA as *potential development land*. The addendum does not refer to what type of development, if any, may be forthcoming in these locations. Rather it is intended to allow for the possibility of something coming forward at a future point in time, subject to relevant local plan policies and other material considerations. This is in contrast to the original masterplan document which showed them as being retained in their existing use.
- 4.4** It is of course relevant to note that even if the masterplan were to remain unaltered in this respect, the two parcels of land in question fall within the SDA boundary as defined in the Local Plan and those landowners could still bring forward development proposals which would need to be considered on their own merits.
- 4.5** In overall terms, Officers are therefore comfortable with the relatively minor amendments which have been made to the masterplan and are of the view that the addendum document should be supported.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1** Subject to the approval of Members, the masterplan addendum will become a material planning consideration updating a number of aspects of the original masterplan document which was approved in March 2022, with both documents then being used to help determine any current or future planning applications that come forward in relation to the West Eynsham SDA.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1** Although Policy EW2 of the Local Plan requires development of the West Eynsham SDA to be led by a comprehensive masterplan, it does not stipulate that any such masterplan should be approved by the District Council.
- 6.2** As such, Cabinet could choose not to approve the addendum document attached at Annex A.
- 6.3** However, given that Cabinet approved the original masterplan document in March 2022, if it chooses to not approve the addendum document, there may be a risk of further legal challenge from any third party landowner who considers that their views have not been properly taken into account.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The report raises no direct financial implications although there is an indirect risk of expenditure having to be incurred by the District Council should any further legal action be taken.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Cabinet's decision in March 2022 to approve the original masterplan document was the subject of a subsequent threat of legal challenge. The proposed course of action which was subsequently agreed led to that claim being discontinued.
- 8.2 As outlined above, should Cabinet choose not to approve the addendum document which has been prepared in direct response to discussions with third party landowners, there may be a risk of further legal challenge from those third parties.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 In the absence of an agreed masterplan for the West Eynsham SDA, there is a risk to delivery in terms of housing land supply, place-making objectives and the provision of supporting infrastructure to support the development of the site as a whole.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1 The report raises no specific equality implications for any specific group/protected characteristic.

11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The masterplan addendum addresses a number of issues relating to the climate and ecological emergencies including ecology and biodiversity, greenspace and woodland provision and landscaping.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 None.

(END)

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WEST EYNESHAM STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREA



Masterplan Document Addendum



February 2023



Forward

This Masterplan Document Addendum has been produced by Turley Design, on behalf of Jansons, Berkeley, Blenheim Strategic Partners and Oxfordshire County Council (Property and Facilities Team).

This Addendum provides an update to the Masterplan (approved in March 2022) following engagement with third party landowners within the SDA boundary as resolved by WODC Cabinet on the 13th July 2022.

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Turley



Berkeley
Designed for life

BLENHEIM
STRATEGIC PARTNERS

PYE
homes
BLENHEIM

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Introduction

Document Structure & Purpose

This Addendum to the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan document approved on 16th March 2022, sets out the outcome of the further engagement with other third party landowners within the SDA and provides both updated constraints information and consequential amendments/ updates to the masterplan, supporting text and diagrams. The updated plans and supporting material contained in this Addendum replace and supersede the relevant sections of the approved Masterplan Document.

Land Ownership

The masterplan area is covered by a number of different land ownerships. This document has been prepared on behalf of the four landowners/developers who control the majority of the land within the SDA boundary. These parties have worked together in preparing the masterplan and will continue to do so in bringing the development forward.

The Masterplan Process

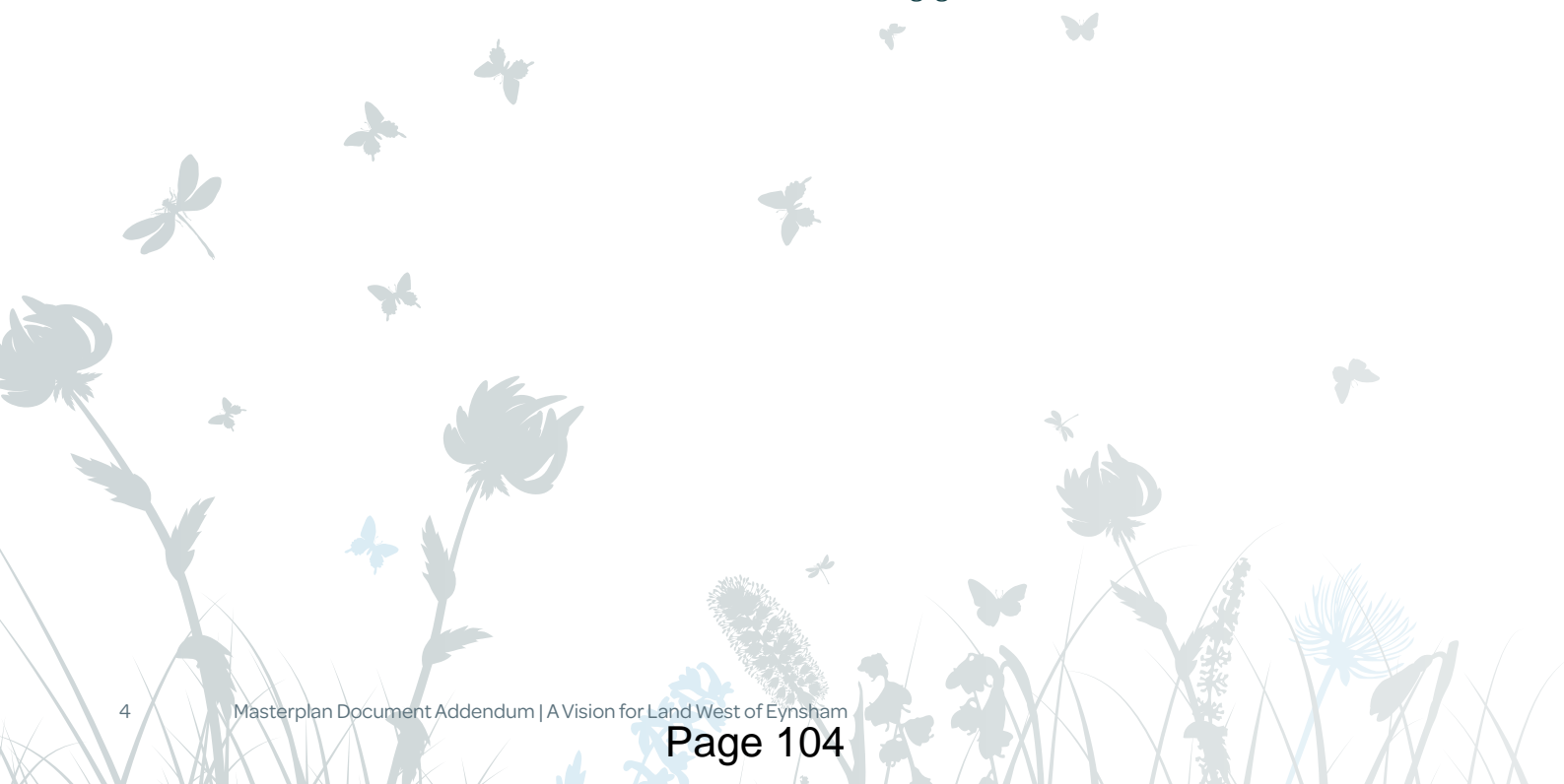
The masterplan was considered by the West Oxfordshire District Council Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 March 2022 and subsequently at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet on 16th March 2022 where it was formally agreed as a material planning consideration.

Following representations by one of the third party landowners within the SDA boundary, the Council decided to reconsider the Masterplan Document having first given the landowner and any other third party landowners, the opportunity to submit representations on the Masterplan Document to the Council by 23rd June 2022.

On the 13th July 2022 the WODC Cabinet resolved to invite the four main landowners/developers responsible for the preparation of the masterplan to engage with the third party land owners to seek their comments on the Masterplan Document.

It was resolved that a further report would then be brought back to Cabinet, setting out the outcome of that further engagement, including where necessary, any consequential amendments/ updates to the masterplan.

This Masterplan Addendum sets out the outcome of this further engagement.



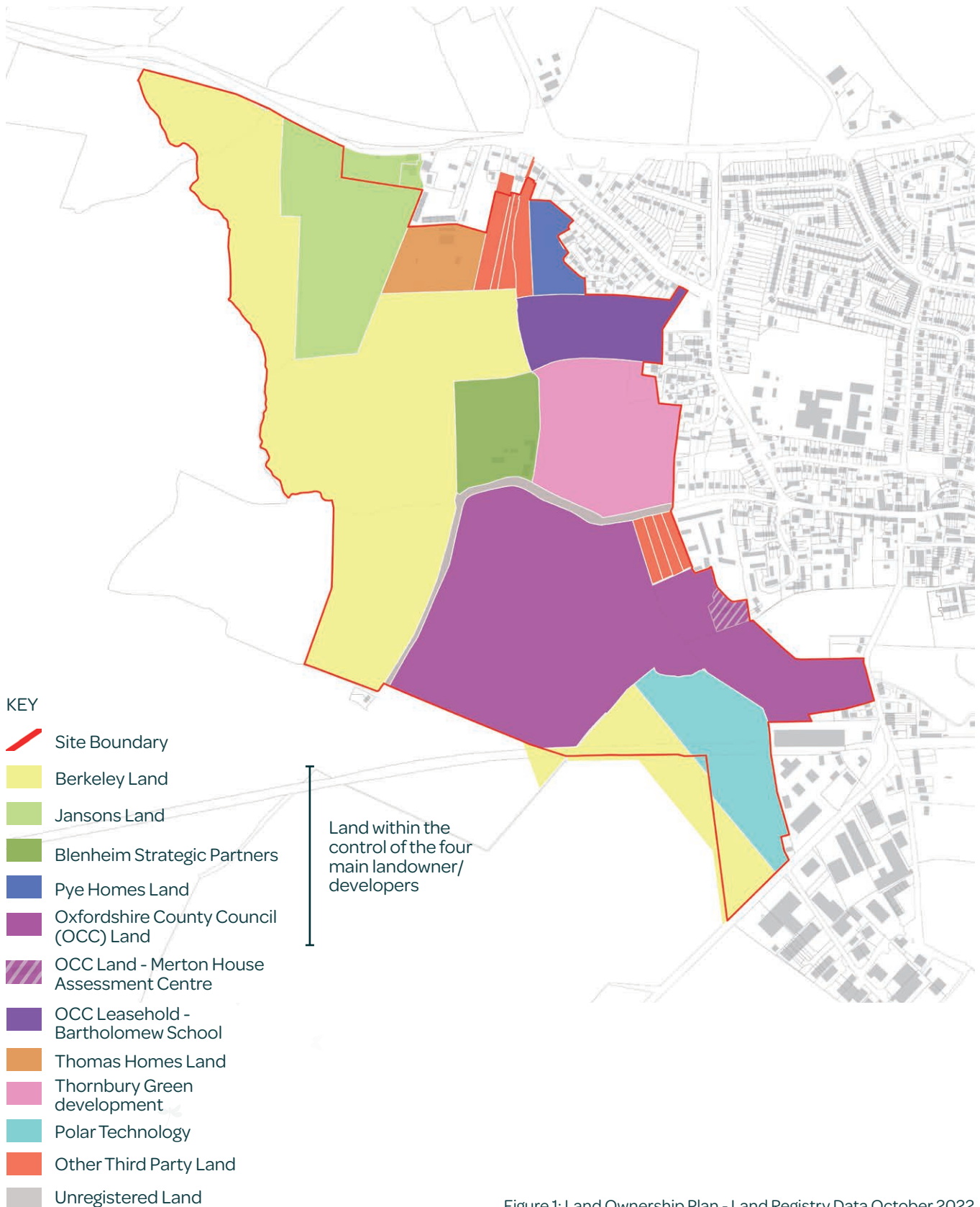


Figure 1: Land Ownership Plan - Land Registry Data October 2022
(to supersede Figure 12 of Masterplan Document)



Engagement

Chess Engage on behalf of the four main landowner/ developers has undertaken a process of engaging with other third party landowners within the SDA.

The 'Consultation Strategy' section of the SDA Masterplan document (pages 40-41), summarises how the SDA was subject to extensive engagement with the local community prior to the Masterplanning process. The SDA Masterplan document (pages 42-45) then explains the engagement at the Masterplan preparation stage and provides a summary of amendments to the Masterplan following engagement with the dedicated Liaison Group in 2021 and 2022.

Post Masterplan Agreement

In line with the agreed resolution of the WODC Cabinet meeting on 13th July 2022, the main landowner/developer team engaged with the other third party landowners within the West Eynsham SDA to seek any comments on the Masterplan document.

A hardcopy letter dated 29th August 2022 was posted, along with a copy of the Masterplan document agreed at Cabinet on 16th March 2022, to the other third party landowners within the SDA requesting comments to be returned by 5pm on 23rd September 2022. These letters were followed up with electronic correspondence (to those with email addresses the landowner/ developer team were aware of).

Comments received from the other third party landowners to this correspondence were considered by the main landowner/ developer team and as a result some updates have been made to this Masterplan document. These updates are detailed later in this Addendum.

The other third party landowners within the SDA were contacted again in December 2022/ January 2023 to obtain their feedback on this Masterplan Addendum, alongside sharing the document with Eynsham Parish Council and WODC Officers.



Landowner Consultation

August 2022

Letters and emails sent to all
Registered and other third party
Land Owners

September - October 2022

Replies received from other third
party Land Owners

November 2022

Masterplan Addendum prepared
to respond to landowner
responses

December - January 2023

Further consultation with third
party landowners on Masterplan
Addendum

Spring 2023

Masterplan Addendum
submitted to WODC Cabinet for
approval



Ecology and Biodiversity

There are no specific nationally designated sites of importance for biodiversity within the SDA. The SDA is predominantly greenfield with farmland arable and semi-improved grassland fields, woodland, orchard, trees, mature hedgerows, ditches and the Chil Brook. There are valuable habitats and wildlife corridors within the site, especially the Chil Brook.

There are records of protected and notable species within and adjoining the site. Phase 1 surveys and assessment of the site have been carried out and prior to any planning application, it is recommended that specialist Phase 2 surveys for protected species are carried out, in addition to further assessment of hedgerow, grassland and arable habitats, in order to establish the presence or absence of protected or notable habitats and species in order to ensure compliance with UK nature conservation legislation and, where necessary, identify measures to avoid or mitigate potential impacts.

The former orchard, west of Fruitlands in the north of the site, is partially covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and is designated as a priority habitat (Deciduous Woodland).

The previous surveys of the site, have identified the areas of highest ecological value, which are primarily along the Chil Brook and the woodland and hedgerow corridors.

The “low ecological value” areas, shown in Figures 2 and 3, are identified in the Oxfordshire Garden Village and Strategic Development Area Preliminary Ecological Impact Assessment Prepared by TACP for West Oxfordshire District Council. This preliminary assessment identified the key ecological features and the areas with the greatest potential for protected species. The low ecological areas have the lowest potential for protected species.

In accordance with national and local policy, development of the site will be required to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity where possible. This is also reflected in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (Policy ENP4a).

To the south east of the site is the proposed ‘Fishponds’ Local Nature Reserve (LNR) on the site of the Eynsham Abbey Fish Ponds.

A further consideration for the West Eynsham site is the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is 3.3km east of the SDA. In respect of increased nitrogen deposition from additional traffic on the A40, a combination of a modal shift away from the use of the private car and a trend for reduction in nitrogen from vehicular emissions will limit any significant effect.

Figures 2 and 3 show the known existing green infrastructure and ecology constraints of the site. This plan has been updated to show the confirmed extent of the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) WODC Ref: No.1/2015 – Land at Fruitlands, Eynsham 141.289 and to show the updated Natural England designations within the Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory mapping for Deciduous Woodland. The plan has also been updated to show the Local Green Spaces designated in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan.

Below is an extract of the updated plan (figure 3) to show these amendments at a closer scale.





Policy Requirement

WODC Policy EW2: h) Requires biodiversity enhancements including arrangements for future maintenance. The provision of appropriate landscaping measures to mitigate the potential impact of development and associated infrastructure.

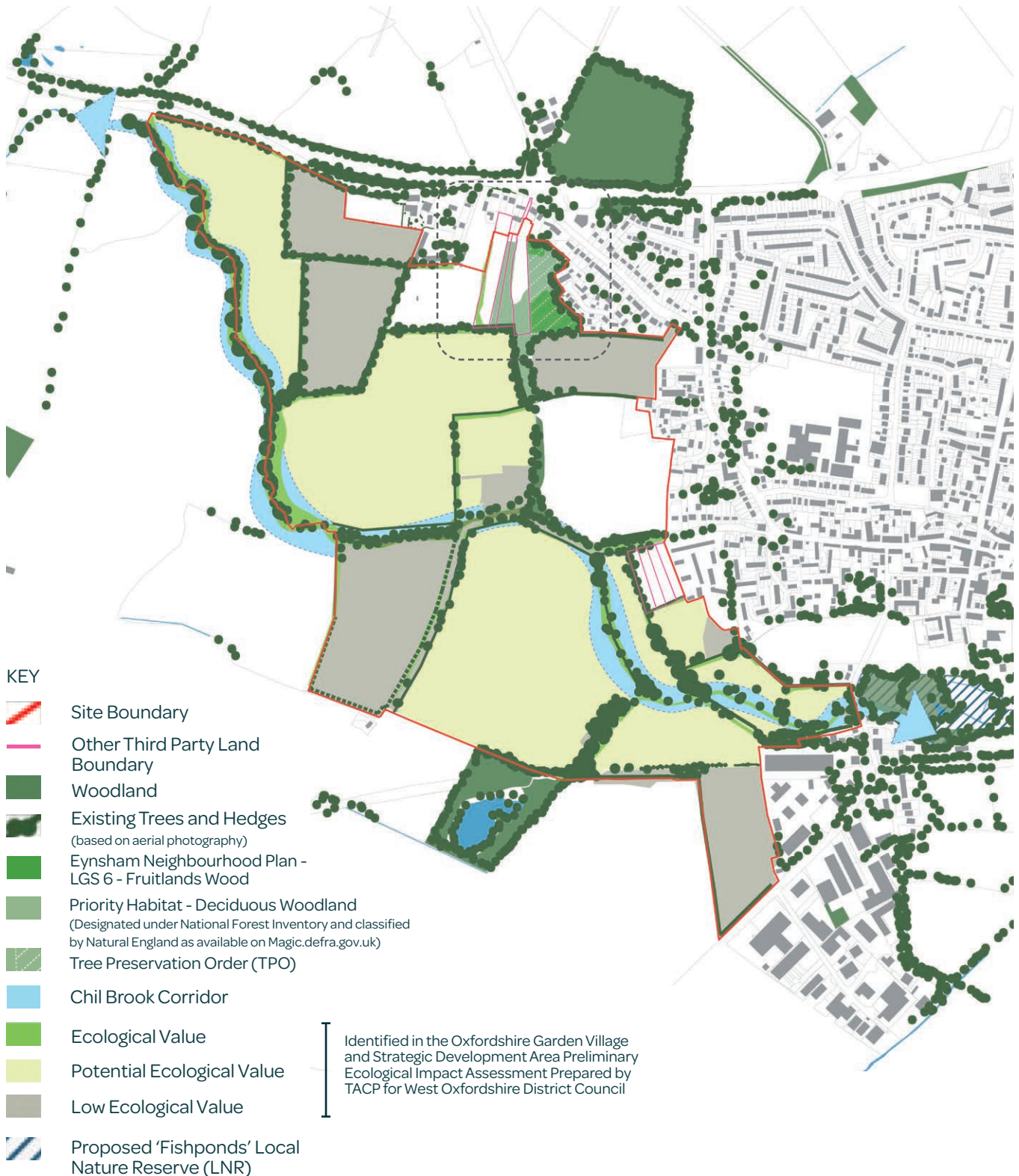


Figure 2: Existing Green Infrastructure and ecology (to supersede Figure 21 of Masterplan Document)



Site Constraints and Opportunities

The Site Constraints Plan has been updated to reflect further information that has become available since the submission of the Masterplan Document. This includes:

- The confirmed extent of the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) WODC Ref: No.1/2015 – Land at Fruitlands, Eynsham 141.289. The extent of the TPO has been confirmed by WODC officers, and
- The areas of National Forest Inventory and Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland, as outlined in DEFRA 'Magic Maps' (Dec 22) which defines the location and extent of habitats of principal importance in accordance with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41.
- Local Greenspace Designation 'LGS 6 - Fruitlands Wood', as set out in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan 2018 - 2031 has been introduced for reference.

These amendments provide greater clarity to the boundaries of these areas but do not fundamentally change the site constraints or consequent masterplan layout and it's opportunities for the SDA.

KEY

	Site Boundary
	1m Contours
	Direction of slope
	Modelled Flood Depth (MFD) <150mm
	MFD 150 - 300mm
	MFD 300 - 450mm
	MFD 450 - 600mm
	MFD 600 - 900mm
	MFD > 900mm
	Surface Water Flood Risk
	Woodland
	Existing Trees and Hedges (based on aerial photography)
	Eynsham Local Greenspace Designations - LGS 6 - Fruitlands Wood
	Priority Habitat - Deciduous Woodland (Designated under National Forest Inventory and classified by Natural England as available on Magic.defra.gov.uk)
	Tree Preservation Order (TPO)
	Chil Brook

	Existing Built Edge
	Potential Landscape Buffer
	Potential Reinforcement of the Existing Vegetation
	Glimpsed Views to St Leonard's Church
	Key Long Distance View into the site
	Industrial Development
	Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)
	Conservation Area
	Listed Building
	Archaeological Features
	Public Rights of Way
	Cycleway
	Proposed Central Residential Boulevard
	Proposed Access
	Potential Pedestrian Links
	Existing PROW Connection
	Potential Pedestrian Access
	Proposed A40 Pedestrian/Cycle Crossing

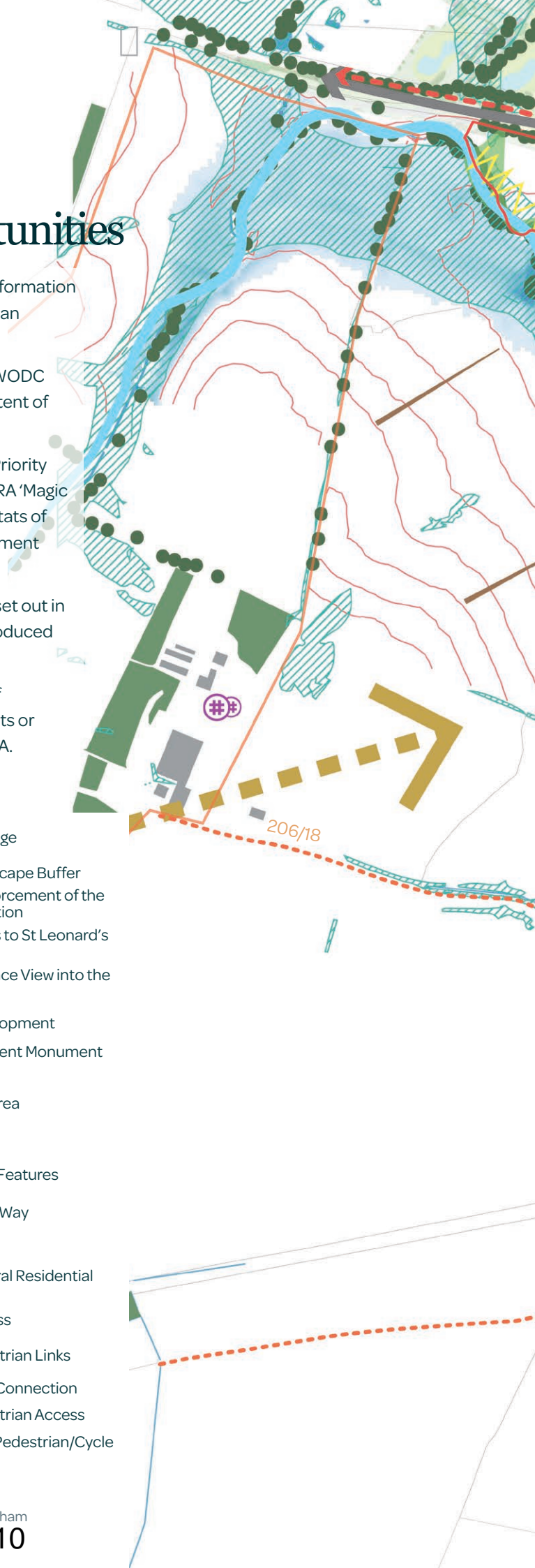




Figure 3: Site Constraints and Opportunities Plan
(to supersede Figure 26 of Masterplan Document)

Opportunities

Chil Brook Linear Park



A landscape for all to enjoy



A new Primary School with safe and convenient access



Local Centre providing a community hub





Design Principles

The design principles for the masterplan have been informed by the assessment of the site and its context and engagement with stakeholders and the community. They establish the vision for how West Eynsham will integrate into the village.

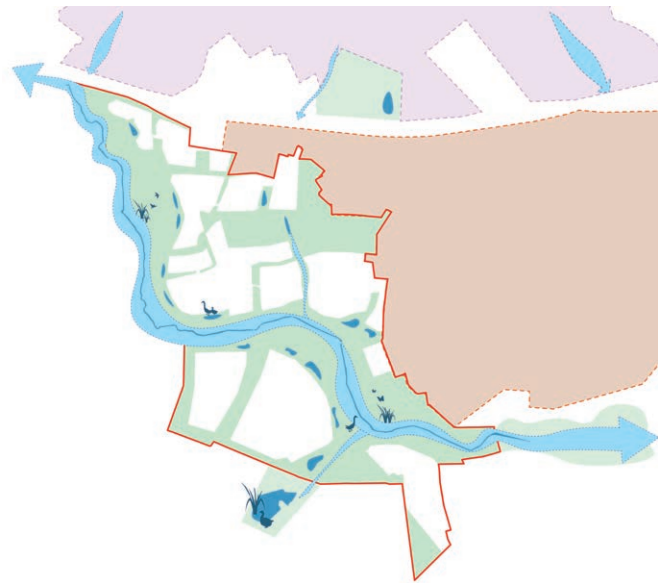
Integrated Landscape Network



The masterplan will create a network of landscape corridors and spaces that will run through the site and connect into the landscape network around Eynsham.

The masterplan will deliver biodiversity enhancement by retaining existing habitats where possible, and creating new habitats to encourage wildlife to use the site. The biodiversity enhancements will form part of a rigorous Green Infrastructure Strategy fully integrating biodiversity through a series of green connections.

Blue infrastructure

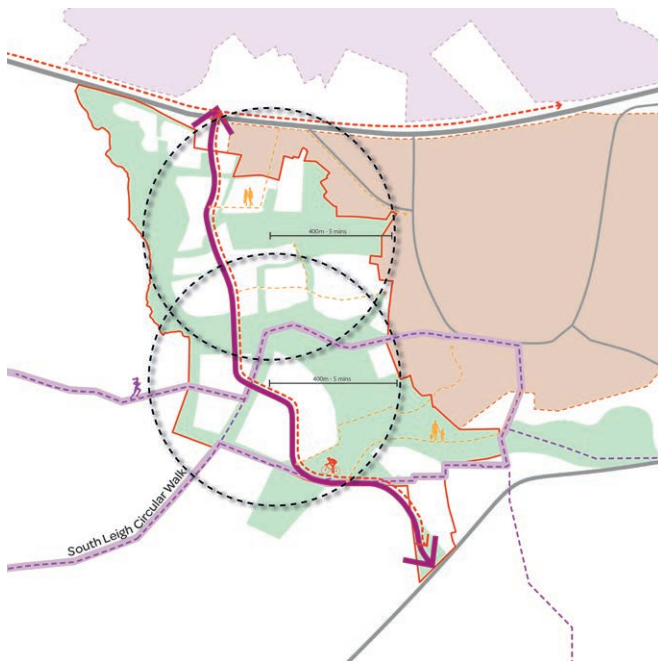


The Chil Brook runs through the site and creates a strong blue infrastructure network. The masterplan will seek to enhance and support this infrastructure by improving and introducing new wet habitats to help encourage wildlife to use the site.

Sustainable drainage systems will be distributed across the site, using natural drainage paths to manage surface water flows and deliver attractive public open space to be enjoyed by people and wildlife.



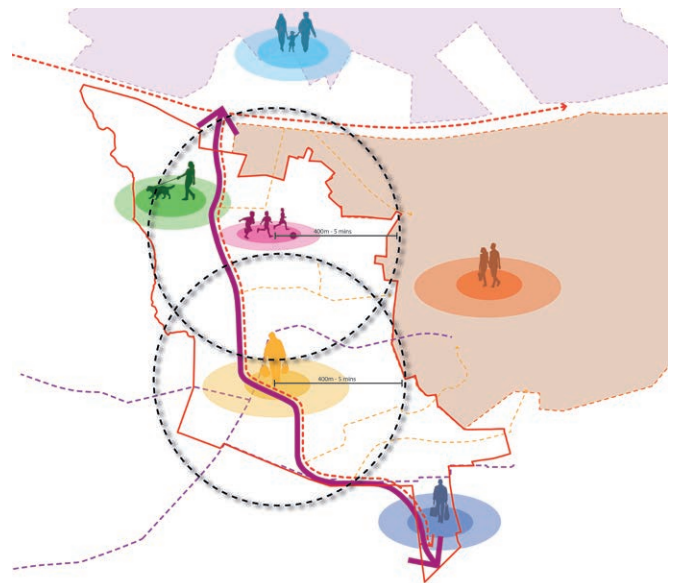
Access and Movement



The proposed Central Residential Boulevard will provide the main access into the proposed development, connecting the A40 with the B4449 Stanton Harcourt Road. This will include integrated cycle lanes within its design, in line with latest national standards, providing an excellent link through the centre of the site with a controlled crossing over the A40, linked to the Park and Ride site and Garden Village to the north.

Existing Public Rights of Way (PROWs) will be retained and incorporated into the fabric of the masterplan, creating a robust and permeable scheme, with increased connectivity into Eynsham. An active modes first approach to the masterplan, supported by off-site improvements will encourage more active means of movement, within, to and from the site.

Land uses & Amenities



The masterplan will seek to deliver a series of land uses to benefit the wider area. A new linear park will provide amenity space for new and existing residents.

A new primary school will be provided to support the development. A new local centre will be provided in the heart of the masterplan and will be accessed from the Central Residential Boulevard, in close proximity to the Chilbridge Road PROW. The provision of on-site land uses such as the primary school and local centre reduce the need for residents to travel, reducing off site movements and particularly those by private car.

The sites sustainable location also means that the site is in the immediate context of Eynsham Village centre and the proposed Garden Village centre, opening up wider opportunity for amenity, and access to a wider array of facilities and services.



Masterplan

The indicative masterplan has been updated to reflect the feedback from other third party landowners within the SDA and now defines the land within the control of third party landowners as potential development land, subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the development plan and other material considerations.

This supersedes the previous Masterplan which retained these areas within their current land use.

KEY

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Site Access from A40 | Existing PROW (Footpath) to be Retained |
| 2 Site access from Stanton Harcourt Road | Existing PROW (Bridleway) to be Retained |
| 3 Central Residential Boulevard with segregated cycle path | Existing PROW to be Re-routed |
| 4 Bridge crossing over Chil Brook | Revised PROW Route |
| 5 Sensitive designed crossing of PROW over the Central Residential Boulevard | Proposed Informal Pedestrian & Cycle Links |
| 6 Chil Brook Linear Park | Residential Development |
| 7 Primary School | Green Infrastructure and Open Space |
| 8 Local Centre | Attenuation Features |
| | Potential development land |

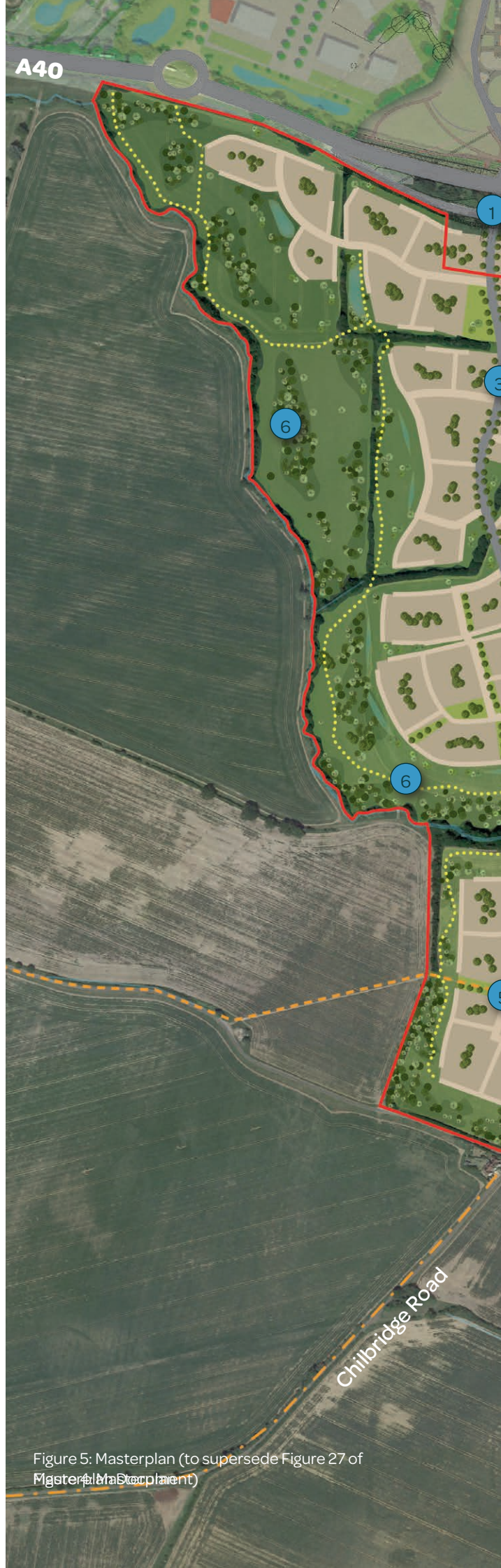


Figure 5: Masterplan (to supersede Figure 27 of Masterplan)



Policy Requirement

WODC Policy EW2: b) requires comprehensive development to be led by an agreed masterplan.












Land Use Strategy

The total site area is circa 88 ha. The land use strategy below sets out the proposed distribution of uses across the site. This provides the appropriate developable area for the required land uses including about 1,000 homes, a primary school, local centre, employment, delivery of the Central Residential Boulevard and green infrastructure.

Existing land uses of Bartholomew's School playing fields, the Merton House assessment centre and the Horizon Technology Park will be safeguarded and retained within their current land use.

Areas of Potential Development Land, within third party ownership, have been identified within the Masterplan as potential development land subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the development plan and other material considerations.

Land Use Strategy		
Land Use	Quantum	Commentary
 Residential	About 1,000 homes of varying densities	West Eynsham is expected to accommodate around 1,000 new homes although this is not an exact, fixed figure and should not be treated as such.
 Education	A new Primary School	A 2.2 hectare site will be provided which is large enough to cater for a 2-form entry primary school.
 Local Centre	A mixture of community uses and small-scale commercial uses	The local centre will provide a community focal point at the heart of the masterplan and will be accessed from the Central Residential Boulevard, in close proximity to the Chilbridge Road PROW. It will include a range of uses including a mixed use and multifunctional community centre.
 Employment	Horizon Technology Park Advanced Engineering Campus	The approximately 4ha employment site of the Horizon Technology Park Advanced Engineering Campus (16/02369/FUL & 17/01114/FUL).
 Green & Blue Infrastructure	Extensive green and blue infrastructure	Approximately 40 hectares of natural and semi-natural green space, amenity green space, formal parks and gardens, sustainable urban drainage, allotments, community orchards, play areas and other outdoor provision.
 Retained Existing Uses	Bartholomew's School playing field and Merton House Assessment Centre	The existing use of an approx 3ha site for playing fields for Bartholomew's School and the 1.61 ha site for the Merton House Assessment Centre will be retained.
 Potential Development Land	Land within the SDA which is owned by other third party landowners	Land beyond the main Landowner /developers control has been identified as potential development land, subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the development plan and other material considerations.



Vision



Spaces will be designed to be easy to navigate, with a wide range of interlinked uses and generous green spaces allowing residents to flourish within their own surroundings.

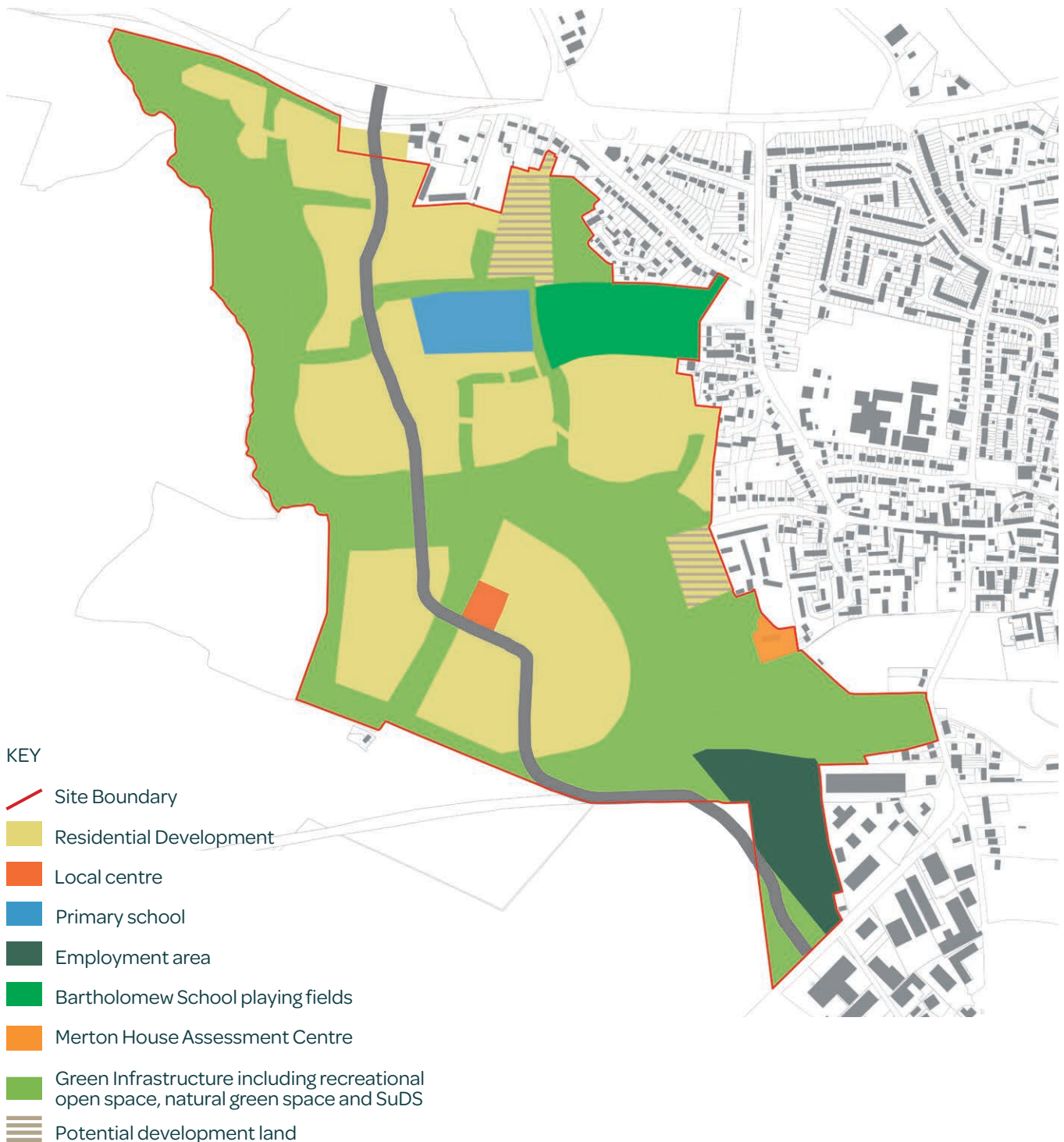


Figure 6: Land Use Strategy (to supersede Figure 28 of Masterplan Document)



Landscape Strategy

The Landscape Strategy has been updated to clarify the area of retained woodland proposed within the Masterplan area and reflects the confirmed extent of the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) WODC Ref: No.1/2015 – Land at Fruitlands, Eynsham 141.289.

The landscape strategy has been designed to accommodate a significant quantum of open space in accordance with local policy as set out in Policy EH5 (Sport, recreation and children's play) of the WOLP 2031 within the land controlled by the landowner/developer team.

Potential development areas within land controlled by third parties within the SDA boundary are excluded from the landscape quantum proposed for the four landowner/developers, who would rely on land within their control for their landscape proposals.

KEY



-  Chil Brook Linear Park
-  Biodiversity links connecting to the linear park following tree lines and hedgerows





Figure 7: Landscape Strategy (to supersede Figure 29 of Masterplan Document)











Indicative Phasing Strategy

The SDA falls within multiple land ownerships and the indicative phasing strategy is split to reflect these land ownerships. The strategy plan has been updated to identify the areas of potential development land (subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the development plan and other material considerations) within the SDA that is within the control of other third party landowners.

The principles of the Phasing Strategy set out within the Masterplan Document remain in place.

KEY

-  Site Boundary
-  Consented Development
-  Phase 1 - Jansons
-  Phase 2/3 - Blenheim Strategic Partners
-  Phase 2/3 - Berkeley
-  Phase 4 - Berkeley
-  Phase 5 - OCC
-  Other Third party Land

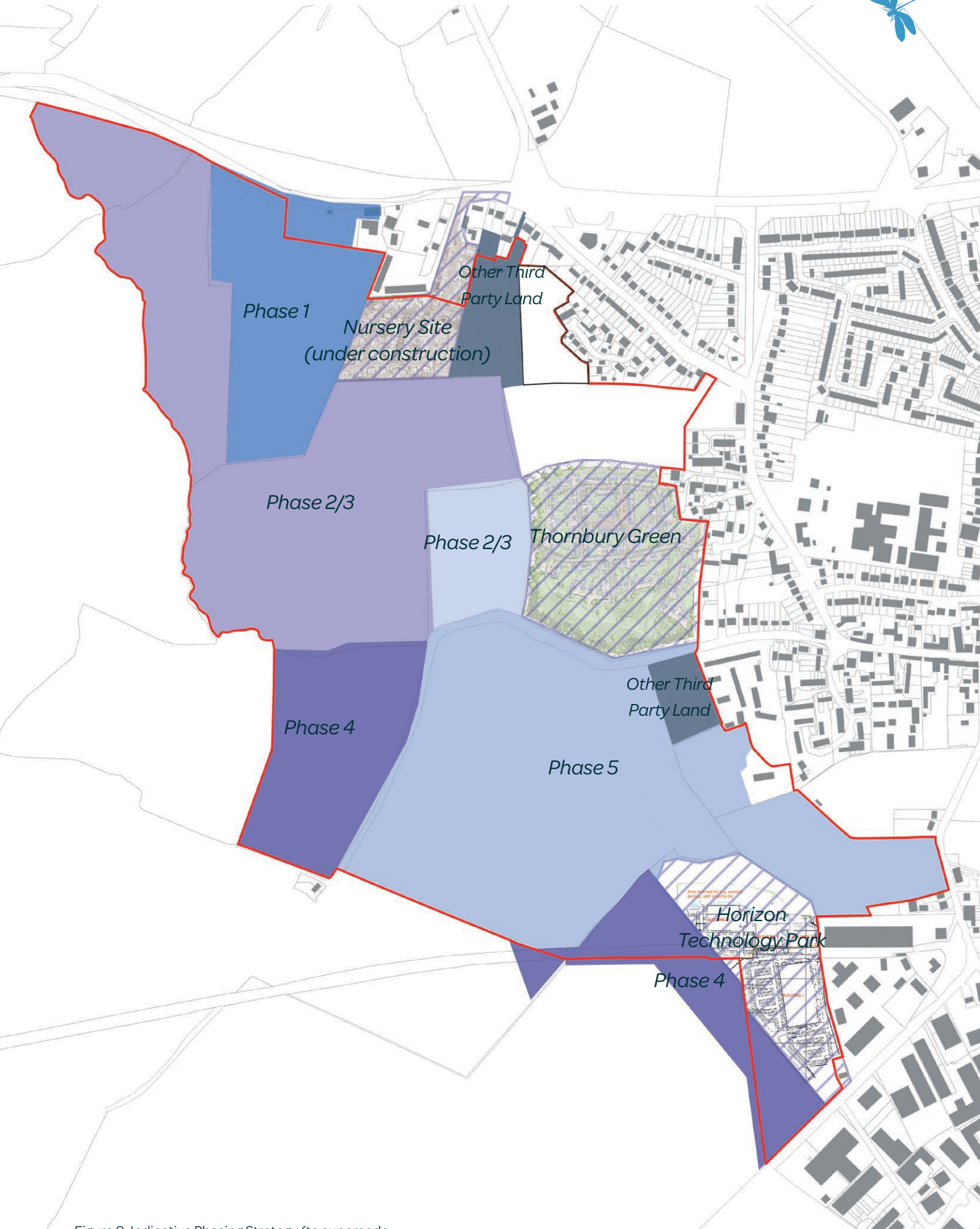



Figure 8: Indicative Phasing Strategy (to supersede Figure 61 of Masterplan Document)



 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 8 MARCH 2023
Subject	COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM – SECOND HOMES AND EMPTY PROPERTIES
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Dan Levy – Executive Member for Finance Email: dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Mandy Fathers – Business Manager for Environmental, Welfare and Revenues Email: mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Report author	Mandy Fathers – Business Manager for Environmental, Welfare and Revenues Email: mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the proposals to implement a Council Tax Premium on second homes.
Annexes	None
Recommendation(s)	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note the report and agrees in principle to the implementation of charging 100% premium for second homes and reducing term for applying charge for empty properties from 2 years to one year, subject to the emerging legislation being passed; and b) Instruct officers to bring a further report back to the Executive when the legislation has been passed providing detail on the legislative implications and proposed implementation.
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 Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer, Interim Head of Legal Services, Finance Business Partner, Assistant Director Resident Services, Director of Finance (Publica), Executive Member for Finance

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The government encourages all billing authorities to adopt Council Tax premiums on empty properties with a view to incentivising property owners to bring those properties back into use. Premiums can currently be charged where properties are left unoccupied and unfurnished for periods exceeding 2 years.
- 1.2** In May 2022, the Government published the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (“the Bill”). The Bill includes proposals aimed at further addressing empty properties through the reduction in the time after which a premium on an empty property can be charged (from 2 years to 1 year) in addition to measures which seek to recognise the impact that high levels of second home ownership can have in some areas of the country
- 1.3** The intention with the Bill is to:
- reduce the minimum period for the implementation of a Council Tax premium for empty premises from two years to one year; and
 - allow Councils to introduce a Council Tax premium of up to 100% in respect of second homes.
- 1.4** The Bill has completed its passage in the House of Commons and had its first reading in the House of Lords on 19 December 2022.
- 1.5** The premium for second homes can only be implemented if the Council has given at least one-year's notice to council tax payers. Therefore, the Council would need to make a decision before 01 April 2023. Should the legislation not be passed as intended, the premium will not be introduced
- 1.6** Councils such as Cornwall and North Yorkshire have already considered the issue and have both published reports asking their councils to support the measures in principle.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1** For Council Tax purposes, a second home is defined as a dwelling, which is not a person's sole or main home and is substantially furnished. There are approximately 996-second homes in the West Oxfordshire district. These properties are subject to the full 100% Council Tax charge.
- 2.2** Second home ownership within parts of the District is significant and is recognised to have a negative impact in terms of the supply of homes available to meet local housing need. The Bill recognises the impact that high levels of second home ownership can have, and that more needs to be done to disincentivise people from simply doing nothing with their property, or not using it to its full potential.
- 2.3** If the bill is introduced, it will allow councils to apply a Council Tax premium of up to 100% ensuring that the mandatory 12 month notice has been given to second home owners.

2.4 With increased pressure on the Council to find houses for local people in need, the implementation of this premium will support the Council's priorities by establishing financial resilience to enable investment and providing additional housing to meet the needs of the district.

2.5 There are some wider issues to consider.

- Incentivise owners of empty properties to bring these back into use
- Properties available to let can be treated as a business and therefore would be subject to business rates (properties that are available to let for more than 20 weeks in a calendar year and was available to let for more than 20 weeks in the previous year).
- Couples who own second homes may claim that they are living separately and are single occupants of each respective property (information supplied to claim any discount can be checked and verified. Financial penalties can be imposed where false information is provided).

2.6 A further report will be brought back to Executive when the legislation has been implemented to provide details around the administration and proposed changes to the Long Term Empty property premium.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 If a 100% premium on second homes was charged, the additional revenue would be approximately £2.1 million with the District Council retaining around £117,346

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The recommendation to adopt the new legislation relating to second homes and empty properties in principle will be subject to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill receiving Royal Assent. There will need to be a review of the legalities once it becomes Law in conjunction with any relevant guidance issued.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 There is a small reputational risk to the Council for imposing additional premiums; however, this should be weighed against the need for more available housing within the District and bringing more empty properties back into use.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

6.1 There are no unacceptable adverse effects on the protected characteristics covered by the Equalities Act 2010 that have been identified.


7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none associated with this report.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

8.1 The Council could choose not to introduce a premium.

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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 8 MARCH 2023
Subject	BUSINESS RATES RELIEF: 2023/2024. RETAIL, HOSPITALITY AND LEISURE SCHEME
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Dan Levy –Executive Member for Finance Email: dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Mandy Fathers – Business Manager for Environmental, Welfare and Revenues Email: mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider a scheme of rate relief for retail premises as outlined by Government in the Autumn Statement 2022
Annexes	Annex A –Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Discount Criteria
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note the contents of the report; b) Endorse the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Scheme as detailed in Annex A; and c) Delegate Authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services to award such relief.
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	Executive Member, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer, Head of Legal Services, Finance Business Partner, Assistant Director for Resident Services, Director of Finance (Publica)

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The government recognises that ongoing difficulties as well as longer-term challenges continue to face the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors.
- 1.2 High streets are still recovering from the impacts of the pandemic whilst also going through a period of transition and evolving in response to changing consumer preferences. Some of these trends, such as the shift to online sales, have been accelerated by the pandemic.
- 1.3 The government is therefore providing a new temporary relief for eligible retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England to support local high street as they evolve and adapt to changing consumer demands for 2023/2024.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The Chancellor announced in his Autumn Budget that eligible hereditaments will receive 75% business rate relief up to a cash cap of £110,000 per business.
- 2.2 Local authorities are expected to use their discretionary relief powers (under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, as amended) to grant these discounts in line with the relevant eligibility criteria as detailed within Annex A (attached).
- 2.3 The Council will be compensated for the cost of granting these discounts through a section 31 grant from government.
- 2.4 Guidance has been provided in respect of which businesses should benefit from this relief and those that should not as detailed within the attached Annex. The Council's Discretionary Rate Relief policy will also be amended with a separate annex detailing the qualifying criteria.
- 2.5 These changes will take effect from 1 April 2023.
- 2.6 The team responsible for the administration of Business Rates will identify those businesses eligible for this relief and apply it to their 2023/2024 liability. Those eligible businesses will see the reduction on their annual business rate demand notice.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Central government will fully reimburse local authorities for the local share of relief awarded to those qualifying businesses entitled to this relief using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003 providing the council adopt the recommended approach when granting relief.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The government is not changing the legislation around the relief available to businesses and expects councils to grant the relief under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1988, as amended.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 There are no risks associated with this report as the Council will be following central government guidance.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 None

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are none associated with this report.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1 None

(END)

Annex A

Expanded Retail Discount Criteria

This discount will apply to occupied retail, leisure and hospitality properties in the year 2023/24. There will be no rateable value limit on the discount

Properties that will benefit from the discount will be occupied hereditaments that are wholly or mainly being used:

- a) As shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues;
- b) For assembly and leisure; or
- c) As hotels, guest and boarding premises and self-catering accommodation.

The government has issued guidance relating to which types of establishments should be considered in (a) as follows:

i. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:

- Shops (such as florists, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licence, chemists, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc.)
- Charity shops
- Opticians
- Post offices
- Furnishing shops / display rooms (such as carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)
- Car/caravan showrooms
- Second-hand car lots
- Markets
- Petrol stations
- Garden centres
- Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)

ii. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Hair and beauty services (such as hairdressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops etc.)
- Shoes repairs/key cutting
- Travel agents
- Ticket officers e.g. for theatre
- Dry cleaners

- Launderettes
 - PC/TV/domestic appliance repair
 - Funeral directors
 - Photo processing
 - Tool hire
 - Car hire
- iii. **Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and/or drink to visiting members of the public:**
- Restaurants
 - Takeaways
 - Sandwich shops
 - Coffee shops
 - Pubs
 - Bars
- iv. **Hereditaments that are being used as cinemas**
- v. **Hereditaments that are being used as live music venues:**
- Live music venues are hereditaments wholly or mainly used for the performance of live music for the purpose of entertaining an audience. Hereditaments cannot be considered a live music venue for the purpose of business rates relief where a venue is wholly or mainly used as a nightclub or a theatre, for the purposes of the Town and County Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).
 - Hereditaments can be a live music venues if used for other activities, but only if those activities (i) are merely ancillary or incidental to the performance of live music (e.g. the sale/supply of alcohol to audience members) or (ii) do not affect the fact that the primary activity for the premises is the performance of live music (e.g. because those other activities are insufficiently regular or frequent, such as a polling station or a fortnightly community event).

The above list(s) set out above is not intended to be exhaustive and is intended to be a guide. The Council should determine for themselves whether a particular property not listed is broadly similar in nature to those above and, if so, to consider them eligible for the relief. Conversely, properties that are not broadly similar in nature to those listed above should not be eligible for the relief.

The government has issued guidance relating to which types of establishments should be considered in (b) as follows:

- i. **Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of sport, leisure and facilities to visiting members of the public (including for the viewing of such activities)**
 - Sports grounds and clubs
 - Museums and art galleries
 - Nightclubs
 - Sport and leisure facilities
 - Stately homes and historic houses
 - Theatres
 - Tourist attractions
 - Gyms
 - Wellness centres, spa, massage parlours
 - Casinos, gambling clubs and bingo halls
- ii. **Hereditaments that are being used for the assembly of visiting members of the public**
 - Public halls
 - Clubhouses, clubs and institutions

The government has issued guidance relating to which types of establishments should be considered in (c) as follows:

- i. **Hereditaments where the non-domestic part is being used for the provision of living accommodation as a business:**
 - Hotels, Guest and Boarding Houses
 - Holiday homes
 - Caravan parks and sites

The list below sets out the types of uses that the government does not consider to be an eligible use for the purpose of relief:

- i. **Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:**
 - Financial services (e.g. banks, building societies, cash points, bureaux de change, short term loan providers, betting shops)
 - Medical services (e.g. vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
 - Professional services (e.g. solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/financial advisers, employment agencies, estate agents, letting agents)
 - Post office sorting offices
- ii. **Hereditaments that are reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public**

In line with legal restrictions in section 47(8A) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, billing authorities may not grant the discount to themselves or a precepting authority.

The Cash Cap and Subsidy Control


Under the cash cap, no ratepayer can in any circumstances exceed the £110,000 cash cap across all of their hereditaments in England.

Where a ratepayer has a qualifying connection with another ratepayer then those ratepayers should be considered as one ratepayer for the purposes of the cash cap. A ratepayer shall be treated as having a qualifying connection with another:

- a) Where both ratepayers are companies; and
 - i. One is a subsidiary of the other, or
 - ii. Both are subsidiaries of the same company, or
- b) Where only one ratepayer is a company, the other ratepayer (the “second ratepayer”) has such an interest in that company as would, if the second ratepayer were a company, result in its being the holding company of the other.

Furthermore, the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Scheme is likely to amount to subsidy. Any relief provided by the Council under the scheme will need to comply with the UK’s domestic and international subsidy control obligations that will commence on 4 January 2023.

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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 8 MARCH 2023
Subject	COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) UPDATE
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Carl Rylett Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Andy Barge, Assistant Director Communities Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Report author	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To provide an update on the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in West Oxfordshire.
Annexes	None.
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: a) Note the content of the report; and b) Agree that new viability evidence is commissioned to inform both a draft CIL charging schedule and the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Any new draft CIL charging schedule would need to be subject to public consultation before being submitted for examination. The Local Plan 2041

	will also be subject to several periods of public consultation before being submitted for examination.
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Members will be aware that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge which local planning authorities can impose on some forms of development (e.g. new housing) to fund new and enhanced infrastructure.
- 1.2** It is charged on a £per m² basis according to floor area and is intended to complement other forms of developer contributions including Section 106 legal agreements. CIL rates must be set out in a document known as a 'charging schedule'.
- 1.3** CIL is optional rather than mandatory with around 50% of local authorities having it in place. In Oxfordshire, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse have CIL in place whereas West Oxfordshire and Cherwell do not.
- 1.4** The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the proposed introduction of CIL in West Oxfordshire and to agree the next steps towards this.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** There have been several previous attempts to introduce CIL in West Oxfordshire. A brief summary is provided below.
- 2.2** The Council's first draft CIL charging schedule was submitted for examination alongside the Local Plan in September 2015 but subsequently suspended alongside the Local Plan in January 2016.
- 2.3** Further consultation then took place on a revised CIL charging schedule in January 2017, with the intention being that it would be submitted for examination alongside the revised Local Plan. However, the Local Plan Inspector advised that he did not wish to examine both CIL and the Local Plan at the same time.
- 2.4** Following the formal adoption of the Local Plan in September 2018, CIL was picked up afresh, with consultants NCS appointed in summer 2019 to produce new viability evidence. Because of Covid-19 there was a delay and public consultation on a draft CIL charging schedule took place in July 2020.
- 2.5** Around 170 responses were received, many of which objecting to the proposed exemption of the Local Plan strategic housing sites from having to pay CIL.
- 2.6** In August 2020, the Government's Planning White Paper outlined an intention to abolish CIL in favour of a new, nationally set infrastructure levy. This was further confirmed in the Queen's speech of May 2021. Subsequently, in September 2021, Cabinet agreed that any further progress with CIL should be held in abeyance.

- 2.7 In May 2022, the Government's Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill further confirmed the Government's intention to replace CIL with a national levy. However, because of the likely length of any transitional arrangements, Cabinet agreed in May 2022 that progress with CIL should be picked up again with the previous consultants NCS to be invited to update their earlier viability study from 2020.

3. PROGRESS UPDATE

- 3.1 Following the decision of Cabinet last year, there have been a number of delays which have meant that the previous NCS viability work has not yet been updated. Initially this was because NCS advised that a complete update would be required rather than the partial update initially envisaged by Officers.
- 3.2 Officer resources were then focused on the 'Your Voice Counts' joint Local Plan and Council Plan consultation which took place in August – September and subsequently public consultation on proposed Main Modifications to the Salt Cross Garden Village AAP which took place from September to November.
- 3.3 It is anticipated that the AAP will be formally adopted during the spring and further consultation on the Local Plan will follow later this year.

4. RECOMMENDED WAY FORWARD

- 4.1 Given the delay since the previous Cabinet decision in May last year, the previous NCS viability evidence is now over 2 years old, having been finalised in January 2020.
- 4.2 It is also pertinent to note that the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 will need to be accompanied by viability evidence to demonstrate at examination that the policies and proposals contained within it are effective and deliverable.
- 4.3 In light of the above, Officers are now of the view that it would be appropriate to undertake a completely fresh procurement exercise and invite quotations for new viability evidence that would initially inform public consultation on a draft CIL charging schedule and subsequently inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.
- 4.4 The indicative timescales are anticipated to be as follows:
- March 2023 – request for quotations
 - April – May 2023 – appointment of consultants and preparation of initial viability evidence to inform draft CIL charging schedule
 - June 2023 – consultation on CIL draft charging schedule
 - August 2023 – submission of CIL draft charging schedule for examination
 - August / September 2023 – preparation of viability assessment for local plan preferred policy options
 - October/November 2023 – consultation on local plan preferred policy options
 - November 2023 – CIL examination

- Spring 2024 – adoption of CIL charging schedule and preparation of viability assessment for Regulation 19 submission draft Local Plan
- May/June 2024 - publication of Regulation 19 submission draft Local Plan
- October 2024 – Local Plan submitted for examination
- Mid-2025 – formal adoption of Local Plan

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** Given the ‘stop-start’ nature of previous attempts to introduce CIL into West Oxfordshire, the relative age of the Council’s most recent viability evidence and the need for the new Local Plan to be supported by evidence of viability, commissioning something afresh to inform both CIL and the Local Plan is considered to be the most pragmatic and cost-effective way forward.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The commissioning of new viability evidence has financial implications but budget has been set aside to facilitate the preparation of the new Local Plan including the cost of supporting technical evidence. It is also relevant to note that a proportion of any future CIL receipts can be put towards the cost of implementation.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The report raises no direct legal implications.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** There are two main risks. The first is progressing the CIL charging schedule or new Local Plan to examination in the absence of up to date viability evidence which presents a risk of them being rejected by the Examiner/Inspector.
- 8.2** The second risk relates to prospective changes to national policy with the Government’s emerging Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill confirming the Government’s intention to replace CIL with a new form of infrastructure levy.
- 8.3** However, because the details of any such levy are yet to be confirmed and is likely to be accompanied by lengthy transitional arrangements, making progress with CIL in the interim is considered appropriate. Any updated viability evidence will also feed into the new Local Plan 2041.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 9.1** The Council could choose not to make any further progress with CIL and instead, await further details of the Government’s proposed replacement – the infrastructure levy.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1** The report raises no direct implications for any people who share a protected characteristic. The Local Plan will be the subject of a separate Equalities Impact Assessment as it reaches a

more advanced stage. There is no requirement to subject a draft CIL charging schedule to any such assessment.

11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS


- 11.1** The report raises no direct climate or ecological implications. The climate and ecological emergencies are anticipated to underpin the new Local Plan and it may be the case that future CIL receipts are able to be spent on climate/ecology related infrastructure projects such as flood risk mitigation and green infrastructure.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1** None.

(END)

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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 8 MARCH 2023
Subject	UPDATE ON WASTE SERVICE REVIEW & UBICO CONTRACT EXTENSION
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment Email: lidia.arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Scott Williams, Business Manager – Contracts Email: scott.williams@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To update the Executive on the waste service review and the Ubico contract for waste and recycling and associated collections and services, street cleansing and grounds maintenance services.
Annex	A) Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP) Year 1 Case Study B) Litter Bin Placement and Renewal Programme Case Study C) Value For Money Assessment (CONFIDENTIAL)
Recommendation	That the Executive resolves to: <i>endorse the proposal contained in this report and recommends to Council that the current contract with Ubico is extended until 31 March 2026.</i>
Corporate priorities	The proposal in this report supports the following Council priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Action - Leading the way in protecting and enhancing the environment by taking action locally on climate change and biodiversity. Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance - Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council
Key Decision	No
Exempt	The main report and annex A and B are not exempt, however Annex C - Value For Money Assessment, is exempt as it contains commercially sensitive information.
Consultees/ Consultation	The following people have all been consulted on this report and the detail contained within: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor Lidia Arciszewska

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior Council and Public Officers
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) along with Cotswold District Council (CDC), Forest of Dean District Council (FoDDC) and five other local authorities are shareholders in Ubico Limited, a Teckal company designed to deliver environmental services, offering better value for money and greater flexibility than commercial contractors.
- 1.2 The teckal model enables councils to commission services without the costs associated with a procurement process as it is treated as in-house provision allowing greater level of flexibility within the contract. Ubico delivers environmental services on behalf of the Councils at a price which reflects the actual cost of service provision but in doing so holds no assets, and so the depots it operates from (Station Lane and Downs Road in Witney), the vehicles it uses to perform the services and the waste and recycling containers which are provided to residents and businesses, are all owned by the councils. This ensures that the shareholders have full control over high value expenditure.
- 1.3 The WODC contract with Ubico delivers the following services:
- Domestic waste and recycling collections (refuse, recycling, food & garden waste)
 - Business waste and recycling collections (including charter markets)
 - Street cleansing
 - Grounds maintenance
 - Bulky waste collections
 - Pest control & dog warden service
 - Waste container deliveries
- 1.4 Ubico delivers an excellent level of service and performance is strong. Collection accuracy is extremely high at 99.9%, so the level of missed collections is low. There is a good relationship between officers in Publica and Ubico, which has been crucial in maintaining delivery of the front line service during the pandemic as well as delivering transformation and service improvements as part of the Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP) over the last two years.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures and the costs of delivering the waste and recycling service has risen year on year for the last few years with unavoidable pressures, mainly from additional salary and fuel costs, this year pushing the budget up by around £750k.
- 2.2 In February 2021, Executive and Council approved extending the Ubico contract by two years, from 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2024. The decision was based on the following benefits:
- It provides Ubico and WODC with certainty over the contract for two more years
 - Avoids cost in having to procure and set up a new contract
 - Builds in a period of time for Ubico to demonstrate support to the Council in identifying and delivering service improvements and efficiency measures to help address the financial pressures as part of the Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP) which was launched in July 2021.

- 2.3 As shown at Annex A - The Environmental Services Innovation Programme Year 1 Case Study and Annex B – Litter Bin Placement and Renewal Programme Case Study, Ubico has made significant service improvements. In addition, Ubico has supported the Council and contributed towards increasing income and reducing costs associated with the services it provides, and the Council has directly benefited from over £400k as a result of the ESIP work. This demonstrates that Ubico is committed to identifying and implementing efficiency measures and service improvements as set out as part of the extension agreed in 2021.
- 2.4 The Council has two realistic options for future service delivery to consider:
- Option A: Outsourcing the contract to a private sector contractor
 - Option B: Continuing to deliver the services through Ubico
- 2.5 These two options each provide advantages and disadvantages which are outlined in the table below:

Outsourcing the contract (Option A)	Delivering the services through Ubico (Option B)
Advantages	Advantages
<p>Clarity over contract value although contractors are likely to want to share inflationary risks with WODC and there is a significant risk of contract variations.</p> <p>Arguably considered to be more 'commercial' although there is strong evidence of Ubico becoming more commercial through the Environmental Services Innovation Programme) – see Annex A</p>	<p>Transparency over contract/operating costs.</p> <p>Greater ability to provide social value for WODC .</p> <p>The contract is flexible.</p> <p>Ubico is delivering high performing services in partner authorities (Delivery of the ESIP Programme).</p> <p>WODC and Ubico have a well-established strategic and operational relationship.</p> <p>Ubico provides the opportunity to collaborate with other councils to support the councils delivery of their medium term financial strategies.</p> <p>WODC has more influence on service transformation, change, and improvement as an owner of Ubico.</p> <p>Flexibility to change service provision at any point, which is particularly beneficial over the next few years in light of the forthcoming Environment Act and outlined in Annex C.</p> <p>Ubico doesn't make a profit through the contract, any savings are delivered back to WODC to support the delivery of its MTFS and/or council priorities.</p> <p>No procurement costs.</p>

Disadvantages	Disadvantages
<p>Fixed long-term contract with limited flexibility and wouldn't support the Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP).</p> <p>Less flexibility and ability to collaborate with other local authorities.</p> <p>Less influence on service transformation, change, and improvement.</p> <p>Less ability to adapt service to any changes in the waste make-up, as a result of the Environment Act.</p> <p>Contractor makes profit through the contract.</p> <p>Procurement or contract set up costs, transitional budget from Ubico (if another operator is selected) to new provider, and potential additional contract management revenue costs of £150,000 p.a. (TBC).</p>	<p>Arguably considered to be less 'commercial' although this is changing and there is evidence of this through the Environmental Services Innovation Programme.</p> <p>Ubico is a key strategic partner part owned by the council and expected to be commissioned to provide service rather than bid for contracts which it was not set up to do and this is the reason for the value for money assessment in Annex C</p> <p>WODC has to take any inflationary risks although external contractors are likely to want to share inflationary risks with WODC anyway, given the financial pressure brought about by the Coronavirus Pandemic and global utilities crisis.</p>

- 2.6 Based on the assessment of the two options (Outsourcing the contract (Option A) and delivering the services through Ubico (Option B), there appear to be clear advantages to Ubico continuing to deliver the service mix. The independent value for money assessment, contained at Annex C, agrees with this assessment and also provides more detailed assessment, market intelligence, and commentary about the waste sector.
- 2.7 There is a provision within the current Ubico contract to extend it but if nothing is decided before 31 March 2023, then the Council would automatically enter into the three year term extension period from 1st April 2024.
- 2.8 The services performed by Ubico are almost entirely part of the council's statutory responsibilities and therefore not providing them is not an option. The services that are not statutory are paid for services like green waste and business waste that generate circa £2.2M of income for the council annually.

3. WASTE SERVICE REVIEW

- 3.1 In January 2022, the Executive approved the commissioning of work to review the current waste collection service and model potential future options. Frith Resource Management were commissioned to undertake the review and have provided a comprehensive assessment report which has been shared with all councillors and considered by the Climate and Environment, and Finance and Management Scrutiny Committees. The report is now subject to detailed due diligence work by officers from Publica and Ubico.
- 3.2 The decision on the type of collection service does not affect the decision to award Ubico the contract extension and further reports on the waste service will come forwards later in 2023.

3.3 The Frith report outlines a number of options which could increase the levels of recycling, reduce the level of carbon the service produces, but potentially saves the cost that the council pays in processing costs. There is a cost of change associated with this as well as revenue implications and that is currently being worked through with Ubico including:

- The condition of the existing recycling fleet and the costs of new vehicles - Vehicle Strategy
- User research - Understanding the impact on residents
- Communications - Supporting the delivery of the desired outcomes
- Property costs - The depots at Station Lane and Downs Road
- Transitional Costs - Project management / Technology / Container / Service Design

3.4 Officers are now working with Ubico and anticipate that the review will be concluded later this year and then councillors will be able to consider the options and agree a roadmap.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The current Ubico contract for services is forecast to cost the Council £7,363,720 this year (2022-23), the table below provides a breakdown of this cost.

Area	Net cost (£)
Container Management	270,725
Refuse	1,439,396
Markets	62,019
Business Waste	437,890
Bulky Household Waste	140,559
Recycling	1,742,311
Food Waste	790,692
Green Waste	780,599
Grounds Maintenance	508,026
Environmental Cleansing	1,103,736
Dog Warden	75,513
Fairs	12,255
Total	7,363,720

- 4.2 A value for money and market assessment was commissioned from Tetra Tech to provide the council with assurance about the cost of the contract provided by Ubico compared to a private sector contractor. These types of assessment are commissioned by other local authorities before awarding contracts in the Ubico Partnership. This report provides a detailed assessment of the cost of Ubico providing the service compared with the private sector and this illustrates that Ubico's cost is lower than the calculated costs for a private sector contractor to deliver these services (page 6, para 5.4) The primary reasons for this are the contingency/risk and the profit margin costs which contractors would include in their contract price (which would be borne by the Authority regardless of whether this became a true contract cost or not) and the profit margin.
- 4.3 In addition, the Tetra Tech report provides intelligence and commentary about the waste sector and also recommends the council considers qualitative factors which should be considered alongside the pure cost of service operation, primarily in terms of risk and flexibility. Tetra Tech's assessment is that there are clear advantages to Ubico continuing to deliver the service for the council. The report states: "One of the key benefits of Ubico delivering the waste collection services on behalf of West Oxfordshire relative to a private contractor, is the degree of flexibility they can offer at the present time given the period of change in the waste sector and new Government legislation. Ubico can work in close partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council to respond to the changes as they are implemented, without having to vary a contract."

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council delivers domestic waste and recycling collections, business waste and recycling collections (includes markets), street cleansing, grounds maintenance, bulky waste collections, pest control & dog warden service and waste container deliveries which are provided by Ubico under the terms set out in a formal contract.
- 5.2 The proposed extension of the current contract ensures that there is the necessary provision in place to perform these statutory functions.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The Council does not have the option of simply stopping the majority of these functions, so needs to continue delivering them directly or through a third party.
- 6.2 The risks associated with the options available to the Council are set out in the Strengths and Weaknesses section of this report and in the Tetra Tech report in Annex C.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

None associated with this report.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

None associated with this report.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Council could choose to tender the contract for some or all of the services provided by Ubico. However, there would be additional unbudgeted one-off costs of circa £250K to prepare the comprehensive service specifications and conduct the necessary procurement process. In addition, there would be an estimated additional revenue costs of circa £150k to provide contract management for a commercial provider which is in addition to the additional revenue costs and risks outlined in the Tetra Tech report in Annex C.

10. REASONS

- 10.1 In order to maintain delivery of the domestic waste and recycling collections, business waste and recycling collections (includes charter markets), street cleansing, grounds maintenance, bulky waste collections, pest control & dog warden service and waste container deliveries and taking account of the planned service redesign. Officers believe, for the reasons outlined in this report and the Tetra Tech report at Annex C, that entering into a contract extension with Ubico until 31 March 2026 would be the best solution. This should also allow time for outside influences to play out and for Ubico to work with the council to conduct the necessary due diligence on the waste service review in 2023 as well as review grounds maintenance and street cleansing services. It will also allow for the delivery of further efficiencies under the Environmental Services Improvement Programme (ESIP) in support of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 10.2 Another benefit of awarding Ubico the extension is that it provides the company and its other shareholders with the security that the Council is committed to the partnership. This is particularly important if the Council wishes to pursue greater efficiency opportunities by working in closer partnership with all or some of the other partner authorities.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet meeting – Wednesday 19 January 2022, Waste & Recycling Future Service Modelling.

<https://meetings.westoxon.gov.uk/documents/g1897/Public%20reports%20pack%2019th-Jan-2022%2014.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>



PUBLICA



Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP) 2021/22 - Year 1 Case Study

Overview

Waste and recycling collection represents one of the most fundamental municipal services that local government offers, presenting councils with huge challenges and potential opportunities in terms of emerging agendas around the environment, climate emergency, and digital services.

The Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP) is a partnership between Cotswold District Council (CDC), Forest of Dean District Council (FoDDC), West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC), Publica and Ubico to deliver shared innovation projects.

The ESIP programme focuses on 6 main priority areas:

- Increase service efficiency delivering reduced operating costs
- Reduce the carbon produced by environmental services
- Optimise and develop paid for products to increase income for shareholder councils
- Further innovation around systems, processes and structures building on Salesforce and In-cab technology
- Improve the customer experience

- Build on our use of business information to continue to make informed decisions

Key projects and benefits ESIP has delivered in 2021/22 include:

- Alloy in-cab systems at CDC and WODC
- Waste service review in FoDDC
- Over £850k of combined efficiencies or additional income for CDC, WODC, and FoDDC

Background

Working in partnership, officers from Publica and Ubico met with stakeholders to develop a 'long list' of potential opportunities, which could be introduced to meet one or more of the programme priority areas.

This 'long list' was then refined to identify the projects which could be delivered in 2021/22 and these were subsequently taken forward.

A total combined savings/additional income target of £400k was also agreed for the programme.

What we did

Following data collection, review and modelling, individual business cases were produced setting out any investment required and the likely outcomes and benefits which could be achieved. Partner authorities were asked to consider the business cases and the programme was updated accordingly.

Any good practice realised in one area/district is shared in the other districts to support commonality of service and also improve team resilience.

Results

The main projects which have been delivered during 2021/22 are:

- Agreement of refuse and garden waste collection increase fleet size to reduce hire costs (WODC)
- Introduction of in-cab system (CDC & WODC) delivering a £25,580 fuel saving (62 ton CO₂) in WODC, and contributing to a 47% reduction in missed bins in CDC
- Providing bulk stocks of litter picking equipment to parish and town councils in support of the Clean & Green programme (CDC)
- Garden Waste licence fee increase delivering £513k of additional combined income (All)
- Waste and recycling container delivery charging (CDC) delivering £7,433 in income
- Grounds maintenance improvements to support biodiversity priority (WODC)
- Driver liaison post (CDC) delivering £14,959 fuel saving which equates to 36.6 tons of CO₂
- Review of waste demand to inform follow on projects (All)
- Litter Bin Placement and Renewal Programme likely to deliver circa £70k of additional income in 2023 (WODC)
- Garden waste stickers implementation (FODDC) saving £6,500
- Removal of bring sites has led to the avoidance of up to £112k in additional cleansing work which was unbudgeted for (WODC)

- Garden waste reduced number of loaders delivering £67,486 (WODC)
- Supporting the Clean and Green Programme (CDC) in additional cleansing
- Vehicle maintenance - new ways of working (WODC) delivering a £34,000 saving
- DMR (Dry Mixed Recycling) new contract (WODC)
- Procurement of electric vehicles including a new sweeper at WODC

Wider benefits

The programme has exceeded the additional income/reduced expenditure target of £400k, delivering over £850k of combined efficiencies or additional income for CDC, WODC, and FoDDC

The introduction of Alloy in-cab technology at CDC and WODC will assist with future collaboration across the Ubico partnership and present greater opportunities.

Resources required to deliver

The Councils have made significant one-off investments in elements such as the Alloy in-cab system (CDC & WODC) and increased number of vehicles (WODC).

Ubico and Publica made a very significant resource investment to deliver the programme and the benefits, which have been achieved with no requirement for additional/external resources to deliver the projects.

Next steps

Year one of ESIP was completed in March 2022 and was largely an 'enabling' phase where the relationship and trust between the councils, Ubico and Publica was further developed and technologies such as in-cab and improved digital services were delivered.

Year two will build on this platform with a focus on strategic service change such as cross boundary working for Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council, and West Oxfordshire District Council and service reviews in order to deliver larger benefits.





WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Litter Bin Placement and Renewal Programme Case Study

In December 2020 West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) adopted a new set of public waste bin principles which outlined where bins would be located in the future. The council took the decision to install new 90ltr dual litter and dog waste bins to replace the 'end of life' separate dog waste and litter bins.

Overview

In July 2021, in partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council and Publica, teams at Ubico (the council's waste company), started to remove and replace 1,200 litter and dog waste bins, completing the implementation phase in May 2022, and achieving the following results:

- A total of 631 new dual bins were installed in 81 parishes across West Oxfordshire.
- A reduction of 58.8% in reports of litter bins overflowing
- The programme implemented a structured and consistent framework to ensure bins were located strategically to meet local needs, ie higher numbers of bins in high footfall areas like town centres
- A new emptying schedule was published and made available to town and parish councils
- A digital map was created to show locations and condition of bins
- The council identified £70,000 of additional income to empty bins in locations that were not adopted highway e.g. play parks and recreation fields

Background

Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, WODC is a "Litter Authority" and therefore responsible for cleansing of the adopted highway within its district boundary. This act includes providing and maintaining any street or public place receptacles for refuse or litter (referred to as litter bins) - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/litter-and-refuse-council-responsibilities-to-keep-land-clear>

It is the duty of a "Litter Authority", to make arrangements for regular emptying and cleansing of any litter bins provided/maintained by them. The regular emptying must be sufficiently frequent to ensure that no such litter bin or its contents shall become a nuisance or give reasonable grounds for complaint.

WODC had approximately 700 90ltr litter and 500 30ltr dog waste bins (total 1,200) in place across the district. The bins were in varying conditions and had differing levels of usage. Many of the receptacles were at end of life and this reflected poorly on the Council and the District, which

attracts millions of visitors annually. In many cases, there were multiple bins (dog and litter) in the same location and these were not accessible to people with physical disabilities.

Some Parish and Town Councils had requested litter and/or dog waste bins in their parks and playgrounds, which they are responsible for. In some cases, the emptying of these bins was being paid for by Parish and Town Councils and in some areas, the costs were being met by WODC.

The locations of litter and dog bins were inconsistent across the district and there was no proper maintenance or replacement programme. The dog bins were in many cases not accessible to all users as they were mounted on poles and to dispose of waste people were required to lift the lid on the top, presenting a potential public health risk.

Some Town and Parish Councils were not aware of when bins in their area were scheduled to be emptied and there was no proper system in place to request additional bins.

What we did

The council adopted a project management approach to deliver the programme, by appointing a sponsor and project lead, and project leads from the council's waste company, Ubico. The installation of new dual bins was done one parish at a time starting with A (Ascott -Under- Wychwood) and working through to W (Witney).

The programme implementation phase started in July 2021 and emails were sent to all town and parish councils informing them. Only 20% of town and parish councils responded to a request for information, despite being sent multiple requests. This subsequently caused communication breakdown in some parishes when the programme was implemented and changes on the ground started to occur. To overcome this, all Town and Parish Councils were emailed a few weeks ahead of the work starting in their area and in a number of cases, site meetings were arranged.

The project team held weekly stand-up review meetings initially and these increased to daily meetings during the final phase of the implementation due to the pace of implementation increasing.

The programme lead reported progress on several occasions to the Councils' Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Committee, ensuring elected Councillors

were kept informed. The Cabinet Member for Environment was briefed on progress every month and the team had a programme tracker.

Teams at Ubico and Publica completed the implementation phase in May 2022, 10 months after it started, installing 631 new dual bins, across 81 parishes in the district.

A reduction of 47.4% in the number of bins across West Oxfordshire was the result of:

- combining litter and dog waste into a dual bin
- rationalising bins that were located at isolated bus stops and laybys; and removing bins that were located in residential areas

Residents of the district are encouraged to take litter and dog waste home and dispose of it in their grey refuse bin. As a result of the reduction in the number of public space waste bins there has not been a visual increase in the amount of littering.

Results

- A total of 1,200 litter and dog waste bins have been reviewed
- A total of 631 new dual bins were installed

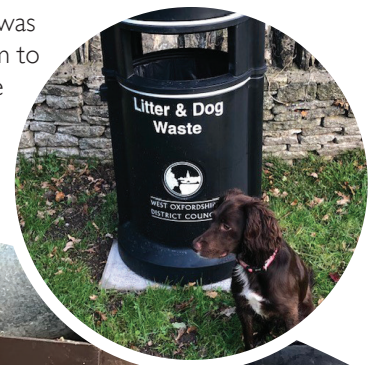
Benefits

- The new dual bins improve the appearance of council assets and branding
- There has been a 58.8% reduction in complaints of overflowing bins (Q4 2021 compared to Q4 2022)
- A new emptying schedule has been published and made available to Town and Parish Councils
- £70,000 of additional income was identified

The implementation benefits outlined at the start of the programme have been over achieved. The secondary benefits will be identified as part of a review of the street cleansing service in 2022/3 as part of the Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP).

Next steps

The management of public bins was transferred to the contracts team to manage at the completion of the programme.



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