

Tuesday 3 October 2023

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EXECUTIVE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Executive, which will be held at The New Warwick Hall, Church Lane, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18 4QY on **Wednesday, 11 October 2023 at 6.00pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Executive

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Joy Aitman, Carl Rylett, Andrew Prosser, Alaric Smith, Geoff Saul, Lidia Arciszewska and Tim Sumner.

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. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive any Apologies for Absence from Members of the Executive.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any Declarations of Interest from Members of the Executive on any items to be considered at the meeting.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 12)**
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 13 September 2023.
4. **Receipt of Announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council, Members of the Executive or the Chief Executive.
5. **Participation of the Public**
Any member of the public, who is a registered elector in the District, is eligible to ask one question at the meeting, for up to three minutes, of the Leader of the Council, or any Member of the Executive on any issue that affects the district or its people.

Notice, together with a written copy of the question, must be provided to Democratic Services, either by email to:
democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

or by post to:
Democratic Services, West Oxfordshire District Council, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB.

Questions are to be received no later than 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).

A response may be provided at the meeting, or within three clear working days of the meeting. 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 appropriate Executive Member will either respond verbally at the meeting or provide a written response which will be included in the minutes of the meeting.
6. **Review of Housing Resources (Pages 13 - 20)**
Purpose:
To brief members on the continuing pressures facing the Housing Service.
To outline the work carried out by Fixed Term Contract Staff, and the impact on the service should these be lost, with a recommendation to make these staff permanent.
To seek approval to recruit an additional member of staff to assist with the complex and increasing volumes of Housing financial transactions.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

- a) Agree that the three fixed term contract posts as described in Section 4.3 are moved to permanent posts;
- b) Approve the recruitment of a new Housing Finance Project Officer (WODC specific) as laid out in Section 6.

7. Human Resources (Employment) & Health and Safety Policies (Pages 21 - 196)

Purpose:

To update the Executive relating to the refresh of all Employment and Health & Safety policies for WODC.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

- a) Request that the Constitution Working Group considers the expansion of the terms of reference of the Performance and Appointments Committee to include responsibility for the adoption and amendment of Employment and Health and Safety Policies.
- b) Recommend that Council adopts the twenty-six Employment and Health & Safety Policies (included in Annex A).
- c) Recommend to Council to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Director of Governance, to approve subsequent amendments to any West Oxfordshire District Council employment policies that may be necessary, in line with legal changes and best practice, to ensure the Councils policies remain compliant.

8. Review of Car Parks (Pages 197 - 236)

Purpose:

To consider proposals that promote the efficient utilisation of the Council's free off-street carparks, and support access to the District's Town Centres and smaller service centres, including the gathering of further data on carpark usage and implementation of amended stay times.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

- a) Agree that a further review in 2024 of Guildenford car park supports the best use of council assets to identify parking issues and capacity levels. As per paragraph 3.5 of the report.
- b) Agree to delegate the decision to approve the costs associated with undertaking a further review of Guildenford car park to Assistant Director for Resident Services Group in consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects.
- c) Agree that a further review in 2024 of Hensington Road car park would support best use of council assets once the impact of charging on street by Oxfordshire

County Council has been assessed as per paragraph 3.39 of the report.

- d) Agree to change the restriction time in Zone G of Woolgate to 12-hour maximum stay as per paragraph 3.30 of the report.
- e) If changes to stay times are agreed (as per recommendation d), delegate the decisions following outcome of the legally required consultation to the Assistant Director for Resident Services Group in consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects
- f) Approve expenditure up to £8,000 to improve car park signage from the Support from either UKSPF funding or Council Priorities Reserve.
- g) Agree in principle that condition surveys on Council Car parks should be considered further to establish the condition of Council assets as per paragraph 5.2 of the report.

9. **Youth Needs Assessment Recommendations (Pages 237 - 246)**

Purpose:

To consider the recommendations made to the council as a result of the Youth Needs Assessment, in which we gained the views of just under 4000 young people to better understand the challenges they face.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

- a) Ask officers to engage with Oxfordshire County Council to work up a proposal to create a dedicated youth specialist role for the Council to lead on Young People and carry forward the recommendations of the Youth Needs Assessment. This proposal should come back to the Executive for approval if it has direct financial implications for the Council.
- b) Dedicate a specific stream of funding on the WestHive platform for youth activities particularly those led by young people themselves.

10. **West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 - Regulation 10A Review (Pages 247 - 314)**

Purpose:

To consider a review of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 in accordance with Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

- a) Note the content of the report;
- b) Approve the Regulation 10A review of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, attached at Annex A.

11. **Treasury Management Quarterly Update Report (Pages 315 - 326)**

Purpose:

To provide a quarterly update on the Council's Treasury Management operations.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

- a) Note the contents of the report.

12. **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.

13. **The Unicorn, Great Rollright - Listed Building in Poor Repair (Pages 327 - 340)**

Purpose:

To review previous decisions to take action to conserve The Unicorn (former Public House) at Great Rollright, a listed building in disrepair, and agree whether the Council should proceed with any action to secure the protection or renovation of the building, based on the financial risk this poses to the Council.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

- a) Continue to work with the building owners who are responsible for its condition and renovation. To monitor the structural condition of the building as set out in Option 4 to comply with its statutory duties but not proceed with discretionary legal action (covered in Options 1, 2 and 3) due to the significant financial risk to the Council and burden on the taxpayer, of doing so.
- b) Note that should the structural stability of the building deteriorate further placing people and property at risk from collapse, the Council will have to take action to remove the risk.

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

Executive

Held in Committee Room 1, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB at 2.00pm on
Wednesday 13 September 2023.

PRESENT

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

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), James Howse (Interim Director of Finance), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer), Frank Wilson (Executive Finance Director, Publica), Andy Barge (Assistant Director, Communities), Jon Dearing (Assistant Director, Resident Services), Phil Martin (Assistant Director, Business Services), Andrew Brown (Business Manager, Democratic Services), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer) and Ciaran O'Kane (Senior Procurement Business Partner).

Other Councillors in attendance: Michele Mead, Liam Walker, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Sandra Simpson and Julian Cooper.

75 Apologies for Absence

There were no Apologies for Absence received from Members of the Executive.

76 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, stated he had interest relating to the Agenda Item 12 (Endorsement of Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan 2023-25) in his role as an Oxfordshire County Councillor.

The Leader stated he was a representative on the Cotswold National Landscape Board, but did not have any pecuniary interests.

77 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 12 July 2023, were unanimously agreed by the Executive, and signed by the Leader of the Council as a true & accurate record.

78 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, welcomed all attendees to the meeting and thanked members of the public for attending. The Leader advised public attendees that the Members of the Executive would remain in attendance after the meeting had concluded, so they could meet each other on an informal basis and discuss any issues attendees wished to raise. The Leader also advised that the meeting was being live streamed to the Council's website and welcomed viewers to the meeting.

The Leader announced a community project in Stonesfield to purchase The White Horse Pub. The purchase would be an asset to the community. The Leader, on behalf of the Executive, thanked Officers for their assistance with the project and their swift action, help and support. The White Horse planned to reopen in 2024.

The Leader advised that the Woodgreen Council Chamber would be undergoing extensive refurbishment work in the latter months of 2023, and as a result, the next Executive meeting on 11 October 2023 would be held at Warwick Hall in Burford. After speaking with residents, it

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was decided to hold the meeting at 6.00pm on an evening trial basis, to facilitate those residents who wished to attend meetings but had commitments in the daytime.

Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, announced the Local Plan Consultation 'Your Place, Your Plan' had recently gone live and would be running for 8 weeks ending on 25 October 2023. The Council was keen to hear the points of view of the residents and had organised the following events at Town and Parish councils:

- 10 October 2023 at 6.30pm at Milton under Wychwood Village Hall;
- 18 October 2023 at 6.30pm at Woodgreen, Witney.

In addition, there would be 3 drop-in sessions at Local Plan Exhibitions:

- 26 September 2023 between 4.00pm and 8.00pm at Carterton Town Hall;
- 3 October 2023 between 4.00pm and 8.00pm at Woodstock Community Centre;
- 23 October 2023 between 4.00pm and 8.00pm at Klein Hall.

Details could be found on the West Oxfordshire District Council Website.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, welcomed Sports Direct to Marriot's Walk Shopping Centre. The Deputy Leader noted that Sports Direct was a welcome addition to the Centre, and complimented the mix of current retailers. Other planned events at Marriot's Walk would include a 'Vegan Fiesta' on 14 October 2023, a Christmas Market and Charter Markets.

The Deputy Leader also highlighted the upcoming first meeting of the Witney Town Partnership, which would bring together organisations within the town and also the District & Town Councils, to focus on how to support businesses in the town. There were plans to bring further partnership meetings to both Chipping Norton and Carterton.

The Deputy Leader advised that engagement and exhibitions were underway to gather ideas for the future of the High Street and Market Square in Witney. This would be led by County Officers, and would be portrayed as a good example of different councils working together.

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, announced that the consultation on Council Tax Support for the next financial year had opened on the consultation pages of the West Oxfordshire District Council website. The consultation would run until 22 September. The consultation was the first part of setting the budget for next year and would focus on helping more residents who faced the challenges of the Cost of Living crisis and increased inflation.

Councillor Levy also welcomed Madhu Richards to West Oxfordshire District Council who was present in the public gallery. Madhu Richards would join the Council as the new Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer. Councillor Levy expressed that the Council looked forward to working with her in the future.

Participation of the Public

There was no Public Participation at the meeting.

80 Review of Community Grant Schemes

Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which considered proposals to refine the community grant funding schemes, to better align intended outcomes from the Council Plan, fostering greater community engagement. The report set out the process through which the Service Level Agreements would be awarded for 2024/25 onwards and the Civic Crowdfunding Platform that would be introduced to ensure that the defined outcomes were achieved.

In debate, the Executive welcomed the report and acknowledged the hard work completed by Officers. Communities would benefit from the scheme as they could extend their fundraising goals resulting in far more opportunities. It would bring new initiatives and new organisations would be able to benefit. The scheme would make sure young people were prioritised and there would be an amount of £20,000 set aside for youth projects and young people's initiatives.

Councillor Joy Aitman proposed that the Executive agree the recommendations as set out in the original report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Grant delegated 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 approve Service Level Agreement awards;
2. Agree the maximum Service Level Agreement award will be £25,000 per annum unless in exceptional circumstances where evidence has been proven to justify the need for a higher award;
3. Permit organisations who are awarded a Service Level Agreement to also submit projects to the SpaceHive Crowdfunding Platform.

81 Asylum Dispersal Grant

Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities introduced and gave an overview of the report, which considered the planned expenditure of the Asylum Dispersal Grant.

In debate, the Executive thanked the staff in the Witney Hotel who had worked hard to support asylum seekers and to the residents of Ducklington who had provided help as well as the various voluntary groups involved.

Councillor Sandra Simpson asked what dietary provisions were in place for vegetarians with focus on nutritional information and if there was a list of organisations where people could volunteer.

Phil Martin, Assistant Director for Business Services, confirmed that the nutritional details for meals provided could be found in addition to the menus. Monthly multi-agency meetings had been held to provide updates on the food being provided. There was a focus more localised food provision. All dietary requirements were met, and the providers were challenged over food quality. The Council had worked with Volunteer Link-up and brought in a co-ordinator post which coordinate would work being done by organisations to give opportunities to the residents of the hotel to be part of the support network. The list of organisations would be made available.

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More challenges were expected however the Council was supporting asylum seekers with the resources available. The Executive thanked the Assistant Director for all the work officers had done, and also thanked the community including community groups, churches and schools.

Councillor Joy Aitman proposed that the Executive agree the recommendations as set out in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Prosser, was put to a vote, and unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the expenditure of £147,000 detailed within the sections 3 and 5 of the original report;
2. Delegate authority to make any amendments to these allocations, providing these are compliant with the ring fenced grant conditions, to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities and the informal Executive.

82 Service Performance Report 2023-24 Quarter One

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which provided details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2023-24 Quarter One (Q1).

Councillor Dan Levy proposed that the Executive agreed to the recommendations as set out in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the 2023/24 Quarter 1 Service Performance Report; and
2. Ask officers to review the performance indicator data set to better reflect the emerging priorities and actions in the revised Council Plan.

83 Financial Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter One

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which detailed the Council's financial performance for Quarter One 2023-24 (April to June).

The Executive thanked the Interim Director of Finance, James Howse, for his ongoing guidance and comments.

Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf asked for clarification on rental properties and what income would be forthcoming for the rest of the year, and how this affect deficits, and what would be done to address the problem.

The Executive advised that there were property rental voids that would be expected given the current financial climate. However, the Council owned properties were doing well as reflected in the numbers of shops rented by good quality tenants in Marriot's Walk.

Councillor Dan Levy proposed that the Executive agree the recommendations as set in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote, and unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the Council's Financial Performance for Quarter One 2023/24 (April to June).

84 Channel Choice and Telephone Access

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, introduced and gave a detailed overview of the report, which outlined the Council's success in supporting the shift in customer demand to digital channels and to consider adjusting telephone access hours as part of a balanced approach to customer contacts that responded to customer preferences.

Councillor Julian Cooper raised concerns about reducing telephone access and advised he did not agree with the proposal.

Councillor Michele Mead stated that she had voted against this proposal at the recent meeting of the Finance and Management Overview & Scrutiny meeting. Councillor Mead highlighted the number of residents who do not have access to computers or are unable to make calls in the morning due to working hours.

The Executive advised that money had been saved by taking this approach, but that investments had been made in the Welch Way Town Centre 'shop' and in systems to support the change. The Executive expressed that the changes were on a trial basis and access channels were remaining open. There were multiple means of accessing the service; residents to call in, use digital channels and walk into the Town Centre.

Councillor Alaric Smith proposed that the Executive agree the recommendations as set in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree the reduced telephone access hours, on a trial basis, with effect from Monday 16 October 2023; and
2. Receive a further report, detailing the finding and recommendations from the trial, to an Executive meeting in the first quarter of 2024/25.

85 Procurement and Contract Management Strategy

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which presented an updated draft Procurement and Contract Management Strategy for comment and consideration by Executive.

In debate, the Executive highlighted that procurement was from ethical sources and reputable suppliers. There would be more control over contracts and reviews of contracts, working with companies who were aware of ethnic issues such as modern slavery, foreign suppliers and making sure current policies were adhered to.

Councillor Dan Levy proposed that the Executive agree the recommendations as set in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the update Procurement and Contract Management Strategy;
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance to amend the approved Contract Procedure Rules to remove reference to the obsolete Procurement Strategy and Procurement Code, which the Procurement and Contract Management Strategy will replace.

86 Endorsement of Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which sought the Council's endorsement of the Cotswolds National Landscape Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2023-2025, produced by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board.

In debate, the Executive expressed its obligation to protect the Cotswolds now and also in the future, including working in line with the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Development Plans for any future planning.


Councillor Andrew Prosser proposed that the Executive agree the recommendations as set out in the report. This was seconded by Councillor Carl Rylett, was put to a vote, and unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

- I. Endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023-2025 for use as;
 - Part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan;
 - Part of the evidence base for the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans;
 - Part of the evidence base for the preparation and implementation of relevant Council strategies, policies and projects;
 - As a material consideration in the determination of planning applications; and to inform the development and delivery of the Council's services and activities.

The Meeting closed at 3.01pm

CHAIR

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 OCTOBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>REVIEW OF HOUSING RESOURCES</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Geoff Saul – Executive Member for Housing & Social Welfare. Email: geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Jon Dearing – Assistant Director, Resident Services. Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Caroline Clissold – Business Manager, Housing. Email: caroline.clissold@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To brief members on the continuing pressures facing the Housing Service. To outline the work carried out by Fixed Term Contract Staff, and the impact on the service should these be lost, with a recommendation to make these staff permanent. To seek approval to recruit an additional member of staff to assist with the complex and increasing volumes of Housing financial transactions.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Nil.</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) Agree that the three fixed term contract posts as described in Section 4.3 are moved to permanent posts;</i> <i>b) Approve the recruitment of a new Housing Finance Project Officer (WODC specific) as laid out in Section 6.</i>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Putting Residents First ● A Good Quality of Life for All ● Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>

I. BACKGROUND

The housing service has seen many changing demands over the last 7 years including the introduction of new legislation, the Covid Pandemic, and the Cost-of-Living Crisis. The service has also seen new burdens from the various strands of housing related refugee work. All of the above have seen increasing numbers of people seeking assistance with Housing issues as they are either homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- 1.1** The Housing Teams are a statutory service and are responsible for ensuring that the council meet a number of statutory requirements as laid down by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (alongside other legislative requirements)
- 1.2** These statutory duties include, but are not limited to, providing a full and accessible to all Housing Options service, preventing homelessness and relieving homelessness should it occur. The Housing Team are also responsible for maintaining a fair and transparent Choice Based Lettings system (HomeseekerPlus) and managing the clients in our four Council owned Hostels - two of which are in West Oxfordshire and two in Cotswold district.
- 1.3** The Housing Team also provides professional advice and support to clients before a statutory homelessness duty occurs to prevent homelessness - often referred to as the pre-prevention stage. This benefits the client by preventing the need for them to move into insecure B&B or hostel type accommodation.
- 1.4** The financial impact on the council of housing people in temporary accommodation is severe due to the legislative restrictions on the claiming of housing benefit on this type of accommodation. The financial loss is on average £215 per person per week and with a rolling average of 29 clients over and above who we can house in council owned properties (and are therefore accommodated in expensive B&B/hotels), which equates to an estimated cost to the council of £324,000 in 2023/24.
- 1.5** The Housing Team have responded to these new challenges in part by using annual Homelessness Prevention Grants to create new fixed term contract posts specifically targeted to undertake complex casework with a focus on preventing homelessness at the earliest possible stage.
- 1.6** When vacant posts have arisen within the Housing Team, some have also been repurposed to meet a particular demand or address an area of additional work not previously undertaken.

2. HOUSING RESOURCES & STRUCTURE

- 2.1** The Housing Team is mainly a shared service across the three Publica authorities, with some site-specific roles employed on Fixed Term Contracts (FTC's) targeting clients with complex needs.
- 2.2** The Housing Team's structure has changed significantly since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in order to meet new Prevention and Relief Duties.
- 2.3** The client management of the council owned hostels was passed to the Housing Team during the pandemic in 2020 therefore roles within the Housing Team structure were repurposed to meet this additional area of responsibility.

- 2.4 The Housing Team currently has 58% permanent staff with the remaining 42% of staff on a FTC or Secondment. This equates to 16 FTE permanent staff and 12 FTE staff on fixed term contracts across the shared service.
- 2.5 Whilst these FTC posts have proven to be invaluable in meeting our statutory duties, lessening the need for expensive B&B and Travelodge accommodation and providing support to clients to prevent homelessness, the short-term nature of the contracts mean that these posts are difficult to recruit to.
- 2.6 In a recent example, a FTC post was advertised which received only one response, whereas at the same time a permanent post was advertised that received over 30 responses.
- 2.7 Housing Leads spend a significant amount of time recruiting into and training staff in these posts, but limited job security means there is a high turnover as post holders leave for more secure work elsewhere.

3. CRISIS RESPONSE

- 3.1 Crises are thought of as rare, short term and unpredictable events that will happen at some point, and when they do, they have a devastating impact. Covid followed by the Cost-of-Living Crisis are both examples and the refugee crisis is yet another, all of which have occurred within a 3-year period with no respite in between.
- 3.2 What links these examples is that they demand an immediate response from Housing professionals to cope with these increased demands. Resources have to be found from short term funding with FTC's and expensive Agency Staff to provide an effective response. This lag in the assembling of resourcing poses reputational risk for the councils as well as risking potential failures in complying with Housing Legislation.
- 3.3 To address some of these issues with resources, three specialist Complex Needs Prevention Officers have been employed on FTCs. These officers are all based in West Oxfordshire and are not shared with other authorities.
- 3.4 Four Temporary Accommodation Officers have also been employed, three of which are on FTC's, to manage the council owned hostel residents, however this is a separate specialist area of work with different funding streams, so these posts are not addressed within this report.

4. FIXED TERM CONTRACT ROLES

- 4.1 Although the levels of clients seeking support from the Housing Team are currently at an all-time high, homelessness presentation levels to West Oxfordshire are beginning to stabilise at around 15 - 20% higher than pre-pandemic levels as we approach the winter period. Although sufficiently above pre-pandemic levels to have a significant impact on work levels and the council's finances, these numbers would be significantly higher if the FTC roles were not in place to work with clients to prevent homelessness in the early stages of being in housing difficulty.

4.2 Nationally, local authorities are also reporting spikes in rough sleeping, with our neighbouring authorities reporting even higher increases than national averages, whereas, thanks to the work of our specialist officers, West Oxfordshire is reporting zero entrenched rough sleepers with month on month low to zero 'new to the street' rough sleepers.

4.3 West Oxfordshire currently has the following FTC:

Housing Prevention Complex Needs Specialist:

The post was created in 2021 as a combined strategic and operational role in response to the new Domestic Abuse Act and the new burdens on housing to ensure safe and appropriate accommodation is provided to DA victims.

Entrenched rough sleepers are often very complex and need intensive time and support to identify options and encourage engagement with appropriate agencies to move off the streets.

The post was successful in both ensuring that the principles of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 were fully embedded into working practices as well as 'bringing in' all of the then identified entrenched rough sleepers.

The post is a level 2 specialist with responsibilities of representing the council at county wide meetings, contributing to and responding to countywide strategies and managing small budgets to assist either victims of DA or for providing bespoke options for rough sleepers.

Housing Prevention Officers - Complex needs x 2 (incorporating the Families First post)

The original Families First post was created in 2016 and the role has been operating within the Housing Team since then. The role title has now changed to Prevention Officer - Complex needs to match that of the rest of the specialist Complex Needs Team. A second Homeless Prevention Officer - Complex Needs post was created at the beginning of the pandemic as the then Families First Officer's caseload was overwhelming.

Both roles target individuals or families that have complex needs at the earliest possible stage to prevent homelessness from occurring.

Both posts have been evaluated at Level 2 Caseworker

4.4 Each of the three posts holds a rolling caseload of 30 - 40 individuals or families each, where they provide intensive support and bespoke solutions to prevent homelessness before a duty arises. In addition, each officer will be able to offer short interventions to those households needing lower-level support.

- 4.5** It is therefore difficult to capture the true scale of the number of households that the three posts have assisted, but it is estimated that in 2022/2023 around 100 households were given intensive support that resulted in homelessness being prevented. In the absence of this support individuals and families would have been moved into temporary accommodation imposing a heavy additional financial burden on the council.
- 4.6** The council is currently reviewing the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for the Housing service as a whole therefore new data sets will be created specifically to monitor the effect of these posts on homelessness presentations.
- 4.7** The loss of 42% of the workforce should the staff either choose to leave for more permanent roles would have a detrimental effect on the service, the clients and the Housing Team's ability to meet even the most basic of our statutory duties.

5. FUNDING STREAMS FOR FTC POSTS

- 5.1** Government grants and financial awards have been given to local authorities for many years with the aim of assisting with the prevention of homelessness. This was initially in the form of a Temporary Accommodation Management Fee. In 2017, this moved to the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and the Homelessness Reduction Grant.
- 5.2** From 2021/22 these two grants were combined for into the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) and West Oxfordshire District Council receives this annually as detailed below:

2021-22	£253,329
2022-23	£260,156
2023-24	£269,927
2024-25	£282,704

- 5.3** In addition to the HPG, Top Ups or Uplifts are sometimes awarded during the financial year. These additional awards can be quite substantial, but are often awarded at the last minute with ring fenced conditions and short timescales in which to spend them. The Homes for Ukraine Top Up for example was for an additional £225,000 for 2023/24 however was not announced until June 2023, with the condition that it is spent by 31st March 2024.
- 5.4** However, these Top Up's and Uplifts cannot be relied upon as they are short notice awards to address additional pressures that have arisen during the financial year.
- 5.5** The HPG currently funds the costs of the three Complex Needs specialist officers.
- 5.6** Homelessness prevention remains a key focus for DLUHC alongside eradicating rough sleeping. In 2022 the methodology of calculating the HPG awards was fully reviewed, and a new formula adopted therefore there is no current indication that the HPG will cease at the end of 2025.
- 5.7** From 2023 onwards advance notification of the amount of the grant to be received will now be given in two years tranches.

6. ADDITIONAL HOUSING FINANCE PROJECT OFFICER

- 6.1** Housing finance is complex with multiple income streams from Grants, Housing Benefits and personal contributions for those in emergency accommodation.
- 6.2** The Housing Team also needs to ensure that our emergency accommodation suppliers are paid in a timely manner.
- 6.3** The Homelessness Prevention Grants for each of our three authorities is split into multiple pots to assist our clients with the financial aspects of securing alternative housing and supplying them with essential white goods, furniture and basics. These funds are used to both prevent homelessness occurring as well as ensure that clients placed in emergency accommodation have what they need to move on swiftly into secure accommodation.
- 6.4** Since 2020, the Housing Team have also had the responsibility of ensuring that our Hostels received maximum rent via Benefits and personal contributions.
- 6.5** In the past year, the Housing Team have seen increasing numbers of refugee groups seeking assistance with their housing. Each group has its own complicated system of reimbursement of housing costs, further increasing the demands on our financial resources.
- 6.6** This work amounts to thousands of transactions through the Housing accounts across the three Publica authorities each year, all of which must be closely monitored.
- 6.7** Each household placed in any form of emergency accommodation will also need to have a Housing Benefit claim made. Across the three Publica authorities this can be around a thousand claims made each year, of which around 50-55% relate to West Oxfordshire
- 6.8** In 2020, the Housing Team received a COMF allocation to employ a temporary officer to manage these numerous and complex transactions. This work was evaluated in 2021 and a new, permanent post of Housing Finance Project officer was created by repurposing a vacant post.
- 6.9** The post holder also assesses housing clients wishing to access funds to ensure that the HPG is distributed fairly and to those most in need, and according to the ring-fenced rules laid out by DLUHC.
- 6.10** However, whilst the post holder has ensured that the Housing finances have been to the most part managed effectively, West Oxfordshire has suffered some losses in housing benefit income. West Oxfordshire has the highest number of homelessness presentations and the volume of transactions and claims needed exceed the workload of one person.
- 6.11** There is no existing base budget available to fund an additional post however the post will be funded from unspent Homelessness Prevention funds from previous years. It is therefore proposed that the Executive approve the recruitment of a second, West Oxfordshire specific Housing Finance Project Officer.

7. PROPOSAL

- 7.1** As the Housing Team is now heavily reliant on FTC's to deliver essential and statutory services, it is proposed that the three Complex Needs Prevention Officer posts be converted into permanent posts.

- 7.2 As volumes of Housing Finance transactions across the three districts are above what one post can manage effectively, it is further proposed that an additional West Oxfordshire specific Housing Finance Project Officer is approved.
- 7.3 Should Homelessness Prevention Grant be removed by the Government in the future then these four roles will be reviewed.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The costs of the posts (including on costs) are detailed below:

Post	Funding stream	£
Housing Prevention - Complex Needs Specialist	Grant	42,001
Housing Prevention Officer - Complex Needs	Grant	35,593
Housing Prevention Officer - Complex Needs (formally Families First)	Grant	37,151
Housing Finance Officer	Unspent Grants from previous years	36,071
Total		150,816

- 8.2 Although the current Housing Finance Project Officer has ensured that many hundreds of Housing Benefit claims have been submitted and benefits successfully claimed to recover some of the costs of emergency and hostel accommodation, given the sheer volume of placements needed mean that there have been some losses.
- 8.3 The table below provides an overview of the losses in income due to missed Housing Benefit opportunities. In 2020/21 and 2022/23 the Housing Team saw an average of 50% more placements needed per annum than in pre pandemic years with the 2019/20 figure reflecting the lower number of homelessness contacts:

Income Loss	HB
2019/20	£56,599
2020/21	£101,506
2021/22	£80,212
2022/23	£155,478

- 8.4 The post will therefore generate cost savings through ensuring that all allowable housing benefit income is claimed. The post will also assess claims for Homelessness Prevention funds which will help prevent homelessness as well as speed up the process of moving clients from B&B to secure accommodation where homelessness cannot be prevented.

- 8.5** FTC posts have the protections (including redundancy costs) after two years as permanent staff.
- 8.6** Whilst the proposal to make the FTC posts permanent incurs no additional costs to the net base budget in the short term, the longer-term funding of these posts will require additional resources should the grant funding reduce or cease.
- 8.7** Should any of the funding streams cease, the roles will be reviewed, and action taken to either reduce the number of these posts to match resource availability or request further consideration be given to the base budget.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** Insufficient resourcing within the Housing Team could lead to statutory functions not being met.

10. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 10.1** Although there is no reason to believe that the annual allocation of the Homelessness Prevention Grants will cease, should this be the case then any roles that are made permanent may need to be made redundant.
- 10.2** However, as these posts have been in existence for many years, fixed term contracts have been renewed. Staff have now been employed over two years, so are therefore entitled to the same protections as staff employed as permanent from the outset.
- 10.3** With regards to the request for an additional Housing Finance Project Officer, as the workload is exceeding the capability of one post holder, losses in income from could continue to be incurred.

11. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 11.1** None


12. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1** None

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1** None

(END)

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 OCTOBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>HUMAN RESOURCES (EMPLOYMENT) & HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes – Chief Executive. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Zoe Campbell – Assistant Director, Organisational Effectiveness. Email: zoe.campbell@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To update the Executive relating to the refresh of all Employment and Health & Safety policies for WODC.</p> <p>No changes have been made to employee Terms and Conditions, only to clarify and enable policies to be used concurrently with employee relations matters, giving clarity and usability to both employees and managers alike.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Updated Employment and Health & Safety Policies</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) Request that the Constitution Working Group considers the expansion of the terms of reference of the Performance and Appointments Committee to include responsibility for the adoption and amendment of Employment and Health and Safety Policies.</i> <i>b) Recommend that Council adopts the twenty-six Employment and Health & Safety Policies (included in Annex A).</i> <i>c) Recommend to Council to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Director of Governance, to approve subsequent amendments to any West Oxfordshire District Council employment policies that may be necessary, in line with legal changes and best practice, to</i>

	<i>ensure the Councils policies remain compliant.</i>
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Good Quality of Life for All
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>Publica worked with XpertHR and its recommended legal counsel, Markel LLP in order to update the policies. This approach ensured that all the policies could be used simultaneously and there was cohesion to mitigate future risk.</p> <p>Following this full refresh, in accordance with current employment law and in line with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration (ACAS) Code, Publica HR's team also worked with an external HR Consultant, Evelyn Fearon in consultation with Publica Interim Head of HR, Assistant Director of Organisational Effectiveness.</p> <p>Publica's HRBP team will be consulting the eight employees in a meeting chaired by the Chief Executive and supported by the Director of Governance on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council on Friday 22nd September at 2pm. The policies have also been through consultation with the Counter Fraud & Enforcement Unit and the South West Audit Partnership before presenting them to Executive for approval.</p> <p>The Health and Safety Policy has been reviewed by the Director of Governance and Legal Services.</p>

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** Following a review of policies, it was recommended that there should a refresh, and updating of the key employment policies on behalf of the Council to clarify and enable policies to be used concurrently with employee relations matters.
- 1.2** No changes have been made to Council employee Terms and Conditions.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** These are the policies which apply to those employees directly employed by West Oxfordshire District Council including the statutory officers. These policies do not apply to Publica employees for which a separate suite of policies exist and have been created to ensure consistency in approach.
- 2.2** The corporate Health & Safety Policy has also been reviewed and updated for consideration by Executive. Unlike the HR policies, the Health & Safety Policy includes elected members in its scope.
- 2.3** Publica HR team to work with XpertHR's Lawyers to ensure ACAS compliant, up to date, clear policies developed. XpertHR are an external organisation who offer dedicated HR support including comprehensive employment law and HR practice guidance.
- 2.4** Publica HR engaged XpertHR Lawyers, Markel, November 2022, to support in the production of a suite of 26 human resources policies to ensure consistency and transparency across all policies, mitigating employment risks.
- 2.5** Initial work was completed by March 2023 on a full suite of policies ensuring no employment terms and conditions were altered which conflicted with the Councils existing terms.
- 2.6** Following further consultation with an external HR Advisor, Evelyn Fearon from HR Lounge, amends were made to core policies which included Capability, Grievance, Harassment & Bullying, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Sickness Absence (Short and Long Term) and Unauthorised Absence Management.
- 2.7** Final amended policies and procedures were sent to Markel LLP and signed off in August 2023.
- 2.8** West Oxfordshire District Council's statutory officers, supported by Publica's HR Team will consult the eight employees directly employed by the Council and are already aware of the updated policies to allow comments. This meeting is arranged for Friday 22nd September at 2pm.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1** The review of the Human Resources (HR) Policies was to ensure that the Council's policies reflected and complied with existing / new regulation and case law, reflected best practice and importantly were clear and concise to allow managers to implement them as and where necessary. Updating all policies together, ensures flow and for policies to be used in conjunction when complex cases arise, ensuring matters are dealt with in a timely fashion and thereby mitigating risk for the Council.

- 3.2 HR Policies provide legal protection for the Council. HR policies and procedures give guidance on a range of employment issues and are written guidance on how a wide range of issues should be handled.
- 3.3 HR Policies provide clear guidance that reflects employment law and regulations and can help avoid involvement from employment tribunal claims.
- 3.4 Even when a policy or procedure is not specifically required by law, employers often find it helpful to have a policy in place to provide clear guidance that reflects the legal framework for handling the issue in question and it also helps employees be clear about the Council's stance on a particular subject, setting clear expectations.
- 3.5 HR Policies play a key role in supporting fairness and consistency across the Council, as well as potentially helping to protect the Council against legal claims and costly exit payments.
- 3.6 HR Policies provide general and practical advice and guidance for managers and staff on a range of employment issues and the procedures give a step-by-step account of specific arrangements that apply in particular circumstances.
- 3.7 Clear Health & Safety policies, which are current and in line with legislation are the backbone to strong safety performance and compliance. These bring a variety of benefits including ensuring a safe working environment and places obligations on employers to meet with their legal obligations.
- 3.8 Under 'common law' all employers have a duty of care which is an obligation to protect their employees. A term is implied into all employment contracts requiring employers to take care of their employees' health and safety.
- 3.9 For example, employers must provide a safe place of work, a safe system of work, adequate equipment.
- 3.10 Employees also have responsibilities and should work with their employer to ensure a safe place of work.
- 3.11 Health and Safety Policies help to mitigate risks, through early warning and ensuring sufficient precautions are taken to prevent damage or injury, thereby reducing the risk of claims against the Council.

4. DELEGATED AUTHORITY

- 4.1 Employment legislation and case law can change on a yearly or bi-annual basis. Therefore, in order to maintain a current, up to date, and working set of HR policies, expediting changes to the suite of policies is key to ensure the Council is within the legal framework.
- 4.2 Regular policy review and revision is an important part of procedure management which needs to be carried out on a regular basis and in line with employment law updates in April and October. The HR team now has Employment Legislation update training on this basis to ensure policies can be amended accordingly.
- 4.3 To ensure expedience, it is proposed that delegated authority to make reasonable amends be given to the Chief Executive of West Oxfordshire District Council.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1 Retaining existing, outdated policies places the Council at risk of challenge.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Publica's HR team was supported by XpertHR, external lawyers and an HR consultant to develop a clean and clear set of policies that mitigate risk for the Council. This suite of policies are up to date and legally compliant.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Whilst there are no financial implications arising directly from this report, it is important that the Council's HR policies are reviewed regularly to ensure they comply with relevant legislation and best practice guidance.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Adopting up to date policies will help the Council manage employees more effectively. In addition, if subject to any legal action, will help to demonstrate that the Council has complied with the law.
- 8.2 The Health & Safety policy statement is written for the activities that are carried out by our staff and incorporates the organisation and arrangements, which are in place to meet the requirements of the legislation. This is in accordance with section 2.3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 By not updating and implementing the new suite of policies, the Council may fail to comply with new laws and regulations and leave itself exposed to costly employment law cases.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1 Each policy has been considered to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. These policies apply equally across the West Oxfordshire District Council workforce.

11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are none arising.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 None.

(ENDS)

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**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 11 OCTOBER 2023

Human Resources and Health & Safety Policies

Annex A

HR & Health and Safety Policies

1. Agile Working Policy
2. Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy
3. Compassionate Policy
4. Disciplinary Policy
5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
6. Expenses Policy
7. Flexible Working Policy
8. Flexi-time TOIL and Overtime Policy
9. Grievance Policy
10. Health & Safety Policy
11. Long Term Sickness Absence Policy
12. Maternity Leave Policy
13. Menopause Policy
14. Parental Bereavement Policy
15. Parental Leave Policy
16. Paternity Leave Policy
17. Performance Improvement (Capability) Policy
18. Probation Policy
19. Redundancy Policy
20. Reserved Forces and Voluntary Emergency Responders Policy
21. Shared Parental Leave (Adoption) Policy
22. Shared Parental Leave (Birth) Policy
23. Sickness Absence Policy
24. Supporting Bereaved Employees Policy



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

- 25. Supporting Employees through Pregnancy Loss Policy
- 26. Time off for Dependents Policy
- 27. Unauthorised Absence Policy



Agile Working Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

This agile working policy builds upon previous flexible working policies and supports a culture of working wherever, whenever and however is most appropriate to get the work done.

Adopting this approach means that desk space is better utilised, with the office plans setting out the new layouts. The new office layout will be more focused on collaborative working and desk space will be shared.

It is important that individuals work with their colleagues and line manager to agree agile working arrangements that meet the needs of both the team and service delivery.

Our approach to agile working also links to our vision to address the climate emergency.

This policy sets out our approach to agile working, which allows employees flexibility between attending the office and working remotely. Agile working is an important element of our:

- Strategy for adapting to, and thriving in the new working environment
- Meeting our climate change commitments
- Commitment to supporting a positive work-life balance for our employees

We wish to support employees to do their best work, have a good work life balance, work flexibly whilst staying connected and getting the job done.

What is Agile Working?

Agile working is about more choice in deciding how, when and where you work best, balancing the needs of WODC, your team and yourself. Where, when and how you choose to work will depend on your role and discussions with your line manager.

Key principles of agile working

- We acknowledge that agile working is not suitable for all roles. Each employee should discuss this with their line manager and establish how they work.
- Our Business Conduct policy applies in every location you work from, whether in one of our offices, at home or on site. Please familiarise yourself with this Policy. [Hyperlink](#)
- Agile working is open to everyone who has a suitable role regardless of how long they have worked with WODC.
- We commit to providing you with the necessary technology and equipment.

- Community and collaboration are part of who we are and we know they are important for our wellbeing. We will continue to provide safe office spaces for you to collaborate and connect with others.
- There will be times when being on site is important, e.g. when you first start working for us, or when you take on a new role. We would encourage you to visit one of the offices to familiarise yourself with the way we work and the support available.
- Working in this way will not change your contractual terms and conditions of employment in respect of working hours or work location. Agile working is an informal arrangement that may be changed from time to time depending on business needs.
- The expenses you can claim will be un-changed, that is if you claim mileage, you will be required to deduct your normal home to office from your claim even if you go to wherever you are going directly from your home.
- If you want to make a more permanent change to your hours, location, place of work and/or working pattern, you will need to request this separately through the Flexible working policy. (Please note a request under the Flexible Working Policy can only be made every 12 months)

Practical Considerations

The number of days per week each employee spends attending the workplace/office compared with working remotely will vary, depending on:

- Their individual circumstances
- The nature of their role
- What is happening within their role and team at any particular time; and
- The needs of our organisations, including the space we have available at our work locations

We expect that most staff will spend some of their working time in the office and some at home.

WODC recognises the benefits of flexibility but also that for some employees working at home may have its challenges. For example, you might:

- Live a significant distance from the office and it would be more efficient for you to spend more time working remotely or
- Have challenges with your working environment at home that mean that remote working is difficult for you and you would like to attend the office more often

Please speak to your line manager who will be supported by the HR Business Partner, if you think that you would benefit from working more at home or more in the office.

Being Flexible

Given the degree of flexibility that our agile working arrangements provide, we expect our people to be flexible.

You may be required to attend the office on particular days at the request of your line manager/senior manager, for example for in-person training and for meetings that your line manager/senior manager has determined are best conducted in person.

Similarly, there may be circumstances in which we ask you to work remotely, or to work from such other place as we may reasonably require, when you would otherwise expect to attend the workplace/office, for instance:

- For operational needs, for example if we have too many employees attending the workplace/office on specific days; or
- In the event of a lockdown/government guidance that employees should work from home if they can.

In such cases, you will be given as much notice as possible.

Arrangements while Attending the Office

Workspaces

Each team has a number of desks allocated to them; however it may be that if all the team are in the office at the same time, you may not be able to access a desk in your area. If this is the case, please use a desk in another part of the building. Some teams may decide to work on a rota basis. Please work with your line manager and the rest of your team to ensure you have the necessary desk space.

At the end of each day on which you are attending the office, please ensure that you leave the desk clean and tidy. Your laptop, any other equipment and any personal items should not be left on desks overnight. Please ensure that your laptop and other equipment are either taken with you or secured away.

Health and Safety - Working Measures

The health, safety, wellbeing, and security of our colleagues in all locations is paramount. Please:

- Familiarise yourself with the risk assessment relating to your work and meet the standards required whilst carrying out your work activities
- Familiarise yourself with the Emergency Evacuation Procedure, the First Aid Arrangements and the Accident / Incident reporting procedure for each site you may be working at.
- Complete a DSE (Display Screen Equipment) self-assessment for office and home workstations. A Working from Home Assessment might also need to be completed. Please see DSE guidance on the Health and Safety Support portal page, in the working from home guidance, and ensure you complete the iHasco online training.
- Keep your workstation tidy, ensure personal belongings or computer wires do not present a trip hazard. You should not bring in electrical equipment from home to use at work.
- Work with your team to ensure that you have appropriate lone working arrangements in place.

Let us know if you have any concerns, have identified any potential risks, or have any suggestions for further adaptations we can make. You can do this by raising concerns or making suggestions to your line manager.

You have a role to play in ensuring all our staff can work in a safe environment and you must follow our safe-working instructions. Failure to do so may be a disciplinary offence and dealt with in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. More detailed information can be found in the Health and Safety Support section on the portal.

Arrangements while Working Remotely

Working hours and keeping in touch

We want to empower you to choose the times you work so you can balance your home life and the needs of your role. We trust you to manage your own time and work the hours you are contracted to do.

There are some key areas we would like you to be aware of:

While working remotely, you must be available and working during your normal hours of work. You should agree your normal working hours with your line manager.

You must ensure regular contact with your team / line manager using mobile phone, telephones and email. Follow the control measures identified in your risk assessment relating to home and lone working.

We ask you to be mindful that you are not overworking. "Downtime" from work is essential. To help maintain your wellbeing, please make sure that you take adequate rest breaks:

- Take time off for lunch each day.
- Even if you are busy, it is essential that you find the time to take a break of at least 30 minutes during each working day that lasts more than six hours.

Please be as clear as possible with your line manager and colleagues about your hours of work for days on which you are working remotely. Making use of tools such as shared calendars and out-of-office messaging can help colleagues to be aware of your availability on these days.

We may ask you (with enough notice) to be available at certain times to meet the needs of the business, to physically be in the office to collaborate or attend training.

Flexing your working times should not result in extra work for other members of your team.

We know life can be complicated and that working in this way can help you balance your home and work life. However, agile working is not a way of dealing with emergency leave or for long-term childcare if it has an impact on your ability to carry out your day-to-day role.

We know that collaboration, connection and having a sense of belonging are important to your wellbeing. We encourage you to actively make time to connect with your colleagues. To find out what other support is available, please visit the Staff welfare and support page on the Portal.

Sickness

When working remotely, you should not work if you are unwell. If you are sick and unable to work, our Sickness absence policy applies.

You should notify your line manager by telephone or by message as soon as reasonably practicable on the first day of absence, preferably before you are due to start work and, in any event, no later than one hour after you are due to begin work.

Technology and equipment

To assist you to work remotely, you are provided with:

- A laptop computer
- A mouse
- A keyboard
- Any additional equipment required as identified in your Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment

You must take care of any equipment we provide you with and notify your line manager/the IT department of any faults with the equipment.

If you need any additional equipment, please speak to your line manager.

You must complete the DSE iHasco online training which will assist you in setting up your workstation correctly.

When working at home you must ensure you have a secure, private and appropriately lit and heated space to work in, with a reliable and secure Internet connection.

Care Commitments

When working at home you will be required to work the hours you are contracted. You should ensure you have the appropriate arrangements in place for childcare or other caring responsibilities, so that you can work undisturbed or distracted by such caring responsibilities. However, if for any reason there are challenges, please discuss any support you may require with your line manager.

Data Protection, Security and Confidentiality

Maintaining the security of information we work with is vital and when we work away from the office we are responsible for the security of the data we have. Please ensure that you know your responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and our security policies.

Please ensure:

- That you do not send work related emails of sensitive data to your home email address
- Do not store work related information on your personal computer
- If you work from a WODC office space, please be mindful of any IT security risk or confidentiality; position your laptop so others cannot see the screen and avoid having sensitive conversations in public
- Other individuals (including family members) should not have access to any work information or personal information either on paper or as electronic records.

Working Elsewhere

At times there may be a request to work outside the UK. There are significant legal and logistical issues with allowing staff to work abroad for weeks at a time. These include tax, employment law and data protection. For this reason, we are unable to support long term arrangements or requests for permanent relocations outside the UK. Please discuss any requests with your line managers and your HR Business Partner.

Costs and Expenses

Your contractual normal location of work will not change, so that your entitlement to claim expenses will remain the same. Please see our Expenses policy.

Employees may be able to claim tax relief for any household expenses incurred as a result of working from home, provided the expenses are solely work related. If you wish to benefit from this tax relief, see the Government's '*Claim tax relief for your job*' expenses guide ([link](#)).

Appendix

Requesting Flexible Working

This Policy focuses on how our organisation operates agile working, but there are many other forms of flexible working.

If you have 26 weeks' service with us, you retain the right to make a formal request for flexible working, whether or not agile working is available for your role/in your team.

Examples of other types of flexible working that can be requested are:

- Reducing the number of hours that you are working
- Changing your start and finish times
- Compressing your working hours into fewer days (for example moving to a nine-day fortnight)

If you would like to request another form of flexible working, or if we do not currently offer you agile working but you would like to request it, you can make a formal request under our Flexible Working Policy.

Version Control:	
Document Name:	Agile Working Policy and Procedure
Version:	1.0
Responsible Officer:	
Approved by:	
Date First Approved:	
Next Review Date	
Retention Period:	



Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. WODC has a strong commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Employees are an organisation's most valued asset and as such we seek to ensure that all our policies and procedures reflect the very best in good practice. Everyone should be treated with respect and dignity, creating an environment where employees can deliver their best in a culture free of bullying or harassment. Having a culture that is diverse, equitable and inclusive is core to everything that we strive to achieve and to the organisational environment we wish to protect.

We will not tolerate any instances of bullying or harassment, victimisation, or discrimination at WODC, with all forms being dealt with effectively. Harassment and bullying can have very serious consequences for individuals and may cause stress, affect their health, impact their families and social relationships, as well as affecting their ability to perform their role and progress their careers. For organisations the impact can be low morale, poor work performance, high attrition and damage to the organisation's reputation. Therefore, any employee who is found to have harassed or bullied a colleague or stakeholder could face disciplinary penalties up to and including dismissal. Victimisation of a person making allegations of harassment and bullying is a disciplinary offence.

Key to protecting an inclusive and positive culture is seeking to eradicate bullying, harassment, victimisation, and discrimination at work. This policy and procedure support this aim by setting out the steps that will be taken to investigate and deal with complaints of bullying or harassment, and how we support those affected, as no one should have to suffer bullying or harassment in the workplace.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to anyone working for WODC. This includes employees, contractors, volunteers, interns, and apprentices. The policy also relates to job applicants and is relevant to all stages of the employment relationship. The policy also applies to bullying or harassment by third parties.

Our Commitment to You

We believe that a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion not only benefits our organisation, Partner Councils and Publica but supports wellbeing and enables our people to work better because they can be themselves and feel that they belong.

We are committed to promoting a working environment based on dignity, trust and respect, free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

A toxic workplace culture, where bullying or harassment is tolerated, is harmful to the wellbeing of the workforce as well as the wider organisation.

We adopt a zero-tolerance approach to instances of bullying or harassment. Our commitment to you is to ensure that all forms of harassment, bullying, and victimisation are dealt with effectively.

What we expect From You

We expect you, and every one of our people, to take personal responsibility for observing, upholding, promoting, and applying this policy. Whatever your job is, this is part of your role.

Any dealings you have with third parties, including customers, suppliers, contractors, agency staff and consultants, must be free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying.

If anyone in the employ of WODC is found to have committed, authorised, or condoned an act of bullying or harassment, we will take action against them (for those to whom it applies) under our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure up to and including dismissal.

There is no justifiable reason to bully or harass anyone. For example, observing a particular religion is not a legitimate reason for bullying or harassing a colleague, neither is their sexual orientation. Even if you do not intend to bully or harass anyone, this does not legitimise your behaviour as it is the impact on the recipient that is important.

You should be aware that you can be personally liable for harassment.

If you experience bullying or harassment, we encourage you to speak up without delay and to ask for appropriate support.

Who is Protected from Harassment?

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination because of certain protected characteristics. These include:

- disability
- sex
- gender reassignment
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- age
- pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage and civil partnership

As well as the protected characteristics covered above, we consider harassment on any ground to be unacceptable.

Meaning of Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of:

- violating someone else's dignity; or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone else.

Harassment can occur where someone perceives another person to have a protected characteristic, for example a perception that someone is transgender even if they are not.

Harassment can also arise by association, where someone is harassed because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic, for example having a family member of a particular religion.

Examples of harassment

Harassment can occur in many forms and can take place either at work or outside work. While this is not an exhaustive list, examples include:

- "banter", jokes, taunts or insults that are sexist, racist, ageist, transphobic, homophobic or derogatory against any other protected characteristic
- unwanted physical behaviour, for example, pushing or grabbing
- excluding someone from a conversation or a social event or marginalising them from the group
- derogatory comments about pregnancy, maternity leave or IVF treatment
- mimicking or making fun of someone's disability
- derogatory or offensive comments about religion
- unwelcome comments about someone's appearance or the way they dress that is related to a protected characteristic
- "outing" (i.e., revealing their sexual orientation against their wishes), or threatening to "out", someone
- consistently using the wrong names and pronouns following the transition of a person's gender identity
- displaying images that are racially offensive
- excluding or making derogatory comments about someone because of a perceived protected characteristic, or because they are associated with someone with a protected characteristic.

Harassment can arise where the perpetrator did not have the intention of causing offence but does cause offence by what they say. For example, this can happen in respect of banter and jokes.

Meaning of Sexual Harassment

Harassment may be sexual in nature. The law defines sexual harassment as:

- conduct, including verbal, comments, of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment and
- less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

Examples of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment can occur in many forms. While this is not an exhaustive list, examples include:

- physical conduct of a sexual nature, unwelcome physical contact, or intimidation
- persistent suggestions to meet up socially after a person has made clear that they do not welcome such suggestions
- showing or sending offensive or pornographic material by any means (e.g., by text, video clip, email or by posting on the internet or social media)
- unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, suggestive remarks, or gender-related insults
- offensive comments about appearance or dress, innuendo, or lewd comments
- leering, whistling, or making sexually suggestive gestures and

- gossip and speculation about someone's sexual orientation or transgender status, including spreading malicious rumours.

Bullying

There is no legal definition of bullying. However, we regard it as conduct that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or an abuse or misuse of power, and usually persistent in nature, that has the effect of undermining, humiliating or injuring the recipient.

Bullying can be physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct. It is not necessarily face to face and can be done by email, phone calls, online (cyber-bullying) or on social media. Bullying may occur at work or outside work.

If the bullying relates to a person's protected characteristic, it may also constitute harassment and, therefore, will be unlawful.

Examples of bullying

While this is not an exhaustive list, bullying may include:

- physical, verbal or psychological threats
- excessive levels of supervision
- spreading rumours, malicious or offensive
- constantly putting someone down, undermining, criticising, showing a lack of respect and
- inappropriate and derogatory remarks about a person's performance.

It is important to understand that legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a person's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to people in the course of their employment, will not of themselves amount to harassment or bullying.

Micro-aggressions

Micro aggressions - sometimes called micro-incivilities - are statements, actions, or incidents that are regarded as indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group such as a racial or ethnic minority. They are sometimes referred to as "death by a thousand cuts". Micro-aggressions generally take one of three forms:

- **Micro-assaults:** Conscious and obvious insults made verbally or non-verbally to a marginalised individual or group, for example directing limp-wristed hand gestures towards a gay colleague and saying, "It's just a joke".
- **Micro-insults:** Unintentionally insensitive remarks or assumptions based on stereotypes, for example saying to a person with a disability "You don't look disabled to me".
- **Micro-invalidations:** Where a person denies, or seeks to cancel, the feelings and lived experiences of a marginalised individual or group, for example a white person saying, "I don't think the UK has a problem with racism - some people are just too sensitive".

Serious micro-aggressions can amount to unlawful harassment, bullying or discrimination but even less serious micro-aggressions can negatively impact the health and wellbeing of the person experiencing them.

What to do if you are being Bullied or Harassed

Informal route

Bully/harasser is a colleague

If you feel able to, and where you believe there is a reasonable prospect of resolution, you may decide to raise the issue with the individual themselves, to make clear that their behaviour is not welcome and to ask them to stop. They may not be aware that their behaviour is offending you or it may be unintentional on their part.

Alternatively, if you do not feel up to speaking directly to the individual, you may consider asking your line manager, or an alternative manager for support. If the individual causing offence is your line manager or a someone senior in the work structure, you may wish to speak with Human Resources for further guidance.

You may or may not want them to talk to the individual on your behalf and, where possible, we will respect your wishes. However, if the welfare or safety of you or others is at risk or where your allegations are particularly serious, we may have to approach the individual and instigate a formal investigation. In such a case we will, where possible, discuss this with you first.

Mediation is a voluntary and confidential process and if you do not wish to take part in mediation, you do not have to. The mediator will be impartial, neutral and fully trained to conduct mediation whether they be an internal or an external resource. Mediation can help to mend workplace relationships by: -

- Finding solutions that everyone agrees to.
- Improving communication.
- Allowing everyone involved to have control of what is finally agreed.

Mediation can be used at any stage in a disagreement but the earlier the disagreement is dealt with, the less chance there is of things becoming more difficult and entrenched.

Bully/harasser is a third party

If you are experiencing bullying or harassment by a third party, for example a client or a supplier, we encourage you to report this to your line manager without delay so that they can consider what action it may be possible to take or how you should respond taking account of the fact this is a third party.

Formal route

If you are not happy with the outcome of an informal process, or if you feel it is not appropriate to approach the issue informally, you may decide to raise your complaint formally.

To make a formal complaint, you should discuss this first with your line manager. If your complaint is about your line manager, you should raise this with another senior manager. If you have any queries you should refer to your HR Business Partner. Under the formal procedure within this policy,

We will usually ask you to set out your complaint in writing or via email. Please include as much detail as possible, for example:

- the alleged bully/harasser's name
- the nature of the bullying/harassment
- the dates of the alleged acts of bullying/harassment
- names of any witnesses
- and details of any action taken to address the matter so far;
- any other information that you feel is directly relevant

In addition:

- you may be asked to discuss this in more detail with the investigating officer
- you can expect the matter to be investigated, which may include meeting with the alleged bully/harasser to ascertain their response to the allegations. It may also include interviewing potential witnesses who we will instruct to keep the matter confidential
- expect the manager chairing the matter to carry out further investigations of the complaint where necessary
- invite you to a meeting to discuss your complaint in full. You will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague
- hold a meeting with you to enable us to ask you further questions in light of any information we have gathered from the alleged bully/harasser and/or witnesses
- the chair will consider all the evidence in full and make a decision and
- inform you of the decision (this will normally be in person without unreasonable delay) and, if we uphold the complaint, instigate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal against the bully/harasser. You will be notified of the timescales involved and any decision will be confirmed to you in writing.

We will investigate fully every formal complaint in an objective and confidential way, ensuring that we respect your rights as well as the rights of the alleged bully/harasser. You are of course welcome to be accompanied by a work colleague to any investigatory meetings held.

We will use every effort to complete an investigation into bullying or harassment as quickly as possible.

Where the alleged bully/harasser is a third party, we may need to adjust the procedure under this policy to ensure we conduct appropriate investigations and we will discuss this with you.

Right to Representation

At any formal meeting you have the right to be represented by a work colleague. However, consideration will be given to another person in exceptional circumstances.

Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the formal hearing, you have the right to appeal.

Should you wish to appeal, you should write to the Manager referenced in the outcome letter setting out what aspects of the decision you are unhappy with and the reasons why. Appeals should be submitted without unreasonable delay and usually no longer than five working days after we inform you of the decision.

The manager or delegated person will arrange a meeting with you to discuss your appeal in full and to try and reach a satisfactory solution. You must take all reasonable steps to attend this meeting and you may be accompanied by a work colleague. If you cannot attend for a genuine reason the matter will normally be rescheduled at least one time (thereafter it may be held in your absence).

The manager or delegated person will write to you to confirm the outcome of the appeal, which will be final.

Support for those Affected or Involved

We understand that anyone affected by, or involved with, a complaint of bullying or harassment may feel anxious or upset and we will do what we can to support you.

If you feel you cannot continue to work in close contact with the alleged bully/harasser, we will seriously consider any requested changes to your working arrangements during our investigation into the matter.

Anyone who complains or takes part in good faith in a bullying or harassment investigation must not suffer any form of detrimental treatment or victimisation. We take such matters very seriously, if you feel you have suffered any victimisation, please inform your line manager as soon as possible. Equally, making malicious, vexatious or false allegations will not be tolerated and is a disciplinary offence.

Regardless of the outcome of your complaint, we will consider carefully how to best approach any ongoing working relationship between you and the individual concerned. For example, depending on the specific circumstances, it may be possible to consider amending the job duties, location or reporting lines of either you or the other person. For example, where the roles in question mean that this is possible to manage without disrupting the work. Alternatively, we may propose that workplace mediation or counselling is appropriate if this can be agreed voluntarily by the parties.

Sensitivity and Confidentiality

Anyone involved with an informal or formal complaint about bullying or harassment, including witnesses, must keep the matter strictly confidential and act with appropriate sensitivity to all parties.

If you are found to have breached confidentiality or acted without due care or sensitivity in a case of bullying or harassment, we may take [disciplinary action](#) against you up to and including dismissal (or other appropriate action for non-employees).

Consequences of Breaching this Policy

If, following a formal investigation, we find that you have committed, authorised or condoned an act of bullying or harassment, we will deal with the issue as a possible case of misconduct or gross misconduct.

We may take disciplinary action against you, up to and including dismissal (or other appropriate action for non-employees).

Anyone who complains or takes part in good faith in a bullying or harassment investigation must not suffer any form of detrimental treatment or victimisation. If we find that you have victimised anyone in this way, we will instigate disciplinary action against you up to and including dismissal (or other appropriate action for non-employees).

We will also offer support for all those affected as we seek to encourage a positive work environment free of harassment and bullying where employees are confident to speak out and use this policy should it ever be required.

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Compassionate Leave Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

At WODC, we provide compassionate leave to help employees to come to terms with the death of a loved one, a serious illness or injury involving a loved one, or serious personal relationship problems.

We also have separate policies to cover parental bereavement leave, supporting employees experiencing pregnancy loss and the statutory right to take time off for dependants, where you may have an emergency situation to deal with. This policy does not affect employees' statutory right to take time off for dependants or parental bereavement leave. Unless there is an overlap with this clause, any time off granted as compassionate leave is in addition to the time off available under the statutory right.

Definitions

Immediate family member: In this policy, immediate family is defined as the employee's spouse, civil partner, partner, parent, child, sibling, grandparent or grandchild.

Dependant: In this policy, dependant is defined as the employee's spouse, civil partner, child or parent, and any person who lives at the same house as the employee (other than as a lodger, tenant, boarder or employee) or who would reasonably rely on the employee for assistance or arrangements for care in the event of illness or injury.

Bereavement

In the event of the death of an immediate family member (other than a child where the employee is eligible for parental bereavement leave), the employee will be granted sufficient time to attend the funeral which would normally be 1-day or 1/2 day. An additional 3 day's leave will be given if you are responsible for arranging the funeral or to deal with post funeral arrangements. Each case will be viewed sympathetically, and the amount of leave granted will depend on the individual's circumstances. The line manager will take into account matters such as the employee's relationship with the deceased, domestic responsibilities and travel requirements.

In the case of the death of another close relative, for example an aunt, uncle, cousin or parent-in-law, or a close friend, the employee may be granted leave to attend the funeral.

The employee should inform their line manager of the need to take compassionate leave as soon as reasonably practicable or, at the latest, on the first day on which they are absent.

If the employee wishes to take further leave, they should request annual leave in the usual way

Other Circumstances where Compassionate Leave is Available

Compassionate leave is available to take care of a dependant or to come to terms with a critical illness or injury of an immediate family member or serious personal relationship problems.

Employees in these circumstances may be granted up to 3 day's paid compassionate leave as a one-off period. Each case will be viewed sympathetically, and the amount of leave granted will depend on the employee's circumstances. The line manager will take into account factors such as the nature of the incident and, if applicable, the closeness of the relationship.

The employee should inform their line manager of the need to take compassionate leave as soon as reasonably practicable or, at the latest, on the first day that they are absent.

If the employee wishes to take further leave, they should request annual leave in the usual way.

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Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return, we seek to support our workforce by ensuring they always have a positive and pleasant working environment, where all employees are treated fairly and consistently.

Valuing our workforce ensures having policies and procedures in place to manage any behaviours that do not reflect our vision and values and the high standards we set, ensuring any issues are managed promptly and reasonably.

This policy outlines the disciplinary procedure, the roles of those involved and the support that is available. This policy also covers issues relating to poor attendance and timekeeping.

If we have any concerns about your conduct, we will usually attempt to talk to you about this on an informal basis. An early conversation may be enough to identify the issue and take steps to resolve it. Most minor conduct-related issues can be resolved informally.

However, where an informal approach is unsuccessful, or the allegations are so serious that an informal approach is inappropriate, we will follow a formal disciplinary procedure.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to employees of WODC, other than the Chief Executive and the statutory officers for whom separate arrangements exist as detailed in their contract of employment. It does not apply to contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for WODC.

Grievances

If you have a grievance that relates to ongoing disciplinary proceedings, you should raise this during the disciplinary procedure with reference to the grievance procedure (for example during the disciplinary hearing or appeal stage). The reason for this is so that the grievance can be addressed in the context of the relevant disciplinary proceedings to which it is related and so that any correction which is applicable can be made quickly and with the least disruption.

Where an employee raises a grievance during a disciplinary process the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance. Where the grievance and disciplinary cases are related it may be appropriate to deal with both issues concurrently. [Add hyperlink](#)

If you raise a grievance during disciplinary proceedings that is unrelated to those proceedings, the disciplinary proceedings and grievance procedure could continue to run independently.

We recognise that a disciplinary procedure can be stressful and upsetting. Everyone involved in the process is entitled to be treated calmly and with respect.

We will not tolerate abusive or insulting behaviour from anyone taking part in a disciplinary procedure and treat any such behaviour as further potential misconduct. Making malicious, vexatious, or false allegations will not be tolerated and is a disciplinary offence.

Remote proceedings

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting under this procedure (for example in respect of incapacity or practical difficulties in holding the hearing or as a reasonable adjustment), we will conduct the process remotely. We will ensure that you and your representative have access to the necessary technology for participating. Your rights will not be affected, and we will ensure that the procedure remains fair and reasonable.

Right to Representation

At any formal meeting you have the right to be represented by a work colleague. However, consideration will be given to another person in exceptional circumstances.

Adjustments to proceedings

If you have a disability that may have an impact on your ability to participate fully in this procedure, or if you need assistance because English is not your first language, you should let us know by contacting the relevant person holding the meeting, who will make appropriate arrangements for you. [ED&I hyperlink](#)

Recording of meetings and hearings

For the avoidance of doubt and for the benefit of all parties, the process will include the digital recording/tape recording of investigatory meetings and hearings where this is agreed by all parties. The record of the meeting, whether written or digital, will be shared with you. The recording of interviews and hearings facilitate full and more accurate records for the investigating officer as well as for the interviewee(s) and, in the case of hearings, the panel members. It is intended to use the facility of recording only for the transcribing of interviews being conducted as part of a formal investigation and, where appropriate, subsequent hearings. This is to aid in the production of accurate records of interviews and hearings. Recording can be suspended at the request of either party for a break in the interview/hearing.

You will be informed that investigatory interview or hearings will be digitally recorded when arrangements are made to set up the meeting if this will be case. Once the equipment is set up for use, a check will be made to test that it is fully functional. At the start of any interview or hearing the date, time and location will be recorded. All parties present will be asked to introduce themselves to enable later voice identification. Once the recording for the investigatory meetings have been transcribed, the transcript will be forwarded to you and if there is a concern regarding accuracy of the transcribing you will be given the option to listen to the recording. Recordings of interviews will be held securely until the conclusion of the investigation and subsequent hearing if required. The recording produced as part of an investigation will not go forward to a hearing; the transcript will be used.

If the matter under investigation is also a possible criminal offence the council reserves the right for the investigatory interview to be an interview under caution, to protect your legal rights and also to protect the integrity of any further criminal investigation.

You, or any person acting on your behalf, are not permitted to record electronically any meeting that we hold under this procedure. This is to encourage openness and full participation. Any breach of this provision may lead to further disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.

In certain limited circumstances, we may permit or arrange for a meeting to be recorded electronically, for example where it is a reasonable adjustment for an employee with a disability. Where we permit or arrange for a meeting to be recorded electronically, we will take responsibility for making the recording.

Where we intend to record meetings held remotely, we will comply with our data protection obligations and obtain prior consent from all attendees.

Change of circumstances

Sometimes circumstances prevent parts of this procedure from being followed in full. For example, employees may be too ill to participate in a disciplinary hearing (if one is required) or a specified line manager may be unavailable to chair the hearing. When this happens, we will do our best to ensure that you fully understand the proceedings so that your response is fairly and carefully considered at the Hearing.

In the case of an investigatory interview then we will always seek to start by rearranging the interview in the first instance where it cannot be attended through an employee being too ill to participate. When this happens, we will do our best to ensure that you fully understand the allegations and are given a proper opportunity to respond to them.

Postponement of meetings

We will make every effort to ensure that any meeting we hold under this procedure is scheduled for a time and place that is reasonable and within your normal working hours. You are therefore required to attend the meeting if it is possible for you to do so. If you are unable to attend, then we will normally reschedule the meeting once to a new time when your attendance should reasonably be possible.

However, it is important to ensure that disciplinary procedures are completed within a reasonable timescale. We reserve the right to proceed with a meeting in your absence when it has not been possible to arrange a meeting that you are able to attend. In that case, we will make every effort to ensure that you are able to make representations in writing or through a representative.

Employees may bring a work colleague to a hearing and something we allow for fact finding investigation meetings. Please note there is no right to legal representation for internal meetings. If your work colleague is not available to attend the meeting, we will agree to postpone and seek to agree a mutually convenient time. However, any such postponement must be short, and we reserve the right to proceed with the original meeting if no new date can be found that is within five working days of the scheduled date.

Conduct and behaviour

Gross misconduct

Gross misconduct is conduct that is so serious that it justifies dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice, although we will always consider the circumstances of any case before deciding on the appropriate penalty.

Examples of gross misconduct include (but are not limited to):

- theft and dishonesty
- fraud and corruption
- physical violence
- serious instances of bullying or harassment (whether it takes place in person or online)
- acts of discrimination against fellow staff members, clients or customers
- deliberate damage to company property
- any conduct that negatively affects our reputation
- unauthorised disclosure of confidential information

- serious breach of our rules, including, but not restricted to, health and safety rules and rules on computer use
- consuming alcohol or unlawful drugs during working hours or in the workplace
- smoking (including the use of e-cigarettes) in any unauthorised area
- unauthorised use of computer equipment
- misuse of company passwords or log-in details
- deliberate breach of procedures on the handling of personal data
- deliberate refusal to follow reasonable instructions
- accessing obscene or pornographic material while at work or on equipment that we provide
- breach of cash-handling procedures
- breach of requirements relating to safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults
- deliberate breach of professional standards relevant to your employment and
- offering or accepting a bribe within the meaning of the Bribery Act 2010.

Misconduct

Examples of misconduct for which disciplinary action is appropriate include (but are not limited to):

- persistent poor timekeeping
- breach of our absence reporting procedures
- general disobedience
- careless work
- time-wasting
- disruptive behaviour and
- insulting or offensive behaviour towards others, not amounting to serious harassment or bullying.

Where any actions constitute possible criminal offences, a referral will be made to the appropriate body or organisation for investigation and any criminal investigation may be conducted concurrently.

In some circumstances, other agencies may also be involved in parallel investigations. In situations where the allegations raise safeguarding concerns, these will be referred to the lead safeguarding officer for the council (or their deputy) and may then be referred to the adult safeguarding team (for allegations relating to adults) or the local authority designated officer in the county council (for allegations relating to children).

Where the allegations relate to suspected criminal offences including fraud, theft or corruption, HR will liaise with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit. In such circumstances, a joint investigation may be necessary.

Where the police, counter fraud and enforcement or the county safeguarding teams may also be investigating, the council will liaise with these bodies to ensure that the council investigation does not jeopardise any criminal investigation. Wherever possible, the council will progress its internal investigation alongside any other external investigation

Actions outside work

We may consider your actions outside work (including your use of social media) to be gross misconduct, or misconduct, if they affect your ability to carry out your job or have a negative effect on our reputation.

Procedure

Allegations of Gross Misconduct / Misconduct

Where an allegation is made against you that cannot be resolved informally, or it is not appropriate to do so, the allegation will be explained to you by your line manager (or, where appropriate, a different line manager). The details of the allegation will also be confirmed to you in writing, together with a copy of this disciplinary procedure.

Suspension

On occasions it may be necessary to consider suspending an employee (on full basic pay) from duty, assign the employee to amended duties, or temporarily redeploy them to an alternative work base or role during the course of the investigation process.

The decision to suspend an employee will be made by management and will only be considered where:

- there is a serious allegation of misconduct and working relationships have severely broken down
- the employee could tamper with evidence, influence witnesses and/or sway the investigation into the allegation
- there is a risk to other employees, property or customers
- the employee is the subject of criminal proceedings which may affect whether they can do their job.

Suspension will also be considered in other circumstances if it is reasonably believed that the suspension of the employee will enable a fair investigation to be completed.

Suspension is in no way intended to indicate guilt on your part, but is an administrative measure designed to protect the business or ensure the smooth running of the disciplinary procedure. Any period of suspension will be regularly reviewed, kept as short as possible and will be on a fully paid basis.

Stage 1 - Investigation

We will investigate the allegations to decide whether there is sufficient evidence to justify taking the matter further.

An appropriate person, who may be an external independent investigator, will be appointed to conduct the investigation and will talk to you at an early stage to hear your response to the allegations and will talk to anyone else who may have relevant information such as the line manager, colleagues and witnesses to the event being investigated etc.

Where appropriate, the investigation may also include the examination of documents, including emails and other forms of electronic communication and you are invited to bring or any relevant documents to the meeting (or send the documentation afterwards) as the purpose of the investigation is to establish the facts so that a decision can be made about any disciplinary action and whether or not an act of misconduct has been committed. It is important that you cooperate fully with the investigation process as this is the best way to ensure a fair outcome.

Once the investigation is complete, management will decide whether to proceed to a formal disciplinary hearing or whether the matter can, in fact, be resolved informally or without any further action.

Stage 2 - Disciplinary Hearing

Invitation to a disciplinary hearing

If we consider that it is necessary to hold a disciplinary hearing, we will confirm this to you in writing. You will usually be given at least five working days' notice of any hearing, depending on the complexity of the case, to allow you to prepare and to arrange for a work colleague to accompany you.

You will be entitled to be accompanied by a work colleague. The responsibility for finding a work colleague rests with you.

We will give you a copy of any evidence/investigation report collated during the investigation in advance of the disciplinary hearing, and you will be invited to submit any further evidence that you consider to be relevant.

The disciplinary hearing

The disciplinary hearing will be conducted by the chair. Details of the chair will be given in the invite letter.

The evidence gathered during the investigation will be presented at the Disciplinary Hearing by the Investigating Officer or a Manager/senior Manager and you and your work colleague will be given an opportunity to confer and to respond. You may also let us know if you are seeking to call on witnesses to give evidence on your behalf if it is relevant to the issues being considered to the meeting.

The chair of the disciplinary hearing may choose to adjourn the meeting so that further evidence can be obtained. If this happens, the hearing will be reconvened once this is done, and you will be given an opportunity to respond to any new evidence. Before the hearing closes, you (or your work colleague) will be given an opportunity to make a closing statement. Once closing statement are made, no further comments will be accepted.

The outcome

The chair of the hearing will usually adjourn for a period to consider the outcome. The outcome will usually be communicated when the hearing is reconvened but will, in any case, be confirmed to you in writing as soon as possible and usually within seven working days after the hearing.

Disciplinary penalties

If the allegations are upheld to any extent, formal disciplinary action may be taken. This will usually take the form of a first written warning for a first offence. However, we reserve the right to implement this procedure at any stage depending on the circumstances and misconduct.

A first written warning is appropriate for instances of misconduct that are sufficiently serious to warrant disciplinary action, but where there is no current warning in place. The warning will set out the nature of the misconduct and explain that any further misconduct (similar or otherwise) will be likely to result in further disciplinary action.

A final written warning is given in cases of serious misconduct or where there is a live first written warning in place and the circumstances justify it. It will set out the nature of the misconduct and make it clear that any further misconduct (similar or otherwise) will be likely to result in dismissal.

There may be some cases where it is appropriate to give you a final written warning as a first sanction in consideration of the seriousness of the offence (this could be an alternative to dismissal in a potential gross misconduct situation).

If you are found to have committed misconduct while subject to a live final written warning, the outcome may be that you are dismissed with notice.

If you are found to have committed gross misconduct, the outcome may result in you being dismissed without notice as a summary dismissal. In these circumstances, your contract of employment will end immediately, although this will not affect your right of appeal.

In exceptional circumstances (for instances where you are likely to continue to commit misconduct even if subject to warning), you may be summarily dismissed even if no warning of dismissal has been given. Depending on the terms of your contract, this may involve being given a payment in lieu of notice.

If you are dismissed with notice, we reserve the right to instruct you not to work for the duration of your notice period. This may include a payment in lieu of notice, garden leave and you being asked to take your holiday.

Additional Sanctions

Where formal written warnings are issued as a result of a disciplinary hearing the Council may also apply additional sanctions. The Council may use one or more of the following, depending on the circumstances:

- Suspension for a period without pay
- Loss of increment
- Recovery of costs
- Temporary cessation of pay.
- Disciplinary transfer

These alternatives, short of dismissal, mentioned above are not exhaustive and the Council reserves the right to take any action it considers reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances.

There may be occasions where the employee's conduct is satisfactory throughout the period of warning only to lapse very soon thereafter.

Where a pattern emerges and/or there is evidence of abuse, the employee's entire disciplinary record should be taken into account by the Hearing Officer when deciding how long any warning should last.

Stage 3 - Appeal

Appealing against the outcome

If you consider the disciplinary process and/or outcome are unfair you are entitled to appeal.

You should appeal in writing to the senior manager, named in the disciplinary outcome letter within 10 working days of receipt of the disciplinary outcome letter. If you have any questions about the process you should raise them with your HR Business Partner.

You should also set out in writing the grounds on which you believe the outcome of the original hearing to have been unfair or flawed and why you feel it to be flawed.

Appeal hearing

Following receipt of your appeal, we will arrange an appeal hearing within 20 working days, with the appeal to be heard within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal. However, if this is not possible, you will be informed of the reason for any delay.

You are entitled to be accompanied at the appeal hearing by a work colleague.

The appeal meeting will be conducted by a senior employee or another delegated person who will consider the grounds that you have put forward and review the conclusion reached in the original disciplinary hearing.

At the hearing you will be given the opportunity to explain why you feel the initial hearing reached the wrong conclusion.

Outcome of appeal

Following the appeal hearing, the relevant line manager/senior Manager will inform you in writing, usually within seven working days, of the outcome. The outcome may result in the original decision being upheld, the original decision being overturned, or a lesser sanction. The appeal will not result in the sanction being increased.

If the result of the appeal is that a decision to dismiss you is overturned, you will be reinstated with immediate effect. You will be reimbursed in full for any wages lost since your dismissal.

The outcome of the appeal is final.

Duration of warnings

When you are given a warning, we will tell you how long it will remain live. This will depend on the specific circumstances. However, in general:

- a first written warning remains live for up to six months and
- a final written warning remains live for twelve months.

Warnings may be live for a longer period depending on the seriousness of the misconduct and the wider circumstances of the case.

Once a warning has expired, it will no longer be considered when determining the level of any further disciplinary action.

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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference.

At WODC we want to treat people fairly, value differences and remove all the barriers to preventing our people from fully participating in public life. We all have different backgrounds, strengths, personal characteristics, perspectives, and attributes that when harnessed and used collaboratively, are incredibly powerful. An inclusive and diverse culture helps each of us to benefit from a wider range of these different perspectives, experiences, and skills, creating opportunities and reducing the barriers for everyone. Our aim is to create an inclusive and diverse workforce, however creating an inclusive and diverse culture, with equality for all, is a process of continuous improvement, we never stop learning!

To support this inclusive culture, this policy:

- outlines our commitment throughout the employment lifecycle to equality, diversity and inclusion and sets out how we put this commitment into practice
- explains the behaviours we expect of our people in support of this commitment and
- sets out the key steps we take to make our culture as inclusive as possible, and how we ensure equality of opportunity throughout the employment lifecycle.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to anyone working for us. This includes employees, contractors, volunteers, interns and apprentices. The policy also relates to job applicants and is relevant to all stages of the employment relationship.

Our Commitment to You

We believe that a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion not only benefits our organisation but supports wellbeing and enables our people to work better because they can be themselves and feel that they belong.

We are committed to promoting a working environment based on dignity, trust and respect, and one that is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation.

We ensure that our recruitment, promotion and retention procedures do not treat people less favourably because of their:

- disability
- gender, gender identity or gender reassignment status
- marital status
- race, racial group, ethnic or national origin, or nationality
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- age
- civil partnership status
- pregnancy or maternity
- paternity
- educational background
- socio-economic background
- caring responsibilities
- part-time status or
- fixed-term status.

What we Expect from You

We expect you, and every one of our people, to take personal responsibility for observing, upholding, promoting and applying this policy. Our culture is made in the day-to-day working interactions between us so creating the right environment is a responsibility that we all share.

Developing this culture does not happen by accident but requires ongoing commitment and nurturing. The reality is that we live in a world where areas of difference (whether gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or others) often translate to biases, challenges and barriers that may not be faced by others. And the more areas of difference a person brings, the more this effect can be compounded. In this way, the experiences of a black woman with a disability may be very different to the experiences of a black woman without a disability and also very different from the experiences of a white woman. This way of looking at diversity and inclusion is known as "intersectionality".

We expect you to treat your colleagues and third parties (including customers, suppliers, contractors, agency staff and consultants) fairly and with dignity, trust, and respect. Sometimes, this may mean allowing for different views and viewpoints and making space for others to contribute.

By embedding such values and constructively challenging inappropriate comments or ways of working, you can help us achieve and maintain a truly inclusive workplace culture.

Any dealings that you have with colleagues, or third parties must be free from any form of discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying.

If any of our people is found to have committed, authorised, or condoned an act of discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or bullying, we will take action against them including (for those to whom it applies) under our Disciplinary procedure.

We are liable for discrimination and harassment as an organisation, and you should be aware that you can also be personally liable for discrimination and harassment.

Discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination because of certain protected characteristics. These are:

- disability
- sex
- gender reassignment
- marital or civil partnership status
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- age and
- pregnancy or maternity.

Discrimination can be intentional or unintentional and may occur directly, indirectly, by association, or by perception under the Equality Act 2010.

There are also two specific types of discrimination that apply only to disability: "discrimination arising from disability" and "failing to make reasonable adjustments" under the Equality Act 2010.

Discrimination is not always obvious and can be subtle and unconscious. This stems from a person's general assumptions about the abilities, interests and characteristics of a particular group that influences how they treat those people (known as "unconscious bias"). Such assumptions or prejudices may cause them to apply requirements or conditions that put those in particular groups at a disadvantage. Examples include:

- steering employees into particular types of work on the basis of stereotypical assumptions without considering the particular attributes and abilities of individuals
- recruiting or promoting individuals into particular roles because of assumptions about the reactions or preferences of other employees or clients and
- using different standards for different groups of employees to judge performance.

Different Types of Discrimination under the Equality Act 2010

- **Direct discrimination:** Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic compared with someone who does not have that characteristic (for example choosing not to recruit someone because they are disabled and you think they "wouldn't fit in" to the team).
- **Indirect discrimination:** Where a policy, procedure or way of working that applies to everyone puts people with a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage, compared with people who do not have that characteristic, unless there is a good reason to justify it. An example is introducing a requirement for all staff to finish work at 6pm. It is arguable that female employees, who statistically bear the larger share of childcare responsibilities could be at a disadvantage if the new working hours prevent them from collecting their children from school or nursery.
- **Associative discrimination:** Treating someone less favourably because they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, for example because their partner is transgender.
- **Discrimination by perception:** Treating someone less favourably because you perceive them to have a protected characteristic even if they do not, for example choosing not to promote someone because you mistakenly perceive them to be gay.
- **Discrimination arising from disability:** Treating someone unfavourably because of something connected with that person's disability and where such treatment is not justified. Examples include:
 - dismissing or failing to pay a bonus to someone because of their disability-related absence or

- disciplining someone for losing their temper where such loss of temper was out of character and was due to severe pain caused by them having cancer.
- **Failing to make reasonable adjustments:** Employers are legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that aspects of employment, or the employer's premises, do not put a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage. Failing to comply with this duty is unlawful. Examples of reasonable adjustments might include:
 - allocating some of the disabled person's duties to a colleague
 - changing their working hours or place of work
 - adjusting procedures for assessing job candidates and
 - modifying Disciplinary and Grievance procedures.

Harassment and Sexual Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of:

- violating someone else's dignity or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone else.

Sexual harassment is:

- conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment and
- less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

Victimisation

Victimisation is treating another person detrimentally either because that person has made a complaint of discrimination or harassment, or because they have supported someone else who has made such a complaint, for example by giving a witness statement that supports the allegations.

Bullying

There is no legal definition of bullying. However, we regard it as conduct that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or an abuse or misuse of power, and usually persistent, that has the effect of undermining, humiliating, or injuring the recipient.

Bullying can be physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct. It is not necessarily face to face and can be done by email, phone calls, online or on social media. Bullying may occur at work or outside work.

If the bullying relates to a person's protected characteristic, it may also constitute harassment and, therefore, will be unlawful.

More information around Harassment & Bullying can be found in the attached policy [INSERT HYPERLINK](#)

Equality of Opportunity

Recruitment

We take reasonable and appropriate steps to encourage job applications from as diverse a range of people as possible.

We will ensure anyone making a decision about recruitment does not discriminate in any way and has attended appropriate training.

Every decision-maker should challenge themselves, and other members of the recruitment selection panel, to make sure that any stereotypes, unconscious bias, or prejudice do not play any part in recruitment decisions. For example, question and check the basis of your decisions and ensure that you are making a decision on an objective criterion for the role.

Please refer to the Recruitment Policy and Procedure for more information. [HYPERLINK](#)

Disability Inclusion

Recruiting people with a disability

The recruitment team and our HR Team will consider disability in advance of a recruitment campaign so that advertising, application forms and assessments, arrangements for interviews, job descriptions and employee specifications, and selection criteria are appropriate and as inclusive as possible.

We will ask applicants at the outset if they require any reasonable adjustments to be made to the recruitment process. These may include ensuring easy access to the premises for an interview/adapting psychometric tests/replacing psychometric tests with an alternative option/providing an alternative to a telephone interview for a deaf candidate/providing a suitable chair for an interview with a candidate suffering from back problems/list other relevant examples.

If you are involved in the interview process, you must not ask job applicants about their health or disability. If you have any concerns, please seek advice from your HR Business Partner. Such approval is given only in exceptional circumstances and where there are specific legal grounds for doing so.

Talking about Disability

We understand that some people find it hard to discuss their disabilities and that disability can be invisible.

Psychological safety, where people feel able to speak up about their experiences without fear of negative consequences, is paramount to ensuring disability inclusion.

However, this is only possible if we treat people with dignity, trust and respect and we expect everyone to uphold these values.

We do not tolerate ableist language in our organisation. Ableist language is language that is negative, inappropriate or offensive towards people with a disability and may take the form of jokes or "banter". If you adopt such language, we will take action against you including (where applicable) under our Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Reasonable adjustments

If you have a disability, you do not have to tell us. However, we would encourage you to let us know so that we can support you, for example by making reasonable adjustments to our premises or to aspects of your role, or to our working practices.

If you are experiencing difficulties at work because of your disability, please contact your line manager to discuss potential reasonable adjustments that may alleviate or minimise such difficulties. We may need to discuss your needs with you and your medical adviser to help us get the right support in place. You will

have a documented framework of the agreed reasonable adjustments, which will be reviewed on a regular basis, but will remain in situ for the duration of employment.

For colleagues who are returning from long-term disability-related absence, we have a return-to-work support programme in place.

Support

If you have a disability, or you care for someone with a disability, and need emotional support or help with practical issues, please contact your line manager in the first instance. You can also seek support & advice by contacting your HR Business Partner.

Training

All staff must attend the mandatory training provided for the whole workforce via iHasco, our online training portal. If you are involved with making decisions about a person's employment, you must attend appropriate equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) training. All managers are required to attend EDI training.

All new starters must attend equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) training as part of their onboarding programme.

Every current employee must attend regular equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) training on at least an annual basis.

Monitoring and review

We analyse diversity and inclusion data (in compliance with our data protection obligations) on an ongoing basis to assess the impact of this policy and our equality, diversity, and inclusion strategy. We would look to address any issues identified by this data.

You are also responsible for ensuring the data we hold for you is correct, please take the time to regularly check your business world data and notify us if you have any questions, queries or concerns.

Promoting Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in the workplace

We are continually looking at ways to promote ED&I in the workplace, not only through training but also through the online portal and welcome suggestions from our employees at any time.

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Expenses Policy and Procedure

Introduction

This policy sets out West Oxfordshire District Council's (WODC) rules on how employees can claim for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties for the organisation. The policy covers travel, meals and accommodation, overseas and relocation expenses, business entertainment, gifts and staff parties.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that employees are properly reimbursed for legitimate business expenses and to ensure that these expenses are treated appropriately for tax purposes.

General procedure

We will reimburse you for actual expenditure that is incurred wholly, necessarily, and exclusively in connection with authorised duties that you undertake in the course of your employment.

All claims should be submitted on a monthly basis and no later than three months after the expenditure has been incurred.

Claims should be submitted through the Business World system for your line manager to approve before the 6th of the month. Appropriate receipts must be supplied. You will find full instructions about how to submit a claim on the main portal on the Business World Support page [Business World - uploading receipts](#)

Expenses will not be paid unless supporting evidence is provided, together with a completed expenses claim on Business World. This should include receipts or invoices with the date and time of the transaction (unless you are claiming for mileage). When claiming for travel expenses on public transport, you should enclose or attach proof that evidences the journey. When claiming for mileage, a fuel receipt showing VAT should also be provided.

As a general rule credit and debit card statements will not be accepted. On the rare occasion tickets or other proofs are not provided, you should provide evidence of the cost incurred on an appropriate banking statement. Claims without receipt but submitted with a statement as evidence will be approved at the discretion of your line manager. Where you are submitting a VAT receipt, you should set out:

- the name and VAT registration number of the retailer or service provider
- the goods and services provided and
- the amount of VAT payable.

Once completed via Business World, you should submit your expenses claim form to your approving manager. Once your manager has approved the claim form, this is automatically submitted to the Payroll Team for payment.

We may return an expenses claim to you without payment if it is completed incorrectly or lacks supporting evidence. We reserve the right to withhold any payment where written approval has not been sought.

We will pay claims for authorised expenses by BACS transfer into the same bank account into which your salary is paid.

In general, you should not incur expenses other than in the categories listed below. Claims for expenditure other than for those categories listed below should have written approval from your line manager before incurring the expense.

We will accept email as written approval where it is required under this policy.

Any queries in relation to this policy should be directed to your line manager in the first instance.

Travel

Employees and line managers should consider whether travel is necessary to meet business objectives or if there are more appropriate means (for example, teleconferencing or videoconferencing).

Air

Any flight must be pre-authorised by the Chief Executive in writing before being booked. Where possible, flights should be booked well in advance to benefit from any discounts for early booking, and you will usually only be permitted to travel in economy. Any exceptions to this would only be upon written authorisation from the Chief Executive.

Personal incentives or rewards associated with specific air travel, such as air miles, should not be a factor in determining which flight is purchased for business. The key consideration is whether the flight is the most cost-effective for the organisation unless there is a valid business reason for taking an alternative flight.

Rail

You may claim for standard class rail fares only. Where possible, rail journeys should be booked well in advance to benefit from any discounts for early booking.

You should, where possible, use any rail cards or season tickets that have already been paid for as part of your normal commute to the office towards any journey taken on business, where this is more economical.

Any exceptions to this would only be upon written authorisation from the Chief Executive.

Taxis

You may claim for a taxi fare only in limited circumstances and these should be approved by your service manager in the first instance. These are:

- where taking a taxi would result in a significantly shorter travel time than using public transport
- where there is a disability/mobility issue
- where there are several employees travelling together or
- where personal security and safety of employees is an issue, for example taxis may be permitted after 9.30pm.

You must obtain a receipt with details of the date, place of departure and destination of the journey.

Use of your own car

It may be appropriate and cost-effective to use your own car when travelling on business, for example if you are travelling with several employees or, where there is limited public transport to your destination, or the journey time is significantly shorter than using public transport. Any use of your own car on business is subject to you:

- holding a full UK driving licence
- ensuring that your car is roadworthy and fully registered and
- holding comprehensive motor insurance that provides for business use.

We accept no liability for any accident, loss, damage or claim arising out of any journey that you make on business unless caused by the organisation's negligence. We will not pay for the cost of any insurance policy on your own car.

To claim a mileage allowance payment, you should set out the distance of the journey undertaken on your expenses claim form. However, you must deduct your usual home to work and work to home mileage from the total miles claimed. You must hold a valid driving licence and have the appropriate business car insurance. We will pay you a mileage allowance in accordance with the rate agreed with your employing body. You may also claim passenger mileage at a rate of 5p per mile for each colleague that accompanies you on your work-related journey. These rates apply whether your car is petrol, diesel, hybrid or electric.

We will pay for tolls, congestion charges and parking costs incurred as part of the business journey, where applicable, but not parking fines.

Bicycle and motorcycle

If travelling by bicycle, you can claim 20p per mile. If travelling by motorcycle, you can claim 24p per mile.

Bus

If travelling by bus is the most effective method of transport, you can claim back the full cost of your ticket. Where tickets are not available, you may submit a banking statement to validate the cost incurred.

Travel Time

Any time spent travelling for business reasons from your normal work base to another location is taken as work time.

Late Night/Early Morning Transport

The organisation will, in exceptional circumstances, reimburse you for late night or early morning transport, including a taxi, if you are required to travel to or from the office, airport, railway station or other destination for specific business reasons. This will apply only where you are required to be at work before 7am or after 9.30pm, or at the airport or railway station before 8am or after 9.30pm, these times may vary in line with seasonal changes and light conditions. You should speak with your manager for prior approval in such instances. No transport expenses will be reimbursed for any staff social events held by the organisation or employees.

You should seek prior written authorisation for late or early departures from or to work where possible from your line manager. If this is not possible, you should set out the reasons for the late or early departure in your expenses claim.

Meals/Accommodation

As a guideline for business travel, you should book accommodation equivalent to three-star standard or less. You may book hotel accommodation of up to £120 maximum in a major city and £100 elsewhere.

It is your responsibility to ensure that any hotel reservations are cancelled within the required cancellation period if they are no longer required.

The National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services ceased to produce nationally agreed subsistence rates for local government staff in 1996. Since that time, subsistence rates have been a subject for local determination.

If you are required to undertake business travel and you incur a cost on a meal (food and drink) after starting the journey, subject to retaining appropriate evidence of expenditure, you may claim:

- £5 (five-hour) rate - where you have been undertaking business travel for a continuous period of at least five hours and have incurred the cost of a meal
- £10 (10-hour) rate - where you have been undertaking business travel for a continuous period of at least 10 hours and have incurred the cost of a meal or meals
- £25 (15-hour and ongoing at 8pm) rate - where a scale rate of £5 or £10 is paid and the qualifying journey in respect of which it is paid lasts beyond 8pm a supplementary rate of £10 can be paid to cover the additional expenses necessarily incurred as a result of working late and
- £5 for an overnight personal allowance - where you are travelling on business and required to stay away from home overnight in the UK and you incur personal incidental costs, such as for a newspaper or laundry.

The maximum amounts above are inclusive of drinks. Where you are required to start early or finish late on a regular basis, the over five-hour and 10-hour rate, whichever is applicable, will be paid provided that all the other qualifying conditions are satisfied.

If you are inviting clients or other business contacts for breakfast, lunch, or dinner to discuss business matters, these maximum rates will not apply. However, where possible, you should obtain prior written approval from a Statutory Officer before making any reservations.

You should supply or attach receipts and invoices for all hotel and meal expenses other than for the overnight personal allowance, where no receipts are required. You can be reimbursed for a meal once only. If the cost of an evening meal or breakfast is included in the cost of overnight accommodation, you will not be entitled to meal allowances in respect of those meals.

Overseas Expenses

When travelling overseas on business, we will reimburse you for authorised expenses at the scale rates recommended by HM Revenue and Customs for an employee travelling outside the UK. These scale rates may be varied from time to time and will be published on the organisation's intranet for employee guidance and information.

You should provide the applicable currency exchange rate for the date on which the expense was incurred.

We will reimburse you for any travel visas, inoculations, and any other legal requirements for business travel. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have a valid passport with a minimum of six months remaining prior to the expiry date after the final day of travel.

We will provide business travel insurance for any trips authorised by the organisation.

Business Entertainment/Gifts

WODC recognises that corporate entertainment can provide opportunities to strengthen business relationships, enhance the organisation's reputation and deepen prospective clients' or suppliers' understanding of the business. Any entertainment booked for clients, suppliers, or other business contacts must be approved in advance by a Statutory Officer. You should submit:

- details of the individuals whom you wish to invite
- the name of the organisation that they represent
- the nature of the entertainment, including date and location and
- the business reasons for the entertainment.

We will only approve business entertainment proposals that demonstrate a clear business objective and that are appropriate for the nature of the business relationship. The organisation will not approve business entertainment where it considers that a conflict of interest may arise or where it could be perceived that undue influence or a particular business benefit is being sought (for example, prior to a tendering exercise). The organisation must ensure compliance with all applicable anti-corruption laws, including the Bribery Act 2010.

Any gifts, rewards or entertainment that you receive from clients, suppliers, or other business contacts should be reported immediately to your line manager. In certain circumstances, it may not be appropriate to retain such gifts and you may be asked to return gifts to the sender, for example, where there could be a real or perceived conflict of interest. As a rule, small tokens of appreciation, for example flowers or a bottle of wine, may be retained by employees.

Christmas Parties/Annual Events

Any team event such as a Christmas meal or celebration for a team or department will be subject to your line manager's approval, which must be authorised by a Statutory Officer.

All employees will need to fully expense any team celebrations or parties they attend.

Expenses that will not be reimbursed

The organisation will not reimburse you for:

- the cost of any travel between your home and usual place of work (except in exceptional circumstances for early morning/late night transport as set out above)
- the cost of any travel undertaken for personal reasons
- the cost of any travel for your partner or spouse
- any fines or penalties incurred while on business for whatever reason, including penalties for not paying for a rail ticket in advance of boarding the train and penalties or fines associated with motoring offences, including speeding or parking fines, clamping or vehicle recovery charges
- any expenses incurred for personal benefit or to improperly influence or reward a business contact or
- cash advances or withdrawals from an ATM machine.

You are required to pay for any travel costs incurred by your partner or spouse if they accompany you on business. Your spouse or partner must have adequate travel insurance for that journey.

False Claims

If the organisation considers that any expenditure claimed was not legitimately incurred on behalf of the organisation, it may request further details from you. The organisation will thoroughly investigate and check any expenses claim as it sees fit. It may withhold payment where insufficient supporting documents have been provided. Where payment has been made to you prior to the discovery that the claim was not legitimate or correct, it may deduct the value of that claim from your next salary payment on completion of the investigation.

Any abuse of the organisation's expenses policy will not be tolerated. This includes, but is not limited to:

- false expenses claims
- claims for expenses that were not legitimately incurred
- claims for personal gain
- claims for hospitality and/or gifts to induce a client or other business contact to take improper action and
- receipt by you of hospitality and/or gifts from business contacts that may be perceived to influence your judgment.

The organisation will take disciplinary action where appropriate and, in certain circumstances, may treat a breach of this policy as gross misconduct, which may result in your summary dismissal.

Where any actions constitute possible criminal offences, a referral will be made to the appropriate body or organisation for investigation and any criminal investigation may be conducted concurrently.

Where the allegations relate to suspected criminal offences including fraud, theft or corruption, HR will liaise with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit. In such circumstances, a joint investigation may be necessary.

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Flexible Working Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

We are committed to attracting and retaining the very best people and utilising all the talent and experience available. We recognise that our employees and potential employees have responsibilities, interests and aspirations outside of the world of work which impact on their time and appreciate that the standard Monday to Friday, 9 to 5 working week is no longer compatible with increasing demand for a better work-life balance.

This policy sets out our approach to flexible working requests under the statutory procedure.

Eligible Employees

All employees who have a minimum of 26 weeks' continuous service have the statutory right to request flexible working. Under the statutory procedure, you can make one request in every 12-month period.

However, we recognise the importance of providing flexible working for all employees. Therefore, if you are not eligible to make a formal request for flexible working under the statutory procedure, you may submit an informal request and we will consider this on an informal basis.

Types of Flexible Working

Examples of flexible working include:

- hybrid working (sometimes referred to as "blended working"), which allows you to split your time between attending the workplace and working remotely
- reducing the number of hours that you are working
- changing your start and finish times
- compressing your working hours into fewer days (for example moving to a nine-day fortnight); and
- working flexitime.

Making a Request for Flexible Working

All requests must be made in writing by email or letter. This should be submitted to your line manager in the first instance.

Any request made under this policy must include:

- the date of the application
- the changes that you are seeking to your terms and conditions of employment
- the date on which you would like the terms and conditions to come into effect
- what effect you think the requested change may have on your organisation, your colleagues and the ability to deliver the service
- how, in your opinion, any such effect might be dealt with
- a statement that this is a statutory request
- whether or not you have made a previous application for flexible working; and
- if you have made a previous request, when you made that application.

Where a request for flexible working does not contain all the required information, you will be asked to resubmit your request with the necessary additional information. Requests that are incomplete or contain errors will not be automatically rejected.

Timescales

Once you submit your flexible working request, it will be dealt with as soon as possible. However, all requests will be dealt with within three months, from receipt of the request to notification of any appeal decision.

The timescales within this policy may be extended where this is mutually agreed.

If you fail to attend a meeting to discuss your flexible working request, including an appeal meeting, and then fail to attend a rearranged meeting without good reason, your application will be deemed to have been withdrawn.

Meeting to Discuss a Flexible Working Request

Your line manager will usually arrange a meeting to discuss your request. The aim of the meeting is to find out more about your proposed working arrangements and how they could be of benefit to both you and the organisation. Be prepared to suggest solutions which will help your case.

Your line manager should aim to hold the meeting to discuss your request within 28 days of receiving it.

You may, if you wish, ask a work colleague to attend the meeting with you.

Where a request can, without further discussion, be approved in the terms set out in your written application, a meeting will not be necessary.

Right to Representation

At any formal meeting you have the right to be represented by a work colleague. However, consideration will be given to another person in exceptional circumstances.

Considering your Request

After the meeting, your line manager will consider your proposed flexible working arrangements carefully, weighing up:

- the potential benefits to both you and the organisation; and
- any adverse impact of implementing the changes.

Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis - agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their working patterns.

Notifying you of the Decision

Your line manager should aim to notify you of the decision as soon as possible and no later than 14 days after the meeting.

Your request may be granted in full or in part. For example:

- we may propose a modified version of your request
- your request may be granted on a temporary basis; or
- you may be asked to try the flexible working arrangement for a trial period.

Reasons for Rejecting a Request

Your request for flexible working will be rejected only because of:

- the burden of additional costs
- an inability to reorganise work among existing staff
- an inability to recruit additional staff
- a detrimental impact on quality
- a detrimental impact on performance
- a detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
- insufficient work for the periods the employee proposes to work
- a planned structural change to the business.

Your request will not be rejected for any other reason.

Your Right to Appeal

You have the right to appeal if your request for flexible working is rejected or only agreed in part.

Your appeal should be sent in writing to the appropriate line manager or senior manager within 14 days of receiving our decision. Your letter should set out the grounds on which you are appealing. An appeal meeting will be held within 14 days of you lodging your appeal.

You may, if you wish, ask a work colleague to attend the appeal meeting with you.

You will be informed of the outcome of your appeal as soon as possible and no later than 14 days after the appeal meeting.

Flexible Working Requests that are granted

If your request is upheld, you and your line manager should discuss how and when the changes will take effect.

Any changes to your terms and conditions of employment, whether permanent or temporary, will be put in writing and sent to you as an amendment to your contract of employment.

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Flexitime, TOIL and Overtime Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

WODC have a basic full time working week of 37 hours per week. Whilst a key principle is always ensuring we deliver a great service to our customers, we recognise that at times this can result in working above contractual hours. WODC recognises that it has a duty to protect the health and safety of its employees by ensuring that they do not work in excess of their hours on a regular basis and where this becomes excessive, the individual has the opportunity to be recompensed for the additional hours worked.

This policy is in place to define the flexi-time, time off in lieu and overtime system and to set down guidelines for its implementation.

'Flexi-time' is a system which allows employees to balance personal and work commitments with peaks and troughs regarding work load. As a result, overtime should not occur. There are occasions when extra hours become a feature of employment and therefore the flexible hours scheme cannot compensate sufficiently and therefore overtime or Time off in lieu (TOIL) will be more appropriate.

'Time off in lieu' (TOIL) is time off that is taken instead of being paid overtime, by employees who have worked beyond their contractual hours (for example; working a day that isn't contracted/weekends).

Employees will be allowed to take time off in lieu or receive overtime pay if they have obtained the prior agreement of their line manager.

Overtime/ Accrual of Time off in Lieu (TOIL)

Employees who occasionally need to work more than their contractual hours should inform their line manager at least twenty-four hours before the date concerned and seek their approval to do the overtime. The extra hours worked must be recorded in accordance with WODC's systems.

Employees are expected to manage the amount of overtime worked in cooperation with their line manager. Whilst there is no limit to the number of hours that an individual can accrue, these hours should be kept to a minimum and be in accordance with working time regulations.

Where overtime is an alternative to time off in lieu, it will typically be where an individual or individuals are asked to cover absences, to catch up on deadlines, or to resource one-off projects that cannot be carried out in normal working hours.

Your contract of employment will specify whether you are obliged to work overtime if requested.

If overtime work is available, the line manager will inform those employees who are eligible of the existence of overtime work and ask which employees are interested. If more than one employee is interested, the work will be allocated on a rotational basis to ensure that the opportunity is spread among the employees capable of doing the work.

Overtime that is approved in advance by your line manager will be paid as per your salary under your contract of employment.

Overtime rates will only apply for hours worked over 37 per week and only if properly authorised by your line manager, in advance. Payment for authorised overtime hours will be at the following rates:

- Monday to Saturday – time and a half
- Sundays and public holidays – double time

As an alternative to overtime, TOIL that has been accrued is equal to time actually worked. For example, if the employee works for two hours, two hours of TOIL is accrued, regardless of whether the work is done on a weekday, weekend or bank holiday.

Redemption of Time Off in Lieu

Employee's requests to redeem TOIL will be granted at the discretion of their line manager, taking into consideration operational requirements such as the needs of the business and workload of other employees. Line managers are expected to allow staff as much flexibility as they can under this policy. However, it will not always be possible to allow staff to take the time off when they have requested it. At least one-half day of TOIL must be accrued before it can be redeemed.

Employees must where possible take TOIL within one month of accrual. Employees cannot carry forward TOIL beyond this period without the prior agreement of their line manager.

Line managers are responsible for monitoring the levels of TOIL that employees are accruing and ensuring that accumulations are in accordance with this policy.

When an employee moves to a different department, accumulated TOIL will be paid as overtime pay unless alternate arrangements are made. In this case, TOIL paid as overtime will be charged to the department for which the employee was working when they did the overtime. Employees can obtain the agreement of their new line manager to carry over TOIL to their new department. The new department will absorb the associated costs of carrying over TOIL.

Employees who are leaving the organisation and have accrued TOIL will be paid overtime to cover this.

Redemption of Flexitime

We know that many staff like to enjoy the benefits of our flexi time scheme, which enables staff to accrue additional hours and then book flexi leave.

The system operates on a four-weekly settlement period of 148 hours (37 per week) and an employee will record their start and finish times and include breaks to keep a record of their hours.

In terms of flexi-leave, our agile working approach means that staff no longer need to utilise the traditional flexi time scheme to work flexibly and therefore its applicability is limited to the booking of flexi leave as either half or whole days. For staff who wish to utilise this system the following applies:

The scheme applies equally to part-time staff. If you are part time, your manager will discuss with you how it will work for you.

Accruing hours: Staff are permitted to accrue hours by working more than their contracted hours, up to a maximum of 10 hours in a four-week period and provided always that this is in accordance with the Working Time Regulations. Accrued hours can then be taken as flexi leave, with staff able to book up to 1 day or 2 half-days flexi leave in any four-week period.

At the end of the four weeks any hours in excess of 10 are lost and cannot either be carried forward into the next four-week period or paid as overtime. All staff are therefore encouraged to actively monitor the number of hours they are accruing and adopt their working patterns accordingly.

Staff are permitted to hold a debit of up to 5 hours in any four-week period, provided that the debit is cleared over the following four weeks.

48-hour Working Week

We cannot require you to work longer than an average of 48 hours per week. You can choose to work more than the maximum 48-hour week by signing an opt-out agreement. In some circumstances, we may ask that you sign an opt-out agreement. However, it is entirely your decision and you do not have to agree to opt out of the legal limit.

Health and Safety

If you are working long hours, you must take rest breaks. We have additional health and safety obligations towards young employees and employees who work at night. Please refer to the Health and Safety policy for more information

Recording of hours

Staff who wish to book TOIL or flexi leave or who carry debit hours must keep accurate records of their hours. To assist staff in recording sample time sheets are available on the Contractual benefits page on the portal. Time sheets should be saved into a shared area which can be accessed by your line manager.

Booking Time Off

All requests for flexi leave, TOIL and overtime must be submitted via Business World and can only be submitted once sufficient hours have been accrued. Staff are reminded that all requests are considered in line with the usual parameters around taking leave, for example, office cover etc. and therefore can be declined by your manager.

Crediting Annual Leave, Sickness, Training

For the purpose of crediting annual leave, sickness, training courses etc. one day will be seven hours 24 minutes and half a day will be three hours 42 minutes. For staff who work part-time the hours credited will be determined by your work pattern. With regard to training courses exceptions may be made, at the discretion of your line manager, where there are extended travel requirements.

Leaving the Organisation

For anyone leaving the organisation any accrued hours must be taken, or debit hours made up, during the notice period.

Any abuse of the scheme will be regarded as grounds for disciplinary action. Where any actions constitute possible criminal offences, a referral will be made to the appropriate body or organisation for investigation and any criminal investigation may be conducted concurrently.

Where the allegations relate to suspected criminal offences including fraud, theft or corruption, HR will liaise with the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit. In such circumstances, a joint investigation may be necessary.

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Grievance Policy and Procedure

Introduction

At West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC), we encourage a culture in which you can raise any workplace problems, complaints or concerns in a supportive framework and we will ensure that all grievances are dealt with quickly and fairly. The basic premise that every employee has the right to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect at work sits at the heart of this policy and is governed by the principles of natural justice.

We would strongly encourage employees and managers to resolve grievances informally, wherever possible. Most issues can be resolved informally. However, if an informal approach does not resolve matters, or is not appropriate, you may choose to raise a formal grievance.

This policy outlines the grievance process, the roles of those involved and the support that is available to you. At all stages of the procedure, all parties will observe confidentiality and act with sensitivity. When dealing with grievances and complaints, managers must ensure that equality and diversity considerations are taken into account at every stage of the process.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to all WODC employees. It does not apply to contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for WODC.

If you have a grievance that relates to ongoing disciplinary proceedings, you should raise this during the disciplinary procedure with reference to the grievance procedure (for example during the disciplinary meeting or appeal stage). The reason for this is so that the grievance can be addressed in the context of the relevant disciplinary proceedings to which it is related and so that any correction which is applicable can be made quickly and with the least disruption. No individual will suffer a detriment for raising a grievance. An individual may close a grievance at any time.

If you raise a grievance or you whistle-blow during disciplinary proceedings that is unrelated to those proceedings, the disciplinary proceedings and grievance procedure will normally run independently.

Fairness and Respect

We recognise that a grievance procedure can be stressful and upsetting. Everyone involved in the process is entitled to be treated calmly and with respect.

We will not tolerate abusive or insulting behaviour from anyone taking part in a grievance procedure and will treat any such behaviour as misconduct under our disciplinary procedure. Making malicious, vexatious or false allegations will not be tolerated and is a disciplinary offence.

Remote Proceedings

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting under this procedure, we will conduct the process remotely. This could happen if you are physically not able/incapable to attend the meeting or if there are practical reasons as to why a face-to-face meeting cannot go ahead. We will ensure that all those participating have access to the necessary technology. Your rights will not be affected, and we will ensure that the procedure remains fair and reasonable.

Adjustments to Proceedings

If any aspect of the grievance procedure causes you difficulty because of a disability, or if you need assistance because English is not your first language for instance, you should raise this with your line manager or the person holding the meeting, who will make appropriate arrangements for you. **ADD HYPERLINK to ED&I**

Recording of Hearings and Investigation Meetings

We will take a written record of all meetings conducted under this procedure. This will be done either by the person holding the meeting, a member of the HR Team or by an additional person arranged by us to take notes.

You, or any person acting with you or on your behalf, are not normally permitted to record electronically any meeting that we hold under the grievance procedure. This is to encourage openness and full participation. Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.

In certain limited circumstances, we may permit a meeting to be recorded electronically, for example where it is a reasonable adjustment for an employee with a disability. Where we permit a meeting to be recorded electronically, we will take responsibility for making the recording.

Where we intend to record meetings held remotely, we will comply with our data protection obligations and obtain prior consent from all attendees.

Raising an Informal Grievance

In the first instance, you should raise any grievance that you may have informally with your line manager. If your grievance is about your line manager, you should raise this with a statutory officer or HR Business Partner if unsure who to approach.

The relevant manager will meet with you to give you the opportunity to explain your grievance and seek to identify whether the issue can be resolved informally. Many concerns can be resolved informally.

Mediation is a voluntary and confidential process and if you do not wish to take part in mediation, you do not have to. The mediator will be impartial, neutral, and fully trained to conduct mediation whether they be an internal or an external resource. Mediation can help to mend workplace relationships by: -

- Finding solutions that everyone agrees to.
- Improving communication.
- Allowing everyone involved to have control of what is finally agreed.

Mediation can be used at any stage in a disagreement but the earlier the disagreement is dealt with the less chance there is of things becoming more difficult and entrenched.

However, while we encourage the informal resolution of complaints through informal meetings or an agreement to take part in mediation, we recognise that this is not always possible or appropriate, for example if your grievance relates to a serious issue such as discrimination. Therefore, if the informal process does not resolve matters such that you are not satisfied with the outcome or is not appropriate or does not work, you should raise a formal grievance under this procedure.

Raising a Formal Grievance

Where your grievance has not been resolved informally, or if your grievance is serious in nature, you should raise the matter formally in writing. Grievances can be about: -

- Bullying and Harassment (normally dealt with under the Anti-harassment and Bullying policy - [hyperlink](#))
- Communication problems
- Personality clashes
- Relationship breakdowns

To make a formal complaint, you should discuss this first with your line manager. If your complaint is about your line manager, you should raise this with another appropriate senior manager/statutory officer. If you have any queries about this procedure you should refer to your HR Business Partner. Under the formal procedure within this policy:

- we will ask you to set out your complaint in writing or via email. Please include as much detail as possible, for example:
 - the respondents name (who is/are the key people involved in your complaint)
 - the nature of the complaint
 - the dates of the alleged acts of your complaint
 - names of any witnesses
 - and details of any action taken to address the matter so far
 - any other information that you feel is directly relevant
- you may be asked to discuss this in more detail with the investigating officer,
- we would usually expect the matter to be investigated, which may include meeting with the alleged bully/harasser to ascertain their response to the allegations. It may also include interviewing potential witnesses who we will instruct to keep the matter confidential
- we would usually expect the manager chairing the matter to carry out further investigations of the complaint where necessary
- we would invite you to a meeting to discuss your complaint in full. You will have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague
- we would hold a meeting with you to enable us to ask you further questions in light of any information we have gathered from the alleged bully/harasser and/or witnesses
- the chair will consider all the evidence in full and make a decision
- we will inform you of the decision (this will normally be in person without unreasonable delay) and, if we uphold the complaint, instigate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal against the bully/harasser. You will be notified of the timescales involved and any decision will be confirmed to you in writing.

Your complaint should be in writing or on email and sent to your line manager. If your complaint relates to your line manager, you should send your written grievance to a senior manager/statutory officer.

Stage 1 - Investigation

Your grievance will be kept confidential as far as possible. Other people being questioned will be asked to keep the matter confidential.

However, before proceeding to a grievance hearing, we may have to carry out a fact-finding investigation. This will usually be conducted by the same manager who will hear your grievance. The relevant manager will write to you confirming that they are conducting the investigation and the timescale for completion. You have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague.

The level of investigation and time this will take will vary depending on the nature of your grievance.

You will be given a copy of any evidence, reports produced etc, collated during the investigation in advance of the grievance hearing. However, in some cases, the evidence given by individuals may have to remain confidential. Where confidentiality is necessary, we will provide you with an appropriate summary of the evidence.

Stage 2 - Hearing your Grievance

The Grievance Hearing

The grievance hearing will be held within five working days of receiving your written complaint. However, if this is not possible, you will be informed of the reason for any delay.

You are entitled to be accompanied by a work colleague.

The grievance hearing will be conducted by your line manager, unless your grievance relates to your line manager, in which case it will be conducted by another manager.

The purpose of the hearing is for you to explain the nature of your complaint and what action you feel should be taken to resolve the matter. If more information comes to light, it may be necessary to adjourn the grievance hearing to conduct a further investigation and reconvene the hearing when this has been done.

If you are unable to attend the grievance hearing because of circumstances beyond your control, you should inform the line manager conducting the hearing as soon as possible and explain the circumstances. We will reschedule the hearing at least once but if you fail to attend the rescheduled hearing, the grievance hearing may take place in your absence, based on your written grievance statement and any other documentation available.

The Outcome

Following the hearing, the chair will inform you in writing, usually within seven working days after the hearing, of the outcome and any action that will be taken as a result of your complaint.

Right to Representation

At any formal meeting you have the right to be represented by a work colleague. However, consideration will be given to another person in exceptional circumstances.

Stage 3 - Appeal

Appealing Against the Outcome

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your grievance, you may submit a formal appeal.

You should appeal in writing to the senior manager, named in the grievance outcome letter within 7 working days as specified and if you have any questions about the process you should raise them with your HR Business Partner

Your letter should clearly state the grounds of your appeal, i.e. the basis on which you consider that your grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved.

Appeal Meeting

We will then arrange an appeal meeting within seven working days to consider the matter. However, if this is not possible, you will be informed of the reason for any delay.

You are entitled to be accompanied at the appeal meeting by a work colleague.

The appeal meeting will be conducted by the Chief Executive/statutory officer, a member of the HR Team or delegated person, who will consider your grounds for appeal and review the conclusion reached in the original grievance hearing.

If you are unable to attend the appeal meeting because of circumstances beyond your control, you should inform the manager conducting the meeting as soon as possible and explain the circumstances. We will reschedule the meeting at least once but if you fail to attend the rescheduled meeting, the meeting may take place in your absence, based on your written grievance statement and any other supporting documentation available.

Outcome of Appeal

Following the appeal meeting, the relevant manager who was appointed as chair will inform you in writing, usually within seven working days, of the outcome. The outcome of the appeal is final.

Collective Grievances

If you and another employee (or more than two of you) have identical grievances and you all wish to have it addressed in one grievance process, you can raise a collective grievance. We retain the right to hear your grievances individually if your grievances are not identical, or there are exceptional circumstances.

If you are raising a collective grievance, the requirements set out in this policy are varied as follows.

Raising a Formal Grievance

Your written complaint should still be submitted as an individual document and be headed "Formal collective grievance". You and your colleagues will need to nominate one of you to act on behalf of all of you throughout the grievance process. Your grievance letter must identify whom you have appointed to be the nominated representative.

If you and your colleagues are all members of the same trade union, your trade union representative may raise the collective grievance on your behalf.

Stage 2 - Hearing your Grievance

If you have been appointed to be the nominated representative, you will be invited to attend one collective grievance meeting. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a work colleague. Following the meeting, there will be one identical outcome. You and your nominated representative will be notified of the outcome in writing and any action that will be taken as a result of your collective complaint. Where the nominated representative wishes to be accompanied at the grievance meeting by one of the other employees taking out the grievance, they may request this from the chair of the meeting.

Stage 3 - Appeal

If you, or any of your colleagues, are not satisfied with the outcome of your collective grievance, you may submit a formal appeal, your appeal should be headed "Formal collective appeal". You should appeal individually in writing to the Chief Executive/statutory officer named in your outcome letter within seven working days of receipt of the collective grievance outcome letter.

If you have been appointed to be the nominated representative, you will be invited to attend one collective grievance appeal meeting. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a work colleague. Following the appeal meeting, there will be one identical outcome. You and your nominated representative will be notified of the outcome in writing. Where the nominated representative wishes to be accompanied at the grievance meeting by one of the other employees taking out the grievance, they may request this from the chair of the meeting.

The outcome of the collective appeal is final.

If only one employee wishes to appeal, the normal grievance procedure will apply to the appeal.

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Health and Safety Policy and Procedure

Statement of Intent

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) recognises employees are a valuable resource and the health, safety, wellbeing and security of our colleagues is paramount:

Our commitment to managing health and safety:

- Encourage a positive health and safety culture where employees, councillors, suppliers, contractors and other stakeholders respect and support each other, stepping in where necessary to maintain a safe working environment.
- Comply with all applicable legal (and other) requirements appropriate to our businesses.
- Consider health and safety in our business decisions, ensuring all risks are properly assessed and managed.
- Elected councillors of West Oxfordshire District Council understand that the health and safety implications of decisions, particularly budget and target setting must be considered alongside other decision-making criteria. Councillors acknowledge the key part they must play in the monitoring and review of health and safety performance and support the principles of this policy in the council's approach to managing health and safety.
- Provide information, instruction, training and supervision to employees and others as is necessary to implement and maintain high standards of health and safety.
- Require everyone who works for and with us to take responsibility for their own health and safety, consider how their actions may impact on others and empower them to stop work when an unsafe condition arises.
- Ensure we provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and has appropriate facilities.
- Ensure we provide and maintain safe plant and equipment.
- Involve and listen to employees in matters relating to their health and safety to secure their commitment and participation at all levels.
- Develop appropriate health and safety procedures to prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health and ensure we learn from our experiences.
- Implement emergency procedures, including evacuation in case of fire or another significant incident.

This policy is regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the council’s business requirements and legislation.

Signed

Cllr Andy Graham
Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council

Date:

Signed

Giles Hughes
Chief Executive Officer

Date:

Legislation

Health and Safety Legislation is regulated by the Health and Safety Executive, with the main piece of legislation being the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 which places general duties on employers in protecting employees and others in the workplace. To support the Health and Safety at Work Act, various regulations have been developed that place more specific responsibilities on employers, compliance with which must be demonstrated.

To support this policy and the council's overall health and safety management, specific policies and statements have been produced by Publica Group (Support) Ltd which demonstrate compliance with the statutory duties placed on West Oxfordshire District Council.

Roles and Responsibilities

Elected Councillors

- Ensure that suitable and adequate resources and strategic direction are available to discharge the Council's health and safety responsibility
- Monitor, the overall performance of the Council's health and safety management system
- Have a duty to conduct their business and make decisions in conformity with health and safety legislation and the council's own policies.
- Agree all new or amended policies and statements as they are updated or developed

Chief Executive Officer

- Take overall responsibility for health and safety across the Council and lead in setting policy and direction.
- Take responsibility for ensuring that the overarching Health and Safety Policy is in place and that it is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.
- Ensure that suitable and adequate resources and strategic direction are available to discharge the council's health and safety responsibility.
- Monitor the overall performance of the council's health and safety management system.
- Ensure health and safety is a regular agenda topic at LMT meetings and that the LMT attendees are kept informed by the health and safety business partner of significant health and safety developments and performance matters.

Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Governance and Development

- Ensure that this policy is put into practice.
- Provide strategic direction and oversight of health and safety policies.
- Ensure that robust health and safety management arrangements and organisation exist.
- Support the Chief Executive Officer by meeting their health and safety responsibilities.

Managers

- Ensure that robust health and safety arrangements exist in their areas of responsibility.
- Ensure staff are aware of and comply with health and safety arrangements.
- Report and investigate all accidents and incidents as required.

Health & Safety Business Partner (Publica Ltd)

- Be the 'Competent Person' as set out in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Keep up to date with current legislation and best practice and provide appropriate and timely advice and support to employees.
- Report injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences to the Health and Safety Executive.
- Support incident investigations as appropriate and liaise with enforcing authorities.

Employees / Councillors / Volunteers / Contractors

- Familiarise themselves with the contents of this policy, Publica statements and guidance that relate to their work and meet the standards required of them whilst carrying out their work activities.
- Attend any specific health and safety training required to enable them to carry out their job/role safely.
- Work with due regard to the health and safety of themselves and others affected by their work activities.
- Draw attention to any health and safety hazards or deficiencies to an appropriate person.
- Provide relevant documentation as required with regard to matters of health and safety, including insurance and competency certificates.

Arrangements for Health and Safety

Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare)

Property Services (Publica Ltd.) will:

- Ensure the relevant legislative requirements are met including the display of the Health and Safety Law Poster and Public Liability Certificate.
- Ensure working areas and arrangements meet the minimum standard as set out in the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations.
- Ensure a suitable and sufficient assessment is carried out to identify adequate health, safety and welfare provision for the premises.
- Ensure the premises are inspected, tested and maintained for safe use as necessary.
- Ensure that appropriate records are kept of all risk assessments and information, training and instruction given to staff, maintenance records and inspection sheets.

Risk Assessments

Managers will ensure that suitable risk assessments are implemented, and relevant action taken. Risk Assessments will be reviewed when work or working conditions change.

Training

All staff receive a full induction and online refresher training where necessary. Specific training needs can be addressed via Publica's Learning & Development Team. Suitable arrangements are in place for employees who work remotely.

Consultation

Managers will consult with employees on all matters affecting their health and safety, including risk assessments. The council will also consult with staff representatives (including unions) as appropriate.

Monitoring and audit

Monitoring will be by way of inspection of workplaces and properties occupied by Publica, other clients and owned by West Oxfordshire District Council.

Audits will be carried out by the Health and Safety Business Partners on a regular basis and the results communicated at the appropriate level (Audit and Governance Committee) for consideration and if necessary, action on an annual basis.

Evacuation

The Chief Executive, who is the responsible person under the RRFSO (Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order), has overall responsibility for fire safety. The Evacuation Plan applies to everyone working on or visiting the premises. The plans are tested regularly and updated if necessary.

Support

Publica guidance documents support the arrangements in place to achieve the statement of intent. (Available via the staff portal) These documents are reviewed on a regular basis, to take into account legal requirements and best practice guidance.

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Long Term Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

Having a culture that is diverse, equitable and inclusive is core to everything that we strive to achieve and key to the creation of a positive organisational environment. WODC is also committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of all employees and we wish to offer supportive and effective management of absence due to ill-health and a positive healthy culture that empowers managers to handle sensitive situations in the correct way.

WODC is committed to dealing fairly and sympathetically with employees who are absent from work for long periods because of ill health and aim to assist them with their rehabilitation and eventual return to work.

WODC will always treat employees fairly and sensitively during times of sickness and ill health, it must also pay due regard to its operational needs. By implementing this policy, WODC aims to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of its operational needs and the genuine need of employees to take time off work because of ill health.

This policy recognises WODC is under a legal duty to consider making reasonable adjustments, and will do this in collaboration with the employee who becomes disabled or their disability worsens. This is to enable the employee to continue to carry out their role and to support any identified disadvantage being removed.

This policy does not form part of employees' terms and conditions of employment and may be subject to change at the discretion of the management.

Definitions

The following definitions are used in this policy:

"Absence management stages" our step-by-step process for managing frequent Short-term sickness absence.

"Period of sickness absence" or **"instance of sickness absence"** means any continuous period of sickness absence, of whatever length, during which the employee does not work.

"Short-term sickness absence" means any period of sickness lasting one to 27 calendar days.

"Long-term sickness absence" means any period of sickness lasting 28 calendar days or more.

"Formal review period" means a defined period during which an employee is required to show an improvement in their sickness absence levels.

Scope

This policy covers long-term sickness absence, which is defined as an absence lasting at least 28 calendar days. WODC operate a separate policy on short-term sickness absence, which is defined as an absence lasting one to 27 calendar days. - [hyperlink to the Sickness Absence policy](#).

Where an employee is on long-term sickness absence, but returns to work for short periods, we reserve the right to continue to manage their sickness absence under this policy, even in the case where an employee has returned to work for a short period.

This policy assumes that, if misconduct is suspected, our separate disciplinary procedure will apply, for example if there is evidence that:

- absence is not genuine or not for the reason provided
- the employee is undertaking inappropriate activities while off sick, such as carrying out work for another employer or
- the correct sickness absence notification and evidence procedure has not been followed.

Under our absence policy in cases of capability where an individual may be unable to fulfil their substantive role because of sickness or a disability, it may be appropriate to consider alternative action under the Performance Improvement (Capability) Policy and Procedure. [Hyperlink](#) Alternatively, there may be cases under our Absence management stages where the disciplinary procedure applies.

This policy applies to employees only and does not apply to contractors, consultants, agency workers or any self-employed individuals working for us.

Employees' Responsibilities

Employees are expected to:

- provide medical evidence for sickness of more than seven calendar days (with sickness of seven calendar days or less being self-certified)
- continue to keep in touch with their manager while unable to attend work. How frequently this should be agreed in advance with your line manager
- share as much information with their manager about the reason (i.e., the nature of the illness or injury) why they cannot attend work and how long they think the absence will last
- do what is possible to enable a return to work, for example by following medical guidance, taking steps recommended by healthcare professionals during rehabilitation, and not undertaking any activities while on sick leave that could exacerbate the health problem
- tell their manager of any extenuating circumstances, for example personal or family problems or an unmanageable workload
- bear in mind that we may seek a medical report, for example from their doctor or our occupational health advisers
- cooperate with the possible implementation of any adjustments to job duties, hours or working conditions, particularly those suggested by a healthcare professional and
- attend a return-to-work meeting when returning to work following long-term sickness absence.

Medical Evidence

All sickness that lasts longer than seven calendar days requires medical evidence (with sickness of seven calendar days or less being self-certified). This medical evidence will normally be in the form of a fit note, also known as a "statement of fitness for work".

As well as being issued by doctors, fit notes can be issued by nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists and physiotherapists who have assessed their fitness for work. Fit notes cannot be issued on request or via over-the-counter services without an assessment.

If the employee is absent for eight calendar days or more, their line manager must ensure that they provide a fit note as soon as possible. A fit note may state that the employee:

- is "not fit for work", in which case the employee should remain off work or
- "may be fit for work", if the recommendations are followed (for example, a phased return, amended job duties, altered hours of work, or workplace adaptations).

While there is no legal obligation to follow the recommendations, managers should take the recommendations seriously and give fair consideration - in consultation with the employee and Human Resources - as to whether any of the changes recommended can be accommodated.

The fit note will state the period that it covers, with a section for a start and end date. An employee on long-term sickness absence who is not returning to work on the next working day after the end date must obtain a new fit note.

Long term absence management stages

The following procedure aims to provide a consistent approach to managing long term absence initially through informal interventions, and where attendance does not improve/attendance targets are not met and concerns continue, through a formal process.

Managers are expected to keep in touch

It is important that managers maintain contact with an employee on long-term sickness absence to:

- monitor the employee's progress in terms of their return to health
- support the employee and actively maintain their engagement with us
- provide information to the employee so that they may make informed decisions (for example, in relation to sick pay entitlement)
- provide practical support from our occupational health advisers
- encourage a return to work as early as possible
- facilitate a phased return to work if required, by making appropriate temporary or permanent adjustments and
- ensure that the employee remains informed about events in the workplace.

It is the joint responsibility of both the line manager and the employee to maintain contact. Once the employee is on long-term sickness absence (i.e. once the employee has reached 28 days' continuous absence), the employee's line manager should contact the employee to agree the method and frequency of contact. Contact should be on a regular basis and the frequency of this contact should be agreed mutually, but no less than monthly.

Home visits

In some circumstances, contact with an employee on long-term sickness absence can be maintained via home visits. Home visits will take place only with the prior consent of the employee at mutually agreed times.

Home visits will usually be conducted by the employee's line manager. The line manager will normally be accompanied by a representative from Human Resources. Where the employee is female, at least one of the visitors should always be female. The employee may be accompanied during the visit if they wish, for example by a family member or an employee representative.

If the employee would prefer our representative not to visit them in the home, another location near the employee's home (such as a local cafe or leisure centre) could be mutually agreed.

Sick Pay

WODC operates a contractual sick pay scheme that supplements Statutory Sick Pay and Employment and Support Allowance to maintain normal pay during defined periods of absence on account of sickness, disease, accident, or assault.

Providing you follow the correct procedure as detailed in this document, you will normally receive:

Year 1 of service	1 months' full pay (after 4 months' service)
Year 2 of service	2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay
Year 3 of service	4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay
During Year 4 and Year 5 of service	5 months full pay and 5 months half pay
After 5 years of service	6 months full pay and 6 months half pay (as per the Green Book)

The Employee is required to cooperate fully with WODC when a medical referral to the Occupational Health Advisor is required.

The employee may be entitled to receive SSP if contractual sick pay is withheld or suspended, this may be in cases where we are not satisfied that the employee is ill, and no evidence of sickness is provided, or they remain within their probationary period for example.

Sick pay under our contractual scheme is subject to the usual deductions for PAYE, national insurance, pension contributions, etc.

Payments under our contractual scheme will be calculated by reference to the employee's salary only and any payments made under our contractual scheme are inclusive of any entitlement to SSP for the same period of absence.

Holiday during Sick Leave

An employee who is absent on sick leave will continue to accrue their holiday entitlement and will be given the opportunity to take this at a later date, including in the subsequent leave year, if they do not take the holiday entitlement due to being on sick leave.

An employee may wish to use annual leave to support their gradual return to work following a period of absence. The manager will seek to accommodate any requests where possible.

An employee on sick leave may apply to take their holiday entitlement while on sick leave. The holiday dates must be approved by the line manager, in accordance with internal procedures.

Medical Advice

Occupational health referrals

Once an employee has been absent for 28 calendar days, or as soon as it is confirmed that they will be absent for at least 28 days (for example, a fit note has signed them off for that period), their manager should contact their HR Business Partner to arrange an occupational health referral to be undertaken.

If not already done so, the line manager should also contact the employee to advise them that the occupational health department will be in touch, with a view to us seeking medical advice on the employee's prognosis.

At various stages of managing the employee's sickness absence, a manager may want to obtain advice on the employee's fitness for work from occupational health advisers. The manager should liaise with their HR Business Partner for support on this process.

Examples of when a line manager might refer to occupational health include:

- seek a medical report on the employee
- establish when the employee might be able to return to work
- ask for guidance on the employee's condition, for example if there is a possibility that the employee is disabled or where there is ambiguity as to the exact nature of the condition
- seek guidance on a referral for counselling or some other therapeutic support and
- discuss any adjustments that could be made to accommodate the employee's disability, if the employee is disabled.

WODC will treat personal data about you collected during the absence management process in accordance with its data protection policy / policy on processing special categories of personal data (this may include medical certificates or information given by you about your sickness). Information about how an employee's data is used and the basis for processing their data will be provided in the privacy notice which contains the data protection information [Hyperlink](#). Where WODC is relying on its legitimate interests as the legal ground for processing an employee's data, you can object to the processing.

Report from a medical practitioner who has been responsible for the employee's clinical care

Occupational Health may request a report from the employee's medical practitioner where necessary. The employee will be fully informed of their rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 and their permission will be sought for the report to be obtained.

The employee's permission will be sought to contact the medical practitioner on the relevant consent form, available from Human Resources.

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The employee has the right to access the report before it is released to us. If the employee wishes to see the report, they should inform the Occupational Health Practitioner at the time of their appointment.

When requesting a report, we will provide the medical practitioner with as much information as possible on the role of the employee and explain why the report is being sought. We will provide the medical practitioner with:

- a copy of the employee's signed form consenting to the request to seek a medical report
- confirmation that the employee is aware of their rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 and
- details of the major features of the employee's job.

We will ask the medical practitioner to identify:

- the nature of the employee's illness or injury
- when the employee is likely to be fully fit to resume their normal duties
- if the employee is unfit to resume their normal duties, what alternative duties they might be fit to undertake
- when the employee is likely to be fit to undertake any alternative duties
- what reasonable adjustments could be made to working conditions or work premises to facilitate a return to work and
- the likelihood of recurrence of the illness or injury once the employee has returned to work.

Where the employee refuses us permission to contact their medical practitioner, we will explain to the employee the reasons behind the request and inform the employee that a decision relating to their employment may be made without the benefit of access to medical reports. The same procedure will be followed where the employee delays in giving their consent.

Where the employee feels that the report is misleading or incorrect, they may ask the medical practitioner to amend it. If the medical practitioner does not agree with the employee and does not alter the report, the employee may attach a statement to the report to reflect their views.

Alternatively, having seen the report, the employee may request that access to the report be withheld from us. The employee will be informed that a decision relating to their employment may be made without the benefit of access to medical reports.

Report from a medical practitioner who has not been responsible for the employee's clinical care

The Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 does not apply where we are seeking a medical report from a medical practitioner who has not been responsible for the employee's clinical care, typically our own chosen specialist or occupational health adviser.

When seeking additional medical advice we will explain to the employee in writing what information we are seeking on the employee's health, why we are seeking additional information and how the information will be used. The letter should explain to the employee:

- that we intend to obtain a medical report and why we wish to do so
- from whom the report will be obtained
- what we will do with the report
- how we will treat personal data collected when obtaining the medical report and
- their right to object to the processing of their personal data.

We will write to the medical practitioner to request the report. The letter should explain to the medical practitioner why we are requesting the report and ask any specific questions that we wish the practitioner to answer.

Where the employee objects to the processing of their personal data when we are seeking to obtain a medical report to which the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 does not apply, we will explain to the employee the reasons behind the request and inform the employee that a decision relating to their employment may be made without the benefit of access to medical reports.

Return-to-Work Arrangements

Employees who have been on long-term sickness absence should be supported to return to their former post and way of working, but we recognise that this is not always possible. We see the value of phasing employees back to work, temporarily adjusting their duties, or redeploying them permanently if they cannot return to their previous role.

WODC understands that employees are more likely to remain at work and not go off sick again if they initially return to work on reduced hours and gradually build up their number of hours. We will always arrange a return-to-work meeting for an employee returning from long-term sickness absence. This may be during the period immediately prior to their return or on the first day back in work. Either way this will be discussed and agreed with the employee.

When the employee returns to work, the employee's line manager should arrange to reintroduce the employee back into the workplace and ensure that arrangements are made to support the employee on their return. These arrangements should include any agreed adjustments and (where necessary) a risk assessment.

Phased return to work

A phased return to work could involve a variation in work hours, a gradual increase in hours, or an initial period during which the employee works from home on certain days. This would be to support an employee to transition from ill-health absence back to full (or sometimes permanently amended) work duties.

The phased return to work will usually arise following medical advice, which could be:

- a doctor's letter or medical report (such as an Occupational Health report) recommending a phased return; or
- one of the options on a fit note.

The line manager, with the support of Human Resources, should discuss how best to manage a phased return to work and what if any reasonable adjustment will be required. A phased return to work should not be considered where the employee remains unfit for any work.

Next steps:

- The employee's line manager should invite the employee to a meeting to discuss the medical advice and the possibility of a phased return to work.
- The invitation, which should be in writing, should inform the employee in advance of the arrangements for the meeting, including who is to attend on our behalf.
- Issues such as mobility or work-related stress will be taken into account when deciding on where the meeting will be held.

The meeting should focus on:

- reviewing any risks prohibiting a phased return to work
- determining a start date, initial scope of work and hours
- whether there will need to be any changes to the employee's work environment or workplace during the phased return to work and/or once the phased return to work is completed
- when and how the employee's work and hours will develop during any phased return to work
- what arrangements will be put in place to monitor the employee's progress during any phased return to work
- the employee's pay during any phased return to work and
- to whom the employee should report if there are any difficulties with their return to work.
- what risk assessments, if any need to be undertaken for workplace adjustments
- notes should be taken as to what has been discussed and agreed at the meeting and what review has been agreed in a return-to-work plan.
- the review period will require a further meeting, and the date and arrangements for the next meeting should be agreed at the end of the first meeting.
- The individual should be made aware of any impact to their salary. If sick pay has been exhausted consideration might be given to leave accrual for example.

Temporary reassignment

Where an employee has been on long-term sickness absence but is unfit to return immediately to their substantive role, even on a phased basis, their line manager should consider temporarily reassigning the employee to another role.

The possibility of a temporary role will depend on:

- the availability of work elsewhere and the employee's agreement to undertake the role.
- The employee's line manager should initially consider whether a different role is available within their department and, if it is not, widen the search to include other departments.
- The line manager should do this by liaising with HR about available vacancies in other departments in areas in which the employee's skills could be utilised.

The employee's existing rate of pay will be protected during the temporary reassignment and their salary will be paid by the department in which the employee normally works. Temporary placements to help an employee on long-term sickness absence will normally last no longer than six months and would be regularly reviewed during this period. Any reassignment should be discussed in full with the individual and a return to work plan documented.

Permanent redeployment

We will consider redeployment where it appears unlikely from the medical advice that an employee on long-term sickness absence will be able to return to their existing role.

Any offer to redeploy the employee will be entirely at our discretion. Such an offer will be made only where we are confident that the employee is no longer able to continue to work in their current role and will be able to perform well in the redeployed role.

If you have a disability under the Equality Act 2010 you will have 'at risk' status. This means that you will have priority when we consider an alternative role with us. We will take a positive approach to redeployment. A trial period, on a four-week basis, will be offered for alternative roles, to enable the employee and the new manager to assess whether the job is suitable. With the support of the HR Business Partner, the manager will be supported in identifying if there is a need to make reasonable adjustments to assist you to continue in work.

While the employee is free to refuse any offer of redeployment, the only alternative available will usually be dismissal. If we believe that there is no suitable alternative role available for the employee, we may be left with no option but to dismiss.

Should the employee choose to accept permanent redeployment, they will be asked to agree to a variation of contract that could impact existing contractual arrangements such as pay. However, continuous service should not be affected.

Before an employee is dismissed due to no suitable role being available or because they unreasonably refuse an offer of redeployment, a formal sickness absence meeting with the employee at risk of dismissal will be held. The employee has the right to be accompanied to such meetings by a work colleague. Such action may be considered with reference to the Performance Improvement (Capability) Policy and Procedure, or the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

If the employee is dismissed, they should be given the opportunity to appeal against the dismissal.

Any dismissal will be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Right to Representation

At any formal meeting you have the right to be represented by a work colleague. However, consideration will be given to another person in exceptional circumstances.

Return-to-Work Meetings

When an employee is returning to work following long-term sickness absence, their manager should:

- arrange to meet informally with them.
- ideally, the return-to-work meeting will take place prior to the employee's return to work, to allow time for any necessary adjustments to be made to the employee's working arrangements and conditions.
- if this is not possible, the return-to-work meeting should take place on the employee's first day back at work.
- the return-to-work meeting should take place in a private place, and all discussions between the employee and the manager will be deemed private and confidential.
- the return-to-work meeting could take place off-site at a location of the employee's choosing, should the employee be more comfortable with that approach.

During a return-to-work meeting after long-term sickness absence, the manager and employee should discuss:

- the arrangements for the employee's return to work, including any adjustments that are being made such as a phased return or homeworking
- what work the employee will be doing on their return to work, including an outline of work during the employee's first week back
- any medical issues of which the employer is not already aware, such as any updated guidance from a healthcare professional
- what arrangements will be put in place to monitor the employee's progress and
- to whom the employee should report if they have any difficulties with the arrangements.

At the end of the return-to-work meeting, the line manager and employee should

- agree their next meeting to monitor the employee's progress.
- if the return-to-work meeting takes place before the employee's return, this should be a short meeting on their first day back.
- if the return-to-work meeting takes place on the employee's first day back at work, this meeting should be at the end of the employee's first week back.
- during any of these return-to-work meetings you may, should you wish, choose to be accompanied by a colleague.

Special Cases

Pregnancy-related absences

Pregnant employees who are off work because of pregnancy-related ill health must abide by our absence reporting procedure. For example, a pregnant employee is subject to the usual notification and evidence requirements and should be asked to attend a return-to-work meeting when returning to work.

However, any sickness absence by a pregnant employee for a pregnancy-related reason should not be taken into account when checking the need for formal action.

If the manager is in any doubt as to whether a pregnant employee's absence is related to their pregnancy, the manager should contact Human Resources for clarification.

Disability-related absences

Where an employee gives as the reason for absence an underlying health issue that could amount to a disability under the Equality Act 2010, the manager should discuss the case with Human Resources. This includes where the employee states that they are suffering from stress or anxiety.

Managers should remember that we are under a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.

Ill-health retirement

Retirement on the ground of ill health will be considered where:

- it appears unlikely from the medical advice that an employee on long-term sickness absence will be able to return to their role; and
- they are entitled to a pension/lump sum under their pension scheme.

If ill-health retirement is raised as an option, the employee's line manager should advise the employee in the first instance to contact Human Resources. This will allow the employee to find out if they qualify for, and the financial implications of accepting, ill-health retirement.

Where an employee is suffering from a terminal illness, we will endeavour as far as possible to accommodate their wishes and to provide the most financially advantageous arrangements for them and their family. This includes discussion of the possibility of ill-health retirement or the termination of employment with a lump-sum payment under their pension scheme.

While we will support employees who wish to continue working, employees with a terminal illness should be aware that there may come a time when they will be unable to continue working. In this case, the employee's line manager will discuss the options with the employee, with the support of Human Resources.

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Terminally ill employees who choose to continue working should consider that, while there is no obligation to inform WODC or any of their colleagues about the illness, it is normally better to do so to allow the proper support to be provided.

WODC provides an employee assistance programme so that the employee can access the support that they might need.

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Maternity Leave Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

This policy sets out the rights of employees who are pregnant or have recently given birth, including time off for antenatal appointments and entitlement to maternity leave and pay.

The following definitions are used in this policy:

"Expected week of childbirth" means the week, starting on a Sunday, when your doctor or midwife expects you to give birth.

"Qualifying week" means the 15th week before your expected week of childbirth.

The policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to employees employed by WODC. It does not apply to contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation.

Entitlement to Ordinary and Additional Maternity Leave

All pregnant employees are entitled to take 26 weeks' ordinary maternity leave followed immediately by 26 weeks' additional maternity leave.

You can decide how much maternity leave you wish to take. However, you must take at least two weeks of compulsory maternity leave immediately after your child is born.

To exercise your right to take maternity leave, you must comply with the notification procedure set out in this policy.

Ideally, you should notify your line manager as soon as possible that you are pregnant so that you may take paid time off to attend your antenatal appointments. This will also help us to ensure that we are able to address any health and safety concerns in a timely manner.

Time Off for Antenatal Appointments

Once you have told us that you are pregnant, you will be entitled to reasonable paid time off work to attend your antenatal appointments. This may include relaxation and parent craft classes that your doctor, midwife or nurse has advised you to attend, in addition to medical examinations, screening tests and any midwife appointments.

After your first appointment, we may ask you to provide proof of your further antenatal appointments such as an appointment card or an equivalent document confirming your booking.

You should give your line manager as much notice as possible of your antenatal appointments and, wherever possible, try to arrange them outside your core hours/as near to the start or end of the working day.

Any individual who has a qualifying relationship with you (which includes your spouse, civil partner and the father of your expected child), has a statutory right to unpaid time off to accompany you to up to two antenatal appointments. They would need to contact their employer to request time off in these circumstances.

Health and Safety

We have a duty to take care of the health and safety of all our employees.

We have an additional duty to carry out an individual risk assessment as soon as we receive written notice that an employee is pregnant, has given birth in the last six months or is breastfeeding where the work is of a kind that could pose a risk to their health or their baby.

Where we carry out an individual risk assessment, we will inform you of any risks that we have identified and the steps that we propose to take to eliminate or reduce them. This may mean altering your working hours, changing your working conditions, or offering you suitable alternative work.

In certain cases, we may have to suspend you from work until the risk to you or your baby has been removed. If you are suspended, your employment will continue during any period of suspension. You will also be entitled to your normal salary and contractual benefits, unless you have unreasonably refused an offer of suitable alternative employment.

Sickness Absence

If you are absent from work due to a pregnancy-related illness, you will receive sick pay in the same way as you would during any other sickness absence.

However, if you are absent from work due to a pregnancy-related illness in the four weeks immediately before your expected week of childbirth, your maternity leave will start automatically. You must notify your line manager as soon as reasonably practicable that you are absent for a pregnancy-related illness and the date that your absence began.

Notice to take Maternity Leave

You can start your maternity leave at any time from the Sunday at the beginning of the 11th week before your expected week of childbirth.

To take maternity leave, you need to give your line manager notice in writing by the end of the qualifying week, or as soon as possible afterwards, of:

- the fact that you are pregnant
- your expected week of childbirth and
- the date on which you wish your maternity leave to start.

You will also have to provide your line manager with your MAT BI form, which is a certificate from your doctor or midwife confirming your expected week of childbirth.

Failure to give the required notice and provide us with your MAT BI form may affect your entitlement to maternity leave and pay.

We will write to you within 28 days of receipt of your notice confirming the date on which you are expected to return to work if you take your full 52-week entitlement to maternity leave.

Changing your Maternity Leave Start Date

If you wish to bring forward your maternity leave start date, you must inform your line manager in writing at least 28 days before the new start date or, if that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable.

The date that you select as your maternity leave start date cannot be before the Sunday at the beginning of the 11th week before your expected week of childbirth.

If you wish to postpone your maternity leave start date, you must inform your line manager in writing at least 28 days before the original proposed start date or, if that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable.

If you change your maternity leave start date, we will write to you within 28 days of the start of your maternity leave confirming the revised date that you must return to work if you take your full 52-week entitlement to maternity leave.

Starting your Maternity Leave

Your maternity leave will usually start on the date that you have chosen, unless:

- your child is born before your chosen maternity leave start date, in which case your maternity leave will start on the day after you give birth; or
- you are absent for a pregnancy-related reason (for example, if you are off sick for a pregnancy-related illness or suspended on health and safety grounds) in the four weeks before your expected week of childbirth, in which case your maternity leave will start on the day after your first day of absence.

If you give birth before your intended maternity leave start date, you must notify your line manager in writing of the date that you have given birth as soon as reasonably practicable.

Maternity Pay

Statutory maternity pay is payable for up to 39 weeks of your maternity leave.

The first six weeks is payable at 90% of your average weekly earnings. The remaining 33 weeks is payable at a rate set by the Government for the relevant tax year, or at 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

You will qualify for statutory maternity pay if :

- you have been continuously employed for at least 26 weeks at the end of your qualifying week
- you are still pregnant 11 weeks before the start of your expected week of childbirth (or have already given birth)
- you have provided us with a MAT B1 form confirming your expected week of childbirth
- you have stopped working and
- your average weekly earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions.

If you become eligible for a pay rise between the start of the original calculation period and the end of your maternity leave, your statutory maternity pay will be recalculated to take account of your pay rise, regardless of whether statutory maternity pay has already been paid. This means that your statutory maternity pay will be recalculated and increased retrospectively, or that you may qualify for statutory maternity pay if you did not previously. In these circumstances, you will be paid a lump sum to make up any difference between statutory maternity pay already paid and the amount payable as a result of the pay rise.

Statutory maternity pay is treated as earnings and is therefore subject to PAYE and national insurance deductions.

Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP)

You may be entitled to receive Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP)

To qualify for OMP you must:

- Have at least one year's continuous service at the beginning of the 11th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC).
- Declare that you intend to return to work at the end of your maternity leave.

At what rate is OMP paid and for how long?

- For the first 6 weeks, you will receive 9/10 of a week's pay (this will be offset against any entitlement to SMP or Maternity Allowance receivable during those 6 weeks)
- For the following 12 weeks you will receive half pay plus SMP (if you qualify). The sum of the half pay plus the SMP must not exceed your normal full pay. If it does, your pay will be adjusted accordingly.
- The 12 weeks' half pay is paid on the understanding that you return to work for a period of at least 3 months. If you do not return for a 3-month period, you will have to pay the money back
- If you are unsure about returning, you can opt not to receive the half pay whilst you are on maternity leave. If you do subsequently return (providing it is for at least 3 months), the half pay can be paid retrospectively as a lump sum. You can choose to have the half pay spread evenly over the 33 remaining weeks of paid Maternity Leave rather than paid over 12 weeks

Both SMP and OMP are subject to the usual deductions for Income Tax, National Insurance and, where applicable, Superannuation.

Payment of enhanced maternity pay includes any entitlement to statutory maternity pay that may be due to you for the same period.

Maternity Pay will be paid in the usual way on your normal pay day.

Maternity Allowance

If you are not entitled to statutory maternity pay, you may qualify for maternity allowance from the Government. If this is the case, we will provide you with an SMP1 form so that you are able to pursue a claim for maternity allowance.

Your Rights During Maternity Leave

During ordinary maternity leave and additional maternity leave, all the terms and conditions of your contract except normal pay will continue. Your pay will be replaced with statutory maternity pay if you are eligible for it. However, other benefits such as holiday entitlement and pension contributions will continue as set out below.

Holiday Entitlement

You will continue to accrue your holiday entitlement during your maternity leave.

You should make every effort to take any outstanding holiday entitlement before commencing maternity leave or immediately after your maternity leave has ended. Any holiday entitlement that has not been taken because of maternity leave may be carried over into the next holiday year with the agreement of your line manager or a director.

Pension Contributions

We will continue to make pension contributions based on your normal pay during ordinary maternity leave and any period of paid additional maternity leave. The contributions that you make will be based on the actual pay that you receive during your maternity leave.

Our pension contributions will cease during any period of unpaid additional maternity leave.

Contact during Maternity Leave

We reserve the right to maintain reasonable contact with you during your maternity leave. This may be to discuss your plans for returning to work, to discuss any special arrangements to be made or training to be given to ease your return to work, or to update you on developments at work during your absence.

Keeping-in-Touch Days during Maternity Leave

You can agree to work (or attend training) for up to 10 days during your maternity leave without that work bringing your maternity leave or statutory maternity pay to an end. These are known as "keeping-in-touch" days. Any work carried out on a keeping-in-touch day will count as a whole working day and you will be paid your normal rate of pay.

We have no right to require you to carry out any work and you have no right to undertake any work during your maternity leave. Any work undertaken on keeping-in-touch days is entirely a matter for agreement between you and your line manager.

Notice for Ending Maternity Leave

You may take your full period of maternity leave entitlement and return to work at the end of the additional leave period without having to provide notice.

If you wish to return to work earlier than the end of your additional maternity leave period, you must give at least eight weeks' notice in writing to your line manager confirming the date on which you intend to return.

If you have notified us of an early return date, but subsequently change your mind about returning to work on this date, you must give notice in writing to your line manager at least eight weeks before the earlier of the date on which you intend to return and the date on which you had previously given notice to return.

Returning to Work after Maternity Leave

You have the right to resume working in the same job and on the same terms and conditions if returning to work from a period of ordinary maternity leave. If you have taken a period of additional maternity leave, you have the right to return to the same job wherever possible. However, if this is not reasonably practicable, we will offer you a suitable alternative job on terms and conditions that are no less favourable.

We will write to you as the end of your maternity leave approaches to remind you of your expected date of return and the arrangements for your first day back.

We recognise that returning to work from maternity leave after a significant period of time away from work can be challenging. We will take steps to ensure that your return to work is as smooth as possible and work will be handed back to you on a gradual basis.

What do you need to do if you decide not to come back to work?

If you decide that you do not wish to return to work, you must give written notice of resignation as soon as possible in accordance with the terms of your contract of employment. You should note that:

- if you have been paid Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP), you will have to pay it back
- depending on the timing of your maternity leave, you may have used up more of your annual leave entitlement than has been accrued at the time of resignation so you may have to pay that back
- if you have been paid SMP, that does not have to be repaid.

Requests for Flexible Working

If, following a period of maternity leave, you feel that you would benefit from a change to your working arrangement, you should make a request for flexible working in accordance with the policy in place. Although we will take all reasonable steps to accommodate a request for flexible working, the full range of flexible working options will not be appropriate for all jobs across all areas of the organisation.

Shared Parental Leave

If you and your partner meet the eligibility and notice requirements, you may choose to end your maternity leave and pay early and take shared parental leave instead. This will enable you and your partner to take it in turns to have periods of leave to care for your child, return to work while your partner takes leave, or take leave at the same time as each other.

Further information can be found in our shared parental leave policy.

Experiencing Loss

If you experience a miscarriage or sadly the loss of a child after 24 weeks or at birth, separate policies to cover parental bereavement leave are in place, supporting employees experiencing pregnancy loss and the statutory right to take time off for dependants.

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Menopause Leave Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

WODC is committed to creating an open and supportive culture. We want you to feel comfortable speaking about how menopause-related symptoms may be affecting you at work and be able to ask for the support that you need to help you manage your symptoms.

This policy sets out the rights of employees experiencing menopausal symptoms and explains the support available to them.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to anyone working for us. This includes employees, contractors, volunteers, interns and apprentices.

In this policy, where we refer to the menopause, we also mean the perimenopause.

Symptoms of Menopause

The menopause is a natural event during which a person stops having periods and experiences hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels.

For some it will be medically induced. For others, it usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years.

However, each person's experience will differ, and menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40. Perimenopause, or menopause transition, begins several years before menopause. A person may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause.

Symptoms vary greatly and can be both physical and psychological. For around a quarter of women, they are severely debilitating. Each woman will be affected in different ways and to different degrees over different periods of time. Menopausal symptoms can often indirectly affect their partners, families and colleagues as well.

Symptoms can include:

- hot flushes
- night sweats
- anxiety
- dizziness
- fatigue
- memory loss
- depression
- headaches
- recurrent urinary tract infections
- joint stiffness, aches and pains
- reduced concentration and
- heavy periods.

Our Commitment to You

We are committed to ensuring that all line managers and statutory officers are provided with adequate training so that they are able to support individuals experiencing adverse menopausal symptoms.

Additionally, it is the responsibility of everyone throughout the business to familiarise themselves with this policy and to play a part to ensure its successful implementation.

Requesting Support

If you are finding it difficult to cope at work because of menopausal symptoms, you are encouraged to speak to your line manager. If for any reason you are unable to approach your line manager, you can speak to a statutory officer.

We urge you to be as open as possible about any particular issues that you are experiencing or adjustments that you need to ensure that you are provided with the right level of support.

Any health-related information disclosed by you during discussions with your line manager or statutory officer will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

Working Flexibly on a Temporary Basis

For employees eligible to request flexible working, who require a permanent change to working arrangements, they can make such a request through their line manager.

However, we recognise that for individuals affected by menopausal symptoms, the option to work flexibly on a temporary (rather than permanent) basis may be appropriate. For example, this could include working from home, changing your start and finish times, changes to your work allocation or taking more frequent breaks. This is not a definitive list.

If you feel that you would benefit from a temporary change to your working arrangement on an ad hoc basis because of sleep deprivation or other symptoms that may be impacting on your performance, you should discuss and agree these with your line manager supported by the HR Business Partner.

We will try to facilitate temporary flexible working arrangements wherever this is possible and will continue to review these to ensure that they meet your needs.

Working Environment

If you feel that your working environment is exacerbating your menopausal symptoms, you should raise this with your line manager or director.

There are a range of practical adjustments that we can implement to make your working life easier, such as moving your workstation to a cooler area or providing you with a fan. If you are required to wear a uniform, we will allow flexibility where reasonable.

Quiet Place to Work

If you need time out to relax, a short break to manage any symptoms or take medication, or a quiet space to work, you should speak to your line manager who will try their best to accommodate this.

Sanitary Products

We will ensure that sanitary products are available in toilet and shower facilities.

Sickness

There is no expectation on you to work if you are unwell because of menopausal symptoms.

Unless otherwise set out in your contract, if you are sick and unable to work, you should follow the procedure set out in our sickness absence policies.

You do not have to disclose that your absence is related to the menopause if you wish to keep this private. However, we want you to feel that you can be open about the reason for your leave.

Occupational Health

In some cases, we may refer you to occupational health so that they can advise on how your symptoms are impacted at work and make recommendations on the types of adjustments that may be appropriate. Occupational health may also signpost you to external sources of help and advice.

External Sources of Help

There are various organisations that provide help and support on the menopause, including:

- [Menopause matters](#), which provides information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options
- the [Daisy Network](#) charity, which provides support for people experiencing premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency and
- the [Menopause Café](#), which provides information about events where strangers gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss the menopause.
- NHS information <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>
- My Menopause Doctor - empowering women with the necessary information to make informed decisions regarding the treatment options that are available. <https://www.menopausedoctor.co.uk>
- The Menopause Charity - a charity on a mission to bust myths, overcome ignorance and make menopause symptoms history. Supporting women and healthcare professionals with fact-based menopause research and access to the safest treatments. <https://www.themenopausecharity.org>

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Parental Bereavement Leave Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

At WODC, we recognise that, while dealing with any bereavement is difficult, the death of a child is among the most devastating events that an employee can ever face.

This policy sets out our commitment to supporting bereaved parents through their grief by ensuring they can take parental bereavement leave.

The policy applies to employees who suffer the loss of a child under the age of 18. This includes parents who suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

We have a separate policy that highlights further steps we take to help bereaved employees.

Who can take Parental Bereavement Leave?

Whatever your length of service, you can take this type of leave if you are the parent of the child who has passed away, or the partner of the child's parent. In general, you can take this type of leave if you have parental responsibility for the child. This includes adoptive parents.

If you have suffered a bereavement but are unsure if you are entitled to parental bereavement leave, please contact your line manager for clarification.

What Leave a Bereaved Parent can take

You can take two weeks of parental bereavement leave. You can take the leave as:

- a single block of two weeks or
- two separate blocks of one week at different times.

You cannot take the leave as individual days.

You can take the leave at the time(s) you choose within the 56 weeks after your bereavement. You might choose, for example, to take it at a particularly difficult time such as your child's birthday.

If you have lost more than one child, you have a separate entitlement to bereavement leave for each child who has passed away.

Notice to take Parental Bereavement Leave

If you need to take parental bereavement leave within the first 56 days after your bereavement, you can take the leave straight away. You do not have to provide any notice. Please let your line manager know no later than when you are due to start work on the first day on which you wish to take leave or, if that is not feasible, as soon as you can.

To take leave more than 56 days after your bereavement, please give your line manager at least one week's notice.

Changing your Mind about taking Parental Bereavement Leave

You can cancel your planned leave and take it at a different time (within the 56 weeks after your bereavement). Where your planned leave was due to begin during the first 56 days after your bereavement, please let your line manager know you no longer wish to take it before your normal start time on the first day of the planned leave.

Where your leave was due to begin more than 56 days after your bereavement, please let your line manager know at least one week in advance that you wish to cancel it.

You cannot cancel any week of parental bereavement leave that has already begun.

Pay During Parental Bereavement Leave

Parental bereavement pay will be paid at the statutory minimum rate

To receive statutory parental bereavement pay, you must have:

- at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us by the week before the one in which your child passed away (and still be employed by us on the date of the bereavement); and
- normal weekly earnings in the eight weeks up to the week before your bereavement of at least the lower earnings limit for national insurance contribution purposes.

If you are unsure if you are entitled to statutory parental bereavement pay, please contact your HR Business Partner who will be able to advise you.

If you qualify for statutory parental bereavement pay, you will be paid during your leave at the rate set by the Government, or at 90% of your average weekly earnings where this figure is lower. If you are not eligible, your leave will be unpaid.

You need to give us notice of the weeks for which you wish to claim statutory parental bereavement pay, via a form that [your line manager/the HR department] will ask you to sign.

You must normally sign and return the form to your line manager within 28 days of the first day for which you are claiming. However, if that is not possible, please sign and return the form as soon as you can.

All benefits will remain in place.

Rights during Parental Bereavement Leave

During your leave, all the terms and conditions of your contract except normal pay as set out above will continue.

This means that all other benefits will remain in place. For example, holiday entitlement continues to accrue. Pension contributions will continue to be paid.

Your HR department will notify you of any paperwork that needs to be completed to ensure payments are made in accordance with this policy.

Returning to Work after Parental Bereavement Leave

When you return to work after some time on parental bereavement leave, you generally have the right to return to the same job.

However, a slightly different rule applies if you return from time on bereavement leave that follows on immediately from some maternity, adoption, paternity leave or shared parental leave (taken in relation to the child who has passed away), and your total time on leave is more than 26 weeks.

In these circumstances, you have the right to return to the same job, unless this is not reasonably practical - in which case you have the right to return to a suitable and appropriate job on the same terms and conditions.

This rule also applies if your leave includes more than four weeks of ordinary parental leave (taken in relation to any child), regardless of the total length of the leave.

If you are taking parental bereavement leave, but are unsure where you stand on your return, please contact your line manager for clarification.

External Support

External sources of help and support for bereaved employees include:

- [Cruse Bereavement Care](#) / [Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland](#), which offers support to bereaved people, for example via a telephone helpline
- [Child Bereavement UK](#), which offers support to families when a child passes away, for example via a telephone helpline
- [Marie Curie](#), which supports families living with a terminal illness.

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Parental Leave Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

This policy sets out the circumstances where employees who have parental responsibilities may take unpaid time off work to look after their children who are under 18.

WODC are committed to supporting a positive work-life balance for all our employees and recognise that time with children is important. If you are eligible (see below), you can take ordinary parental leave to care for your child - this may be to look after your child during school holidays, be with them when they are unwell, or enjoy more quality time with them.

This type of parental leave may be particularly useful if you require time off to care for your child but have used up, or are not entitled to, other types of family-friendly leave (see below).

Other Types of Family-friendly Leave

Ordinary parental leave should not be confused with:

- maternity, paternity and adoption leave; or
- shared parental leave, which enables employees to end their maternity or adoption leave early, and share the untaken balance with their partner.

Who can take Ordinary Parental Leave?

You can take ordinary parental leave to care for your child if you:

- have a minimum of one year's continuous service with us by the time you take the leave; and
- have, or expect to have, parental responsibility for the child.

If you are unsure if you are entitled to ordinary parental leave, please contact your line manager.

Amount of Ordinary Parental Leave you can take

You can take up to 18 weeks' unpaid leave for each child, subject to a maximum of four weeks' leave for each child in any one-year period.

You must take ordinary parental leave in blocks of at least one week. However, if your child has a disability, you can take the leave one day at a time (please speak to your line manager to arrange this).

Your entitlement to ordinary parental leave carries over from your previous employment. This means that, if you have taken ordinary parental leave with a previous employer:

- you can take the balance with us, but you must wait until you have worked for us for at least one year; and
- we will ask you about the amount of ordinary parental leave already taken for your child with your previous employers.

If you are unsure how much ordinary parental leave you can take, please contact your line manager in the first instance.

Notice to take Ordinary Parental Leave

To take ordinary parental leave, you normally need to give your line manager at least 21 days' notice, counting back from the date on which the leave is to start. You should set out the dates on which you wish to take ordinary parental leave.

Fathers (or others who will have parental responsibility) requesting leave to begin when their child is born

You can ask for your leave to begin when your child is born, whether this is earlier or later than expected. In these circumstances, you should give your line manager at least 21 days' notice, counting back from the beginning of the expected week of childbirth.

Your notice should set out the expected week of childbirth and the length of leave you are requesting.

Adopters requesting leave to begin on the child's placement

You can ask for your leave to begin when the child is placed with you for adoption, whether this is earlier or later than expected. In these circumstances, you should give your line manager at least 21 days' notice, counting back from the beginning of the week in which the placement is expected to occur. If 21 days' notice is not possible, please give us notice as soon as you can.

Your notice should set out the week in which the placement is expected to occur and the length of leave you are requesting.

Paternity leave

If you are considering taking ordinary parental leave on the birth of your child (or if you are an adopter, the placement of the child with you for adoption), you should bear in mind that you may also be entitled to two weeks' paid paternity leave.

Paternity leave must normally be taken within 56 days of the child's birth or placement with you for adoption - please see our separate paternity leave policy.

Evidence to take Ordinary Parental Leave

Your line manager or a director will ask you for evidence to support your request for ordinary parental leave. They will normally ask to see evidence of your child's birth certificate or certificate of adoption.

Postponing your Ordinary Parental Leave

While our aim is to agree to your request for ordinary parental leave, there are circumstances in which we may need to postpone the start date. We will do this only if your absence would cause undue disruption to our organisation and will give you written notice of the postponement no more than seven days after we received your request.

However, we will never postpone your period of ordinary parental leave if the leave starts on the birth of your child or your child's placement for adoption.

If we postpone your period of ordinary parental leave, your line manager will discuss alternative dates with you to take that period of leave within six months of the first day the postponed leave was due to start.

While you are on Ordinary Parental Leave

During your leave, all the terms and conditions of your contract, except normal pay, will continue and your continuity of employment is not affected.

This means that, while sums payable by way of salary will cease, all other benefits will remain in place. Annual leave will continue to accrue in the normal way.

During your leave, you continue to be bound by the terms and conditions of your employment. In particular, you should remember that you must not disclose any confidential information/are required to obtain our written consent before working for any other employer.

Returning to work after Ordinary Parental Leave

If you take an isolated period of ordinary parental leave of four weeks or less, you are entitled to return to the same job you were doing before your absence.

You can also return to your previous job if you take a period of ordinary parental leave of four weeks or less following on immediately from a period (or consecutive periods) of maternity, adoption, paternity and/or shared parental leave (taken in relation to the same child) that did not last more than 26 weeks.

You are entitled to return to your previous job or, if that is not practical for our organisation, to another job that is both suitable and appropriate in the circumstances if you:

- take a period of ordinary parental leave of more than four weeks; or
- take a period of ordinary parental leave of four weeks or less following on immediately from a period (or consecutive periods) of maternity, adoption, paternity and/or shared parental leave (taken in relation to the same child) that lasted more than 26 weeks.

If you are taking ordinary parental leave, and are unsure where you stand on your return, please contact your line manager.

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Paternity Leave Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

This policy sets out the rights of employees to paternity leave and pay.

We are committed to supporting a positive work-life balance for all our employees and recognise that time with your children is important.

Who can take Paternity Leave?

You can take paternity leave if you:

- have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth
- are the biological father of a child, or the spouse, civil partner or partner of the child's mother and
- have, or expect to have, the main responsibility (apart from any responsibility of the mother) for the child's upbringing.

This means that paternity leave is available to an eligible female employee who is married to, or is the civil partner or partner of, the child's mother.

Paternity leave is also available to the spouse, civil partner or partner of an individual who has adopted a child. Where a couple adopt a child jointly, one may take adoption leave and the other paternity leave. They are entitled to choose for themselves which adoptive parent takes which type of leave.

To be eligible for paternity leave for a child adopted within the UK, you must have you: have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment by the end of the week in which the adoption agency formally notifies the adopter that they have been matched with the child.

Length and timing of Paternity Leave

An eligible employee can take either one week's leave or two consecutive weeks' leave. You cannot take paternity leave in instalments (for example as part weeks or individual days).

You can take just one period of paternity leave per pregnancy or adoption, regardless of the number of children born as a result of the pregnancy or the number of children placed under the same adoption arrangement.

You must take paternity leave within 56 days of the child's birth or, if the child is born earlier than the expected week of birth, within 56 days of the first day of the expected week of birth.

For an adopted child, you must take within 56 days of the child's placement for adoption with you (or in the case of a child adopted from overseas, within the period of 56 days beginning with the date the child entered Great Britain).

If you wish to take shared parental leave, you must take your paternity leave first. You cannot take paternity leave if you have already taken a period of shared parental leave in relation to the same child.

Notice to take Paternity Leave

To take paternity leave for a birth child, you need to give your line manager supported by the HR Business Partner at least 15 weeks' written notice of:

- the date on which your partner's baby is due
- the length of paternity leave you wish to take and
- the date on which you wish your paternity leave to start.

To take paternity leave for an adopted child, you need to give your line manager, supported by the HR Business Partner, written notice of your intention to take paternity leave no later than seven days after the date on which notification of the match with the child was given by the adoption agency. The notice must specify:

- the date on which the adopter was notified of having been matched with the child
- the date on which the child is expected to be placed for adoption
- the length of paternity leave you wish to take and
- the date on which you wish your paternity leave to start.

Changing your Paternity Leave Plans

If you wish to change the timing of your paternity leave, you must give your line manager at least 28 days' written notice of the revised start date.

Rights during Paternity Leave

During your leave, all the terms and conditions of your contract except normal pay will continue. Your Salary will be replaced by statutory paternity pay if you are eligible for it.

This means that all other benefits will remain in place. For example, holiday entitlement continues to accrue. Pension contributions will continue to be paid.

Returning to work after Paternity Leave

Following your leave, you have the right to resume working in the same job as before on terms and conditions that are no less favourable to you than the terms that would have applied had you not been absent.

Your continuity of employment is not affected.

Maternity Support Leave – what is this?

This is a benefit that applies to employees of the Company who will be providing support to a pregnant woman around the time that they are giving birth (see below for details).

Such employees are defined as being expectant fathers; partners or nominated carers. As an expectant father, you will be able to take five days' maternity support leave, paid at normal pay.

This must be combined with Paternity Leave. Therefore, you can take one week of Maternity Support Leave at full pay and one further week of Paternity Leave (if you qualify), paid at the statutory paternity pay rate. There is no required qualifying period for Maternity Support Leave.

Time off for Antenatal Care

In addition to your paternity leave, you have the right to take time off to accompany a pregnant woman with whom you are having a child at up to two antenatal appointments. You are eligible if you're the pregnant woman's husband, civil partner, or if you're living together in a long-term relationship, if you are the biological father of the expected child you are also eligible. You may be asked to make up some or all of the time taken off.

To make a request for time off to accompany someone at an antenatal appointment, you should contact your line manager.

The antenatal appointment must be made on the advice of a registered medical practitioner, midwife, or nurse. We expect that normally no more than half a day is needed for an antenatal appointment, but the leave includes the time needed to travel to the appointment and any waiting time needed at the appointment and can be for a maximum of six-and-a-half hours on each occasion.

You should endeavour to give as much notice as possible of time off required for the antenatal appointment and, wherever possible, arrange for them to be as near to the start or end of the working day as possible.

Time off to attend Adoption Appointments

If you are adopting a child, you are entitled to take time off to attend adoption appointments, which enable contact with the child (for example, to bond with them before the placement) or for any other purpose connected with the adoption (for example, to meet with the professionals involved in the care of the child).

Where you are part of a couple jointly adopting a child, the couple can elect for one of them to take paid time off to attend up to five adoption appointments. The other can elect to take unpaid time off to attend up to two adoption appointments.

To make a request for time off for an adoption appointment, you should contact your line manager.

The appointment must have been arranged by or at the request of the adoption agency. The time off must be taken before the date of the child's placement for adoption with the employee.

You should endeavour to give as much notice as possible of when you need the time off for the adoption appointment and, wherever possible, arrange them for them to be as near to the start or end of the working day as possible.

Experiencing Loss

If you experience a miscarriage or sadly the loss of a child after 24 weeks or at birth, we also have separate policies to cover parental bereavement leave, supporting employees experiencing pregnancy loss and the statutory right to take time off for dependants.

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Performance Improvement (Capability) Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference.

As such we seek to support and empower our employees to be motivated to deliver their best. Continuous improvement and learning is incredibly important for all of us and is actively supported. So too is our value of delivering services to a consistently high standard. We do this through a variety of ways, including one to ones, team meetings, setting work-based objectives that include our strategic and operational priorities. Performance management should be a continuous cycle, not an isolated event. Employee objectives should be reviewed and amended in line with changing organisational priorities, and feedback and reviewing performance should be a regular occurrence.

Sometimes, however, for a number of reasons, performance may fall below an acceptable level. This policy should be used when improvements in performance are not achieved following informal discussions and regular feedback. Its purpose is to provide a framework for resolving poor performance in a fair and supportive manner.

Where poor performance is believed to be the result of unacceptable behaviours, or where serious errors have been made to the detriment of WODC, we may decide to use our disciplinary procedure instead.

Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting under this procedure, we will conduct the process remotely. We will ensure that you and your representatives have access to the necessary technology for participating. Your rights will not be affected, and we will ensure that the procedure remains fair and reasonable.

We will take a written record of all meetings conducted under this procedure. This will be done either by the person holding the meeting, a member of the HR Team or by an additional person arranged by us to take notes. We may digitally record any meeting conducted remotely under this procedure, provided that all parties agree. We will ensure that any such recording is made in line with our data protection obligations.

Stage 1 - Informal Meeting

Your line manager will inform you of the nature of the problem and confirm this in writing. You will be invited to an informal meeting to discuss concerns regarding your performance. The meeting will be conducted by your line manager.

Following the informal meeting, your line manager may choose to:

- take no further action
- refer the matter for investigation under the disciplinary procedure or

- issue guidance to you on what you need to do to improve your performance. For example, timekeeping, setting objectives etc. and agree a reasonable timescale within which improvement is expected. A review meeting will be held after the agreed time has elapsed to assess if there has been sufficient improvement.

Stage 2 - Performance Improvement Meeting

Where stage 1 does not lead to a satisfactory improvement in your performance, you will be invited to a performance review meeting.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss your performance and decide what measures should be taken to help you to improve your performance to an acceptable level. The meeting will be conducted by your line manager. You have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague.

At the meeting, you will be given an opportunity to ask questions, comment on the issues and put forward any explanation you may have for the matters identified by your line manager as amounting to poor performance.

The outcome of the meeting may be:

- a decision to take no further action
- a decision to refer the matter for investigation under the disciplinary procedure; or
- the implementation of a performance improvement plan (see below).

Where the decision is made to carry out further investigation under the disciplinary procedure, we will provide you with the reasons for such action.

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP)

A PIP is a series of measures designed to help you to improve your performance. We will seek to agree each measure with you but reserve the right to insist on any aspect of the PIP if agreement cannot be reached.

Each plan will be tailored to the particular situation but will cover the following elements and will be recorded in a PIP: ([hyperlink to the management portal](#)). The plan will take into consideration any reasonable adjustments the employee may need and the provision of additional support, for example IT providing a screen to support a neurodiverse employee with reading on screen.

Targets

The PIP will cover the particular areas in which improved performance is needed and state the criteria on which your performance will be assessed. Where appropriate, we will set specific targets that will need to be achieved either by the end of the plan or at identifiable stages within it. The PIP will form the basis of the ongoing discussions with you and will be an active management record in determining if the required acceptable performance standards have been reached.

Timescale

The overall timescale in which the necessary improvement must be achieved should be agreed with the individual and followed up in writing. Whilst timescales may be variable, they should be realistic in terms of the task that has been set and achievable with the right support. We envisage that no PIP should last beyond six months, unless there is good reason for it and your manager will seek guidance from the HR Business Partner throughout the process, if required.

Measures

The measures we will take to support you in improving your performance. This may include:

- training
- additional supervision
- the reallocation of certain duties and
- the provision of additional support from your colleagues. This may include coaching or mentoring from a colleague or manager or external support such as an Access to Work Assessment and the implementation of recommendations as far as feasible.

Feedback

You will be given regular feedback from your line manager indicating the extent to which you are on track to deliver the improvements set out in the plan.

If, at any stage during the plan, your line manager feels that your performance is not progressing in a satisfactory way, a further meeting may be held with you to discuss this, and where appropriate, your plan may be amended and/or extended.

Review

At the end of the plan, typically no longer than six months, your performance will be reviewed. If satisfactory progress has been made, we will confirm this in writing. If your line manager feels that satisfactory progress has not been made, your PIP may be extended and/or amended by a further three months. Alternatively, you may be asked to attend a formal hearing under stage 3 of this procedure (see below).

Ongoing review

Following the successful completion of a performance improvement plan, your performance will continue to be monitored. If, at any stage during the following 12 months, your performance again starts to fall short of an acceptable standard, your line manager may decide to initiate stage 3 of this procedure. The informal stage includes a review period and close supervision to help support you as we would like to see you achieve a satisfactory improvement in your performance.

Stage 3 - Formal Hearing

Where stage 2 does not lead to a satisfactory improvement in your performance, you will be invited to a formal performance management hearing.

You will be informed in writing of the grounds on which the hearing is being convened. The letter will set out sufficient information and examples of why your line manager believes your performance still falls short of an acceptable standard.

The hearing will be conducted by a suitable manager or delegated person. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a work colleague.

At the hearing, you will be given an opportunity to ask questions, comment on the issues and to put forward any explanation you may have for the matters identified by your line manager as amounting to poor performance.

The outcome of the meeting may be a decision to:

- take no further action
- refer the matter for investigation under the disciplinary procedure
- possible redeployment
- institute another performance improvement plan or
- issue a formal warning
- Or if appropriate, ill health retirement may be considered, if you are permanently unable to do your job, and you are not immediately capable of undertaking gainful employment.

A formal warning will be issued if it is concluded that reasonable steps have been taken that should have allowed you to perform to an acceptable standard, but that these measures have not succeeded. The warning will explain the nature of the improvement required in your performance and state the timescale for making these improvements. It will also explain that, if the necessary improvement does not take place, you may be dismissed.

The warning will remain current for a period of 6 months, after which it will cease to have effect.

Where you are issued with a formal warning in accordance with this procedure, you will have a right of appeal.

Stage 4 - Dismissal Hearing

If you have been issued with a warning under stage 3 that remains live and your line manager believes that your performance is still not acceptable, the matter may be referred to a performance dismissal hearing.

You will be informed in writing of the grounds on which the hearing is being convened. The letter will set out sufficient information and examples of why your line manager believes your performance still falls short of an acceptable standard.

The hearing will be conducted by a senior manager or another delegated person. The employee will be entitled to be accompanied by a work colleague.

At the meeting, you will be given an opportunity to ask questions, comment on the issues and to explain any issues around your performance or mitigating circumstances.

The outcome of the meeting may be:

- a decision to take no further action
- the issuing of another performance management warning
- an offer to redeploy the employee to alternative work or
- a decision to dismiss the employee.

Any offer to redeploy you will be entirely at our discretion. Such an offer will be made only where we are confident that you will be able to perform well in the redeployed role. It will only be offered as an alternative to dismissal in circumstances where we are satisfied that you should no longer be allowed to continue to work in your current role. While you are free to refuse any offer of redeployment, the only alternative available will usually be dismissal.

If we believe that there is no alternative role available and suitable for you and that you have not met an acceptable standard of performance, you may be dismissed. A decision to dismiss will only be taken by a statutory officer who has the authority to do so.

The decision to dismiss together with the reasons for dismissal will be set out in writing and sent to you. Any dismissal will be with full notice, or a payment in lieu of notice.

Where you are dismissed in accordance with this procedure, you will have a right of appeal.

Appeal

You have a right of appeal against a sanction issued under stages 3 or 4 of this procedure. A request for an appeal should be sent in writing to the Chief Executive within 10 working days of being informed of the sanction. Your letter should set out the grounds on which you believe that the decision was flawed or unfair.

An appeal hearing will be convened to consider the matter. It will be chaired by a statutory officer. You will be entitled to be accompanied by a work colleague.

At the hearing, the decision to impose the sanction will be reviewed and you will be entitled to make representations about the appropriateness of that decision.

The result of the hearing will be either to confirm the sanction or substitute an outcome that was available to the panel conducting the hearing at which the sanction was imposed on you.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed to you in writing, usually within seven working days, explaining the grounds on which the decision was reached. The outcome of the appeal will be final.

Right to Representation

At any formal meeting you have the right to be represented by a work colleague. However, consideration will be given to another person in exceptional circumstances.

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Probationary Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

At WODC, we aim to create a positive working environment where everyone can fulfil their potential and perform to the best of their ability to deliver excellent service. As a new employee, we want you to thrive in your new role and we will provide you with the support and training you need to get you up to speed in your role as quickly as possible. When you start, your manager and the team will provide you with support and induction into the organisation.

This policy is intended to allow both the employee and the line manager to assess objectively whether the employee is suitable for the role. WODC believes that the use of probationary periods increases the likelihood that new employees will perform effectively in their employment.

The relevant line managers are responsible under this policy for ensuring that all new employees are properly monitored during their probationary period. If any problems arise, the line manager should address these promptly. This will ensure that the employee is aware that some aspect of their performance or conduct is unsatisfactory and prevent the problem from escalating.

Length of Probation

WODC's standard period of probation is six months. During this time your manager will have regular meetings to review how you are progressing so you will know that you are on the right track. If you aren't sure about how to do something or think you need a bit more training or support, you can ask your manager at any time. Within your first week, you will be invited to a mandatory virtual welcome session.

After successful completion of your probationary period, your employment in your role will be confirmed.

Extending Probationary Periods

WODC reserves the right to extend an employee's period of probation at its discretion. This will be limited to one extension and the total period of probation will be no longer than 9 months.

An extension may be implemented in circumstances where the employee's performance during probation has not been entirely satisfactory, but it is thought likely that an extension to the probationary period may lead to an improvement, or where the employee or line manager has been absent from the workplace for an extended period during probation.

Before extending an employee's probationary period, the line manager must consult with Human Resources. If an extension to the probationary period is agreed, WODC will confirm the terms of the extension in writing to the employee, including:

- the length of the extension and the date on which the extended period of probation will end
- the reason for the extension and, if the reason is unsatisfactory performance, details of how and why performance has fallen short of the required standards
- the performance standards or objectives that the employee is required to achieve by the end of the extended period of probation
- any support, for example further training, which will be provided during the extended period of probation; and
- a statement that, if the employee does not meet fully the required standards by the end of the extended period of probation, their employment will be terminated.

Terms of employment during the Probationary Period

During the probationary period, employees will be subject to all the terms and conditions of their contracts of employment with the exception of those terms noted below:

The amount of notice that an employee must give to WODC if they wish to resign, and the amount of notice that WODC must give to the employee of dismissal are different during probation. During probation, either party may terminate the employee's contract of employment by giving one week's notice. If WODC decides to terminate the employee's employment, their employment will come to an end immediately and the employee will receive pay in lieu of the one week's notice together with any outstanding holiday pay.

Once the probationary period has been completed, the notice periods will be as defined in the employee's contract of employment.

In the case of existing employees who have been transferred or promoted into different roles, the amount of notice that the employee must give to the organisation if they wish to resign, and the amount of notice the organisation must give to the employee of dismissal will be as defined in the employee's contract of employment.

Line Managers' Responsibilities

Under this policy, the line manager has responsibility for monitoring a new employee's performance and progress during the probationary period. The line manager must ensure that the employee is properly informed at the start of their employment about what is expected of them during probation, for example the required job outputs or standards of performance.

Reviews during Probation

The line manager should review and assess the employee's performance, capability, and suitability for the role on at least a monthly basis during the employee's probation, and again at the end of the probationary period. A clear record should be made of each review meeting. A copy of the record should be passed to the employee and the original forwarded to Human Resources. WODC processes any personal data collected during the probationary period in accordance with its data protection policy.

Any data collected is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of operating the probationary period. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the WODC's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the organisation's disciplinary procedure.

During an employee's probation, the line manager should provide regular feedback to the employee about their performance and progress, and should there be any problem areas, raise these with the employee as soon as possible with a view to resolving them. The line manager is also responsible for providing guidance and support and for identifying and arranging any necessary training or coaching.

Irregularities Discovered during the Probationary Period

If, during an employee's probation, it is suspected or established that the employee does not have the qualifications, experience, or knowledge that they claimed to have at the time of recruitment, the matter will be discussed with the employee to establish the facts. If the evidence suggests that the employee misrepresented their abilities in any way, WODC will terminate the employment.

End of Probation

Shortly before the end of the probationary period, the line manager should conduct a final review of the employee's performance and suitability for the job. This will involve a meeting with the employee to discuss their performance and progress throughout the period of probation. There should be no surprises at this meeting as there have been regular reviews. If the employee's performance is satisfactory, the line manager should notify Human Resources to issue a letter of confirmation of appointment to the employee.

If the employee's performance has not met the standards required by WODC, the line manager should discuss the matter with Human Resources before any decision is made to terminate the employee's employment.

Termination of Employment

If an employee's performance while on probation has been unsatisfactory (despite support from their line manager), and it is thought unlikely that further training or support would lead to a satisfactory level of improvement, the employment will be terminated at the end of the period of probation.

It is WODC's policy to allow the employee to complete the designated period of probation rather than terminating employment before the probation has come to an end. This is to give the employee a full opportunity to come up to the required standards. If, however, there is clear evidence prior to the end of the period of probation that suggests the employee is wholly unsuitable for the role, the line manager should consult Human Resources with a view to terminating the employee's contract early.

Where a decision is taken to terminate the employee's employment, the employee must be interviewed and informed of the reason for the termination. WODC will write to the employee confirming the termination and the reason for it. The employee will be given an opportunity to appeal the decision.

If an employee's employment is terminated after the expiry of the probationary period, or if the employee is an existing employee who has been transferred or promoted into a different role, WODC's normal capability/dismissal procedure must be followed in full.

Right to Representation

At any formal meeting you have the right to be represented by a work colleague. However, consideration will be given to another person in exceptional circumstances.

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Redundancy Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

We value our employees and are committed to providing long-term job security and managing the business in the best way possible to safeguard your employment.

However, there may be occasions when financial pressures, changes in our working practices, advances in technology or external factors, have an impact on our workforce. Where this is the case, we will explore alternative measures to avoid a compulsory redundancy situation. Where appropriate, we may initially seek volunteers for redundancy. Despite our best efforts, certain business situations may arise where redundancies are unavoidable.

This policy sets out the procedure that we will follow when faced with a potential redundancy situation and signposts the help and support available to those affected. The policy will be applied fairly and equally to all employees, and without any form of discrimination.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend or withdraw it at any time.

Measures to Avoid or Minimise Redundancy

We will consider possible alternative measures to minimise or avoid a redundancy situation. Depending on our business needs at the time, we may consider:

- freezing recruitment to posts previously occupied by employees who have resigned or retired
- freezing recruitment for new permanent members of staff
- stopping or reducing the use of temporary workers
- stopping or reducing overtime
- freezing or reducing pay
- offering career breaks or other types of unpaid leave
- flexible working arrangements
- retraining or redeploying employees
- inviting early retirements
- short-time working - reducing the hours of work for a temporary period and
- lay-offs - suspending paid work for a temporary period.

Voluntary Redundancy

To reduce the need for compulsory redundancies, we may seek volunteers for redundancy.

However, we reserve the right not to accept an employee's application for voluntary redundancy. This might be the case where we receive too many volunteers, or we consider that accepting an application is not in the best interests of the business.

If your application is unsuccessful, we will let you know if you are eligible for early retirement.

Consultation

We will consult with all employees who are potentially affected by the redundancy situation and not just those who are at direct risk of redundancy. Where it is not possible to hold a face-to-face meeting, we will conduct the consultation process remotely. We will ensure that you have access to the necessary technology for participating in the process.

Where we propose to dismiss as redundant 20 or more employees at one establishment within a period of 90 days or less, we will consult with recognised trade union representatives and/or elected employee representatives on the proposed selection criteria and how that criteria will be scored, in addition to other matters relating to the redundancy proposal. This is known as collective consultation.

In any collective consultation exercise, we will also consult individually with each employee affected by the redundancy proposal in respect of their own particular circumstances.

Right to Representation

At any formal meeting you have the right to be represented by a work colleague. However, consideration will be given to another person in exceptional circumstances.

Redundancy Selection

We will identify which and how many roles are potentially redundant. We may need to create a pool of employees from which those who are to be made redundant will be selected. The selection pool will normally consist of employees who carry out the same, or similar, work and perform jobs that are interchangeable. However, a selection pool will not be necessary for example where redundancies are expected to involve the whole organisation or just one specific role. The decision on who to include in the pool will be based on genuine business reasons.

Next, we'll evaluate employees in the pool for potential redundancy using a scoring process. Those with the lowest scores will be provisionally selected for redundancy. We will make sure that the criteria used for selecting these employees are objective, measurable, fair, and aligned with the requirements of the role to be performed after the redundancy process has been completed.

We will consult with you individually about the selection pool, the selection criteria that will be used, how that criteria will be scored, and the provisional scores that have been awarded once the selection exercise has been completed.

Notice of Redundancy

If your selection for redundancy is confirmed, you will be given written notice of the termination of your employment in accordance with the notice period set out in your contract of employment or the statutory minimum notice period, whichever is greater.

Depending on the circumstances, we may make a payment in lieu of notice instead of requiring you to work your notice period.

Redundancy Payment

The Council has a consistent method of calculating severance payments which it applies to all employees without differentiation. The payment is intended to recompense employees for the loss of their livelihood and provide financial support whilst they seek alternative employment.

In line with the statutory redundancy payment scheme, the Council calculates redundancy severance payments using the following calculation. The calculation is based on an employee's age and length of continuous local government service (please note that employees must have a minimum of 2 years' continuous service to qualify for a redundancy payment) the multiplier for the number of weeks is then applied to the employee's actual weekly earnings.

The amount of redundancy pay will be calculated as follows:

- 0.5 week's pay for each full year of service where age at time of redundancy is less than 22 years of age;
- 1 week's pay for each full year of service where age at time of redundancy is 22 years of age or above, but less than 41 years of age;
- 1.5 weeks' pay for each full year of service where age at time of redundancy is 41+ years of age.

The maximum number of service years taken into account is 20. The maximum number of weeks' pay is 30 for anyone aged 61 years of age or older with 20 years or more service.

Alternative Work

If you are selected for redundancy, we will continue to explore suitable alternative employment and other internal vacancies that may arise within the organisation up to your termination date. The selection of candidates for alternative work will be conducted in a fair way. If a suitable alternative role arises during your notice period, you will be informed and provided with details relating to the application process.

If you unreasonably refuse an offer of suitable alternative employment, you will lose your right to statutory redundancy pay.

If you have been given notice of redundancy during maternity leave, adoption leave or shared parental leave, we are under a statutory obligation to offer you suitable alternative work, where it exists, in preference to your colleagues who have also been selected for redundancy.

Salary Protection

Redeployment aims to be neutral in terms of job grading. However, in order to consider the widest possible pool of opportunities, posts lower than the employee's substantive post will normally also be considered.

If an individual, who has formally been notified that their post is being redundant, is redeployed into an alternative job within the Council at a lower grade than their redundant post, their original salary will be protected for a period of two years. On expiry of the two-year period, the full terms and conditions of the lower graded post will take effect and the individual's salary will reduce to the maximum scale point on the new grade.

Trial Period

If an employee who is under notice of redundancy, is redeployed into another post, they will be given a trial period of four weeks. This trial period determines the employee's suitability for the job without necessarily losing the right to a redundancy payment. This period can be extended by up to 12 weeks by mutual written agreement to provide for any necessary training.

Please refer to the Council's Redeployment Policy for further information regarding trial periods. [Hyperlink](#)

Time off Work for Training or to look for a New Job

If you are selected for redundancy, you may be entitled to take a reasonable amount of paid time off work to look for alternative employment, attend job interviews and arrange training for future employment. To qualify, you must have at least two years' continuous service by the date your notice is due to expire.

Any request for time off work should be made by email to your manager and copied into Human Resources.

Additional Support

We understand that redundancy situations cause stress and feelings of insecurity. If you are concerned about your wellbeing or that of a colleague, you should speak to Human Resources. Alternative internal help is available through the Employee Assistance Scheme.

We also recommend the external support and information available at:

- www.acas.org.uk/redundancy, for free online and telephone information and advice on employment law issues; and
- www.gov.uk/redundancy-your-rights, for free information from the government on employment law and rights.

Right of Appeal

You have the right to appeal against being made redundant if you believe the decision to be unfair.

The notice of redundancy will contain details about the appeal process.

Pension

Normally, when an employee retires, the benefits they are entitled to are calculated by reference to the final years pensionable pay (or one of the previous two years if this produces a higher pay figure.)

If however, the employee has taken a lower paid post because their substantive post is redundant or their pay has been restricted as a result of redeployment, then it is possible to protect their benefits by the issue of a 'Certificate of Protection of Pension Benefit.' The Council will request these on behalf of the employee affected.

The certificate protects the value of the benefits by allowing them to be calculated by reference to pensionable pay from either:

- Any one of the last five years of service membership (each year ending with the anniversary of the date of leaving), or
- The annual average of any three consecutive years within the last 13 years (each year ending with the anniversary of the date of leaving).

Please discuss any queries you may have concerning your pension options with Human Resources.

Employment with an associated employer

It is important to note that if an employee accepts a redundancy payment and leaves the Council, he or she will have to wait for at least four weeks and one day before returning to another job within local government or an associated employer as defined by The Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government) (Modification) Order 1999. An earlier return to a local government employer will mean that he or she will have to pay back any redundancy compensation received or lose their continuous service.

Data Protection

We process your personal data, including special categories of your data, in accordance with our Data Protection policy at all stages of the redundancy process.

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Reserved Forces and Voluntary Emergency Responders Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

WODC embraces and supports the Armed Forces Reservists (Reservists) and those who volunteer as Emergency Service Responders (Volunteers) working within our organisation. For the purpose of this policy, WODC recognises the following roles. This list is not exhaustive:

- Volunteer Reservists - civilians recruited into the Royal Naval Reserves, Royal Marines Reserves, Army Reserve and Royal Auxiliary Air Force.
- Regular Reservists - ex-regular servicemen/women who may retain a liability to be mobilised depending on how long they have served in the Armed Forces.
- Volunteer Emergency Services Responders - Community First Responder / St John's Ambulance / Special Police Constables / Search & Rescue Services/Retained Fire-Fighters.

Purpose and Scope

WODC has pledged its support for employees who are members of or those wishing to join the Reserve Forces and/or Volunteer Emergency Services and acknowledges the training undertaken by Reservists and Volunteers enables them to develop skills and abilities that are of benefit to both the individual and the organisation.

This policy defines WODC's obligations towards all employees who are Reservists and/or Volunteers. We will not disadvantage those Reservists and/or Volunteers who notify the Company of their Reserve or Volunteer status.

We shall, subject to the provisions set out in Section 4, agree to release Reservists and Volunteers for attendance at training events where these take place on an employee's normal contracted working day. We shall, subject to the provisions set out in Appendix I - Mobilisation of Reservists Guidance agree to the release of all employees mobilised for Reservist duties.

Reservists and Volunteers Notification Requirement

Reservists and Volunteers are required to inform their employer that they are a member of the Reserve Forces and/or Emergency Services and the specific force/organisation that they belong to. This is so that WODC can provide the appropriate level of support to the individual.

We also recognise the additional skills and experiences that being a Reservist or Volunteer can bring to the organisation and therefore it is useful for WODC to understand where these particular skills and experiences exist.

Reservist employees are also required to grant permission for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to write directly to their employer. This is known as 'Employer Notification' and ensures the Company is made aware that the employee is a Reservist and of the benefits, rights and obligations that apply.

It is the responsibility of the Reservist and Volunteer to ensure their personal details are kept up to date e.g. if they change employer or leave their respective Reserve Force or Emergency Service.

The individual will not be disadvantaged as a result of notifying WODC of their Reserve status.

Training Commitments and Time Off

WODC recognises the importance of the training undertaken by Reservists and Volunteers that enables them to develop skills and abilities that are of benefit to their respective Reserve Force, community, the individual and the organisation.

This includes any period of training, which may involve:

- Weekly training - most Reservists/Volunteers train at their local centre for around two-and-a-half hours, one evening a week.
- Weekend training – most Reservists/Volunteers are expected to attend a number of training weekends which take place throughout the year.
- Annual training – all Reservists are expected to attend a 1–2-week annual training course sometimes referred to as 'annual camp'. This may take place at a training establishment, as an attachment to a Regular Unit, as a training exercise or a combination of any of these. Training normally takes place within the UK, although each year some Reservists train overseas.

Legally employers are not obliged to grant leave for attending training, however, WODC is committed to granting additional paid leave of up to two weeks (10 days) pro-rata per year to employees who are Reservists and/or Volunteers specifically to enable them to attend their annual camp and/or training days throughout the year.

Reservist and Volunteer employees are asked to give as much notice as possible to their Line Manager of the training commitments to allow appropriate planning for absences. Permission once given will not be rescinded unless there are exceptional circumstances. The permitted time off will be recorded on Business World against reason code RESFORCE.

Appendix One - Mobilisation of Reservists Guidance

Mobilisation is the process of calling Reservists into full time service with the Regular Forces to make them available for military operations. The maximum period of mobilisation will depend on the scale and the nature of the operation and is typically no longer than 12 months.

The Call-out papers for mobilisation are sent by post to the organisation or sometimes delivered in person by the Reservist to their line manager. The documentation will include the call-out date and the anticipated timeline. Whenever possible, Defence aims to give at least 28 days' notice of the date that a Reservist will be required to report for mobilisation, although there is no statutory requirement for a warning period prior to mobilisation.

A period of mobilisation comprises three distinct phases:

- Medical and pre-deployment training
- Operational tour
- Post-operational tour leave

Pre-mobilisation

- Meet with Reservist to ensure all mobilisation paperwork is completed (including pay, benefits and pension arrangements)
- Make a claim for financial assistance as appropriate (see s.10 of policy)
- Discuss any handover of work and return of equipment
- Arrangements for keeping in touch
- Refer to checklists in Line Manager and Reservist Guidance document

During mobilisation

- Keep in touch with Reservist as arranged post-mobilisation
- Ensure both employer and reservist fulfil their return-to-work obligations ([include link to template letters](#))
- After care and support requirements

Applying for Exemption/Deferral/Revocation

In all cases of mobilisation, WODC will release the Reservist to report for duty unless there are exceptional circumstances, whereby the decision and reasoning will be explained to the Reservist.

In such circumstances, line managers have the right to seek exemption and should refer the matter to the appropriate director for a decision if the Reservist's absence is considered to cause serious harm to service delivery.

Definitions of 'harm' will vary from case to case, but may include;

- loss of reputation, goodwill or other financial harm
- impairment of the ability to produce goods or provide services
- harm to the research and development of new products, services or processes (which could not be prevented by the granting of financial assistance under sections 83 and 84 of The Reserve Forces Act 1996).

Details of how to apply for exemption are included in the call-out pack. The application must reach the Adjudication Officer within 7 days of the Company receiving a call-out notice. If this timescale is not met permission to make a late application will need to be obtained from the Adjudication Officer. The Reservist also has the right to apply for exemption or deferral if the call-out papers arrive at a difficult time

If an unsatisfactory decision is received following the application for a deferral, the Company can appeal for a hearing by the Reserve Forces Appeals Tribunal. Appeals must reach the Tribunals Secretary within 5 days receipt of written notice of the decision. If the tribunal rejects the application for exemption or deferral, the Company will be required to release the Reservist for mobilisation.

Treatment of Terms and Conditions during Mobilisation

WODC will continue to treat the contracts of employment of employees mobilised for Reserve Service as operable throughout the period of such service. There will be no loss of continuous service or service-related benefits, although some other benefits may be suspended. Under The Reserve Forces Act (Safeguarding of Employment) Act 1985, an employee's service is terminated on mobilisation, but providing the employee follows the correct notification procedure under the Act, he or she can return to employment and their continuity of service will be restored.

Pay

The MoD will assume responsibility for the Reservist's salary for the duration of their mobilisation. They will pay a basic salary according to the Reservist's military rank. If this basic element is less than the salary the Reservist receives from WODC, it is the Reservist's responsibility to apply to the MoD for the difference to ensure that they suffer no loss of earnings. This is known as a Reservist Award.

Where mobilisation occurs, the employee will be given special unpaid leave of absence.

WODC is not required to pay the Reservist's salary during the period of mobilisation.

Benefits

Contractual benefits that are suspended by the Company during mobilisation can be claimed by the Reservist as part of their Reservist Award. Example benefits include:

- All those benefits available at the time on the Portal

The Line Manager and Reservist should discuss benefit arrangements during the pre-mobilisation meeting.

This should cover those benefits that will be suspended and for any continuing benefits, arrangements should be made as to how these are paid.

Pension

If the Reservist is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) WODC will continue to run the pension scheme and make the employer contribution. If the Reservist decides to stay in the scheme and contributes personally, the MoD will contribute as the employer during the mobilization time, as long as the Reservist also keeps contributing.

Annual Leave

Reservists should be encouraged to take any accrued annual leave before mobilisation. WODC is not obliged to accrue annual leave for a Reservist employee during the period of mobilisation. Reservists accrue annual leave with the MoD whilst they are in full time service. When they demobilise, Reservists are entitled to a period of post-operational leave (POL). During this period, they will continue to be paid by the MoD.

WODC employees are entitled to carry over up to 5 days leave from one holiday year to the next i.e. the annual holiday year is from 1st April to 31st March.

Dismissal/Redundancy

A Reservist's employment cannot be terminated on the grounds of their military duties or their liability to be mobilised. To do so would be a criminal offence under s.17 of The Reserve Forces (Safeguarding of Employment) Act 1985.

Reservists can be included in the redundancy pool if this is necessary due to a downturn in business or closure of a department. However, all employees should be treated consistently, and redundancy criteria should not discriminate against Reservists on the grounds of their Reserve service or call-up liability.

Sick Pay

During the period of mobilisation, the Reservist will continue to accrue any rights to service-related WODC sick pay. Should a Reservist become sick or injured during mobilisation they will be covered by Defence Medical Services and any financial assistance will continue to be received (including pay) until demobilised. If the sickness or injury continues and this results in early demobilisation, the Reservist will remain covered by Defence until the last day of paid military leave.

After this time the Reservist will be covered by the current WODC Sickness arrangements (in line with local policy).

If the Reservist becomes ill post mobilisation, and a notional return to work date has been agreed, they will be covered by WODC Sickness arrangements as per the WODC Sickness Policy.

Return to work

Both the Reservist and their employer have obligations under The Reserve Forces (Safeguarding of Employment Act) 1985 regarding the return-to-work process.

Reservist

The Reservist must write to their employer by the third Monday after their last day of military service making their request to return to work and suggesting a date which should fall within 6 weeks of their last day of full-time service. This letter formally starts the return-to-work process.

They are also encouraged to informally contact the employer, via a letter, a meeting or a telephone call to discuss their return to work at the earliest opportunity. The formal application must be made in writing for it to be valid under the Act.

If a Reservist is not happy with the offer of alternative employment, they must write to the employer stating why there is reasonable cause for them not to accept it. If a Reservist believes that an employer's response to their application denies their rights under the Safeguard of Employment Act 1985, an application can be made to a Reinstatement Committee for assessment. This committee will consider the Reservist's application and can make an order for reinstatement and/or compensation.

Employer

WODC has an obligation under Reserve Forces (Safeguarding of Employment) Act 1985 to reinstate the Reservist, where possible to their former role, and if not, to a mutually acceptable role on the same terms and conditions prior to mobilisation.

The Reservist should be reinstated within 6 weeks of the last day of their full-time service. They must be reinstated for a minimum period of 13, 26 or 52 weeks, depending on their length of service prior to mobilisation.

Sometimes Reservists may need refresher training when they return to work or be given time to familiarise themselves with processes and procedures in the workplace. Financial assistance may be available for retraining if it is required as a direct result of their mobilisation, although applications cannot be made for training courses that would have taken place anyway. Evidence of costs will be required in addition to evidence that the Reservist could not reach the required standard by any other means, such as workplace experience.

Aftercare

A Reservist returning to work will benefit from a smooth reintegration into the workplace/team. The following should be considered as part of this process:

- The need to update on changes and developments in the organisation.
- The need to offer specific refresher training where it is sought/considered necessary.
- Where the job duties have changed since mobilisation a period of skills training may be required to assist with new aspects of the job.
- Whether the reservist can meet up with colleagues informally or socially before or after their return to work to prevent any feeling of dislocation, if this is sought.
- Reasonable time off to seek therapeutic treatment if required.

Performance Review

Line managers who carry out Performance Review meetings with a Reservist should be aware that Reserve Forces activities undertaken by an individual (either through training or mobilisation) bring essential skills into the workplace such as leadership, communication, team working and organisational ability, which ultimately lead to improved performance in the workplace.

Financial Assistance

Financial assistance for employers in the event of an employee who is a Reservist being mobilised is governed by the Reserve Forces (Call out and recall) (Financial Assistance) Regulations 2005. These cover additional costs above the normal earnings of the called-up Reservist associated with replacing that employee.

There are 3 types of awards available:

One-off Costs

- Agency fees, if a recruitment agency or employment agency is used to find a temporary replacement; or advertising costs
- No financial cap on claims, but any claim must be supported by relevant documentation

Recurring Costs

- Overtime costs, if other employees work overtime to cover the work of the Reservist [by the amount that such costs exceed earnings of the Reservist]
- Costs of temporary replacement [by the amount that such costs exceed earnings of the Reservist]

The maximum claim available is £110 per day (£40,000 per annum correct at 2/9/2021 but may be subject to change). Claims can be made for every normal working day that the Reservist is away on service. An application for one-off costs and recurring costs must be made within 4 weeks of the end of full time Reservist service.

Training Award

If a returning Reservist has to undertake additional training as a direct result of their mobilisation (routine training excluded), then the Company can make an application for the financial assistance.

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Shared Parental Leave (Adoption) Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best

This policy sets out the rights of employees to shared parental leave and pay following the adoption of a child. If you or your partner is pregnant or has recently given birth, please refer to our Shared parental leave (birth) policy.

Shared parental leave should not be confused with ordinary parental leave, which is the separate entitlement to up to 18 weeks' unpaid leave.

The following definitions are used in this policy:

"Adopter" means the person with whom the child has been or is to be placed for adoption, or where two people have been matched jointly, whoever has elected to be the child's adopter for the purposes of adoption leave.

"Partner" means the person who is married to, or the civil partner or the partner of, the adopter at the date on which the child is placed for adoption (or for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain). This includes someone, of whatever sex, who lives with the adopter and the child in an enduring family relationship but who is not the adopter's child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.

"Matched for adoption" means an adoption agency deciding that a person would be a suitable adoptive parent for a child either individually or jointly with another person. A person is notified of having been "matched for adoption" with a child on the date on which the person receives notification of the adoption agency's decision.

"Placed for adoption" means placed for adoption under UK adoption laws, including placement with a local authority foster parent who is also a prospective adopter ("foster to adopt").

"Official notification" means written notification, issued by or on behalf of the relevant domestic authority, that it is prepared to issue, or has already issued, a certificate to the overseas authority concerned with the adoption of the child, confirming that the adopter is eligible to adopt and has been assessed and approved as being a suitable adoptive parent.

The policy does not form part of your contract of employment and we reserve the right to amend it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees employed by us, whether they are the adopter or the partner. It does not apply to contractors, volunteers or interns working for WODC.

How does Shared Parental Leave Work?

Shared parental leave enables an adopter to end their adoption leave early and share the remaining weeks of leave with a partner. It is aimed at giving parents more flexibility over how they share childcare between them during the first year of their child's adoption.

Shared parental leave can be taken at the same time as an eligible adopter/partner or separately.

Leave must be taken in blocks of at least one week.

You can request to take shared parental leave in one continuous block, in which case we must accept your request as long as you are entitled to shared parental leave and meet the notice requirements.

Alternatively, you can request to take shared parental leave in a number of discontinuous blocks of leave, separated by periods of work, in which case your line manager's agreement should be sought in advance.

Entitlement to Shared Parental Leave if you are the Adopter

If you are an adopter, you are entitled to Shared Parental Leave if:

- you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the week in which you were notified of being matched with the child for adoption (or for adoptions from overseas, at the end of the week in which you received the official notification)
- you remain in continuous employment with us until the week before any period of shared parental leave that you take
- you have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's placement apart from the partner (or for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain);
- you are entitled to statutory adoption leave in respect of the child
- you have brought your statutory adoption leave to an end by giving an adoption leave curtailment notice (or returned to work before the end of your statutory adoption leave period) and
- you have complied with the relevant notice and evidential requirements set out in this policy.

In addition, the partner must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner for at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the week in which the adopter was notified of being matched with the child for adoption (or for adoptions from overseas, the week in which the child enters Great Britain)
- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold in any 13 of those 66 weeks and
- have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's placement apart from the adopter (or for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain).

Entitlement to Shared Parental Leave if you are the Partner

If you are a partner, you are entitled to Shared Parental Leave if:

- you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the week in which the adopter was notified of being matched with the child for adoption (or for adoptions from overseas, at the end of the week in which the adopter received the official notification)

- you remain in continuous employment with us until the week before any period of shared parental leave that you take
- you have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's placement apart from the adopter (or for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain) and
- you have complied with the relevant notice and evidential requirements set out in this policy.

In addition, the adopter must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner for at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the week in which they were notified of being matched with the child for adoption (or for adoptions from overseas, the week in which the child enters Great Britain)
- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold in any 13 of those 66 weeks
- have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's placement apart from the adopter (or for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain)
- be entitled to statutory adoption leave or statutory adoption pay in respect of the child and
- have brought their statutory adoption leave to an end by giving an adoption leave curtailment notice (or returned to work before the end of their statutory adoption leave period).

Amount of Shared Parental Leave available

The amount of shared parental leave that you can split between you is 50 weeks, minus the amount of adoption leave taken by the adopter.

If you are an adopter, you cannot start a period of shared parental leave until at least two weeks of adoption leave has been taken by you.

If you are a partner, you can begin a period of shared parental leave at any time from the date of the child's placement (or for adoptions from overseas, at any time from the date on which the child enters Great Britain). However, you are entitled to take up to two weeks' paternity leave following the adoption of your child, which you will lose if shared parental leave is taken first.

All shared parental leave must be taken within the first 52 weeks of the date of the child's placement (or for adoptions from overseas, within 52 weeks of the date on which the child enters Great Britain).

Notice Requirements

If you wish to take shared parental leave, you must ensure that you submit the required notices to your line manager within the timescales set out in this policy. The notices are:

- adoption leave curtailment notice (if you are the adopter);
- notice of entitlement and intention; and
- period of leave notice.

The notice periods set out in this policy are the minimum required by law. However, the earlier you inform us of your intentions, the more likely it is that we will be able to accommodate your wishes, particularly if you want to take periods of discontinuous leave.

If you have already decided the pattern of shared parental leave that you would like to take, you can provide more than one type of notice at the same time.

Adoption Leave Curtailment Notice

If you are the adopter who is employed by us, you must give your line manager an adoption leave curtailment notice (unless you have already returned to work from adoption leave). This is for you to confirm the date on which you intend to end your adoption leave.

Your notice must be received by us at least eight weeks before you or your partner intend to start the first period of shared parental leave.

You should submit your notice using Form for adopter [Inset link](#) to curtail adoption leave.

Additionally, you must at the same time submit either:

- [Form for adopter \(link\)](#) to provide notice of entitlement and intention (adoption within UK) / Form for adopter to provide notice of entitlement and intention (adoption from overseas) - if you intend to take the first period of shared parental leave, or you and the partner intend to take it together (see Notice of entitlement and intention below) or
- [Form for adopter \(link\)](#) to provide declaration of consent and entitlement - if your partner will be taking the first period of shared parental leave alone.

If you are the partner who is employed by us, you cannot take shared parental leave until the adopter has given an adoption leave curtailment notice to their own employer or returned to work before the end of their statutory adoption leave period.

Revoking your adoption leave curtailment notice:

We urge you to think carefully before submitting your adoption leave curtailment notice.

Once an adoption leave curtailment notice is submitted, you can only revoke it if:

- you discover that neither you nor the partner are entitled to shared parental leave or statutory shared parental pay and you withdraw your notice in writing within eight weeks of the date on which it was submitted or
- the partner has died.

If you wish to revoke your notice, you will need to complete Form for adopter to revoke notice curtailing their adoption leave for purpose of shared parental leave and give this to your line manager.

Notice of Entitlement and Intention

Before you can book a period of shared parental leave, you must give your line manager a notice of entitlement and intention. This is for you to declare that you are entitled to shared parental leave and confirm that you intend to take it.

Your notice must be received by us at least eight weeks before you intend to start the first period of leave.

If you are the adopter who is employed by us, you should submit your notice using Form for adopter to provide notice of entitlement and intention (adoption within UK) or Form for adopter to provide notice of entitlement and intention (adoption from overseas).

If you are the partner who is employed by us, you should submit your notice using Form for partner to provide notice of entitlement and intention (adoption within UK) or Form for partner to provide notice of entitlement and intention (adoption from overseas).

These forms contain declarations that will need to be signed by both the adopter and the partner.

Varying or cancelling the dates in your notice of entitlement and intention

You can vary or cancel the proposed shared parental leave dates set out in your notice of entitlement and intention by providing us with written notice.

To do this, you will need to complete Form for employee to vary notice of entitlement and intention to take shared parental leave (adoption) and give this to your line manager.

Limit on number of variations in the notice of entitlement and intention

There is no limit on the number of variations that you can make as a notice of entitlement and intention is non-binding until you submit a period of leave notice.

Period of Leave Notice

Once you have provided a notice of entitlement and intention, you must also provide your line manager with a period of leave notice. This is for you to book each period of shared parental leave that you wish to take.

Your notice must be received by us at least eight weeks before you start the first period of leave. It may be given at the same time as your notice of entitlement and intention.

You should submit your notice using Form for adopter to provide period of leave notice (adoption within UK) or Form for adopter to provide period of leave notice (adoption from overseas).

Your period of leave notice may state the start and end dates for each period of leave that you wish to take. If your child has not yet been placed for adoption, your notice may state that you would like your shared parental leave to start either on the day on which your child is placed for adoption, or a specified number of days after the child's placement. Likewise, for adoptions from overseas, if your child has not yet entered Great Britain, your notice may state that you would like your shared parental leave to start either on the day on which your child enters Great Britain, or a specified number of days after your child enters Great Britain.

Shared parental leave must be booked in blocks of at least one week. You can book one continuous period of leave; in which case we must accept your request as long as you are entitled to shared parental leave and meet the notice requirements. Alternatively, you can book discontinuous periods of leave, separated by periods of work, in which case we will consider your request but reserve the right to refuse it (see booking discontinuous leave below).

Varying or cancelling the dates in your period of leave notice

You can vary or cancel the shared parental leave dates in your period of leave notice by providing us with notice at least eight weeks before any period of leave varied or cancelled is due to start.

To do this, you will need to complete Form for employee to vary period of leave notice to take shared parental leave (adoption) and give this to your line manager.

Limit on number of period of leave notices.

You can submit three period of leave notices per adoption. However, any notice to vary or cancel the dates in your period of leave notice will count towards this total.

Booking Continuous Leave

If you submit a period of leave notice requesting a continuous period of leave, we must accept your request as long as you are entitled to shared parental leave and meet the notice requirements.

Booking Discontinuous Leave

If you submit a period of leave notice requesting discontinuous periods of leave, separated by periods of work, we will consider your request but reserve the right to refuse it.

In such cases, your line manager will start a two-week discussion period with you.

Your line manager may agree to your request, refuse your request, or propose alternative dates.

If agreement cannot be reached within that two-week period, you may take the leave as one continuous period of leave on:

- the start date given in your original period of leave notice or
- a new start date that is at least eight weeks after the start date given in your original period of leave notice (in which case you must notify your line manager of that new start date within five days of the end of the two-week discussion period).

Alternatively, if you withdraw your period of leave notice on or before the 15th day after the notice was submitted, it will not count towards the limit on the number of period of leave notices that you are entitled to submit and you may submit a new period of leave notice.

Request for Further Information

We may, within 14 days of receiving your notice of entitlement and intention, ask you to provide:

- evidence in the form of one or more documents issued by the adoption agency confirming the name and address of the agency, the date on which the adopter was notified of having been matched with the child, and the expected date of placement; or
- a copy of the official notification; and
- the name and address of the adopter or partner's employer (or a declaration that they have no employer).

You must provide this information within 14 days of our request.

Shared Parental Pay

Statutory shared parental pay is available for an eligible adopter and partner to share between them while on shared parental leave.

The number of weeks' statutory shared parental pay available will depend on how much statutory adoption pay the adopter has been paid when their adoption leave or pay period ends.

A total of 39 weeks' statutory adoption pay is available to the adopter. The first two weeks of adoption leave are allocated to the adopter. This means that an adopter who ends their adoption leave at the earliest opportunity could share up to 37 weeks' statutory shared parental pay with a partner.

Any statutory shared parental pay due during shared parental leave will be paid at a rate set by the Government for the relevant tax year, or at 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

Shared Parental Leave (Adoption) Policy and Procedure

It is up to the adopter and partner as to who is paid the statutory shared parental pay and how it is allocated between them. If you intend to receive statutory shared parental pay, you should give notice at the same time that you submit your notice of entitlement and intention.

Entitlement to Shared Parental Pay if you are the Adopter

If you are an adopter, you are entitled to Shared Parental Pay if:

- you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the week in which you were notified of being matched with the child for adoption (or for adoptions from overseas, at the end of the week in which you received the official notification)
- you remain in continuous employment with us until the week before any period of shared parental pay begins
- your average weekly earnings for a period of eight weeks ending with the week in which you were notified of being matched with the child (or for adoptions from overseas, ending with the week in which you received the official notification) are not less than the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions
- you have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's placement (or for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain) apart from the partner
- you are absent from work and intend to care for the child during each week in which you receive statutory shared parental pay
- you are entitled to statutory adoption pay in respect of the child, but the adoption pay period has been reduced and
- you have complied with the relevant notice and evidential requirements set out in this policy.

In addition, the partner must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner for at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the week in which the adopter was notified of being matched with the child for adoption (or for adoptions from overseas, the week in which the child enters Great Britain)
- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold in any 13 of those 66 weeks and
- have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's placement (or for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain) apart from the adopter.

Entitlement to Shared Parental Pay if you are the Partner

If you are a partner, you are entitled to Shared Parental Pay if:

- you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the week in which the adopter was notified of being matched with the child for adoption (or for adoptions from overseas, at the end of the week in which the adopter received the official notification)
- you remain in continuous employment with us until the week before any period of shared parental pay begins
- your average weekly earnings for a period of eight weeks ending with the week in which the adopter was notified of being matched with the child (or for adoptions from overseas, ending with the week in which the adopter received the official notification) are not less than the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions
- you have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's placement (or for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain) apart from the adopter

- you are absent from work and intend to care for the child during each week in which you receive statutory shared parental pay and
- you have complied with the relevant notice and evidential requirements set out in this policy.

In addition, the adopter must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner for at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the week in which they were notified of being matched with the child for adoption (or for adoptions from overseas, the week in which the child enters Great Britain)
- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold in any 13 of those 66 weeks
- have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's placement (or for adoptions from overseas, at the date on which the child enters Great Britain) apart from the adopter and
- be entitled to statutory adoption pay in respect of the child, but the adoption pay period has been reduced.

Your Rights during Shared Parental Leave

During shared parental leave, all the terms and conditions of your contract except normal pay will continue. Your pay will be replaced with statutory shared parental pay if you are eligible for it. However, other benefits such as holiday entitlement and pension contributions will continue as set out below.

Holiday Entitlement

You will continue to accrue your holiday entitlement during your shared parental leave.

You should make every effort to take any outstanding holiday entitlement before commencing shared parental leave or immediately after your shared parental leave has ended if your leave is likely to extend into the next holiday year. Any holiday entitlement that has not been taken because of shared parental leave may be carried over into the next holiday year with the agreement of your line manager or director.

Pension Contributions

We will continue to make pension contributions based on your normal pay during any period of paid shared parental leave. The contributions that you make will be based on the actual pay that you receive during your shared parental leave.

Our pension contributions will cease during any period of unpaid shared parental leave.

Contact during Shared Parental Leave

We reserve the right to maintain reasonable contact with you during your shared parental leave. This may be to discuss your plans for returning to work, to discuss any special arrangements to be made or training to be given to ease your return to work, or to update you on developments at work during your absence.

Shared Parental Leave Keeping in Touch Days

You can agree to work (or attend training) for up to 20 days during shared parental leave without that work bringing your shared parental leave period or statutory shared parental pay to an end. These are known as "shared-parental-leave-in-touch" (SPLIT) days.

SPLIT days are in addition to the 10 keeping-in-touch days available to an adopter during adoption leave. Any work carried out on a SPLIT day will count as a whole working day and you will be paid your normal rate of pay.

We have no right to require you to carry out any work and you have no right to undertake any work during your shared parental leave. Any work undertaken on SPLIT days is entirely a matter for agreement between you and your line manager.

Returning to Work following Shared Parental Leave

You have the right to resume working in the same job and on the same terms and conditions when returning to work from shared parental leave if the period of leave when added to any other period of shared parental leave, statutory adoption or paternity leave taken by you in relation to the child is 26 weeks or less.

Whenever feasible, you can go back to your original job after taking shared parental leave. This applies if your total leave, including shared parental, statutory maternity, or paternity leave, is over 26 weeks. But if this isn't practical, we'll provide a suitable alternative role with terms and conditions that are no less favourable.

If you decide that you do not wish to return to work, you must give written notice of resignation as soon as possible in accordance with the terms of your contract of employment.

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Shared Parental Leave (Birth) Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

This policy sets out the rights of employees to shared parental leave and pay following the birth of their child. If you are adopting a child, please refer to our shared parental leave adoption policy.

Shared parental leave should not be confused with ordinary parental leave, which is the separate entitlement to up to 18 weeks' unpaid leave.

The following definitions are used in this policy:

"Mother" means the mother or expectant mother of the child.

"Partner" means the father of the child, or the person who, at the date of the child's birth, is married to, the civil partner of, or the partner of the mother. This includes someone, of whatever sex, who lives with the mother and the child in an enduring family relationship but who is not the mother's child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.

"Expected week of childbirth" means the week, starting on a Sunday, during which the mother's doctor or midwife expects them to give birth.

"Qualifying week" means the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

The policy does not form part of your contract of employment and we reserve the right to amend it at any time.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees employed by us, whether they are the mother or the partner. It does not apply to contractors, volunteers or interns working for us.

How does Shared Parental Leave Work?

Shared parental leave enables a mother to end their maternity leave early and share the remaining weeks of leave with a partner. It is aimed at giving parents more flexibility over how they share childcare between them during the first year of their child's life.

Shared parental leave can be taken at the same time as an eligible mother/partner or separately.

Leave must be taken in blocks of at least one week.

You can request to take shared parental leave in one continuous block, in which case we must accept your request as long as you are entitled to shared parental leave and meet the notice requirements. Alternatively, you can request to take shared parental leave in a number of discontinuous blocks of leave, separated by periods of work, in which case your line manager's agreement should be sought..

Entitlement to Shared Parental Leave if you are the Mother

If you are a mother, you are entitled to Shared Parental Leave if:

- you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the qualifying week;
- you remain in continuous employment with us until the week before any period of shared parental leave that you take
- you have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's birth (apart from the partner)
- you are entitled to statutory maternity leave in respect of the child
- you have brought your statutory maternity leave to an end by giving a maternity leave curtailment notice (or returned to work before the end of your statutory maternity leave period) and
- you have complied with the relevant notice and evidential requirements set out in this policy.

In addition, the partner must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner for at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the expected week of childbirth
- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold in any 13 of those 66 weeks and
- have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's birth (apart from the mother).

Entitlement to Shared Parental Leave if you are the Partner

If you are a partner, you are entitled to Shared Parental Leave if:

- you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the qualifying week
- you remain in continuous employment with us until the week before any period of shared parental leave that you take
- you have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's birth (apart from the mother) and
- you have complied with the relevant notice and evidential requirements set out in this policy.

In addition, the mother must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner for at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the expected week of childbirth
- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold in any 13 of those 66 weeks
- have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's birth (apart from the partner)
- be entitled to statutory maternity leave, statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in respect of the child and

- have brought their statutory maternity leave to an end by giving a maternity leave curtailment notice (or returned to work before the end of their statutory maternity leave period).

Amount of Shared Parental Leave Available

The amount of shared parental leave that you can split between you is 52 weeks, minus the amount of maternity leave taken by the mother.

If you are a mother, you must take compulsory maternity leave immediately after the child is born. This means that you cannot start your shared parental leave until two after the birth of your child.

If you are a partner, you can begin a period of shared parental leave at any time from the date of the child's birth. However, you are entitled to take up to two weeks' paternity leave following the birth of your child, which you will lose if shared parental leave is taken first.

All shared parental leave must be taken within the first 52 weeks following the birth of the child.

Notice Requirements

If you wish to take shared parental leave, you must ensure that you submit the required notices to your line manager copied to the HR Team within the timescales set out in this policy. The notices are:

- maternity leave curtailment notice (if you are the mother)
- notice of entitlement and intention; and
- period of leave notice.

The notice periods set out in this policy are the minimum required by law. However, the earlier you inform us of your intentions, the more likely it is that we will be able to accommodate your wishes, particularly if you want to take periods of discontinuous leave.

If you have already decided the pattern of shared parental leave that you would like to take, you can provide more than one type of notice at the same time.

Maternity Leave Curtailment Notice

If you are the mother who is employed by us, you must give your line manager a maternity leave curtailment notice (unless you have already returned to work from maternity leave). This is for you to confirm the date on which you intend to end your maternity leave.

Your notice must be received by us at least eight weeks before you or your partner intend to start the first period of shared parental leave.

Additionally, you must at the same time submit either:

- **Form for mother** (link) to provide notice of entitlement and intention to take shared parental leave - if you intend to take the first period of shared parental leave, or you and the partner intend to take it together (see Notice of entitlement and intention below) or
- **Form for mother** (link) to provide declaration of consent and entitlement - if your partner will be taking the first period of shared parental leave alone.

If you are the partner who is employed by us, you cannot take shared parental leave until the mother has given a maternity leave curtailment notice to their own employer or returned to work before the end of their statutory maternity leave period.

Revoking your maternity leave curtailment notice

We urge you to think carefully before submitting your maternity leave curtailment notice.

Once a maternity leave curtailment notice is submitted, you can only revoke it if:

- you discover that neither you nor the partner are entitled to shared parental leave or statutory shared parental pay and you withdraw your notice in writing within eight weeks of the date on which it was submitted
- notice was given before the birth of the child and you withdraw your notice in writing within six weeks of the child's birth or
- the partner has died.

If you wish to revoke your notice, you will need to notify your line manager, with a copy to the HR Team as soon as possible.

Notice of Entitlement and Intention

Before you can book a period of shared parental leave, you must give your line manager a notice of entitlement and intention. This is for you to declare that you are entitled to shared parental leave and confirm that you intend to take it.

Your notice must be received by us at least eight weeks before you intend to start the first period of leave.

If you are the mother who is employed by us, you should submit your notice using Form for mother to provide notice of entitlement and intention to take shared parental leave.

If you are the partner who is employed by us, you should submit your notice using Form for partner to provide notice of entitlement and intention to take shared parental leave.

These forms contain declarations that will need to be signed by both the mother and the partner.

Varying or cancelling the dates in your notice of entitlement and intention

You can vary or cancel the proposed shared parental leave dates set out in your notice of entitlement and intention by providing us with written notice.

To do this, you will need to complete a 'Form for employee' to vary notice of entitlement and intention to take shared parental leave and give this to your line manager.

Limit on number of variations in the notice of entitlement and intention

There is no limit on the number of variations that you can make as a notice of entitlement and intention is non-binding until you submit a period of leave notice.

Period of Leave Notice

Once you have provided a notice of entitlement and intention, you must also provide your line manager with a period of leave notice. This is for you to book each period of shared parental leave that you wish to take.

Your notice must be received by us at least eight weeks before you start the first period of leave. It may be given at the same time as your notice of entitlement and intention.

Your period of leave notice may state the start and end dates for each period of leave that you wish to take. Alternatively, if your child has not been born yet, your notice may state that you would like your shared parental leave to start either on the day on which your child is born, or a specified number of days after the child's birth.

Shared parental leave must be booked in blocks of at least one week. You can book one continuous period of leave; in which case we must accept your request as long as you are entitled to shared parental leave and meet the notice requirements. Alternatively, you can book discontinuous periods of leave, separated by periods of work, in which case we will consider your request but reserve the right to refuse it.

Varying or cancelling the dates in your period of leave notice

You can vary or cancel the shared parental leave dates in your period of leave notice by providing us with notice at least eight weeks before any period of leave varied or cancelled is due to start.

To do this, you will need to complete a relevant form and return it to your line manager, copied to the HR Team.

Limit on number of period of leave notices

You can submit three period of leave notices per pregnancy. However, any notice to vary or cancel the dates in your period of leave notice will count towards this total.

Booking Continuous Leave

If you submit a period of leave notice requesting a continuous period of leave, we must accept your request as long as you are entitled to shared parental leave and meet the notice requirements.

Booking Discontinuous Leave

If you submit a period of leave notice requesting discontinuous periods of leave, separated by periods of work, we will consider your request but reserve the right to refuse it.

In such cases, your line manager will start a two-week discussion period with you.

Your line manager may agree to your request, refuse your request or propose alternative dates.

If agreement cannot be reached within that two-week period, you may take the leave as one continuous period of leave on:

- the start date given in your original period of leave notice or
- a new start date that is at least eight weeks after the start date given in your original period of leave notice (in which case you must notify your line manager of that new start date within five days of the end of the two-week discussion period).

Alternatively, if you withdraw your period of leave notice on or before the 15th day after the notice was submitted, it will not count towards the limit on the number of period of leave notices that you are entitled to submit and you may submit a new period of leave notice.

Request for Further Information

We may, within 14 days of receiving your notice of entitlement and intention, ask you to provide:

- a copy of the child's birth certificate (or a signed declaration stating the date and place of birth if the birth certificate is not available); and
- the name and address of the mother or partner's employer (or a declaration that they have no employer).

You must provide this information within 14 days of our request.

Shared Parental Pay

Statutory shared parental pay is available for an eligible mother and partner to share between them while on shared parental leave.

The number of weeks' statutory shared parental pay available will depend on how much statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance the mother has been paid when their maternity leave or pay period ends.

A total of 39 weeks' statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance is available to the mother. There is a compulsory maternity leave period of two weeks. This means that a mother who ends their maternity leave at the earliest opportunity could share up to 37 weeks' statutory shared parental pay with a partner.

Any statutory shared parental pay due during shared parental leave will be paid at a rate set by the Government for the relevant tax year, or at 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

It is up to the mother and partner as to who is paid the statutory shared parental pay and how it is allocated between them. If you intend to receive statutory shared parental pay, you should give notice at the same time that you submit your notice of entitlement and intention.

Entitlement to Shared Parental Pay if you are the mother

If you are a mother, you are entitled to shared parental pay if:

- you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the qualifying week
- you remain in continuous employment with us until the week before any period of shared parental pay begins
- your average weekly earnings for a period of eight weeks ending with the qualifying week are not less than the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions
- you have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's birth (apart from the partner)
- you are absent from work and intend to care for the child during each week in which you receive statutory shared parental pay and
- you are entitled to statutory maternity pay in respect of the child, but the maternity pay period has been reduced and
- you have complied with the relevant notice and evidential requirements set out in this policy.

In addition, the partner must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner for at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the expected week of childbirth
- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold in any 13 of those 66 weeks and
- have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's birth (apart from the mother).

Entitlement to Shared Parental Pay if you are the Partner

If you are a partner, you are entitled to Shared Parental Pay if:

- you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the qualifying week
- you remain in continuous employment with us until the week before any period of shared parental pay begins
- your average weekly earnings for a period of eight weeks ending with the qualifying week are not less than the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions
- you have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's birth (apart from the mother)
- you are absent from work and intend to care for the child during each week in which you receive statutory shared parental pay and
- you have complied with the relevant notice and evidential requirements set out in this policy.

In addition, the mother must:

- have been employed or been a self-employed earner for at least 26 of the 66 weeks immediately preceding the expected week of childbirth
- have average weekly earnings of at least the maternity allowance threshold in any 13 of those 66 weeks
- have main responsibility for the care of the child at the date of the child's birth (apart from the partner) and
- be entitled to statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance in respect of the child, but the maternity pay period or maternity allowance period has been reduced.

Your Rights during Shared Parental Leave

During shared parental leave, all the terms and conditions of your contract except normal pay will continue. Your pay will be replaced with statutory shared parental pay if you are eligible for it. However, other benefits such as holiday entitlement and pension contributions will continue as set out below.

Holiday Entitlement

You will continue to accrue your holiday entitlement during your shared parental leave.

You should make every effort to take any outstanding holiday entitlement before commencing shared parental leave or immediately after your shared parental leave has ended if your leave is likely to extend into the next holiday year. Any holiday entitlement that has not been taken because of shared parental leave may be carried over into the next holiday year with the agreement of your line manager.

Pension Contributions

We will continue to make pension contributions based on your normal pay during any period of paid shared parental leave. The contributions that you make will be based on the actual pay that you receive during your shared parental leave.

Our pension contributions will cease during any period of unpaid shared parental leave.

Contact during Shared Parental Leave

We reserve the right to maintain reasonable contact with you during your shared parental leave. This may be to discuss your plans for returning to work, to discuss any special arrangements to be made or training to be given to ease your return to work, or to update you on developments at work during your absence.

Shared Parental Leave Keeping in Touch Days

You can agree to work (or attend training) for up to 20 days during shared parental leave without that work bringing your shared parental leave period or statutory shared parental pay to an end. These are known as "shared-parental-leave-in-touch" (SPLIT) days.

SPLIT days are in addition to the 10 keeping-in-touch days available to a mother during maternity leave. Any work carried out on a SPLIT day will count as a whole working day and you will be paid your normal rate of pay.

We have no right to require you to carry out any work and you have no right to undertake any work during your shared parental leave. Any work undertaken on SPLIT days is entirely a matter for agreement between you and your line manager.

Returning to Work following Shared Parental Leave

You have the right to resume working in the same job and on the same terms and conditions when returning to work from shared parental leave if the period of leave when added to any other period of shared parental leave, statutory maternity or paternity leave taken by you in relation to the child is 26 weeks or less.

You have the right to return to the same job, wherever possible, if you have taken shared parental leave and the period of leave taken is more than 26 weeks when added to any other period of shared parental leave, statutory maternity or paternity leave taken by you in relation to the child. However, if this is not reasonably practicable, we will offer you a suitable alternative job on terms and conditions that are no less favourable.

If you decide that you do not wish to return to work, you must give written notice of resignation as soon as possible in accordance with the terms of your contract of employment.

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Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

Having a culture that is diverse, equitable and inclusive is core to everything that we strive to achieve and key to the creation of a positive organisational environment. WODC is also committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of all employees and we wish to offer supportive and effective management of absence due to ill-health and a positive healthy culture that empowers managers to handle sensitive situations in the correct way.

WODC aims to encourage all its employees to maximise their attendance at work whilst recognising that there may be occasions when employees may be unable to attend work due to their own ill-health.

WODC will always treat employees fairly and sensitively during times of ill health, but it must also pay due regard to its operational needs. Persistent absence can damage efficiency and productivity and place an additional burden on colleagues.

By implementing this policy, WODC aims to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of its operational needs and the genuine need of employees to take time off work because of ill health.

This policy does not form part of employees' terms and conditions of employment and may be subject to change at the discretion of the management.

Definitions

The following definitions are used in this policy:

"Absence management stages" our step-by-step process for managing frequent Short-term sickness absence.

"Period of sickness absence" or **"instance of sickness absence"** means any continuous period of sickness absence, of whatever length, during which the employee does not work.

"Short-term sickness absence" means any period of sickness lasting one to 27 calendar days.

"Long-term sickness absence" means any period of sickness lasting 28 calendar days or more.

"Formal review period" means a defined period during which an employee is required to show an improvement in their sickness absence levels.

Scope

This policy covers short-term sickness absence. WODC operates a separate policy on long-term sickness absence. Once an employee's sickness has lasted 28 calendar days, WODC's long-term sickness absence policy applies. [Hyperlink](#)

Where an employee's absences are being managed under this policy and they then go off on long-term sickness absence, management of their sickness absence will be switched over to WODC's separate policy on long-term sickness absence.

This policy is formulated on the assumption that, if WODC suspects there to be misconduct, its separate disciplinary procedure will apply. For example, WODC may take disciplinary action if there is evidence that:

- absence is not genuine or not for the reason provided
- the employee does not provide satisfactory reason for the absence
- the employee is undertaking inappropriate activities while off sick, such as carrying out work for another organisation or
- the correct sickness absence notification and evidence procedure has not been followed.

Under our absence policy in cases of capability where an individual may be unable to fulfil their substantive role because of sickness or a disability, it may be appropriate to consider alternative action under the performance improvement and capability policy. Alternatively, there may be cases under our Absence Management stages where the disciplinary procedure applies.

This policy recognises WODC is under a legal duty to consider making reasonable adjustments and will do this in collaboration with the employee who becomes disabled, or their disability worsens. This is to enable the employee to continue to carry out their role and to support any identified disadvantage being removed.

This policy applies to employees only and does not apply to contractors, consultants, agency workers or any self-employed individuals working for WODC.

Responsibilities:

Guidelines for line managers

When an individual is off sick, a line manager should:

- take responsibility for managing and reviewing their staff's attendance and absence; the manager should ensure that the sickness record is up to date and reflective of an individual's absence.
- maintain a record of each employee's sickness absences ensuring the records clearly identify the reasons for the employee's various absences.
- take responsibility for applying the Attendance management stages under this policy when the relevant absence triggers are met.
- after speaking to them on the first day of absence, maintain contact on at least the fourth day of absence and at regular intervals thereafter. You should agree the frequency with that individual with consideration to the nature of the absence and the duration of any fit notes should the absence extend beyond seven calendar days.
- ensure all records of absences, including discussions and medical certificates remain confidential.

When an individual returns to work the line manager should:

- ensure the employee completes a self-certification form for sickness of seven calendar days or less and provides medical evidence for sickness of more than seven calendar days
- conduct a return-to-work meeting on the first day back

- speak to the employee about the absence and the reason for it in a fair and factual way, understanding that the absence could be sensitive
- be alert to patterns of absence, for example frequent absences on Fridays or Mondays, or immediately before or after bank or public holidays
- be particularly sensitive when absences are caused by personal or family problems
- be mindful of any reference to anything work related, for example, workplace stress.

Concerns around high levels of absence or patterns:

- speak with the individual and highlight any concerns around high levels of absence and be ready to apply the attendance management stages where the absence requires
- try to establish any underlying reasons for frequent absences and, where the underlying cause is identified, take steps to help the employee to manage the cause
- be aware of the potential for discrimination when managing absence, particularly where the employee's ill health is related to pregnancy or disability
- keep in mind WODC's legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people when managing absence
- consult with your HR Business Partner if unsure about anything or special circumstances arise, for example if it appears that the employee may have a disability
- bear in mind that WODC may seek a medical report on an employee, for example from the employee's doctor or WODC's occupational health advisers the individual's consent is required to obtain this information;

Guidelines for employees

If they are unable to attend work because of ill health, all employees should:

- notify their line manager by telephone as soon as reasonably practicable, preferably before they are due to start work on the first day of absence. If the line manager is unavailable, the employee should contact the next most appropriate person - it is important that the reporting procedures are followed at all times.
- continue to notify on the fourth day and keep in touch with their line manager at regular intervals after this while unable to attend work. The frequency of such contact should be agreed between the line manager and the employee with consideration to the nature of the absence and the duration of any fit notes should the absence extend beyond seven calendar days.
- be prepared to give their line manager a clear reason (i.e., the nature of the illness or injury) why they cannot attend work and estimate as to how long they think the absence will last.

Upon a return to work an employee should:

- complete a self-certification form for sickness of seven calendar days or less and provide medical evidence for sickness of more than seven calendar days
- attend a return-to-work meeting with their line manager each time the employee returns from a period of sickness absence
- be open with their line manager about the reasons for their absence, to give their line manager the opportunity to provide support where possible
- tell their line manager of any extenuating circumstances, for example personal or family problems or an unmanageable workload

Concerns around high levels of absence or patterns:

- bear in mind that WODC has attendance management stages to help support and manage high levels of absence or patterns
- bear in mind that WODC may seek a medical report, for example from the employee's doctor, and

- co-operate with WODC regarding the possible implementation of any adjustments to job duties, hours or working conditions, particularly those suggested by a healthcare professional.

Attendance review management stages

The following procedure aims to provide a consistent approach to managing short term absence initially through informal interventions, and where attendance does not improve/attendance targets are not met and concerns continue, through a formal process.

Consideration will be given to an employee who needs time off for reasons related to their disability such as:

- too ill to work
- attending medical and hospital appointments
- having treatment or therapy
- recovering from treatment

Some adjustment to the trigger points for absence due to disability will be made by either

- not counting some or all the sickness absence related to a disability towards any trigger point
- increasing the number of absences that trigger a review

Informal Stage (1): Initial attendance review meeting

You will be required to attend an initial attendance review meeting with your manager if you have:

- Three separate occurrences of sickness absence in a 3-month rolling period; or
- More than 20 working days of sickness absence in a 12-month rolling period; or
- A pattern of absence that is of concern (e.g., Mondays/Fridays or absence following holidays or bank holidays)

The initial attendance review meeting should aim to:

- Check on your wellbeing
- Discuss the reasons for the absence
- Identify any contributing issues and how these may be resolved
- Establish whether there is an underlying medical condition or disability (this may involve seeking further medical advice)
- Consider what other support may be needed
- Advise you of what improvement is expected in your attendance
 - Show immediate and sustained improvement
 - Meet an attendance target
 - Follow reporting procedures at all times during the attendance review period
- Or inform you that there will be no further action

You may be advised that if attendance does not improve you may be subject to disciplinary action

Formal Stage (2): Formal attendance review meeting

You will be required to attend a formal review meeting which will be held with you if your attendance remains of concern and/or there is no underlying medical condition. Reasons for a formal meeting include

- A fourth absence occurs in a 3-month rolling period; or
- Sickness absence has reached 30 working days; or
- The pattern of absence remains a concern

At this meeting your manager will:

- Check on your wellbeing
- Discuss the reasons for the continued absence
- Review your attendance and set a clear timeframe for improvement

- Show immediate and sustained improvement
- meet an attendance target
- Discuss how this may be improved
- Consider a referral to occupational health
- Discuss any management support or other needs
- Or inform you that there will be no further action

You may be advised that your absence will be considered a disciplinary issue and managed under the disciplinary or performance improvement or capability procedure and a letter will be sent to you to inform you of the outcome. Any further absences at this stage could then result in a formal procedure being further invoked which may ultimately lead to dismissal.

Right to Representation

At any formal meeting you have the right to be represented by a work colleague. However, consideration will be given to another person in exceptional circumstances.

Notification and Evidence of Sickness Absence

Reporting absence

On the first day of sickness absence, the employee must inform their line manager as soon as reasonably practicable that they will not be working because of illness or injury. Preferably, the employee should notify their line manager of non-attendance by telephone before they are due to start work and, in any event, as soon as reasonably practicable. If the employee's line manager is unavailable, the employee should contact the next most appropriate person.

The employee should provide a clear reason (i.e. the nature of the illness or injury) why they cannot attend work and estimate how long they think the absence will last. The employee should also be prepared to briefly discuss any consequences of their absence, for example if customer appointments need to be cancelled or any essential work needs to be covered.

Notification of sickness absence must be via telephone, not by text message, email or social media. In exceptional circumstances where the employee is unable to telephone (for example, because of hospitalisation), another person such as a friend or relative can contact WODC on their behalf.

If an employee comes to work but needs to leave during the day because of ill health, they should inform their line manager before leaving work. If their line manager is unavailable, the employee should inform the next most appropriate person within the department.

Sickness absence that begins part way through the day will count as half a day's sickness absence if the employee leaves before completing 50% of their working day. Where sickness absence begins after the employee has completed 50% of their working day, no absence will be recorded for that day.

After the first day of absence, the employee should generally telephone their manager on the fourth day and at regular intervals thereafter. This should be as agreed with your line manager and in line with fit note.

Self-certification of sickness absence

If sickness is for seven calendar days or less, on the first day of the employee's return to work/at a return-to-work meeting, they must obtain, complete and sign a self-certification form, setting out the dates of absence and the nature of the illness or injury.

The line manager should countersign the form and pass it on to Human Resources.

Statement of fitness for work (fit note)

While the first seven calendar days of sickness can be self-certified, all sickness that lasts longer than seven calendar days requires medical evidence. This medical evidence will normally be in the form of a fit note, also known as a "statement of fitness for work".

As well as being issued by doctors, fit notes can be issued by nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists and physiotherapists who have assessed their fitness for work. Fit notes cannot be issued on request or via over-the-counter services without an assessment.

If the employee's sickness lasts for eight calendar days or more, the employee's line manager must ensure that the employee provides a fit note as soon as possible. A fit note may state that the employee:

- is "not fit for work", in which case the employee should remain off work or
- "may be fit for work", if the healthcare professional's recommendations are followed (for example, a phased return, amended job duties, altered hours of work, or workplace adaptations).
- where a phased return is recommended this will typically be for a period up to 6 weeks.
- in exceptional circumstances a longer period of reduced hours (recommended by Occupational Health) may be agreed. However, a feasibility review will take place at 3 and 6 months to explore whether any adjustments need to take place i.e. with regards temporarily redeploying into a suitable role or a temporary decrease to working hours.

While there is no legal obligation on WODC to follow the recommendations, line managers should take the recommendations seriously and give fair consideration - in consultation with the employee and Human Resources - as to whether or not any of the changes recommended can be accommodated.

Sick Pay

WODC operates a contractual sick pay scheme that supplements Statutory Sick Pay and Employment and Support Allowance to maintain normal pay during defined periods of absence on account of sickness, disease, accident or assault.

Providing you follow the correct procedure as detailed in this document, you will normally receive:

Year 1 of service	1 months' full pay (after 4 months' service)
Year 2 of service	2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay
Year 3 of service	4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay
During Year 4 and Year 5 of service	5 months full pay and 5 months half pay

After 5 years of service	6 months full pay and 6 months half pay (as per the Green Book)
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Contractual sick pay is calculated over a 12-month rolling period. Employees are required to co-operate fully when a medical referral to the Occupational Health Advisor is required. Decisions around capability / reasonable adjustment will be made based only on the medical information available.

Sick pay under WODC's scheme is subject to the usual deductions for PAYE, national insurance, pension contributions, etc.

Payments under the WODC's scheme will be calculated by reference to the employee's salary only and any payments made under WODC's scheme are inclusive of any entitlement to SSP for the same period of absence.

Medical Appointments

WODC recognises that employees will, from time to time, need to attend medical appointments.

Employees should endeavour to arrange medical appointments in their own time or, if this is not possible, at times that will cause the minimum amount of absence from work or inconvenience to WODC, such as first thing in the morning or at the end of the working day.

However, because WODC accepts that it is not always possible to arrange medical appointments outside working hours, it is WODC's policy to permit reasonable time off work for such appointments.

Provided that the employee gives their line manager reasonable notice of the date and time of an appointment, time off with pay for hospital appointments will normally be granted, although this is subject to the discretion of the employee's line manager and you may be asked to make the time up.

Time off for routine appointments (i.e. Doctors and Dentist Doctors and dentist appointments should be made to minimise the amount of time the employee is away from the workplace. Wherever possible, these appointments should be taken outside of the core working hours of 10am to 12pm and 2pm to 4pm. Time lost must be made up and will not be credited back to time sheets.

Where time off for medical appointments becomes frequent or regular, or starts to cause difficulties for the employee's department, the line manager has the discretion either to require the employee to make up for the time off by working extra time on another occasion, or to grant any further time off without pay.

Employees must obtain approval from their line manager in advance of any appointment. The line manager reserves the right to ask the employee to reschedule an appointment if its timing would cause disruption to WODC business. The line manager may also, at their discretion, ask the employee to produce confirmation of the appointment.

Employees who are pregnant have the statutory right not to be unreasonably refused paid time off work for antenatal appointments where the employee's attendance has been recommended by a registered medical practitioner, midwife or nurse. Paid time off in such circumstances will automatically be granted, although employees should endeavour to arrange appointments outside working hours. Nevertheless, the employee should give reasonable notice of the date and time of the appointment to their line manager where possible and the line manager will still have the right to request to see the confirmation of the employee's second appointment and any subsequent appointments.

A prospective partner of a pregnant woman, has the statutory right to take unpaid time off to attend up to two antenatal appointments up to a maximum of 6.5 hours

Special Cases

Pregnancy-related absences

Pregnant employees who are off work because of pregnancy-related ill health must abide by WODC's absence reporting procedure. For example, a pregnant employee is subject to the usual notification and evidence requirements and will be asked to attend a return-to-work meeting when returning to work.

Disability-related absences

Where an employee gives as the reason for absence an underlying health issue that could amount to a disability under the Equality Act 2010, the manager should seek advice from their HR Business Partner to determine how best to support the employee to improve their attendance. This includes where the employee states that they are suffering from any ill-health related to anxiety or stress.

Holiday during sick leave

An employee who is absent on sick leave will continue to accrue their holiday entitlement and will be given the opportunity to take this at a later date, including in the subsequent leave year, if they do not take their holiday entitlement due to being on sick leave.

An employee on sick leave may apply to take their holiday entitlement while on sick leave. The holiday dates must be approved in accordance with WODC's holiday procedure.

Medical Advice

At various stages of managing the employee's sickness absence, a manager may want to obtain advice on the employee's fitness for work from occupational health advisers.

Examples of when a line manager might refer to occupational health include to:

- seek a medical report on the employee
- establish when the employee might be able to return to work
- ask for guidance on the employee's condition, for example if there is a possibility that the employee is disabled or simply where more information is required as to the exact nature of the condition and
- if the employee is disabled, discuss any adjustments that could be made to accommodate the employee's disability.

WODC will treat personal data about you collected during the absence management process in accordance with its data protection policy / policy on processing special categories of personal data (this may include medical certificates or information given by you about your sickness). Information about how an employee's data is used and the basis for processing their data will be provided in the privacy notice which contains the data protection information. Where WODC is relying on its legitimate interests as the legal ground for processing an employee's data, you can object to the processing.

Report from a Medical Practitioner who has been Responsible for the Employee's Clinical Care

Where a report from the employee's medical practitioner is necessary, the employee will be fully informed of their rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 and their permission will be sought for the report to be obtained.

The employee's permission will be sought to contact the medical practitioner on the relevant consent form, available from Human Resources.

The employee has the right to access the report before it is released to us. If the employee wishes to see the report, they should inform the Occupational Health Practitioner at the time of their appointment.

When requesting a report, WODC will provide the medical practitioner with as much information as possible on the role of the employee and explain why the report is being sought. WODC will provide the medical practitioner with:

- a copy of the employee's signed form consenting to the request to seek a medical report
- confirmation that the employee is aware of their rights under the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 and
- details of the major features of the employee's job.

WODC will ask the medical practitioner to identify:

- the nature of the employee's illness or injury
- whether or not there are any underlying medical conditions that explain the employee's pattern of absences and
- what reasonable adjustments could be made to working conditions or work premises to facilitate a return to work.

Where the employee refuses permission for WODC to contact their medical practitioner, WODC will explain to the employee the reasons behind the request and inform the employee that a decision relating to their employment may be made without the benefit of access to medical reports. The same procedure will be followed where the employee delays in giving their consent.

Where the employee feels that the report is misleading or incorrect, they may ask the medical practitioner to amend it. If the medical practitioner does not agree with the employee and does not alter the report, the employee may attach a statement to the report to reflect their views.

Alternatively, having seen the report, the employee may request that access to the report be withheld from WODC. The employee will be informed that a decision relating to employment may be made without the benefit of access to medical reports.

Report from a medical practitioner who has not been responsible for the employee's clinical care

The Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 does not apply where WODC is seeking a medical report from a medical practitioner who has not been responsible for the employee's clinical care, typically its own chosen specialist or occupational health adviser.

In these circumstances, WODC will explain to the employee in writing what information it is seeking on the employee's health and how the information will be used. The letter should explain to the employee:

- that WODC intends to obtain a medical report and why it wishes to do so
- from whom the report will be obtained
- what WODC will do with the report
- how WODC will treat personal data collected when obtaining the medical report and
- their right to object to the processing of their personal data.

WODC will write to the medical practitioner to request the report. The letter should explain to the medical practitioner why WODC is requesting the report and ask any specific questions that it wishes the practitioner to answer.

Where the employee objects to the processing of their personal data when WODC is seeking to obtain a medical report to which the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 does not apply, WODC will explain to

the employee the reasons behind the request and inform the employee that a decision relating to their employment may be made without the benefit of access to medical reports.

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Supporting Bereaved Employees Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

We recognise that dealing with a bereavement can be among the biggest challenges of an employee's life. This policy sets out our commitment to supporting staff through their grief by providing bereavement leave, keeping in touch with staff while they are off work, and supporting staff on their return to work.

We acknowledge that every bereavement is different, and grief impacts everyone in different ways. This policy is intended to cater for a wide range of circumstances and the differing impacts that a bereavement can have, while also recognising the needs of the business.

Bereavement Leave

In the event of the death of an immediate family member (other than a child where the employee is eligible for parental bereavement leave), you will be granted sufficient time to attend the funeral which would normally be 1-day or 1/2 day. An additional 3 day's leave will be given if you are responsible for arranging the funeral or to deal with post funeral arrangements. Each case will be viewed sympathetically and the amount of leave granted will depend on the individual's circumstances. The line manager will take into account matters such as the employee's relationship with the deceased, domestic responsibilities and travel requirements.

For the purposes of this policy, an "immediate family member" is defined as a:

- spouse or civil partner
- partner (including same-sex partner)
- parent (including step-parent)
- adult child (i.e., who is aged 18 or over, meaning that the employee is not eligible for parental bereavement leave)
- sibling (including step-sibling)
- grandparent; or
- grandchild.

Where there is a loss of a child, and that child is under 18. This is a legal entitlement for bereaved parents to be absent from work for up to two weeks where their child passes away. We are fully committed to supporting staff coping with the loss of a child by ensuring that bereaved parents can take parental bereavement leave.

Whatever your length of service, you can take parental bereavement leave if you have lost a child (i.e. under the age of 18) and are the:

- parent of a child who has passed away or
- partner of the child's parent, where you live in an enduring family relationship with the child and their parent or
- "parent in fact" of a child who has passed away, which means that, for a continuous period of at least four weeks before the child passed away, they have been living with the child and had "day-to-day responsibility" for the child (but who is not being paid to look after the child).

Individual who is not an Immediate Family Member

We recognise that you may be grieving following the death of an individual who is not an immediate family member, but with whom you nevertheless have a close relationship, for example an aunt, an uncle, a cousin or a close friend.

If this is the case, you can request bereavement leave and it will be up to your line manager, to decide whether to grant bereavement leave and, if so, how much bereavement leave to grant. The decision will depend on the circumstances, taking into account issues such as:

- the closeness of your relationship with the deceased
- your obligations towards the deceased (for example if you are responsible for arranging the deceased's funeral)
- travel required (for example if you need to travel a significant distance to be with relatives) and
- any bereavement requirements in relation to religion, such as an extended period of mourning (with the onus on you to tell your line manager about these requirements).

The employee can be granted up to 3 days' paid bereavement leave.

Support during Bereavement

If you have suffered a bereavement and cannot attend work, you should inform your line manager of what has happened by telephone as soon as reasonably practicable. This will allow us to support you.

You should inform your line manager of what you would like colleagues to know about the situation and of any urgent tasks that other staff can pick up or meetings that need to be cancelled or rearranged.

Following the initial contact, you and your line manager should keep in touch. The level of contact is a matter for agreement between the two of you.

External Support

External sources of help and support for bereaved employees include:

- [Cruse Bereavement Care](#) / [Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland](#), which offers support to bereaved people, for example via a telephone helpline;
- [Child Bereavement UK](#), which offers support to families when a child passes away, for example via a telephone helpline;
- [Age UK](#), which has a website that includes [guidance and support](#) on coping with bereavement;
- [WAY Widowed and Young](#), which specialises in supporting people aged 50 or under whose partner has passed away; and
- [Marie Curie](#), which supports families living with a terminal illness.

Other Types of Leave

Where you have exhausted bereavement leave, or you are not entitled to bereavement leave under this policy you can still apply for annual leave under our holiday policy in the usual way.

Employees who are not entitled to bereavement leave under this policy may be able to take unpaid time off under our separate time off for dependant's policy. Employees can take unpaid time off work to take action necessary "in consequence of" the death of a dependant. However, the right is limited to the death of an employee's spouse, civil partner, child or parent, or someone who lives in the employee's household (not as a lodger, tenant or employee).

If you are taking sickness absence as a result of ill health brought on by a bereavement, our usual sickness absence policy applies. Under the sickness absence policy, you must:

- complete a self-certification form for sickness of seven calendar days or less; and
- provide medical evidence for sickness of more than seven calendar days.

Return to Work

Once you are back at work, you can discuss with your line manager what further support we can provide.

We recognise that a bereaved employee may not be able to return immediately to their full duties or way of working. It sees the value of temporarily adjusting a bereaved employee's duties or phasing the employee back to work when it is appropriate to do so.

We will consider requests to make temporary changes to working arrangements, such as allowing you to work reduced hours; work from home on certain days; or be reassigned to another role (for example away from a customer-facing role).

Depending on the nature of the temporary changes, your line manager may agree to the temporary adjustments informally with you, or you may need to make a formal request for flexible working.

We recognise that some bereavements will result in an employee being permanently unable to return to their full duties or way of working. For example, an employee with children whose partner passes away may have increased childcare responsibilities. Permanent changes that could be requested include moving to part-time working; working from home on certain days; or being reassigned to another role, if such a permanent position is available.

Should we agree to permanent changes that impact on your terms and conditions of employment, you will be asked to agree to a variation of contract.

Health and Safety

A bereavement can result in an employee experiencing lapses in concentration, impaired decision-making, fatigue, and depression or anxiety. If you are concerned about your fitness for work, you should discuss this with your line manager.

We reserve the right to require an employee who is unfit for work to go home on sick leave or to adjust their duties temporarily. It may be appropriate to seek a medical report on the employee or carry out a risk assessment.

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Supporting Employees through Pregnancy Loss Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

This policy sets out the rights of employees affected by a miscarriage, stillbirth or termination for medical reasons (TFMR) and explains the emotional and practical support that we can provide.

We empathise when an employee experiences pregnancy loss as we know it is extremely distressing, regardless of how early in pregnancy the loss occurs. Pregnancy loss can have significant physical and emotional consequences, which may affect an employee's attendance or performance at work.

We are committed to supporting employees who are affected and encourage you to discuss your situation with us if you are comfortable doing so.

Definitions

The following definitions are used in this policy:

"Miscarriage" means the loss of a baby before the end of the 24th week of pregnancy.

"Stillbirth" means the loss of a baby after 24 complete weeks of pregnancy.

"Termination for medical reasons" (TFMR) describes the ending of a wanted pregnancy after a prenatal diagnosis of a condition with the baby or because of a risk to the mother's health. In this context, the word "termination" is preferred to abortion to make clear that the pregnancy was wanted. A TFMR can occur at any stage of pregnancy, following findings from ultrasound scans or other investigations.

"Ectopic pregnancy" means a pregnancy that develops outside the uterus, most often in the fallopian tubes.

"Molar pregnancy" is where a fertilised egg implants in the uterus but cannot develop because it does not contain the correct genetic material.

References to a miscarriage in this policy include an ectopic pregnancy and a molar pregnancy.

How a Miscarriage or Stillbirth may affect an Employee at Work

Supporting Employees through Pregnancy Loss Policy and Procedure

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www.westoxon.gov.uk

Having a miscarriage, stillbirth or TFMR can affect an employee in a number of different ways, which can in turn affect their work or performance. These include:

- physical symptoms, such as pain, bleeding, lactation, tiredness or a loss of appetite;
- difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- loss of confidence and motivation
- finding social interaction more difficult
- mood swings, irritability or tearfulness
- feelings of guilt and fear of judgement from others and
- mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Telling us about your Miscarriage

You do not have to tell us that you have had a miscarriage.

However, if you would like to do so, we encourage you to tell your line manager, the HR Team or any member of management at an early stage, so that we can provide any necessary support.

Any information given to line managers and any other management is confidential. Colleagues will only be told about the miscarriage if this is what you want. Your line manager will discuss your wishes with you.

If you do not want to tell your line manager about your miscarriage, you can access support by approaching another manager or director for support.

Telling us about your Stillbirth

We encourage you to tell your line manager about your stillbirth at an early stage, so that we can provide any necessary support.

Telling us about your TFMR

You do not have to tell us that you have had a TFMR.

However, if you would like to do so, we encourage you to tell your line manager at an early stage, so that we can provide any necessary support.

You should bear in mind that a TFMR after 24 weeks must be registered as a stillbirth and statutory maternity rights apply in these circumstances. In this situation, we strongly urge you to inform us so that we can advise you of your right to take maternity leave.

Any information given to managers is confidential. Colleagues will only be told about your TFMR if this is what you want. Your line manager will discuss your wishes with you.

If you do not want to tell your line manager about your TFMR, you can access support by approaching another member of management or a director for support.

Time Off

Employees who have experienced a pregnancy loss may need time off work to recover from the physical and emotional consequences.

The amount of time off that is needed will vary from individual to individual. Your right to time off and the type of leave that you can take depends on whether you have had a miscarriage, stillbirth or TFMR.

Supporting Employees through Pregnancy Loss Policy and Procedure

Miscarriage

If you are unwell and unable to attend work following a miscarriage, we will handle this under our sickness absence policy. You will need to self-certify absences of up to seven days or provide a GP's fit note for longer periods of absence in accordance with the policy.

Your certificate or fit note should confirm that the absence is pregnancy related. Your right to sick pay is also covered by the sickness absence policy.

You may want to consider taking a period of annual leave if you do not qualify for paid sick leave. You should request this in the usual way. We will consider any request sympathetically. We are also willing to consider requests for periods of unpaid leave. You should discuss this with your line manager.

Under our compassionate leave policy, employees are also entitled to 5 days' paid leave. Further information about how to request compassionate leave is contained in the policy.

Stillbirth

Employees who have had a stillbirth can take statutory maternity leave and (if eligible) receive statutory maternity pay. Maternity leave starts on the day after a stillbirth.

If you would like to take maternity leave, you should tell us about the stillbirth as soon as possible and provide a copy of your MAT B1 certificate if you have not already done so. Further information can be found in our maternity policy.

Employees can also take up to two weeks' statutory parental bereavement leave after their statutory maternity leave, and (if eligible) receive statutory parental bereavement pay. Further information can be found in our parental bereavement leave policy.

TFMR

If you are unwell and unable to attend work following a TFMR, we will handle this under our sickness absence policy. You will need to self-certify absences of up to seven days or provide a GP's fit note for longer periods of absence in accordance with the policy.

Your certificate or fit note should confirm that the absence is pregnancy related. Your right to sick pay is also covered by the sickness absence policy.

A TFMR after 24 weeks must be registered as a stillbirth and the right to take maternity leave applies in these circumstances.

You may want to consider taking a period of annual leave if you do not qualify for paid sick leave or maternity leave. You should request this in the usual way. We will consider any request sympathetically. We are also willing to consider requests for periods of unpaid leave. You should discuss this with your line manager.

Practical and Emotional Support

Our intranet signposts employees and line managers to external sources of help and support, including:

- [The Miscarriage Association](#), which provides support and information to those affected by miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy or molar pregnancy and offers a pregnancy loss helpline
- [Sands](#), which provides support to anyone who has been affected by stillbirth or neonatal death
- [Tommy's](#), a charity that carries out research and supports those who have lost babies
- the [Mariposa Trust](#), a charity that provides support to those affected by baby loss and bereavement
- [Petals](#), a charity providing counselling to parents bereaved after pregnancy loss, including TFMR
- [Antenatal Results and Choices \(ARC\)](#), a charity providing support to those who decide to terminate a pregnancy for medical reasons
- the [Dad Still Standing](#) podcast, in which two fathers share their experiences of baby loss and provide advice and guidance to those who reach out to them
- the [Time to Talk TFMR](#) podcast, which deals sensitively with all aspects of TFMR and
- [Mind](#), which provides support and information to those experiencing mental health issues for any reason.

Returning to Work

Your line manager will keep in touch with you during any period of leave after pregnancy loss to discuss:

- what information, if any, you want to share with colleagues before you return to work and how that information should be provided
- any additional support you need to return to work, such as a phased return/temporary changes to your duties, hours or location of work/a period of homeworking/additional breaks and
- any adjustments recommended by a health and safety risk assessment.

Your line manager will arrange a meeting with you to discuss these issues before your return to work if you would find that useful.

Your line manager will also have regular meetings with you after your return to work so that we can continue to provide adequate support.

Rights of Partners and Fathers/Parents

We recognise that the loss of a baby is a distressing experience for both parents. Therefore, an employee whose partner has a miscarriage, stillbirth or TFMR, or the father or parent of the baby who has passed away, may also need support or be eligible for time off.

The sources of practical and emotional support listed above are also open to fathers and partners and we encourage employees to access these. The Miscarriage Association has published guidance [Partners Too](#), which they may find helpful. They should discuss any additional support that they need with their line manager.

The right to time off for partners and fathers/parents depends on how long the pregnancy lasted.

Miscarriage

Employees can take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off, also known as time off for dependents, to provide assistance if their spouse or civil partner falls ill. Employees should tell us the reason for their absence as soon as possible and say how long they expect to be off work.

Stillbirth

Employees can take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off, also known as time off for dependents, to provide assistance if their spouse or civil partner falls ill. Employees should tell us the reason for their absence as soon as possible and say how long they expect to be off work. Further details are set out in our time off for dependant's policy.

In addition to unpaid time off, the partner of the individual who has a stillbirth, or the father/parent of the baby who has passed away, may be eligible for:

- either one- or two-weeks' statutory paternity leave and pay further information is set out in our paternity leave policy
- up to two weeks' statutory parental bereavement leave and pay, which can be taken as two separate weeks or a single period of leave further information is set out in our parental bereavement leave policy and
- 5 days paid leave under our compassionate leave policy.

TFMR

Employees can take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off, also known as time off for dependents, to provide assistance if their spouse or civil partner falls ill. Employees should tell us the reason for their absence as soon as possible and say how long they expect to be off work. Further details are set out in our time off for dependant's policy.

Under our compassionate leave policy, employees are also entitled to 5 days paid leave. Further information about how to request compassionate leave is contained in the compassionate leave policy.

A TFMR after 24 weeks must be registered as a stillbirth and the right to take paternity leave applies in these circumstances.

The role of other Employees

If a colleague is experiencing a miscarriage while they are at work, employees should respond sympathetically and supportively.

Practical steps that you can take include:

- ensuring that they have privacy and access to a toilet
- providing a wrap or covering if they are bleeding heavily
- arranging transport home or to a hospital as appropriate (including calling an ambulance if this is necessary and arranging for someone to accompany them)
- calling their partner or a friend to notify them of the situation, if this is what they want and
- reassuring them not to worry about work and that arrangements to cover their work will be made.

We recognise that an employee whose partner is having a miscarriage or stillbirth may need to leave work at short notice and arrangements will be made to accommodate this.

If a colleague has chosen to share information about a miscarriage or stillbirth, when they return to work employees should offer them sympathy and support and acknowledge their loss. The Miscarriage Association has published [Supporting someone you know](#), which contains guidance on how to talk sensitively about miscarriage in the workplace.

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Time off for Dependants Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

This policy takes the following approach to emergency situations involving employees' dependants. The policy explains the right to take time off to manage unexpected or sudden problems relating to a dependant and make any necessary longer-term arrangements.

Circumstances in which Right to Time off for Dependants Applies

Irrespective of your length of service, and whether you are part time or full time, you can take a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to take necessary action:

- to provide assistance when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted
- to make arrangements for the provision of care for an ill or injured dependant
- in consequence of the death of a dependant
- because of the unexpected disruption or termination of arrangements for the care of a dependant; and
- to deal with an incident that involves their child and occurs unexpectedly while the child is at school/school/another educational establishment.

A dependant is:

- a spouse
- a civil partner
- a child
- a parent
- a person who lives with you other than as your employee, tenant, lodger or boarder
- any other person who would reasonably rely on you for assistance if they fell ill or was injured or assaulted, or who would rely on you to make arrangements for the provision of care in the event of illness or injury or
- in relation to the disruption or termination of care for a dependant, any other person who reasonably relies on you to make arrangements for the provision of care.

What you should do if you need Time off for Dependants

If you need to take time off for dependants, you should contact your line manager at the earliest opportunity. If you become aware of an emergency situation while at work, you should immediately speak to your line manager about leaving work early.

You should explain:

- the reason for the absence and
- how long you expect to be absent from work.

If your line manager is unavailable, you must speak to an equivalent or more senior manager.

If you are unable to contact with a line manager or suitable alternative person before taking time off for dependants, you should contact your line manager as soon as possible.

You must inform your line manager as soon as possible of any change in the anticipated date of your return to work.

Pay

There is no statutory entitlement to receive pay while taking time off for dependants. Therefore, we do not pay you for any time off for dependants.

How much Time off can be Taken?

The right to time off for dependants will, in most cases, be one or two days. You must actively seek alternative longer-term arrangements for the care of a dependant as soon as possible after the emergency occurs. If you are unable to make alternative arrangements, you must contact your line manager and explain why further absence is required.

Other Types of Leave

Time off under this policy is intended to be for you to deal with emergency situations involving dependants. Once the immediate emergency has been taken care of, you are expected to return to work or, if further time off is necessary, request to take it as annual leave under our holiday policy.

We have a separate policy on compassionate leave, which is to help you to come to terms with the death of a loved one, a serious illness or injury involving a loved one, or serious personal relationship problems.

Should you find yourself dealing with the loss of a child, you should refer to the Parental Bereavement Leave Policy.

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Unauthorised Absence Policy and Procedure

Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees to give their best.

Having a culture that is diverse, equitable and inclusive is core to everything that we strive to achieve and key to the creation of a positive organisational environment. WODC is committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of all employees, we wish to offer supportive and effective management of unexpected absence and would emphasise the importance of always contacting your employer.

WODC aims to encourage all its employees to maximise their attendance at work while recognising that employees will, from time to time, be unable to come to work because of ill health or some other reason.

WODC will always treat employees fairly and sensitively during times of sickness and ill health, it must also pay due regard to its operational needs. If an employee is persistently absent from work, this can damage efficiency and productivity, and place an additional burden on the employee's colleagues.

By implementing this policy, WODC aims to strike a reasonable balance between the pursuit of its operational needs and the genuine need of employees to take time off work. However, it should be noted that all absences from work need to be authorised.

This policy on unauthorised absence applies to all employees. It applies if an employee fails to comply with WODC's sickness absence reporting procedure (or provide the necessary evidence within the required time period), fails to attend work or return from holiday, or is absent from work for any other reason without notification and/or agreement.

If an employee is absent from work without good cause and/or fails properly and effectively to notify WODC of their absence, this may be treated as a serious disciplinary offence, potentially constituting gross misconduct as per the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. ([hyperlink](#))

This policy does not form part of employees' terms and conditions of employment and may be subject to change at the discretion of the management.

Action on First Day of Absence

On the first day of the employee's absence, their line manager will attempt to contact them, making a note of the means used and keeping a record of the time. If the employee does not answer the telephone, the manager will attempt to leave a voicemail asking them to return the call. The manager can also try any other methods to contact the employee, including text message to a private mobile phone, if available.

If the manager is unable to contact the employee, they may attempt to contact the employee's next of kin or listed emergency contact.

Action on Second Day of Absence

On the second day of absence, if nothing has been heard from the employee and the manager has again been unable to contact them and has not received a satisfactory explanation from the employee's next of kin or emergency contact, the manager will write to or email the employee detailing their absence and the attempts to make contact them.

The letter will say that no satisfactory explanation for the absence has been received and will require that the employee make contact with the manager as soon as possible, but no later than three days after the date of the letter (or email). The letter (or email, with the relevant read receipt notification) will warn the employee that, if they fail to make contact by the deadline, the organisation may take serious disciplinary action.

Further Action after Second Day of Absence

If, following the deadline, the employee has still not contacted their manager, the manager will send the employee a letter inviting them to attend a disciplinary hearing to explain their absence. The letter should warn the employee that the lack of an adequate explanation could result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

Disciplinary Action

If the manager contacts the employee and/or the employee returns to work, a further investigation may be carried out into the reasons for their absence and their lack of contact with WODC.

If the employee can give an adequate explanation for their absence and lack of contact, the manager can conduct a return-to-work interview. If the employee is unable to provide an adequate explanation for their absence and lack of contact, WODC will treat the absence and the failure to follow the reporting procedure as disciplinary matters.

If the employee claims to have been sick (to the extent that this also precluded contacting WODC), the manager can ask for reasonable evidence of this, this may be in the form of a fit note for instance. If the employee is unable to provide sufficient evidence, WODC may consider whether the claimed sickness absence was genuine.

If the manager considers the employee's failure to attend work to be potential gross misconduct, WODC will conduct any disciplinary hearing in accordance with its disciplinary procedure- [hyperlink](#)

Unauthorised Annual Leave

If an employee has been refused a request for annual leave but declares that they intend to take the time off anyway, the employee's manager should write to or email the employee instructing them to attend work. The letter should confirm that:


- the leave request (for the specific dates) was legitimately declined, with the reason given
- the employee is expected to attend work as usual and
- failure to do so will be unauthorised absence, be unpaid and may result in disciplinary action, which could result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct.

The letter should invite the employee to reconsider their expressed intention to be absent.

If, having sent this letter (or email), the employee fails to attend work, the manager should treat the absence as unauthorised. If an employee has been refused a request for annual leave and fails to attend work (either by saying that they are sick or by making no contact), WODC will investigate this as a potential unauthorised absence. Should the employee have been prevented from contacting work due to serious circumstances, this should be made known at the earliest convenience.

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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 OCTOBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>REVIEW OF CAR PARKS</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Tim Sumner – Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects. Email: tim.sumner@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Jon Dearing – Assistant Director, Resident Services. Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Susan Hughes – Business Manager, Support and Advice. Email: susan.huges@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To consider proposals that promote the efficient utilisation of the Council's free off-street carparks, and support access to the District's Town Centres and smaller service centres, including the gathering of further data on carpark usage and implementation of amended stay times.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Current stay times by car park; Annex B – Customer insight survey results through pro-insight; Annex C – Summary of internal survey on stay times; Annex D – Equalities Impact Assessment.</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Executive Resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) Agree that a further review in 2024 of Guildenford car park supports the best use of council assets to identify parking issues and capacity levels. As per paragraph 3.5 of the report.</i> <i>b) Agree to delegate the decision to approve the costs associated with undertaking a further review of Guildenford car park to Assistant Director for Resident Services Group in consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects.</i> <i>c) Agree that a further review in 2024 of Hensington Road car park would support best use of council assets once the impact of charging on street by Oxfordshire County Council has been assessed as per paragraph 3.39 of the report.</i> <i>d) Agree to change the restriction time in Zone G of Woolgate to 12-</i>

	<p><i>hour maximum stay as per paragraph 3.30 of the report.</i></p> <p><i>e) If changes to stay times are agreed (as per recommendation d), delegate the decisions following outcome of the legally required consultation to the Assistant Director for Resident Services Group in consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects</i></p> <p><i>f) Approve expenditure up to £8,000 to improve car park signage from the Support from either UKSPF funding or Council Priorities Reserve.</i></p> <p><i>g) Agree in principle that condition surveys on Council Car parks should be considered further to establish the condition of Council assets as per paragraph 5.2 of the report.</i></p>
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Putting Residents First ● Working Together for West Oxfordshire
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 Leisure and Major Projects

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1** West Oxfordshire District Council owns 14 car parks in its District; it further manages and leases one. Parking restriction times vary across the car parks with a mixture of long, short and overnight stays.
- I.2** All car parks operating are free of charge, with no restrictions on who can access them.
- I.3** There are designated disabled parking bays in most of our car parks. These are free of charge with no maximum stay limit for valid disabled badge holders.
- I.4** There are a mix of parent and child spaces, electric vehicle charging spaces and designated motorcycle spaces in the majority of our car parks.
- I.5** The current number of car park spaces and stay times are detailed in annex A.
- I.6** West Oxfordshire District Council parking strategy was approved in 2016 and covers the period up to and including 2031.
- I.7** Parking behaviours have changed over recent years due to many contributing factors such as the coronavirus pandemic where people have travelled less and the impacts of customers being more environmentally conscious. The mid-strategy review is intended to ensure that the strategy continues to meet the needs of our customers, establish if current stay times are making the best use of Council assets and ensure that our enforcement activity is working to eradicate parking issues.
- I.8** This report summarises the results from survey work undertaken from 16th January 2023 to August 2023 on all West Oxfordshire District Council car parks to establish customers' current stay times and usage. The detail of which is included at annex C.
- I.9** The report further details the findings from mystery shopping surveys carried out by customer data gathering professionals, to obtain customer insight on their parking behaviours and to identify who our customers are e.g., residents, tourists etc. The results of the survey are at annex B.
- I.10** The report also details a review of our enforcement activity, to ensure that we are making best use of our enforcement resources.
- I.11** The report summarises the review of parking permit options for residents and establishes minor improvements to car parks outside of planned repairs, such as new signage etc.
- I.12** The report summarises the outcome of the trial to allow long stay in Zone G of the Woolgate, Witney car park. Zones A through F are either 1 hour or 3-hour maximum stays in this car park.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1** Most car parks offer long stay, up to 12 hours a day. This results in lower turn around in occupancy and creates reduced capacity at the popularly located car parks.
- 2.2** Four of the car parks offer short stay. (Windrush Leisure Centre in Witney, Woolgate in Witney, Marriotts in Witney and Spendlove in Charlbury.)
- 2.3** The method for surveying stay times, was carried out by Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) and the Parking Office team, who carried out survey work covering all car parks on a rotational basis. The four more popular car parks were visited four times, daily, on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays; in order to establish whether a restriction on stay times should be considered to create a better flow of visitors and create capacity at the car parks that were most popular with service users.

- 2.4 Further survey work was undertaken at the remaining car parks to determine capacity. This was conducted on spot check basis, covering a wide range of days and times. Survey work covered a period of non-tourist and tourist driven periods.
- 2.5 Mystery shopping both face to face and through online survey was conducted to establish who our customers are, how far have they travelled, their frequency of travel and purpose. 684 customers responded to the face-to-face survey, with a 462 responding online. A summary of the findings by Car Park is set out below.

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Guildenford, Burford

- 3.1 It has 167 car parking spaces for general use, parent and child and disabled customers. It is a long stay car park, permitting overnight stays and is open 7 days of the week.
- 3.2 The summary of findings at Guildenford car park is that it is a popular car park, with a 32.75% of those surveyed face to face travelling under 10 miles, indicating that they live locally. A further 67.25% were from out of area. The average occupancy throughout the duration of the study is 61%. The car park is most popular between the peak times of 1pm and 3pm, when on average 80% of spaces are occupied. This increases during summer months when it becomes more popular with tourists, reaching 80 -90%.
- 3.3 The majority of customers using the car park are short stay, which indicates a high turnaround of customers and spaces.
- 3.4 There is additional parking available on street permitting both short and longer stay, for which there is currently no charge. Analysis of enforcement activity highlighted that the majority of enforcement was taken as a result of customers parking beyond the bay markings.
- 3.5 With capacity reaching high levels during tourist driven months, a proposal to undertake a further yearlong study to establish parking behaviours, engage with Town and Parish and County Council on any issues that arise as a result of the study. (Recommendation A and B.)

Alvescot Road, Carterton

- 3.6 It has 38 car parking spaces for general use and disabled customers. It is a long stay car park permitting overnight stays and is open 7 days a week.
- 3.7 The summary of findings at Alvescot Road car park is that the average occupancy overall from random spot checks highlights that occupancy is at 52% in this car park. The car park is adjacent to a supermarket in Carterton with free off-street parking. Enforcement activity was lower at this car park, where enforcement was issued due to customers parking beyond the bay markings.

Black Bourton Road, Carterton

- 3.8 It has 77 spaces for general use, disabled customers and electric vehicle charging spaces. It is a long stay car park permitting overnight stays and is open 7 days a week.
- 3.9 The summary of findings at Black Bourton car park is that the average occupancy overall from random spot checks on capacity levels highlights that occupancy is 47%. There is free parking adjacent to a superstore and opposite another, both have adequate off-street parking. An analysis of enforcement activity concluded that the requirement for enforcement was low at this car park, however when it was carried out it was due to customers parking beyond the bay markings.

Spendlove Centre, Charlbury

- 3.10 It has 39 spaces for general use, parent and child and disabled customers. It allows both long and short stays and is open 7 days a week.

- 3.11** The summary of findings at Spendlove car park is that the average occupancy overall from random spot checks on capacity levels highlights that occupancy is 68%. This car park is adjacent to a supermarket and used by their patrons. Vets, community centre and medical centre have their own off-street free parking alongside this car park. Charlbury has free on street parking. Analysis of enforcement activity concluded that enforcement was low at this car park, and as a result of misuse of the disabled parking bays.

Albion Street, Chipping Norton

- 3.12** It has 53 standard spaces for general use. It is a long stay car park up to 12 hours, open 7 days a week.
- 3.13** The summary of findings at Albion Street is that the average occupancy overall from random spot checks on capacity levels highlights that occupancy is 85%. This car park is opposite a free supermarket car park.
Analysis of enforcement action taken concluded that although this was low at this car park, when it was conducted it was due to customers parking beyond the bay markings.

New Street, Chipping Norton

- 3.14** It has 144 car parking spaces for general use, electric vehicle users, parent and child and disabled customers. It is a long stay car park, permitting up to 12 hour stays, open 7 days of the week.
- 3.15** New Street car park is averaging at 72% throughout the duration of the study. The car park is most popular between the peak times of 11am -1pm, when on average 82% of spaces are occupied. It is slightly less popular than the 9am -11am and 3pm to 5pm stay times. There was little difference in occupancy levels between weekdays and weekends and the holiday period had little impact on occupancy levels. 56.91% of those surveyed face to face were residents travelling under 10 miles to the car parking indicating that they live locally and 43.09% were from out of area, over 10 miles.
- 3.16** There is free on street parking in the on-street market area and alternative parking at local supermarkets. Analysis of enforcement action taken, concluded that the majority of enforcement action taken was as a result of customers parking beyond the bay markings.

Back Lane, Eynsham

- 3.17** It has 82 standard spaces for general use, disabled customers, parent and child and electric vehicle charging bays. It is a long stay car park up to 12 hours, open 7 days a week.
- 3.18** The summary of findings at Back Lane car park is that the average occupancy from random spot checks on capacity levels highlights 46%. This car park is in a residential area where the majority of houses appear to have off street parking. Analysis of enforcement action taken, concluded that although enforcement was low at this car park, when it was conducted it was due to customers misusing the disabled parking bays.

Riely Close, Long Hanborough

- 3.19** It has 9 spaces for general use and disabled customers. It is a long stay car park up to 12 hours, open 7 days a week.
- 3.20** The summary of findings at Riely Close car park is that the average occupancy from random spot checks on capacity levels highlights 83%. This car park is a small free off-street car park near a

church and a school. The area is mostly residential with free on-street parking. Analysis of enforcement action taken concluded that although enforcement was low at this car park, when it was conducted it was due to customers parking beyond the bay markings.

Great Tew

- 3.21** It has 44 spaces for general use. It is a long stay car park up to 12 hours, open 7 days a week.
- 3.22** The summary of findings at Great Tew car park is that the average occupancy from random spot checks on capacity levels highlights capacity with 41%. The car park is in a small village with some free on street parking. There were no enforcement breaches at this car park indicating that customers were adhering to the parking rules. This car park is leased from the local Estate at £498 per annum for the purpose of managing visitors to the village.

Marriotts Walk, Witney

- 3.23** It has 623 spaces for general use, parent and children and disabled customers. It has both long and short stay options, is open 7 days a week, levels 1 – 6 have a maximum stay of 4 hours and levels 7-8 have a maximum stay of 9 hours.
- 3.24** The summary of findings at Marriotts car park is that the average occupancy concluded from survey highlighted 43% occupancy indicating that there is capacity at this car park. Marriotts car park is opposite Woodford Way car park, which is an off-street free car park. Analysis of enforcement action taken at this car park concluded that this was as a result of Customer misusing the disabled parking bays, parking longer than permitted and parking beyond the bay markings.

Woodford Way, Witney

- 3.25** It has 264 spaces for general use, disabled customers and electrical vehicle charging bays. It is a long stay car park, up to 12 hours a day, open 7 days a week.
- 3.26** The summary of findings at Woodford way car park is that the average occupancy concluded from survey highlighted 80% occupancy indicating that there is capacity at this car park. Woodford way is opposite the Marriotts Multi-story car park which also has capacity. Analysis of enforcement action taken concluded that it was due to customers parking longer than permitted and parking beyond the bay markings.

Woolgate, Witney

- 3.27** It has 826 spaces for general use, Parent and Child and disabled customers. It is a short stay car park, open 7 days a week.
- 3.28** The summary of findings at Woolgate car park 85.51% of those who responded to face-to-face survey in Zone G travelled under 10 miles indicating they live locally and 14.49% from out of area having travelled over 10 miles. The average occupancy throughout the duration of the study is 74% indicating that there is capacity at this car park. Woolgate has 7 zones in central Witney.
- Zone A = 3 hours max
 - Zone B = 1 hour max
 - Zone C = 3 Hour max
 - Zone D = 3 hour max

- Zone E = 3 hour max (5 x 1 hour bays)
- Zone F = 3 Hour max
- Zone G = all day parking as part of trial (see 3.29 below)

3.29 Alternative free parking can be found off-street at Woodford Way and Marriotts Walk. Analysis of enforcement action taken, concluded that it was issued as a result of customers misusing the disabled bays, parking longer than permitted, parking in permit bays, (service yards only), and parking beyond the bay markings.

3.30 A trial permitting long stay in Zone G at Woolgate car park has been underway since July 2022, this is 148 spaces of the car park. The trial was initiated to support customers who work locally by permitting longer stays in standard spaces. The trial has proven successful, and proposals are now being made that the Executive adopt this as a permanent change. (Recommendation D)

Windrush Leisure Centre, Witney

3.31 It has 93 spaces for general use and disabled customers. It is a short stay car park, open 7 days a week.

3.32 The summary of findings at Windrush car park is that the average occupancy from spot check data highlights occupancy of 59%. The car park is located opposite Woolgate car park which is free. Analysis of enforcement action taken concluded that enforcement was conducted due to customers parking beyond the bay markings and in loading bays.

Burwell Drive, Witney

3.33 It has 42 Spaces for general use and disabled customers. It is a long stay car park up to 12 hours, 7 days a week.

3.34 The car park is located near residential houses, with the majority of housing having their own parking, the car park serves a small number of convenience stores. The average occupancy from spot checks was 51%, indicating there is capacity at this car park. There were no enforcement breaches at this car park indicating that customers were adhering to the parking rules.

Gordon Way, Witney

3.35 It has 50 spaces for general use. It is a long stay car park, up to 12 hours, open 7 days a week.

3.36 The average occupancy concluded from random spot checks highlight occupancy of 3% indicating that there is capacity at this car park. Gordon Way car park is surrounded by residential houses which appear to have off-street parking the car park serves the artificial turf sports pitch. There were no enforcement breaches at this car park indicating that customers were adhering to the parking rules.

Hensington Road, Woodstock

3.37 It has 117 car parking spaces for general use, electric vehicle users and disabled customers. It is a long stay car park, permitting up to 12 hour stays, open 7 days of the week.

3.38 The summary of findings at Hensington road car park is that this car park had the highest occupancy throughout the period of study 75%, with the highest stay times between 11am and 3pm. 76.47% of those surveyed travelled under 10 miles indicating that they live locally and 23.53% travelled over

10 miles, indicating that they are from out of area. Average occupancy was at its highest 87%. Between 11am and 1pm.

3.39 Woodstock has limited on street parking with pay and display and resident permits. There are no off-street alternatives other than Blenheim Place who have their own charged car park. Analysis of parking enforcement concluded that the majority of enforcement action taken was a result of misuse of electric vehicle parking and disabled persons parking bays. Anecdotally there is less use of the 4 disabled parking bays at Hensington Road, however our data confirms that during the course of the study, 3 out of the 4 bays were occupied and the designated number of bays falls in line with the recommended guidance from the Disabled Motoring UK. Recommendation for the report is to review capacity in a year once the impacts of charging on street by Oxfordshire County Council has been assessed, given Hensington Road has the highest occupancy levels and is further impacted by the lack of off-street parking provision. (Recommendation C)

3.40 Our Civil Enforcement team comprises of 3.4 FTE who carry out enforcement rotating around the car parks. 1 full time, 1, 3 days a week, 1, 4 days a week. We have 1 FTE vacant post which we are aiming to fill.

3.41 The majority of car parks allow long stay which results in less enforcement activity for breach of stay times.

A review of our enforcement activity across all car parks demonstrated that the majority of enforcement action across all car parks was taken as a result of customers parking outside of bay markings and misusing disabled parking bays.

3.42 The transfer of on-street parking to the County has reduced enforcement income since the transfer date of 1st April 2023. In the financial year of 2022-2023 on street PCN income was £71,788 and the year of 2021-2022 it was £70,522.

3.43 Assessment of the condition of our car parks has indicated that signage in the car parks is in need of modernisation, with reports of signage being difficult to read and occasionally obscured by foliage. (Recommendation F)

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 A review of all car parks has demonstrated that the majority of West Oxfordshire District Council car parks are not fully occupied, although occupancy levels do increase during the summer period, particularly in locations that are popular with tourists. Alternative parking is generally available either on street or at alternative nearby car park locations with exception of Hensington Road car park in Woodstock, which has no free alternative parking in proximity. Burford has off street car parking, and available on street parking however capacity can reach higher levels during periods when it is popular with tourists. A further review of these locations will support the Council to make best use of its assets.

4.2 88.53% of our car park users who responded to our surveys, travelled less than 10 miles to park in our car parks, indicating that they live locally.

4.3 The option to implement a resident parking permit scheme has been reviewed as part of the mid strategy review. Issuing permits is a cost to the Council through permit distribution and back-office administration of the scheme estimated £750 per annum. Implementing a permit scheme does not guarantee customers a parking space and would not help to alleviate any future capacity issues should they arise.

- 4.4 Enforcement activity is generally as a result of customer parking beyond marked bays, misusing disabled bays and where short stay is allowed, staying longer than permitted.
- 4.5 An assessment of the signage in the car parks as confirmed that signage is not easy to read, has occasionally been blocked by overhanging trees and hedges and a refresh of signage at all car parks is required. The sum of replacing signage is estimated £8000. (Recommendation F)

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Provision of Car Parking and enforcement of its use is not a statutory service but is aimed generally to support the major service centres within the district.
- 5.2 The 2023/24 budgeted cost of the provision of Car Parking within the district is set out below. There is limited provision for maintenance activity within the revenue budgets, but significant maintenance requirements are funded as required from the general property maintenance fund identified in the capital programme. The budget for car park maintenance is anticipated to double in the next financial year due to the Council taking ownership of the Marriotts car park and the costs of associated repairs and maintenance. A recommendation for the report is that the Council agrees to consider the proposal to undertake condition surveys of its car park assets (Recommendation G) a separate report will follow if approved.
- 5.3 The income stream was impacted significantly by the withdrawal of the agency agreement with Oxfordshire County Council which saw them take responsibility for on-street enforcement activity where the majority of parking breaches (and income) take place. Whilst there was an adjustment to the revenue budget the fixed costs associated with general car parking maintenance and enforcement activity meant there was a significant adverse budgetary impact on the Council.
- 5.4 The table sets out the overall cost of car parking within the 2023/24 revenue budget and shows a subset of the enforcement activity taking account of the enforcement officers and the enforcement administration service.

	All Car Parking	Enforcement Activity
Premises	£143,039	-
Transport	£1,710	-
Supplies & Services	£20,160	£10,000
Contractor Costs	£235,297	£171,559
Total Cost	£400,206	£181,559
Third Party Income	-£119,022	-£119,022
Penalty Charges	-£80,850	-£80,850
Total Income	-£199,872	£-199,872
Net Cost	£200,334	-£18,313

- 5.5 There is not sufficient capacity within the current revenue budget to replace the signs as set out in 4.5 above. It is proposed that these signs be financed from additional UKSPF funding, or the “Support for Council Priorities” earmarked reserves set aside in August 2022 in line with the priority of Business Support for Towns and Villages.
- 5.6 If changes are made to the car parks, the Parking Order process will incur internal resources and external costs due to statutory consultation and notices in the press. The external costs are likely to be in the region of £2,500 for statutory notification required in order to make the change. It is unlikely that this can be met from the current year budget and as a consequence the shortfall will be met from reserves.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Potential requirement to change the Parking Order in order to enforce stay times prescribed.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1** There no associated risks identified in association with this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1** There are no unacceptable adverse effects on the protected characteristics covered by the Equalities Act 2010. There are no changes proposed to the provision of disabled parking bays in the car parks.
- 8.2** An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and shared with the Council's Director of Governance.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** There have been no climate and ecological implications identified in association with the recommendations of this report.

10. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 10.1** The Council could choose not to conduct a further review of Guildenford car park in Burford, however by not committing to a further review, this could leave the Council with insufficient insight on parking activity and capacity levels.
- 10.2** The Council could choose not to conduct a further review of Hensington Road car park, however by not committing to a further review, this could leave the Council with insufficient insight on parking activity and capacity levels once the impacts of on street moving to Oxfordshire County Council have been realised.
- 10.3** The Council could choose not to increase stay times at Woolgate car park in Zone G. However, this trial has been successful and has met the needs of local residents and business thus supporting the local economy.
- 10.4** The Council could choose not to replace the signage in the car parks. However, feedback has been received that the signage is not clear and easy to read, this could result in increased customer complaints when breaches occur and it not aesthetically in keeping with the Council's brand.
- 10.5** The Council could choose not to consider the proposal to carrying out condition surveys on its car parks which could result in depreciation of asset.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None for consideration with this report

(END)

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Current Stay times by Car Park

Car park	No of Standard Spaces	No. of Disabled Spaces	No of Parent & child Spaces	No. of EV charging Spaces	Stay times (Where 12 hours apply this is in any 24-hour period).
Guildenford, Burford	167	3	2	0	Long stay car park, up to 12 hours only, open 7 days a week including overnight.
Alvescot Road, Carterton	36	2	0	0	Long stay car park up to 12 hours only 7 days a week including overnight
Black Bourton Road, Carterton	56	9	0	12	Long stay car park up to 12 hours only 7 days a week including overnight
Spendlove Centre, Charlbury	33	3	3	0	26 long Stay spaces and 7 short stay spaces (between 8am – 6pm no return 1 hour) open 7 days a week
Albion Street, Chipping Norton	55	0	0	0	Long stay car park up to 12 hours only open 7 days a week
New Street, Chipping Norton	121	6	5	12	Long stay car park up to 12 hours only open 7 days a week
Back Lane, Eynsham	60	5	5	12	Long stay car park up to 12 hours only open 7 days a week
Riely Close, Long Hanborough	8	1	0	0	Long stay car park up to 12 hours only seven days a week
The Lane, Great Tew	44	0	0	0	Long stay car park up to 12 hours only open 7 days a week
Marriotts Walk, Witney Town Centre	590	28	5	0	440 short stay spaces and 150 Long stay spaces open 7 days a

					week. Levels 1-6 have maximum stay of 4 hours, (at all times no return 1 hour). Level 7-8 have a maximum stay of 9 hours
Woolgate, Witney	780	34	12	0	Motorcycle parking and Short stay car park (between 8am – 6pm no return 1 hour), open 7 days a week
Windrush Leisure Centre, Witney	88	5	0	0	Short stay car park (between 8am – 6pm not return 1 hour), open 7 days a week
Burwell Drive, Witney	40	2	0	0	Long stay car park up to 12 hours only open 7 days a week
Gordon Way, Witney	50	0	0	0	Long stay car park up to 12 hours only open 7 days a week
Hensington Road, Woodstock	101	4	0	12	Long stay car park, up to 12 hours only open 7 days a week

B- Customer Insight – Pro Insight 22/08/2023

WODC Parking Survey Analysis (Face to Face and Online Questionnaires Collected from 17/07/2023 – 22/08/2023)

How far do people travel?

The provided face to face data reveals the following distribution of travel distances:

- 10+ miles: 284 individuals (41.52%)
- 2-5 miles: 156 individuals (22.81%)
- 5-10 miles: 145 individuals (21.20%)
- Less than 2 miles: 99 individuals (14.47%)

	Guildenford Car Park Burford		Hensington Road Car Park Woodstock		New Street Car Park Chipping Norton		Zone G of the Woolgate Car Park Witney	
10+ miles	154	67.25%	32	23.53%	78	43.09%	20	14.49%
5-10 miles	40	17.47%	31	22.79%	49	27.07%	25	18.12%
2-5 miles	23	10.04%	51	37.50%	32	17.68%	50	36.23%
Less than 2 miles	12	5.24%	22	16.18%	22	12.16%	43	31.16%
Grand Total	229		136		181		138	

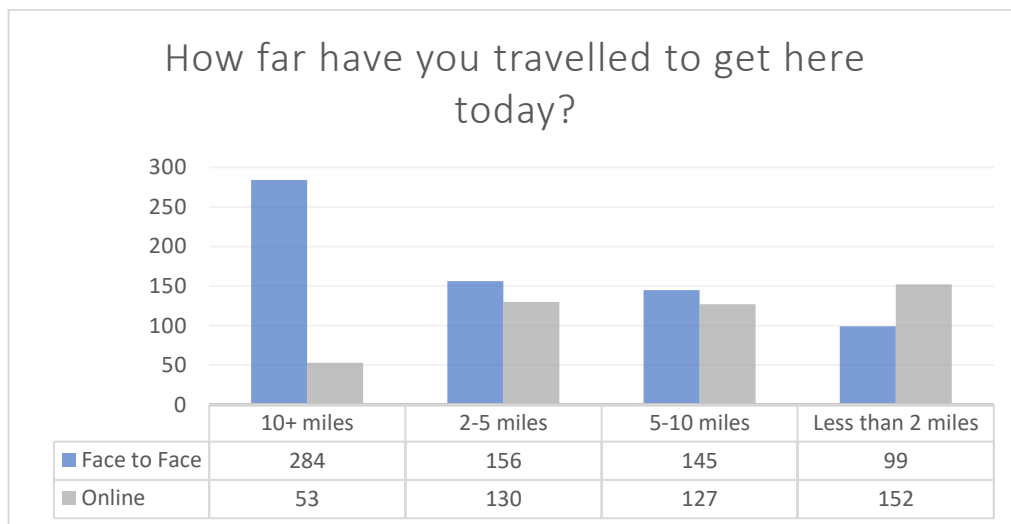
Further online surveys have indicated that collectively of those surveyed, that most car park users travelled less than 10 miles to use our car parks, with exception of Albion Street and Guildenford car park who were favoured by those travelling over 10 miles. (Where the car park is not listed below, we received customer chose not to complete the survey feedback)

How far have you travelled to get here today?								
	10+ miles		2-5 miles		5-10 miles		Less than 2 miles	
Location	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Albion Street Car Park	66.67%	4	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	33.33%	2
Alvescot Road Car Park	10.00%	1	10.00%	1	10.00%	1	70.00%	7
Black Bourton Car Park	14.29%	1	14.29%	1	28.57%	2	42.85%	3

Eynsham Car Park	0.00%	0	80.00%	4	0.00%	0	20.00%	1
Guildenford Car Park	58.06%	18	19.35%	6	19.35%	6	3.24%	1
Hensington Road Car Park	31.25%	5	31.25%	5	25.00%	4	12.50%	2
Marriotts Walk Car Park	11.32%	6	35.85%	19	33.96%	18	18.87%	10
New Street Car Park	44.44%	4	0.00%	0	11.11%	1	44.45%	4
Spendlove Car Park	0.00%	0	25.00%	3	0.00%	0	75.00%	9
Woodford Way Car Park	21.05%	4	26.32%	5	15.79%	3	36.84%	7
Woolgate Car Park	4.88%	4	31.71%	26	34.15%	28	29.26%	24

Key Points:

- The majority of people have travelled distances of less than 10 miles to reach the car park. This suggests that a significant portion of visitors surveyed both face to face and online, live locally.



How Long do people stay?

When surveyed face to face customers were asked how long they intended to stay, this data is a snapshot in time, further detailed analysis of customers actual stay times is detailed in a separate section of the report.

The provided face to face data reveals the following distribution of stay durations:

- 1 hour: 193 individuals
- 2 hours: 255 individuals
- 3 hours: 82 individuals
- 5 hours: 43 individuals
- All day: 105 individuals
- Overnight: 6 individuals

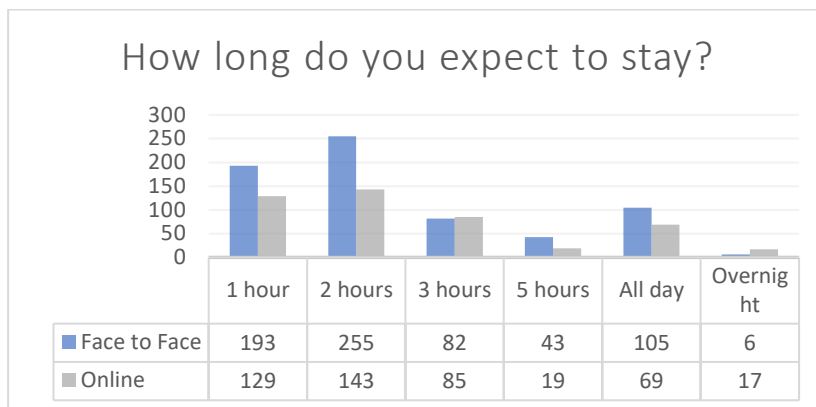
	Guildenford Car Park Burford		Hensington Road Car Park Woodstock		New Street Car Park Chipping Norton		Zone G of the Woolgate Car Park Witney	
1 hour	63	27.51%	45	33.09%	58	32.04%	27	19.57%
2 hours	114	49.78%	41	30.15%	62	34.25%	38	27.54%
3 hours	29	12.66%	9	6.62%	25	13.81%	19	13.77%
5 hours	6	2.62%	15	11.03%	11	6.08%	11	7.97%
All day	16	6.99%	25	18.38%	24	13.26%	40	28.99%
Overnight	1	0.44%	1	0.73%	1	0.56%	3	2.16%

Our online data also reflects that customers plan shorter stays. (3 hours or less)

Online Surveys	Count	Percentage
1 hour	129	27.92%
2 hours	143	30.95%
3 hours	85	18.40%
5 hours	19	4.11%
All day	69	14.94%
Overnight	17	3.68%

Key Observations:

- Moderate Stays: 77% of car park users surveyed both online and face to face have indicated that they plan to park for 3 hours or less.
- Extended Visits: 15% of car park users across the study have chosen to spend the entire day at the location.
- Limited Overnight Stays: A small minority 2% (23 individuals) opt for overnight stays.



How Often do people visit?

The provided data reveals the following distribution of visitation frequencies:

- Monthly: 87 individuals
- Never before: 117 individuals
- Rarely: 121 individuals
- Weekly: 359 individuals

	Guilford Car Park Burford		Hensington Road Car Park Woodstock		New Street Car Park Chipping Norton		Zone G of the Woolgate Car Park Witney	
Monthly	36	15.72%	6	4.41%	37	20.44%	8	5.80%
Never before	90	39.30%	1	0.74%	23	12.71%	3	2.17%
Rarely	65	28.38%	10	7.35%	44	24.31%	2	1.45%
Weekly	38	16.60%	119	87.50%	77	42.54%	125	90.58%

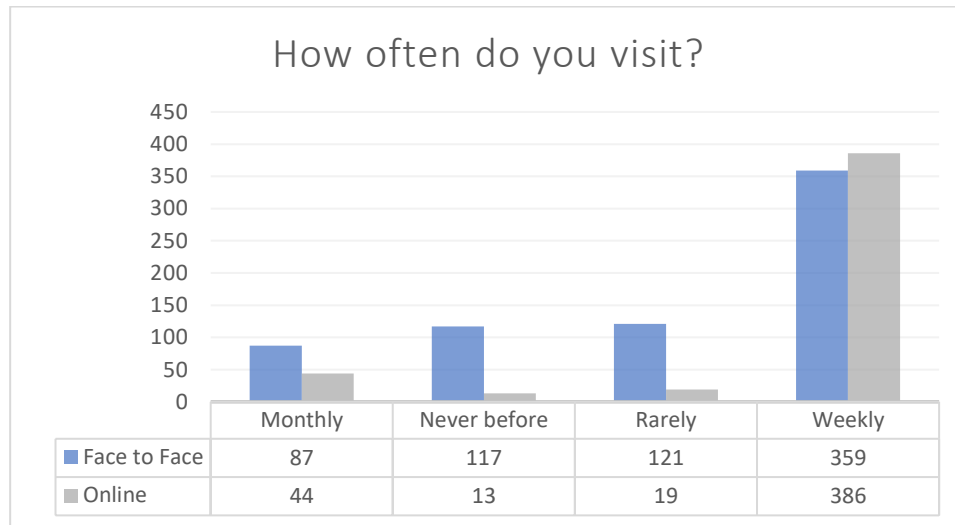
Our online surveys also reflect the results of face to face, as a larger portion of our car park users are weekly visitors.

Online Surveys	Count	Percentage
Monthly	44	9.52%
Never before	13	2.81%
Rarely	19	4.11%
Weekly	386	83.55%

Key Insights:

- Weekly Visits: 65% of car park users (745) visit the location on a weekly basis, indicating a strong and consistent level of engagement, this is supported by the data that the majority of our customers live locally.
- Occasional Visits: 12% of individuals (140) visit the location rarely, suggesting sporadic interest or occasional engagement.

- Monthly Visits: 11% of individuals (131) visits the location on a monthly basis.
- No Previous Visits: Interestingly, 130 individuals have never visited the location before, however as this survey was conducted during a tourist peak period this is not unsurprising.



Where do people park in this survey?

The provided data reveals, of those who answered the survey, the following distribution of parking preferences:

- Guildenford Car Park Burford: 229 individuals
- Hensington Road Car Park Woodstock: 136 individuals
- New Street Car Park Chipping Norton: 181 individuals
- Zone G of the Woolgate Car Park Witney: 138 individuals

	Guildenford Car Park Burford		Hensington Road Car Park Woodstock		New Street Car Park Chipping Norton		Zone G of the Woolgate Car Park Witney	
Monthly	36	15.72%	6	4.41%	37	20.44%	8	5.80%
Never before	90	39.30%	1	0.74%	23	12.71%	3	2.17%
Rarely	65	28.38%	10	7.35%	44	24.31%	2	1.45%
Weekly	38	16.60%	119	87.50%	77	42.54%	125	90.58%

Key Findings:

- Of those who chose to answer the survey, the highest engagement was from the Guildenford Car Park in Burford, with a split data on frequency.
- Hensington Road, although had lower engagement, highlighted strongly that those who visited the carpark did so, frequently.
- The data of weekly visitors in Zone G of the Woolgate Car park supports that the trial to allow parking in Zone G for those who work locally supports the high number of weekly visitors.

- The number of online surveys completed is 574, which do not indicate the location of the car park.

What is the purpose of visit?

The provided data from the face-to-face surveys reveals the following distribution of stay purposes:

- Leisure: 218 individuals
- Medical or dental appointment: 13 individuals
- Onward journey by bus: 10 individuals
- Other: 37 individuals
- Resident living nearby: 53 individuals.
- Shopping: 124 individuals
- Tourist: 103 individuals
- Work: 126 individuals

	Guilford Park Burford		Hensington Road Car Park Woodstock		New Street Car Park Chipping Norton		Zone G of the Woolgate Car Park Witney	
Leisure	75	32.75%	38	27.94%	70	38.67%	35	25.38%
Medical or dental appt	1	0.44%	3	2.21%	8	4.42%	1	0.72%
Onward journey by bus	9	3.93%	0	0.00%	1	0.55%	0	0.00%
Other	8	3.49%	0	0.00%	28	15.47%	1	0.72%
Resident living nearby	10	4.37%	20	14.71%	16	8.84%	7	5.07%
Shopping	22	9.61%	27	19.85%	30	16.57%	45	32.61%
Tourist	85	37.11%	11	8.09%	6	3.31%	1	0.72%
Work	19	8.30%	37	27.20%	22	12.17%	48	34.78%

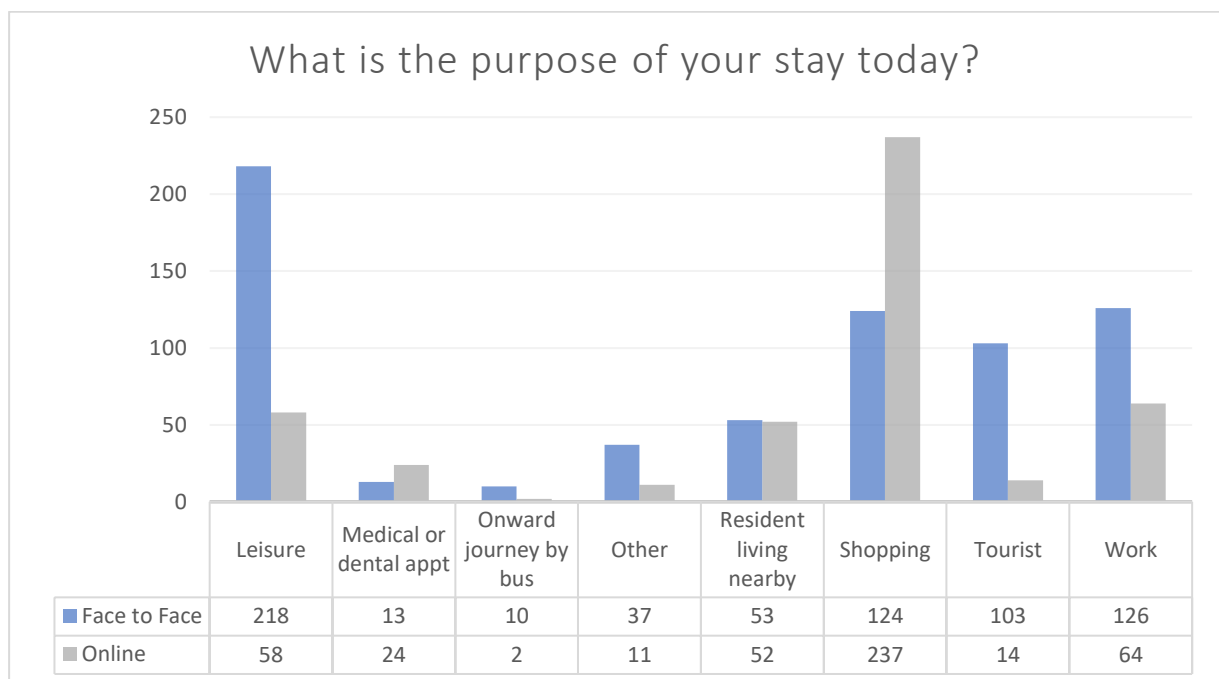
Our online survey results detailed below indicate visits are for Leisure and shopping, supporting the local economy.

Online Surveys	Count	Percentage
----------------	-------	------------

Leisure	58	12.55%
Medical or dental appt	24	5.19%
Onward journey by bus	2	0.43%
Other	11	2.38%
Resident living nearby	52	11.26%
Shopping	237	51.30%
Tourist	14	3.03%
Work	64	13.85%

Key Insights:

- "Shopping" has the highest number of visits 361 (32%), indicating a significant need for parking during shopping activities.
- "Work" follows with 190 (17%) visits, suggesting a substantial amount of business-related parking.
- "Leisure" and "Tourist" purposes contribute 276 (24%) and 117 (10%) visits respectively, highlighting parking needs for recreational and tourism activities.
- "Resident living nearby" indicates 105 (9%) visits, possibly reflecting visitors to nearby residents or shared parking areas.
- "Other" includes 48 (4%) visits, which could encompass various diverse purposes.
- "Medical or dental appt" and "Onward journey by bus" have relatively fewer visits, (4% collectively) indicating specific and potentially infrequent needs.



Spot check analysis (Data collected by spot checks between 09/06/2022 – 02/06/2023)

Burford - Guildenford Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 61% throughout the duration of the study, peaking to 80% between 1pm-3pm.

- This car park experiences a good average occupancy. It offers free on-street parking with some time restrictions, and there is no additional off-street parking available.
- This car park sees a significant number of visitors from both distant locations (10+ miles) and under 10 miles respectively, indicating its popularity among both locals and visitors from a distance.
- This car park is heavily used by tourists, and it also serves as a popular spot for leisure activities and shopping. Some residents living nearby also use it for various purposes, including medical appointments and work.

Carterton - Black Bourton Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 47%
- This car park has a relatively lower occupancy rate. It provides free parking adjacent to superstores with adequate off-street parking options.

Carterton - Alvescot Road Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 52%
- This car park has a moderate average occupancy. It is adjacent to a third supermarket in Carterton and provides free off-street parking.

Charlbury - Spendlove Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 68%
- This car park has a relatively higher average occupancy. It is adjacent to a supermarket and is also used by their patrons. Nearby facilities have their own off-street free parking.

Chipping Norton - New Street Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 72% throughout the duration of the study. Peaking to 83% between 11am and 1pm.
- There is free on-street parking in the area, as well as alternative parking options at nearby supermarkets.
- This car park has a diverse range of visitors, with a significant number of visitors from the 10+ miles and 5-10 miles ranges.
- This car park is frequented by visitors for leisure and shopping. Other purposes, such as onward journey by bus and medical appointments, are also notable.

Chipping Norton - Albion Street Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 85%
- This car park has a very high average occupancy. It is situated opposite a free co-op supermarket.

Eynsham - Back Lane Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 46%
- This car park has a moderate average occupancy. It is located in a residential area with majority off-street parking for houses.

Long Hanborough - Riely Close Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 83%
- This car park experiences a high average occupancy. It serves a small free off-street parking area near a church and school, in a mostly residential area.

Great Tew - Great Tew Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 41%
- This car park has a moderate average occupancy. It is a small village location with some free on-street parking. The car park is leased from the local estate.

Witney - Windrush LC Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 59%
- This car park experiences a moderate average occupancy. It is located opposite the free Woolgate car park.

Witney - Burwell Drive Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 51%
- This car park has a moderate average occupancy. It is surrounded by residential houses with their own parking and serves a small number of convenience stores.

Witney - Gordon Way Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 3%
- This car park has a very low average occupancy. It is surrounded by residential areas with off-street parking and serves an artificial turf sports pitch.

Witney - Woolgate Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 74% throughout the duration of the study.
- Zone G of this car park experiences a moderate average occupancy. It is divided into six zones in central Witney, with alternative free parking options available off-street.
- The majority of visitors to Zone G of this car park come from nearby areas (Less than 2 miles). However, there are also notable numbers from the 2-5 miles and 5-10 miles ranges.
- Zone G of this car park has a mix of uses, with shopping and work being prominent. It also serves as a destination for tourists and leisure activities.

Witney - Woodford Way Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 80%

- This car park experiences a higher average occupancy. It is located opposite the Marriotts multi-storey car park.

Witney - Marriotts Walk Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 43%
- This car park has a moderate average occupancy. It is located opposite Woodford way off-street free car park.

Woodstock - Hensington Rd Car Park

- Average Occupancy: 75% throughout the duration of the study. Peaking to 87% during the periods of 11am and 1pm.
- This car park experiences a high average occupancy. It has limited on-street parking with pay and display and residents' parking permits. There are no off-street alternatives other than Blenheim Palace.
- A considerable number of visitors from the 2-5 miles range suggests that this car park is used by people from relatively nearby areas. Additionally, there is a significant number of visitors from the 10+ miles range.
- Residents living nearby appear to use this car park for shopping, leisure, and work. Medical appointments and work-related activities are also noticeable.

ANNEX C

C – Summary of stay times from survey study period covers 16th January 2023 – 14th August 2023.

Average occupancy % for duration of the study

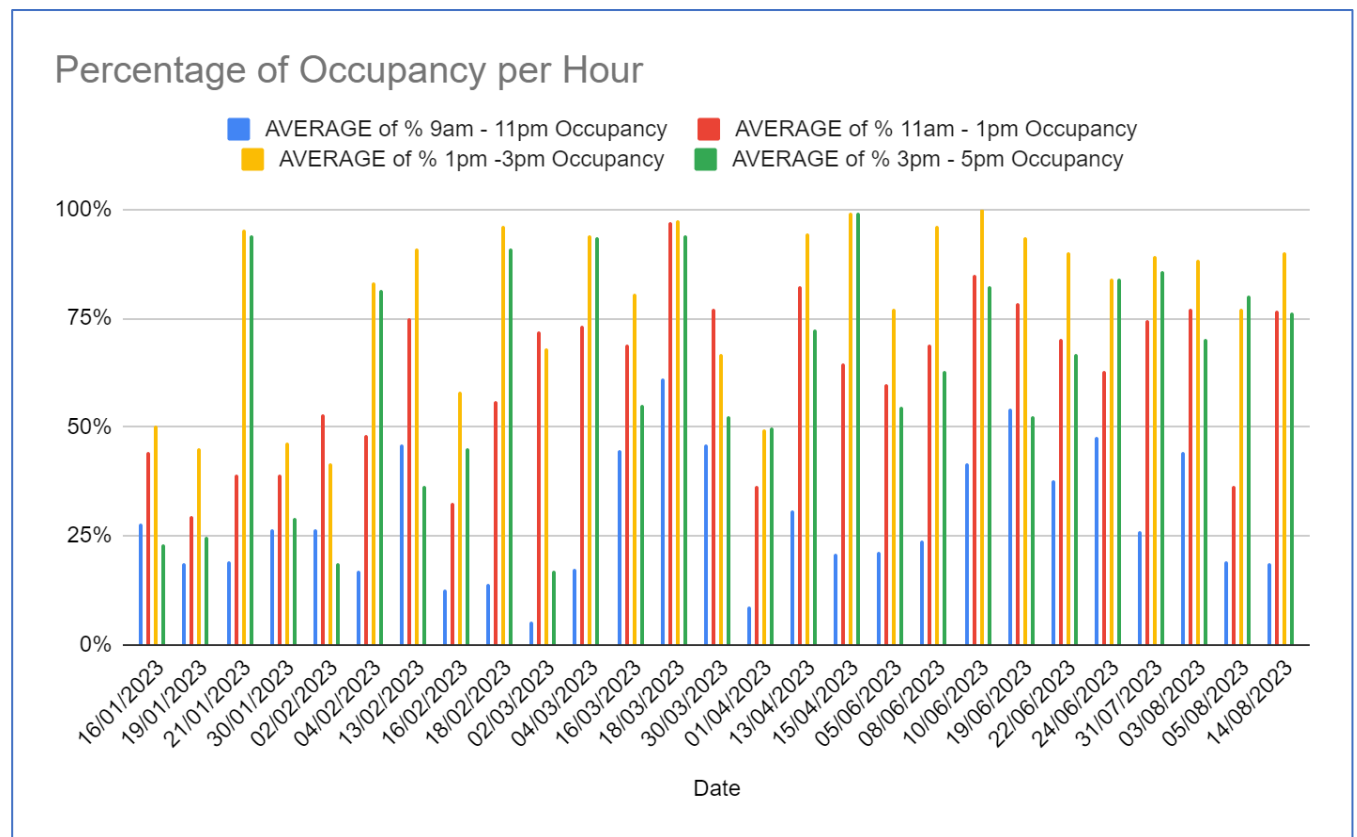
	<i>Overall Occupancy for each car park - 16th January 2023 - 3rd August 2023.</i>			
	Guildenford, Burford	Hensington Rd, Woodstock	New Street, Chipping Norton	Woolgate, Witney
Average	61%	75%	72%	74%

*This is an average % covering periods of peak and non-peak, during tourist seasons occupancy levels naturally will increase.

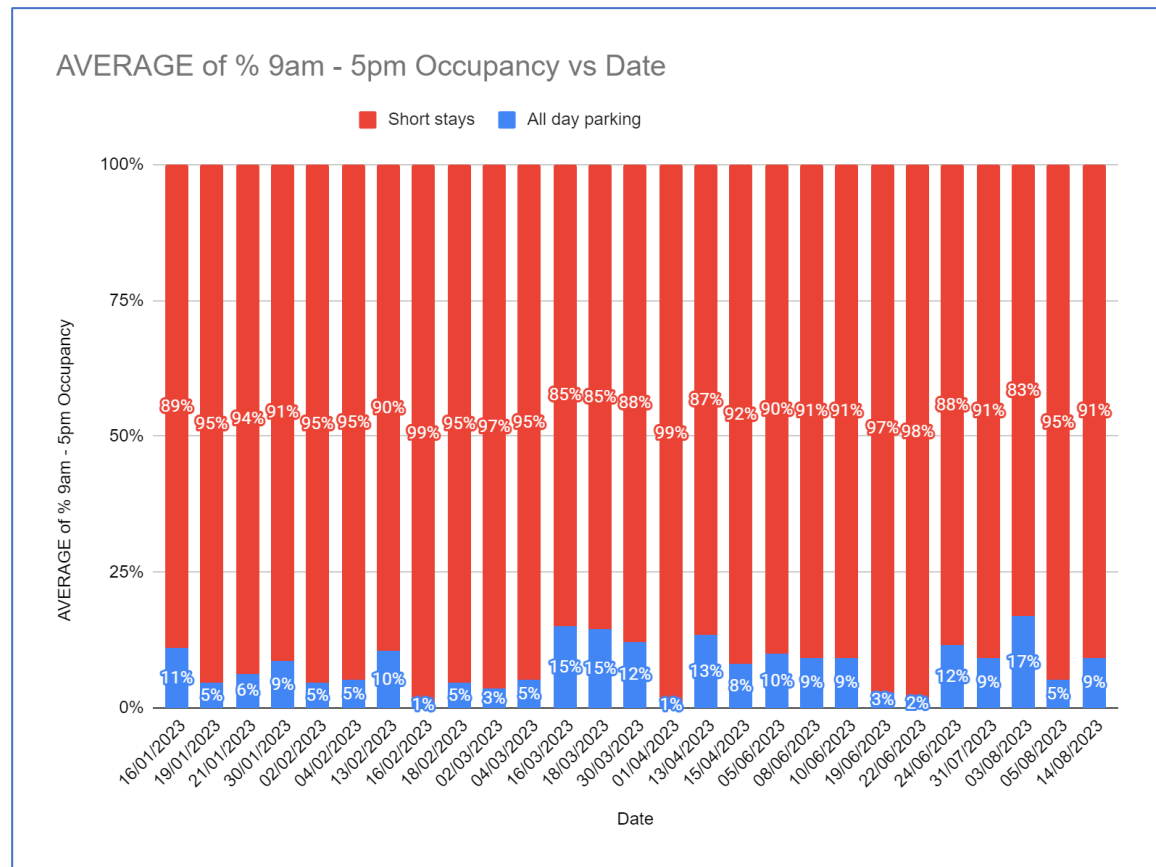
Guildenford car park in Burford

Occupancy

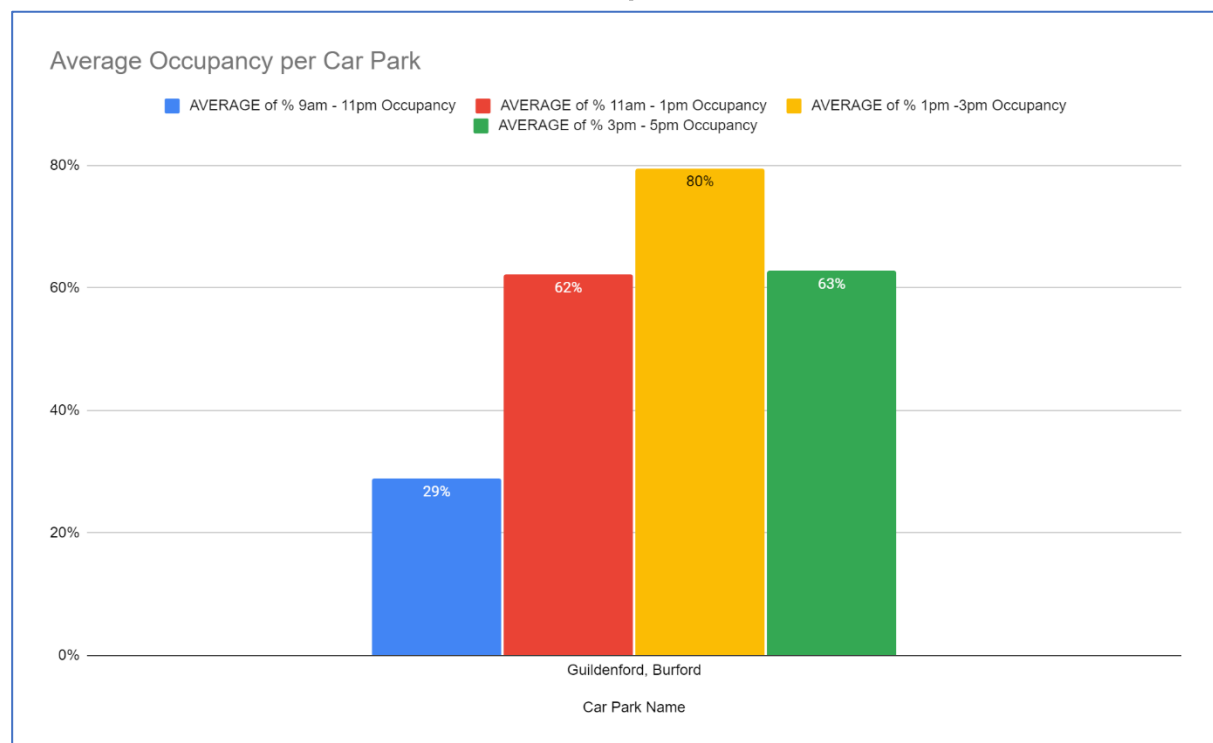
Levels



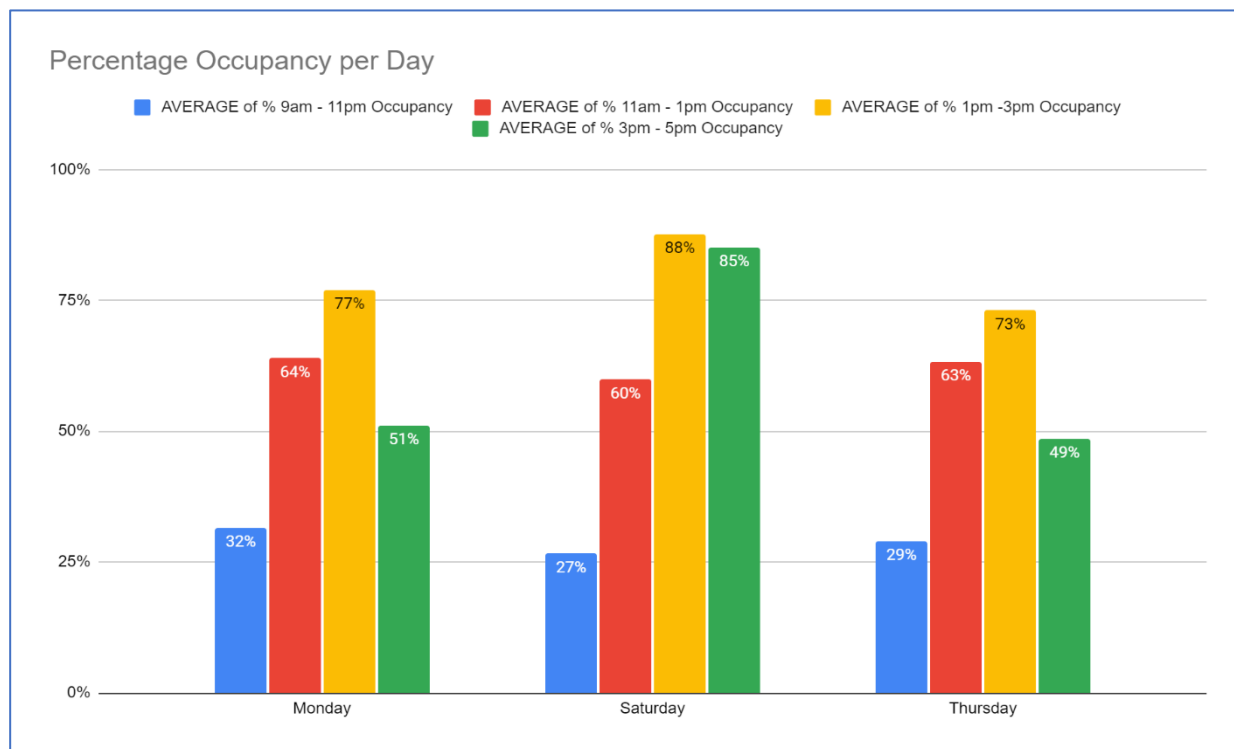
Length of stay short v's long



Peak stay times

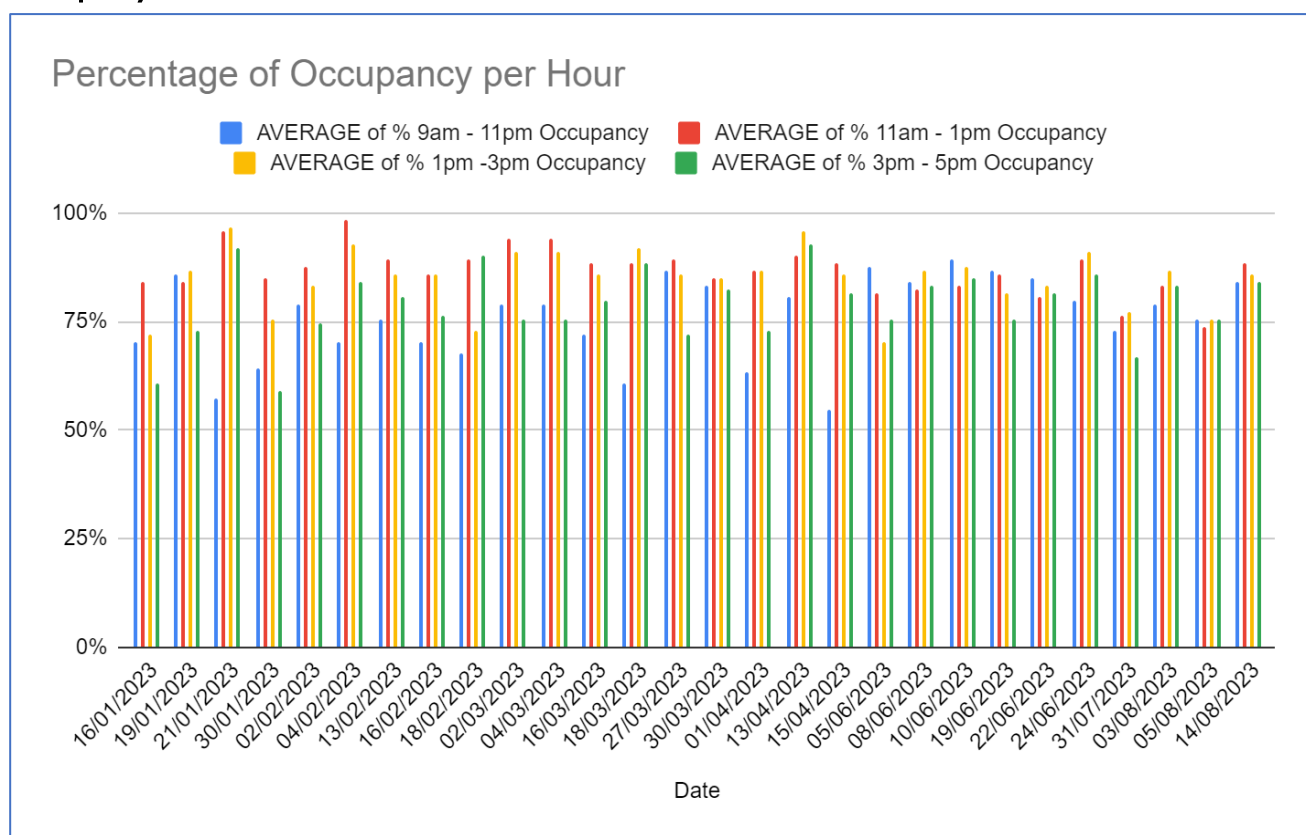


Occupancy by day. Weekday/weekend comparison



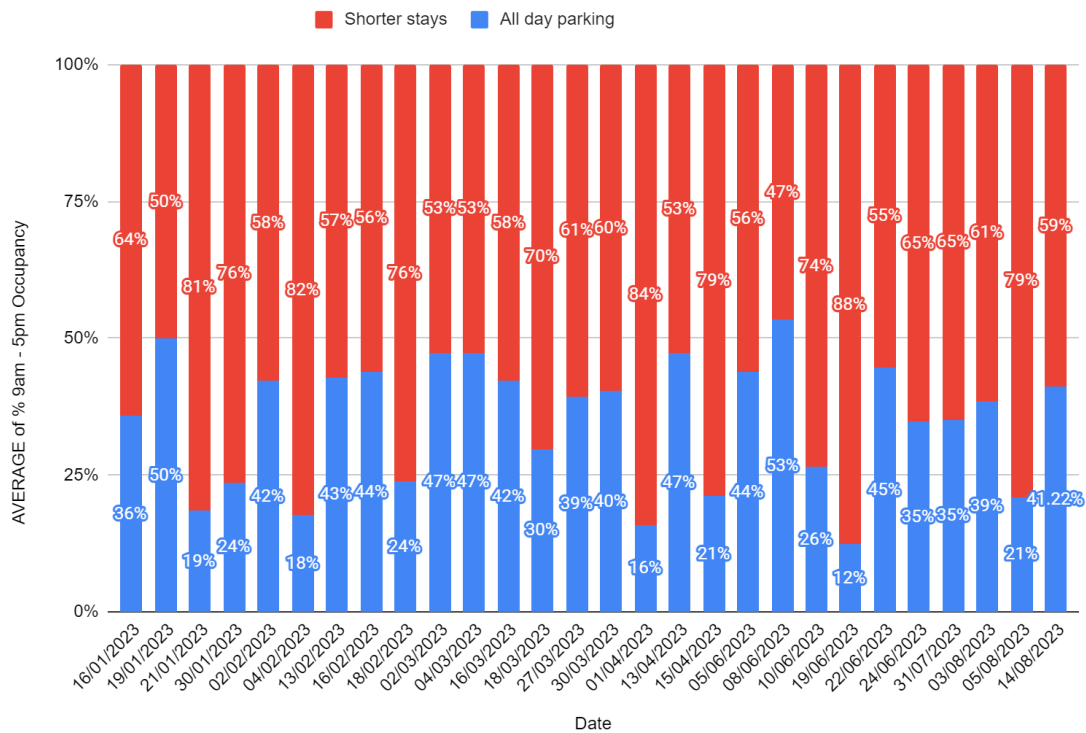
Hensington Road Car park – Woodstock

Occupancy levels



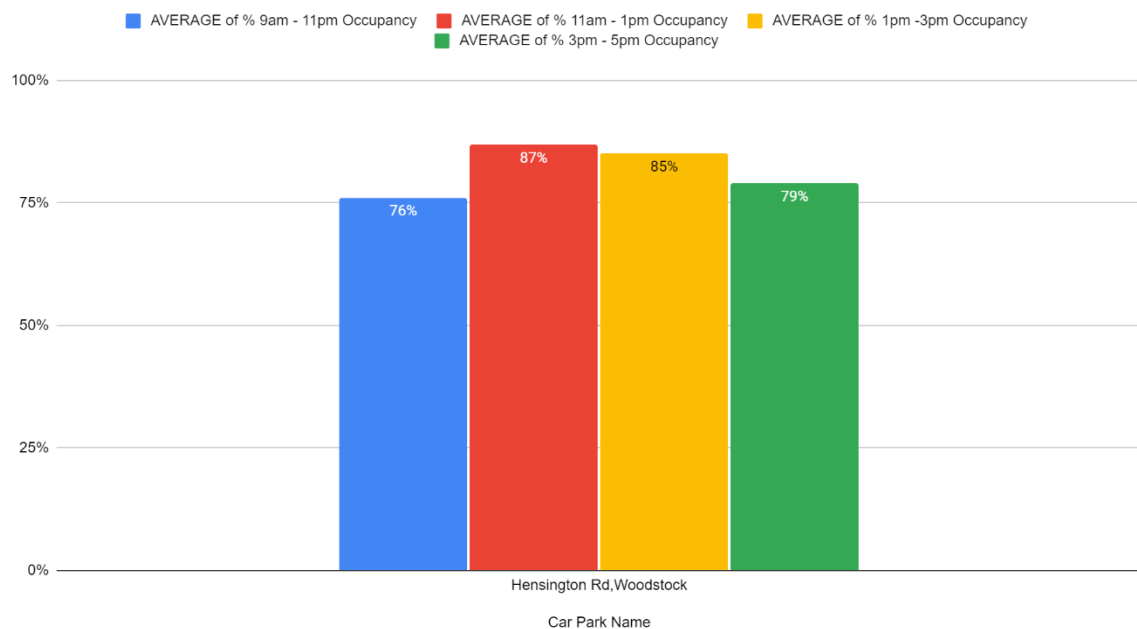
Length of stay short v's long stay.

AVERAGE of % 9am - 5pm Occupancy vs Date

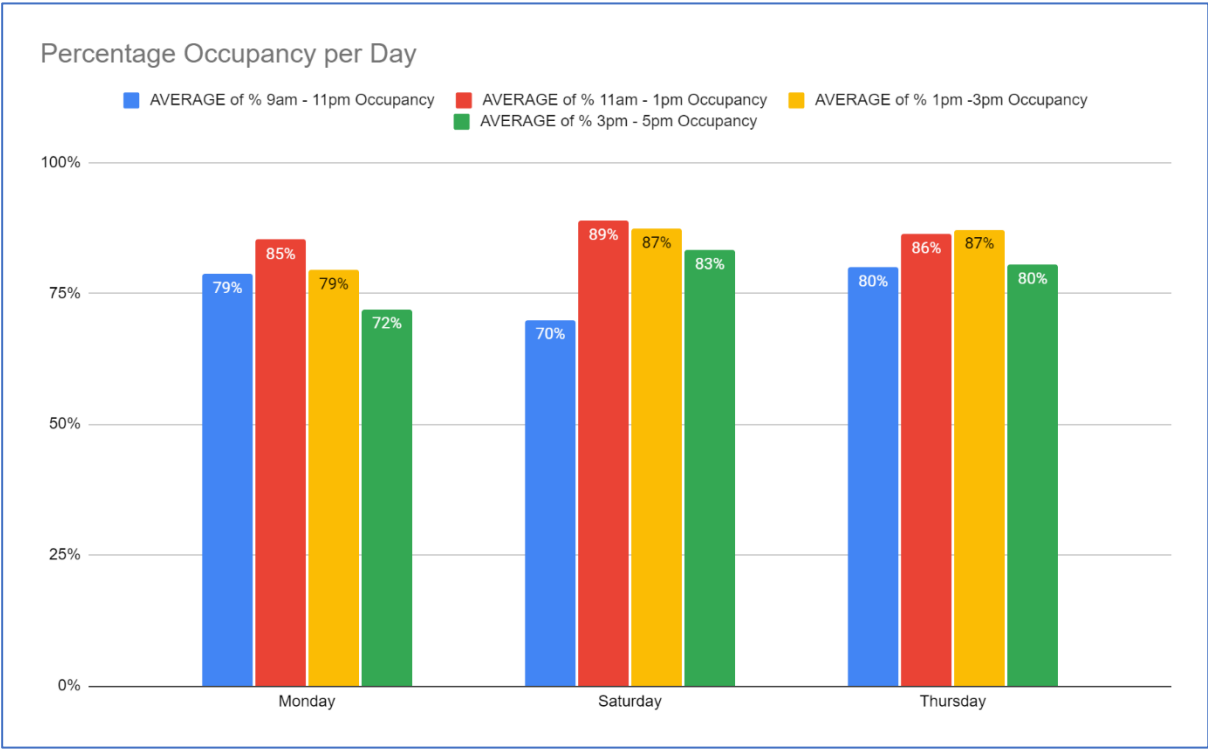


Peak stay times

Average Occupancy per Car Park

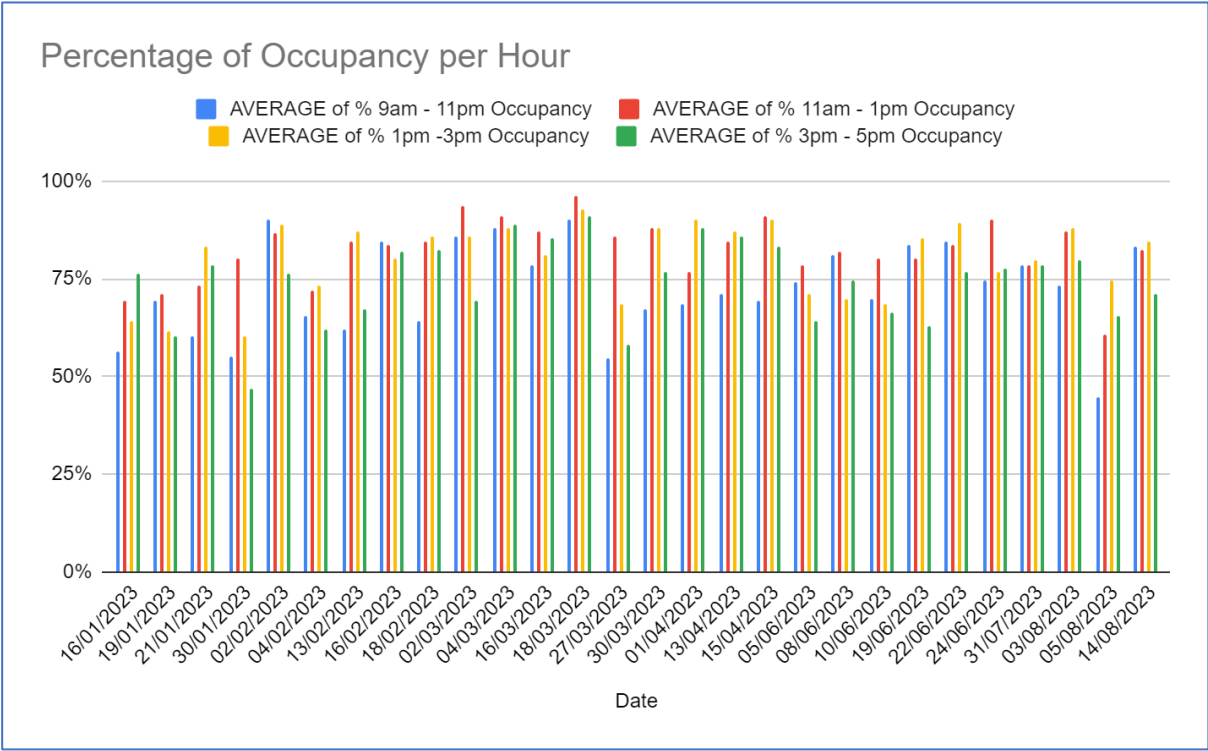


Weekday/Weekend comparison



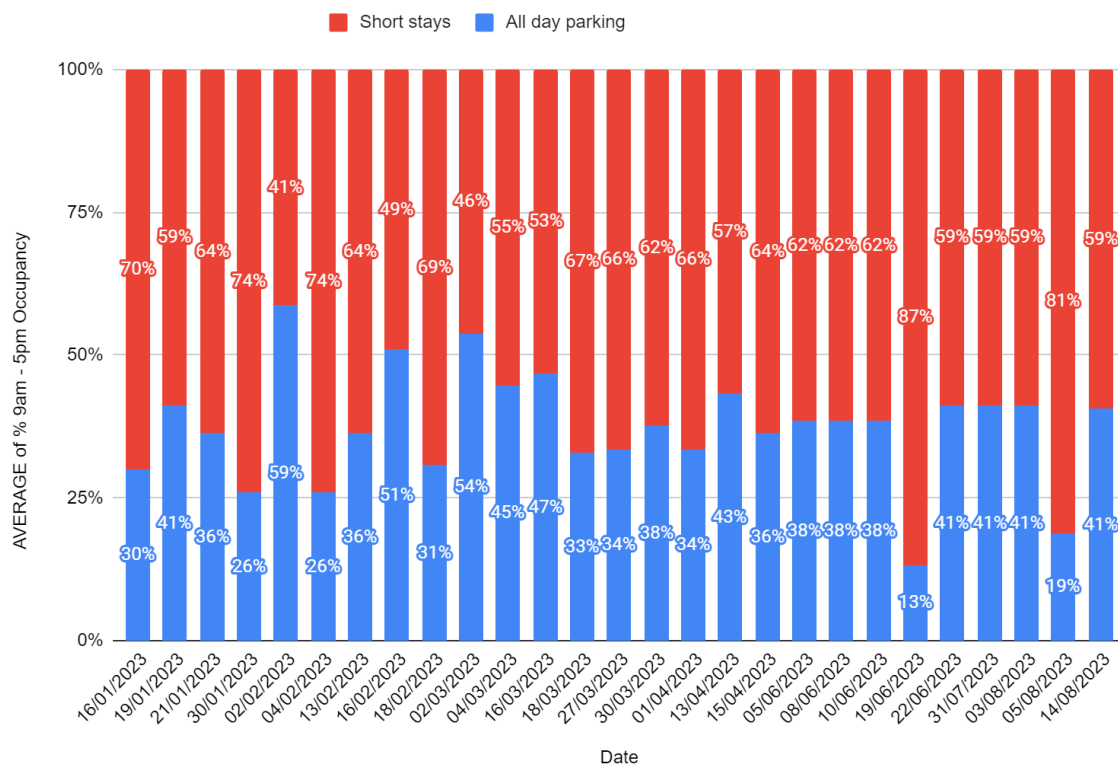
New Street – Chipping Norton

Occupancy levels



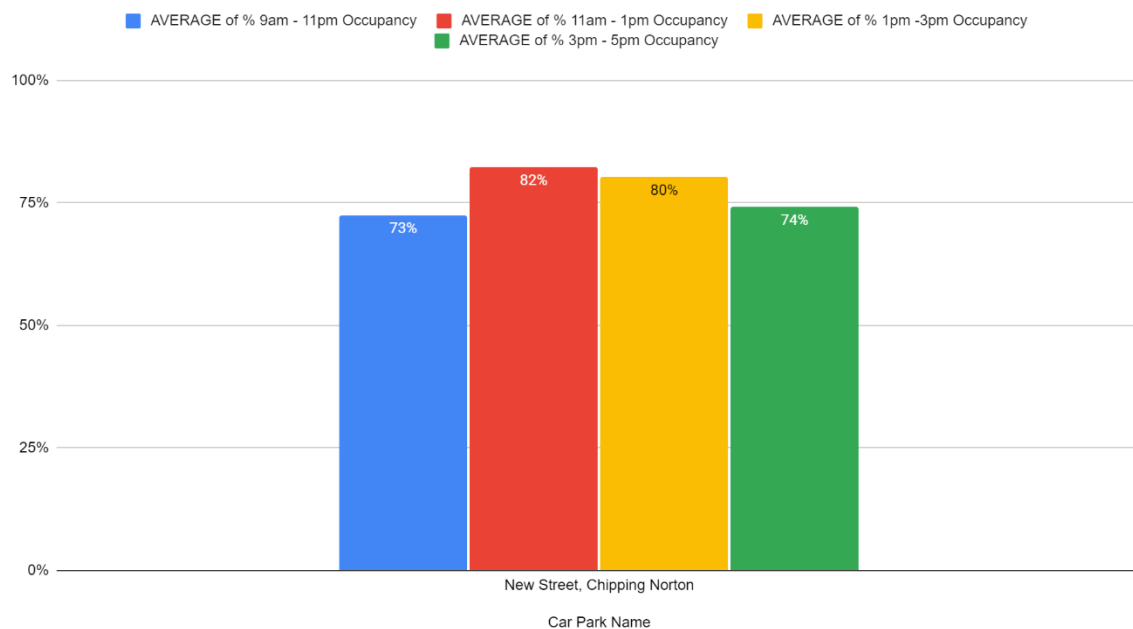
Length of stay short v's long stay.

AVERAGE of % 9am - 5pm Occupancy vs Date

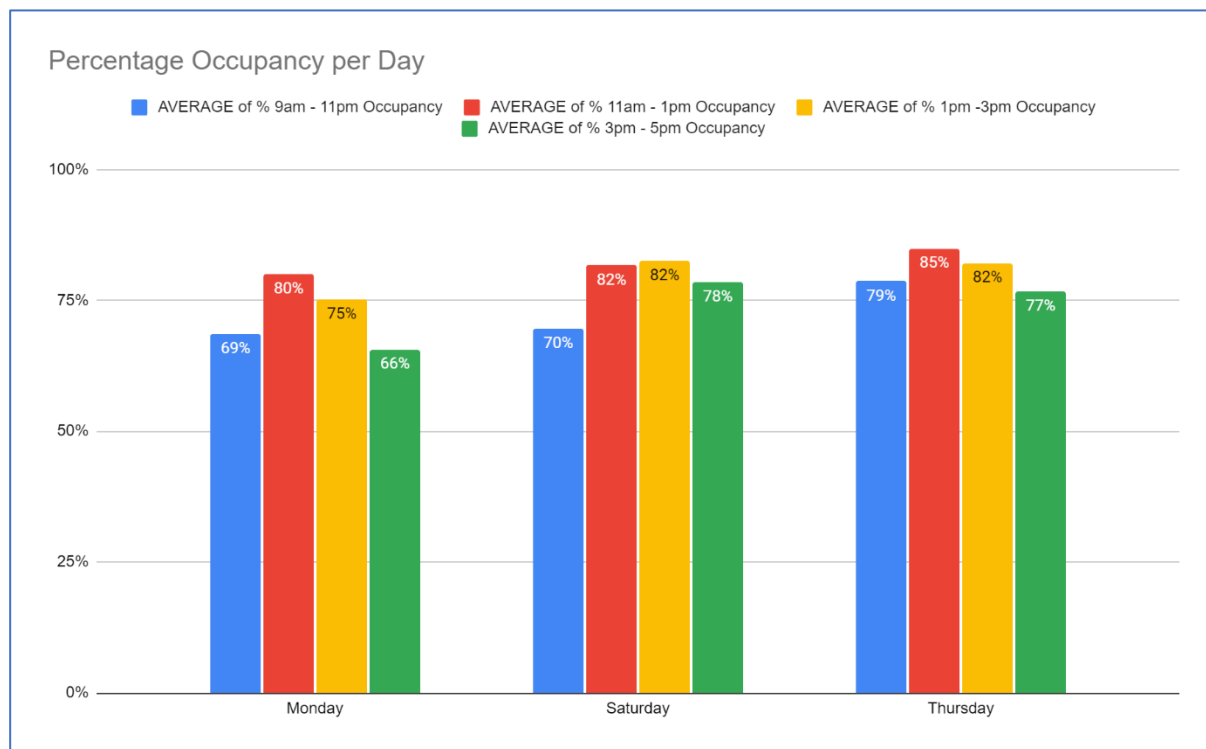


Peak stay times

Average Occupancy per Car Park



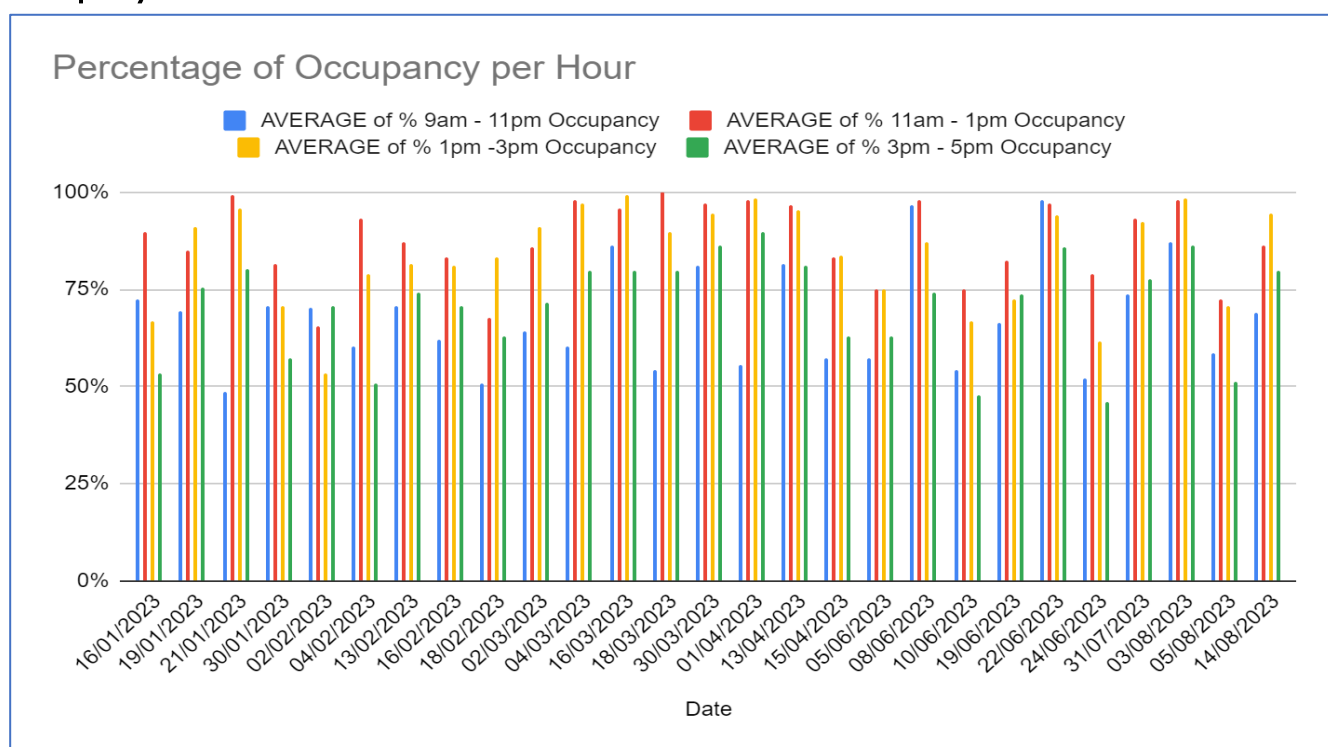
Weekday/weekend comparison



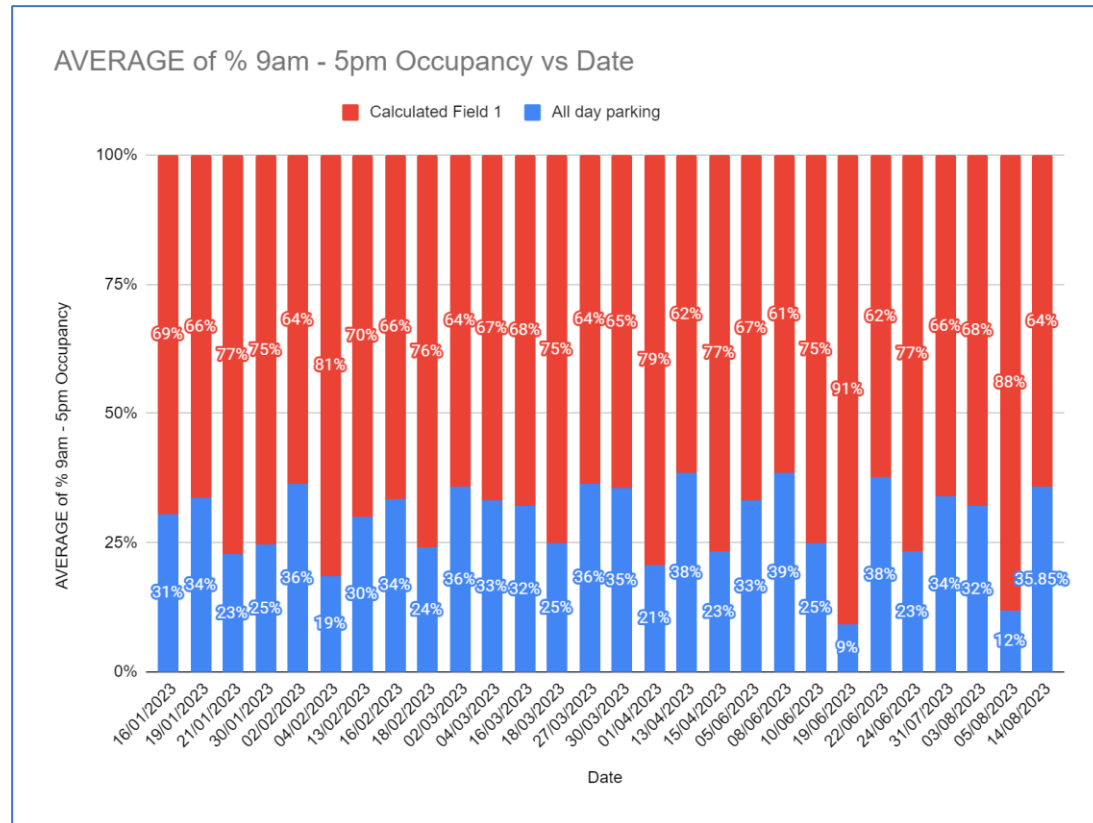
Woolgate – Witney

This focuses on Zone G of the car park.

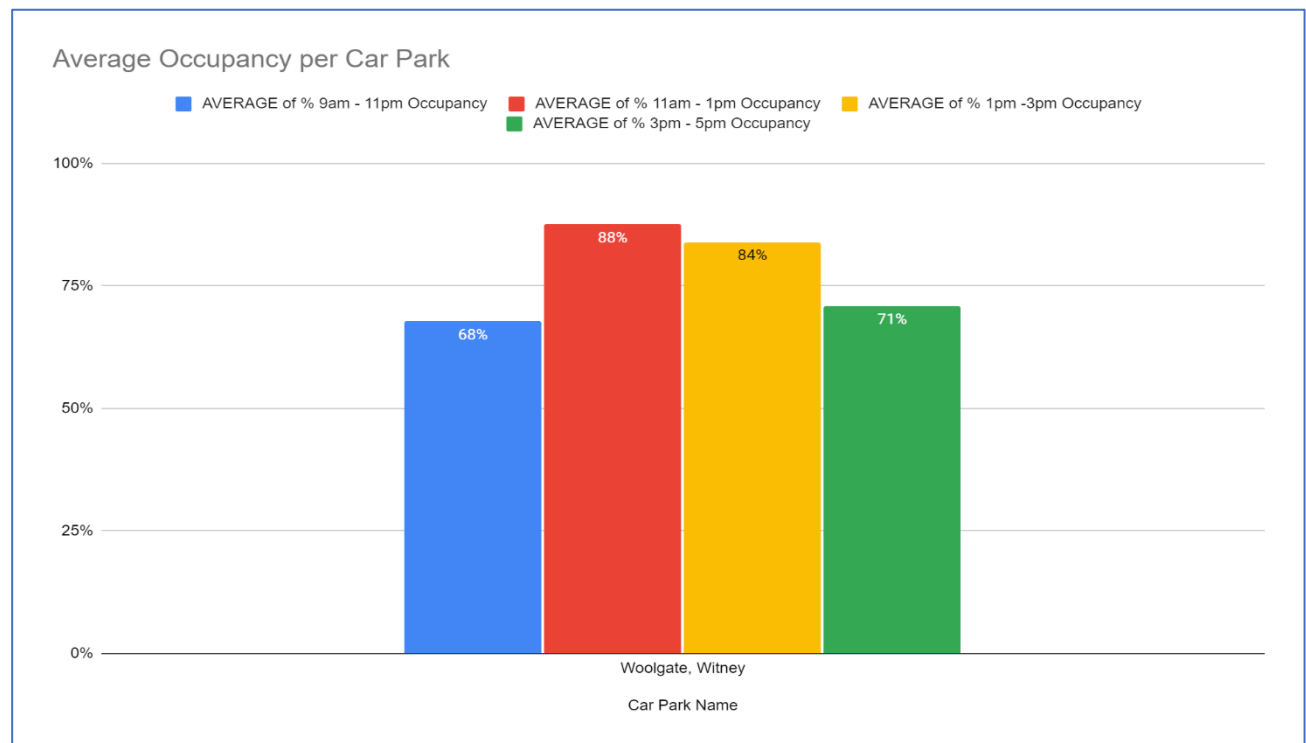
Occupancy Levels



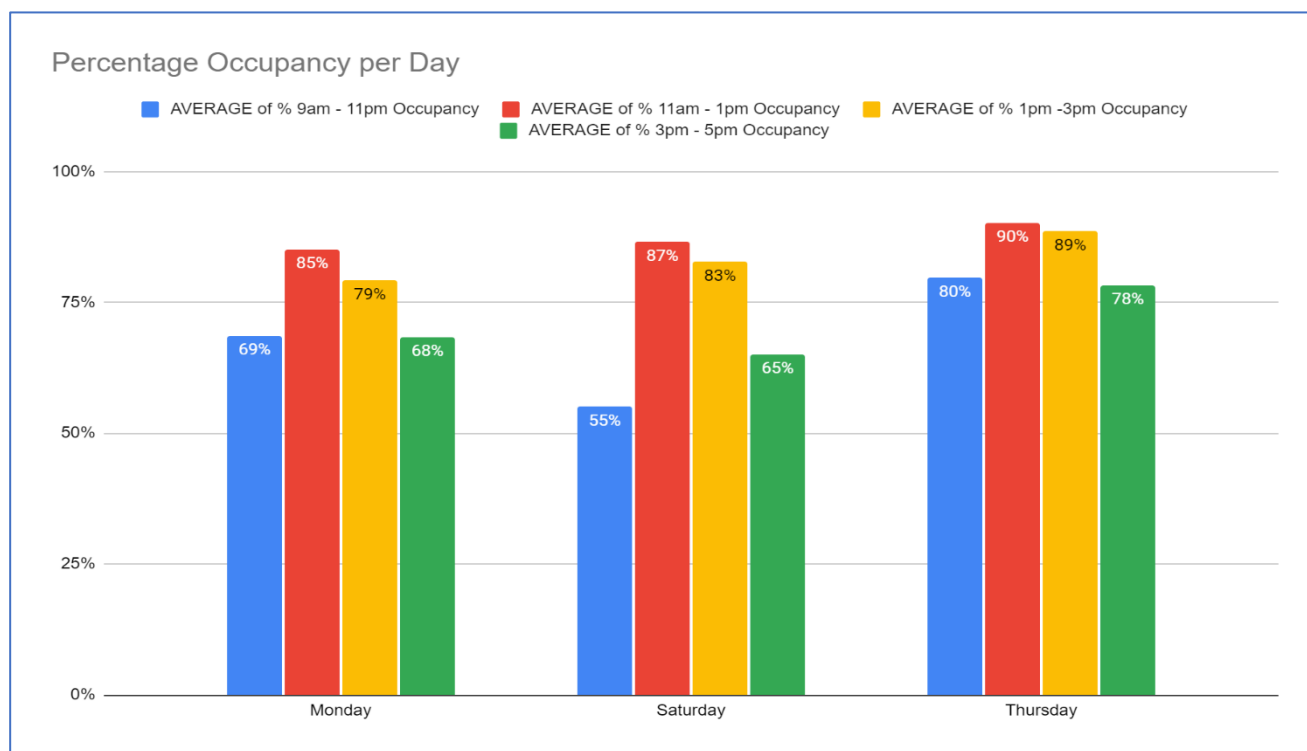
Length of stay v's long



Peak stay times



Weekday/Weekend comparison



Occupancy level spot check data Study period - 09th June 2022 – 02nd June 2023

The remaining car parks.

Area	Car Park	Total Spaces	Average Occupancy %
Carterton	Black Bourton	77	47%
Carterton	Alvescot Road	38	52%
Charlbury	Spendlove	39	68%
Chipping Norton	Albion Street	53	85%
Eynsham	Back Lane	82	46%
Long Hanborough	Riely Close	9	83%
Great Tew	Great Tew	44	41%
Witney	Windrush LC	93	59%
Witney	Burwell Drive	42	51%
Witney	Gordon Way	50	3%
Witney	Woodford Way	264	80%
Witney	Marriotts Walk	623	43%

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Equality and Rural 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 @publicagroup.uk to be signed off by an equalities officer before being published.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Maria Wheatley.	
Date of assessment: August 2023	Telephone: 01285 623228 Email: maria.wheatley@westoxon.gov.uk

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

Review of car parks – Executive report 11 th October 2023
--

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

To note the results of the recent parking surveys for the off-street car parks. To agree a further review in one year, in order to evaluate the effects of changes to enforcement and management of on-street parking by Oxfordshire County Council. To adopt long stay parking in Zone G of the Woolgate car park after a successful trial. Agree a change in focus to the off-street car park enforcement. The Off-Street Parking Order to be varied and the review of consultation delegated to Assistant Director for Resident Services.
--

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

The Off-street car parks are regulated by the Off-street parking order. To enable enforcement and regulation of the car parks any changes will need to be reflected in the Parking Order. There is a legal requirement when making changes to the order that requires statutory and public consultation.

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked, please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	✓	Face to face surveys of the users, occupancy data gathering and online surveys in the car parks.
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Oxfordshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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

All changes to the Parking Order will require statutory and public consultation, this will encourage feedback from a wider audience to add them to survey work gathered.

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

Face to face surveys in 4 of the busiest car parks and online surveys for all the car parks. The questions asked were to gather information on the reasons for parking at each location, expected length of stay, frequency of visits and distance travelled. As stated above further consultation will be required for any change to the Parking Order.

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	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: e.g. A proportion of those using the car parks will be affected. Those who require longer stays such as blue badge holders will not be affected from the proposed change. In all cases there will be a viable long stay option nearby.	

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			x	The proposal is inclusive to people of different age groups, but it is not specific to age	
Age – Old People			x	The proposal is inclusive to all ages	
Disability			x	The proposal is inclusive to people with disabilities but is not specific to disability	
Sex – Male			x	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Sex – Female			x	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			x	The proposal is inclusive to people of all races, but it is not specific to race	

Religion or Belief			x	The proposal is inclusive to people of all religions, but it is not specific to religion	
Sexual Orientation			x	This proposal is inclusive to all types of sexual orientation, but it is not specific to sexual orientation	
Gender Reassignment			x	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Pregnancy and maternity			x	The proposal is inclusive to people who are pregnant and/or on maternity, but it is not specific to this group	
Geographical impacts on one area			x	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the West Oxfordshire District	
Other Groups			x	This proposal is inclusive to all other groups that are not mentioned	
Rural considerations: i.e., Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			x	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the West Oxfordshire District	

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)

Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
Executive to agree proposals 11 th October 2023			
The legal process to change the Parking Order will begin, including statutory consultees and the general public.			Process will start one week after Exec meeting.
Consultation feedback will be considered by Senior Officers and Exec Member responsible for the service.			Consultation will take 21 days.

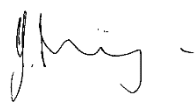
Appropriate lines and signs changed in the car park.			Lead time for signs approximately 14 days plus installation.
Enforcement for new restriction will begin with warning notices for one week, after which penalty charge notices will be issued.			

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

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Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure, or function and where a 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:	Maria Wheatley	Date:	
Line Manager:	 Jon Dearing, Assistant Director for Resident Services	Date:	22/08/2023
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:	C Phillips – Chloe Phillips, Strategic Support Officer	Date:	22/08/2023

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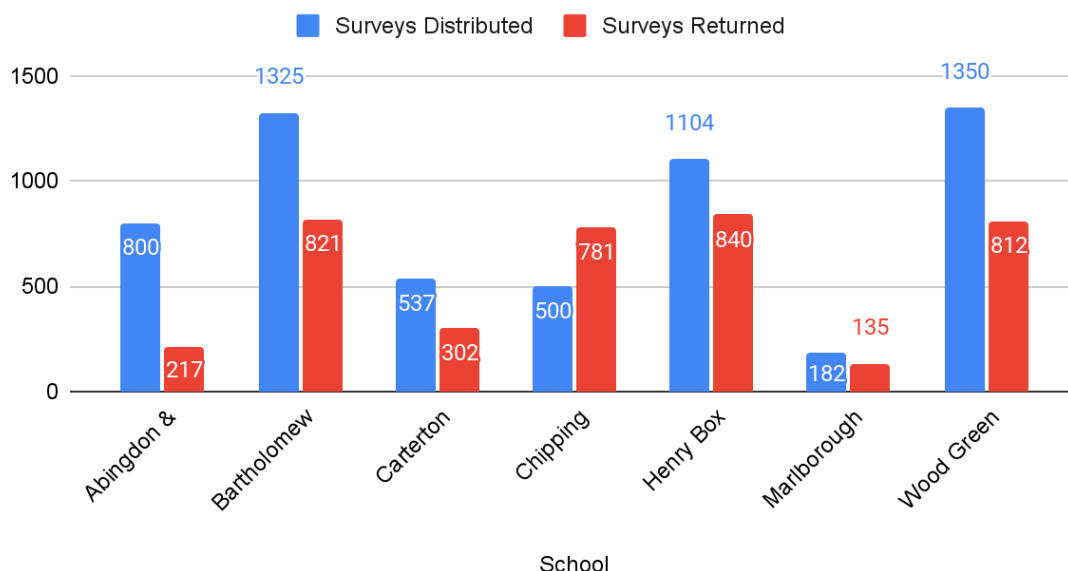
 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 OCTOBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>YOUTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Members</p>	<p>Councillor Geoff Saul – Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare. Email: geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk</p> <p>Councillor Joy Aitman – Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities. Email: joy.aitman@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities. Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Heather McCulloch – Community Wellbeing Manager. Email: heather.mcculloch@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider the recommendations made to the council as a result of the Youth Needs Assessment, in which we gained the views of just under 4000 young people to better understand the challenges they face.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Nil.</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) Ask officers to engage with Oxfordshire County Council to work up a proposal to create a dedicated youth specialist role for the Council to lead on Young People and carry forward the recommendations of the Youth Needs Assessment. This proposal should come back to the Executive for approval if it has direct financial implications for the Council.</i> <i>b) Dedicate a specific stream of funding on the WestHive platform for youth activities particularly those led by young people themselves.</i>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Good Quality of Life for All • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>The Youth Needs Assessment gained the views of 3908 young people aged 11-25 in secondary and sixth form education settings through a paper survey of 39 questions.</p> <p>The views of 177 parents were gained through an online survey.</p> <p>Focus groups were held, engaging approximately 70 young people were involved in these discussions.</p>

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Young people were disproportionately affected by Covid-19, learning was interrupted, opportunities to develop skills were lost and young people had difficulties accessing professional services to support their physical and emotional wellbeing.
- 1.2 Across Oxfordshire we have seen a loss of youth services and providers due to their inability to seek sustainable long-term funding.
- 1.3 The YMCA reported that government funding for youth services saw a significant decrease, with £1.4b in 2010/11 reducing to £430m in 2018/19.
- 1.4 The Council through its Covid-19 Recovery Plan made young people a priority. Recognising the Council's limited involvement with young people to date it was agreed that a period of engagement was essential in understanding their needs ahead of making decisions about what services should be provided. It was agreed that the Council would undertake a Youth Needs Assessment.
- 1.5 Between January and March 2022, paper surveys were distributed to young people aged 11 and above. The surveys were handed out during registration period in 5 of our 6 mainstream secondary schools and also at Abingdon & Witney College. One school did not have capacity to participate.

School Participation



- 1.6** In total we received responses from 3,908 young people aged between 11 and 25, some with additional needs.
- 1.7** We considered sending the survey electronically, but based on evidence decided that a paper survey was most appropriate as these have a higher response rate. Chipping Norton School requested the survey electronically initially and we received 281 responses in that format from them. We followed up with 500 paper surveys and received 100% response rate.
- 1.8** We also held some focus groups with young people to further explore some of the common themes coming out of the survey, including feelings of safety, living in the real world vs online communication and accessibility of services and activities.
- 1.9** We also spoke to parents and conducted a Parents Survey, to which 177 parents responded, 70% of which were parents of children attending school in Witney.
- 1.10** Our Commitments as a council are to:
- To continue to listen and learn from young people, and where possible, act on recommendations they make.
 - To share the results of the Youth Needs Assessment as widely as possible to amplify the voices of young people in the district.
 - To use the insight gained from the Youth Needs Assessment to inform decision making and service delivery.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF THE YOUTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2.1 Words of a young person

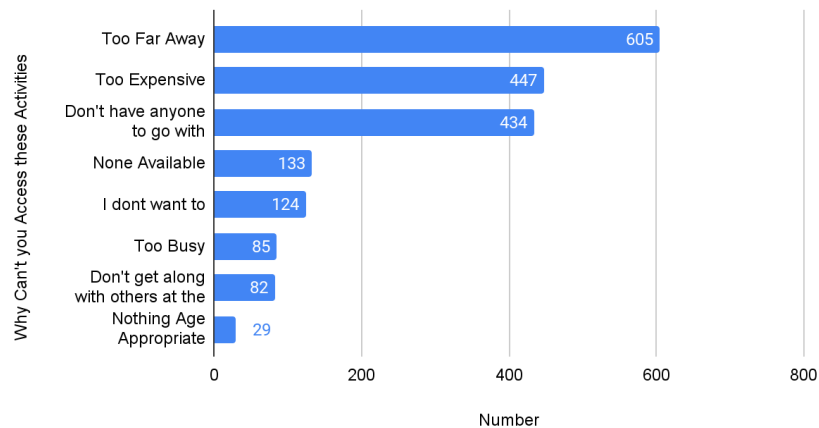
Young People's Words Can be Powerful

We need support, we need inclusivity and it needs to be real and not from a five minute google-ing session, we need to be taken seriously, the people meant to look out for us need to look and talk to us if they see something, and stuff like this needs to be done privately, we need people to trust, we need outlets, we need to be able to be relaxed around adults and teachers and be able to trust and talk to them about anything, we need to not be put on the spot, we need to be able to choose how much to share and not be forced to open up, we need to be allowed to choose what to do, we need options, we need to be provided proper opportunities that are affordable to help us get an idea of what we want to do when we're older, we want to be protected and safe, we want to not be coddled or patronised, we want to act like the children we are, we want to be included in the important conversations, we want to be able to grow and have a safety net ready to catch us and someone standing there comforting saying it's alright to fail and understand how much it hurts to do so. We want to speak and we want to be listened to

2.2 Being Active

Young people want to be active and social, activities they want to participate in are not always available locally and public transport can be difficult to access in rural areas.
Activities can be really expensive to access, with the cost of transport, the activity, equipment and clothing, drinks and snacks. Some families cannot afford them, and the cost-of-living crisis is impacting on many that are unable to access the support offered to families that receive benefits.
Many young people live in rural areas, and with school catchment areas being so large, and public transport options being limited, for some, the only place to socialise with friends is at school.
Young people want access to more adventurous sports, like climbing, winter sports, skating and horse riding
Some sports activities are universally popular across genders and ages, including football, boxing, basketball and swimming
Young people with additional needs may struggle to access some activities because of a lack of equipment at leisure facilities
Young people want us to know that climate change is important to them

Why Can't you Access these Activities



2.3 Mental Health

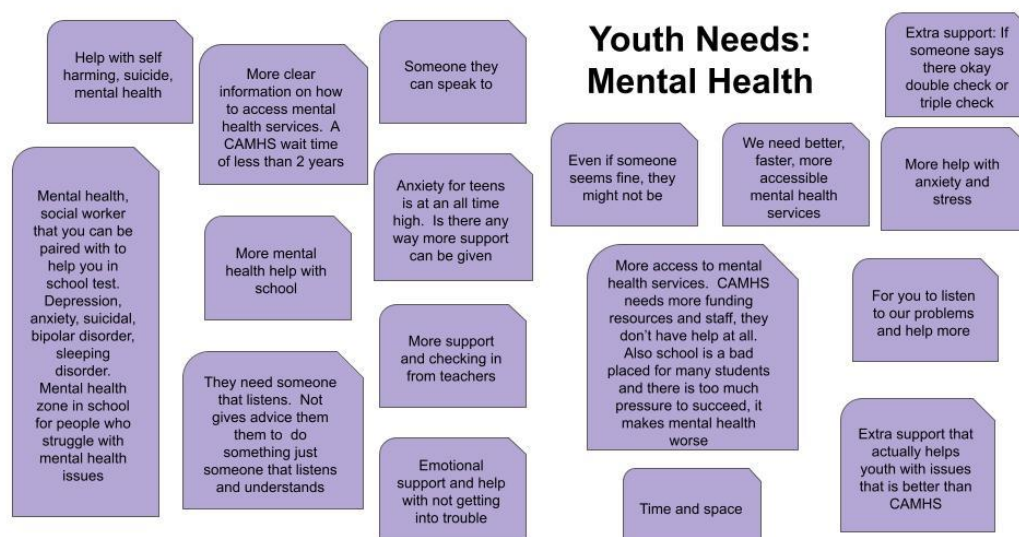
Young people want better access to mental health support, including the ability to access them locally

Young people want access to mental health support without having to be added to lengthy waiting lists.

Young people want adults to check in with them to see if they are ok, not relying on their first response but to check, then check again

Parents want to access low-cost alternatives to CAMHS

Some young people want access to mental health support at schools, others want to access support outside of school so that it is private, and their peers do not become aware. One size does not fit all



2.4 Safety

Young people want to feel safe everywhere
Young people want to be safe from bullying and for adults to challenge them and others when they say something discriminatory or offensive
They want access to safe and youth friendly environments to socialise in, these spaces need to be inexpensive, local and easily accessible. They also need to provide protection from the weather, be well lit and have internet access
Young people want to be safe from gangs, knives and violence of any sort
Young people do not want to be pressured into vaping, smoking or doing drugs
Young women want to feel safe and supported without fear of predatory or sexist behaviour.

Violence, Substances and Alcohol



2.5 Reflections on the Impact of Covid

The mental health of young people and their families was affected by the pandemic, for some this was an exacerbation of existing anxiety and worries and for others the case.
Young people had felt worried about the future and how not being able to attend school would affect their exams and grades. Others had difficulty returning to school due to their mental health, social anxieties or concern for loved ones who were clinically vulnerable
Young people missed out on socialising with friends and participating in activities, for some of them this restricted their access to safe adults outside of the family home they could talk to.

Young people want to talk about the issues they are concerned or passionate about and for adults to listen and act on the information they give them.

3. DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS TO DATE

- 3.1 The results of the Youth Needs Assessment have been disseminated widely through a range of workshops, presentations and meetings. To date these have included:

Q&A Session for Councillors	7 September 2022
Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee	11 October 2022
Youth Needs Assessment Launch	8 December 2022
Mental Health West Forum	21 January 2023
West Oxfordshire District Council Action Plan: Young People	30 January 2023
West Oxfordshire District Council Senior Officer and Business Manager Workshop	2 February 2023
Thames Valley Police Away Day	9 February 2023
Full Council Briefing	15 February 2023
Oxfordshire Communications Group	24 February 2023
Oxfordshire County Council Youth Offer Strategic Group	30 February 2023
Youth Needs Assessment webinar	22 March 2023
West Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Alliance	18 April 2023
West Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership	26 April 2023
Public Health, Full Team Meeting	16 May 2023
Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy Task and Finish group	Ongoing
Children and Young People's Forum	26 June 2023
Oxfordshire Youth in Mind Conference	4 July 2023
Oxfordshire Youth Offer Steering Group	17 July 2023

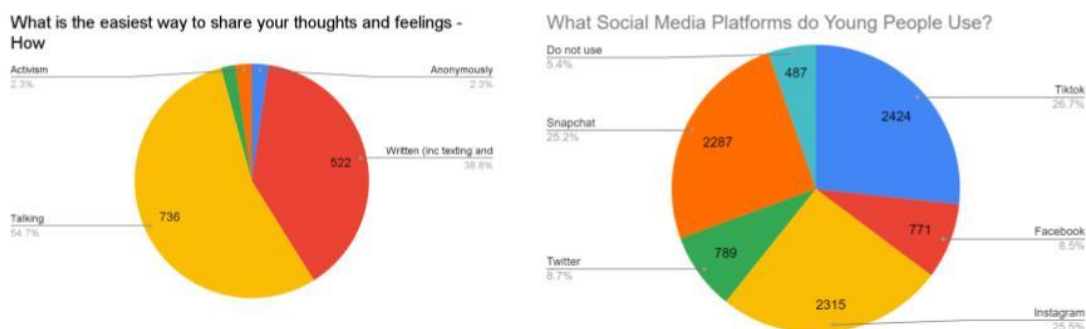
4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL

- 4.1 Based on the results of the Youth Needs Assessment and given that the primary authority with responsibility for young people is Oxfordshire County Council, these are the recommendations with potential financial implications for the Council:
- Officers be asked to engage with Oxfordshire County Council to work up a proposal to create a dedicated youth specialist role for the Council to lead on Young People and carry forward the recommendations of the Youth Needs Assessment. This proposal should come back to the Executive for approval if there are direct financial implications for the Council.
 - Dedicate a specific stream of funding on the WestHive platform for youth activities particularly to support projects led by young people themselves.
- 4.2 Furthermore, these are recommendations where a shift in practice could make a significant contribution:

- Be ambitious about involving young people in consultation, decision-making processes and policy development at the Council – such as the Local Plan, Climate Strategies and Council Plan – so that services meet their needs;
- Raise concerns at every level over the inadequacy of mental health services in West Oxfordshire for children, young people and parents, and seek urgent action – both Councillors and officers;
- Press for serious violence (including knife crime), violence against women and girls, and drugs and gangs to be a priority in the new Community Safety Partnership Plan;
- Make more happen together and in collaboration with town councils where investment in young people's provision is in place - Witney, Chipping Norton and Carterton;
- Subject to appropriate resources being secured enact a Year of Youth, to ensure the voices of young people are celebrated and championed;
- Create a clear communications plan for engagement with young people which identifies how, where, when and what topics the Council will engage young people in. This will look afresh at digital ways to engage in conversations with young people, review accessibility and introduce easy read formats as standard.

Young People want us to be interested in them, to listen to their views and understand that what they have to say is important

Young People have told us how they like to communicate with adults around them, and which social media platforms they use. It is now time to think about how we can use this information to continue our conversation with them



5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1 Whilst not recommended, Executive could choose not to act on the findings from the Youth Needs Assessment.
- 5.2 An alternative to having a youth focused role, would be to create a multi-disciplinary project group within the council, with officers having protected work time to carry forward the work

of the Youth Needs Assessment. Additional time would need to be found within the Communications Team to develop a communications plan and future engagement.

- 5.3 For this to be a viable option, the work would need to be clearly coordinated and directed, with each member an active participant in the work going forward. With competing demands across departments, it is unclear if this could work effectively and make more than superficial changes to the way the council works with and for young people in our communities.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Councillors and officers of the council regularly participate in conversations, meetings and activities which indirectly and directly impact on young people. The Council now has a better understanding of what it is like to be a young person in West Oxfordshire, their aspirations and the barriers and challenges they face.
- 6.2 It would be advantageous over the next 12 months for the council to capitalise on the data and intelligence provided through the Youth Needs Assessment. The Council can demonstrate that it has listened and is taking action as a result.
- 6.3 This report has highlighted how the council can move forward, with youth in mind, and making every contact count.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 It is envisaged that the dedicated youth funding for Westhive would be set at a level of at least £20,000 and this would be found from existing resources.
- 7.1.1 £2,500 would be ring fenced specifically for specific projects / activities that were generated from young people.
- 7.2 The annual cost of Westhive would be met from the Council's priority fund, so not impacting on the Council's revenue budgets for 2024-25 and 2025-26.
- 7.3 Officers will bring forward to Executive a fully costed proposal following conversations with Oxfordshire County Council if there are any direct financial implications for this Council.
- 7.4 The Year of Youth would be reliant on securing external resources and would be deliverable only if additional staffing is secured.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no legal implications that arise from this report.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The risk to the Council of not committing to taking action as a result of the consultation with young people is that the Council would lose the trust and confidence of this segment of the population. Furthermore, young people will continue to face the challenges they have identified.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1** This report sets out the first steps the Council can take to tackle inequality for young people in terms of their access to services and what opportunities they have to influence policy. Acting on the findings from the Youth Needs Assessment could have a positive impact on young people, with a subsequent benefit on parents, guardians or carers. There is also the potential for a positive impact on rural considerations, such as access to services.


11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** It is not expected that this activity will have a negative impact. 75% of young people responding stated that climate change was important to them. It is recommended that young people are engaged with more fully. If the recommendations are agreed there will be opportunities to engage further with young people around climate change.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1** 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:
- Full report and analysis of Youth Needs Assessment
- 12.2** These documents will be available for inspection online at www.westoxon.gov.uk or by contacting democratic services democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting.

(END)

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 OCTOBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2031 – REGULATION 10A REVIEW</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Carl Rylett – Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development. Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves – Planning Policy Manager. Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves – Planning Policy Manager. Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider a review of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 in accordance with Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Regulation 10A review of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a) Note the content of the report;</i> <i>b) Approve the Regulation 10A review of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, attached at Annex A.</i>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>

Consultees/ Consultation	None.
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 National planning policy stipulates that Local Plans should be reviewed at least once every five years to assess whether the policies they contain need to be updated.
- 1.2 Reviews should be completed no later than five years from the adoption date of a plan and should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area and any relevant changes in national policy.
- 1.3 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 was adopted in September 2018 and as such a formal review of its policies has now been undertaken.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to summarise and agree the outcome of that review.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 was formally adopted on 27 September 2018 and sets out the overall planning framework for the District from 2011 to 2031.
- 2.2 Members will be aware that the plan is based on an overall housing requirement of 15,950 homes, which comprises 13,200 homes for West Oxfordshire's needs and a further 2,750 homes for Oxford City's unmet housing needs.
- 2.3 To ensure that Local Plans are effective, they must be kept up to date. The NPPF therefore requires policies to be reviewed at least once every 5 years to determine whether they need to be updated.
- 2.4 Members will be aware that the District Council has already committed to the preparation of a new Local Plan for West Oxfordshire with informal consultation currently ongoing in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 2.5 However, the District Council has not previously undertaken a formal review of the current Local Plan and so to ensure that legislative requirements are met, a review has now been carried out.
- 2.6 The review document has been prepared in tabular form for ease of reference and is attached to this report at Annex A.

3. OVERVIEW

- 3.1 As can be seen from Annex A, whilst many of the Local Plan policies remain generally consistent with current national policy, the vast majority would benefit from being updated/replaced as part of the ongoing review of the Local Plan.

- 3.2 One area of discrepancy with current national policy relates to the current Local Plan housing requirement (which is primarily set out in Local Plan Policies H1 and H2).
- 3.3 Members will be aware that these policies are based on evidence which dates back to 2014 (the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment or SHMA) and, importantly, pre-date the introduction of the Government's standard method for assessing local housing need in 2018.
- 3.4 None of the Oxfordshire Local Authorities are looking to the Oxfordshire SHMA to inform their emerging Local Plans. Oxford City and Cherwell District Council have jointly commissioned a new Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) and South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils are jointly commissioning a separate housing needs assessment to inform their emerging Joint Local Plan.
- 3.5 West Oxfordshire District Council is in the process of commissioning its own housing needs assessment as part of the ongoing Local Plan review. This will help to inform a new housing requirement to 2041.
- 3.6 In light of the above, the review document attached at Annex A concludes that Policies H1 and H2 of the Local Plan require updating in the context of national policy and Oxfordshire-specific local circumstances.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR HOUSING NUMBERS

- 4.1 Although the review which has been undertaken has concluded that Policies H1 and H2 of the current Local Plan need to be updated, this does not render them obsolete. They still form part of the statutory development plan, as do the sites which have been allocated to deliver the overall requirement. This will continue to be the case until the new Local Plan has been adopted.
- 4.2 What it does mean however, is that for the purposes of calculating its 5-year housing land supply position, the District Council will use a different approach from 27 September 2023 onwards i.e. when the current Local Plan becomes more than 5 years old.
- 4.3 Members will be aware that the Council is required to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land and that, to date, this has been calculated against the housing requirement set out in Policies H1 and H2 of the Local Plan which include provision for Oxford City's unmet housing needs.
- 4.4 However, national policy (NPPF paragraph 74) states that, unless a local authority's strategic housing policy requirement has been reviewed and found not to require updating, that any calculation of 5-year housing land supply should be based on local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old.
- 4.5 In this instance, because policies H1 and H2 of the Local Plan have been found to require updating, once they become 5-years old (i.e. from 27 September 2023 onwards) the District Council will calculate its 5-year housing land supply position using the Government's standard method for assessing local housing need rather than using the housing requirement set out in Policies H1 and H2 of the Local Plan in accordance with paragraph 74 of the NPPF.

- 4.6 This means that whilst making provision for Oxford City's unmet housing needs will remain a material planning consideration, because those unmet needs do not form part of West Oxfordshire's local housing need calculated under the standard methodology, they will not be taken into account for the purposes of calculating the District Council's housing land supply position in accordance with the requirements of national policy.
- 4.7 It is anticipated that a new housing land supply position statement will be published on this basis in October 2023.
- 4.8 In parallel with this, the Council's planning policy team will continue to take forward the new Local Plan to a more advanced stage which will help to determine a new housing requirement to 2041 along with a planned supply of housing sites to deliver it.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Members will be aware that the District Council has already committed to preparing a new Local Plan to ensure that it has in place an up-to-date framework of robust and ambitious policies to guide future development.
- 5.2 The review of the current Local Plan which has now been undertaken (Annex A) ensures that the legislative requirement for such a review to take place within 5-years of the date of adoption has been met.
- 5.3 It also provides a useful summary overview of where there have been notable changes in national policy or circumstances which will help to inform the development of the new Local Plan as it takes shape during 2024.
- 5.4 Subject to the approval of Members, the review document attached at Annex A will be published online alongside the current West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 The Executive could choose not to approve the review document attached at Annex A, however there is a legislative requirement to undertake such a review within 5-years of the date of adoption.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The report raises no direct financial implications.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 stipulates that a local authority must complete a review its Local Plan within 5 years of the date of adoption.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The report presents no significant risks, although the calculation of the Council's five-year housing land supply position is likely to continue to be challenged through planning appeals.

- 9.2** Legal advice has been sought and Officers are confident that this is a robust and defensible position to take.
- 9.3** It should be noted that similar reviews have been undertaken by Cherwell District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council with both authorities using the standard method to calculate their 5-year housing land supply position.
- 9.4** Although both authorities include a separate allowance for Oxford's unmet need, it is understood that this is because their Local Plan Policies which deal with the unmet need issue are not yet 5 years old, unlike the position in West Oxfordshire.

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** None.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1** None.

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West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031

Regulation 10A Review

September 2023

Introduction

Planning legislation¹ requires local planning authorities such as West Oxfordshire District Council to undertake a review of their Local Plan within 5 years of adoption. The purpose of such a review is to determine whether or not the plan's policies need to be updated.

The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 was formally adopted on 27 September 2018.

As such, a review of the policies included in the plan has been undertaken and is set out in full in this document.

For ease of reference, the review is set out in tabular format with each policy considered in turn, and any notable amendments to national policy, relevant evidence or changes in circumstances since the plan was adopted highlighted accordingly.

¹ Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
OS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development	<p>National policy remains based on a presumption in favour of sustainable development (NPPF paragraph 11).</p> <p>Whilst the wording of Local Plan Policy OS1 does not precisely reflect the NPPF, the scope and purpose of the policy is generally consistent.</p>	<p>The Government's Planning Practice Guidance on Plan-Making (October 2021) confirms that whilst Local Plans should reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, this should be done by identifying and providing for objectively assessed needs and by indicating how the presumption will be applied locally.</p> <p>It confirms that there is no need for a local plan to directly replicate the wording in paragraph 11 of the NPPF in a policy.</p>	<p>Policy OS1 remains generally consistent with the NPPF in setting out a presumption in favour of sustainable development.</p> <p>Current planning practice guidance confirms that although Local Plans should reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, there is no need for them to include a specific policy on this.</p> <p>As such, it is anticipated that the new Local Plan 2041 will not include such a policy, rather it will articulate what sustainable development means in the context of West Oxfordshire through other policies.</p>
OS2 - Locating development in the right places	<p>As outlined above, the NPPF remains underpinned by a presumption in favour of sustainable development.</p> <p>In terms of plan making, this means promoting a sustainable pattern of development which is what Policy OS2 seeks to do - adopting a hierarchal approach, whereby the majority of development is steered towards the District's larger</p>	<p>In terms of specific evidence, it is relevant to note that the District Council has commissioned independent research on rural service provision in West Oxfordshire through the Plunkett Foundation (March 2023).</p> <p>The intention is that this will be taken into account along with other relevant evidence and feedback in determining the most appropriate</p>	<p>Policy OS2 remains consistent with the NPPF in setting out a sustainable pattern of development based on a 'hierarchal' approach.</p> <p>The general principles contained in Policy OS2 are also considered to be consistent with the current NPPF albeit certain elements (e.g. design) now have a much stronger emphasis than was the case with the 2012</p>

	<p>settlements, with proportionately less development taking place in smaller settlements and rural areas.</p> <p>Policy OS2 also sets out a number of general criteria which all development is required to comply with.</p> <p>These cover a range of issues in line with the NPPF including for example flood risk, amenity, conserving and enhancing the historic environment etc.</p>	<p>pattern of development (spatial strategy) for the new Local Plan 2041.</p>	<p>NPPF under which the current Local Plan was prepared.</p> <p>The new Local Plan 2041 provides the opportunity to consider the extent to which Policy OS2 should be rolled forward or whether an alternative approach should be taken both in terms of the pattern of development and the applicability/wording of any general development principles.</p>
OS3 – Prudent Use of Natural Resources	<p>Policy OS3 requires all development to demonstrate efficient and prudent use and management of natural resources (waste, water efficiency etc.)</p> <p>This is consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of natural resources being used prudently (NPPF paragraph 8).</p>	<p>Since the Local Plan was adopted, the District Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency and published a net zero carbon toolkit and sustainability checklist.</p> <p>The Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) has also progressed to main modifications and final reporting with ambitious targets set in a number of areas including water and energy efficiency.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy OS3 remains consistent with the NPPF, the Local Plan review provides the opportunity to consider in what form the policy should be taken forward, updated and potentially strengthened to reflect the District Council's current priorities and ambitions as well as relevant national policy.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
OS4 – High Quality Design	<p>Policy OS4 requires all development to demonstrate a high quality, inclusive and sustainable approach to design, with developers required to adhere to a number of specific principles and also take account of relevant considerations including the West Oxfordshire Design Guide (2016).</p> <p>This is consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places (NPPF paragraph 8) and strategic policies setting out an overall strategy for the design quality of places (NPPF paragraph 20).</p>	<p>There have been no specific changes locally but national policy now places a much stronger emphasis on design quality than the 2012 version of the NPPF under which the adopted Local Plan was prepared.</p> <p>This includes an expectation that Local Plans will include a design vision and expectations and policies that reflect local aspirations.</p> <p>The NPPF also set out a number of design principles relevant to plan-making and decision-taking.</p> <p>Alongside the NPPF, the Government has also published a National Design Guide and National Model Design Code with the expectation that local authorities will take these into account in drawing up their own local design codes and guides - either as part of their Local Plan or alongside.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy OS4 remains consistent with the NPPF in seeking high quality design solutions, since the Local Plan was adopted, the importance of design has been much more fully recognised at the national level including the introduction of the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.</p> <p>The new Local Plan 2041 therefore provides an opportunity to strengthen and enhance the Council's policy approach.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
OS5 – Supporting Infrastructure	<p>Policy OS5 requires all new development to deliver or contribute towards the timely provision of essential supporting infrastructure.</p> <p>This is consistent with the NPPF which requires development to be supported by necessary infrastructure (e.g. transport, communications, green infrastructure etc.).</p>	<p>Since this policy was drafted, further countywide work on infrastructure provision has taken place through the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS) in 2017 and 2022 with a further refresh currently planned.</p> <p>The Council has recently adopted a Developer Contributions SPD (July 2023).</p> <p>Further work on infrastructure provision in the Eynsham Area has also taken place in support of the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP).</p> <p>Nationally, the CIL regulations have been updated to remove reference to Regulation 123 lists which are currently referred to in the policy.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy OS5 remains consistent with national policy, the emerging Local Plan provides the opportunity to consider whether a standalone policy is necessary or whether the need for supporting infrastructure can be incorporated into other policies related to biodiversity, healthy communities, green infrastructure transport etc.</p> <p>It also provides the opportunity to strengthen supporting infrastructure requirements and consider issues such as phasing in more detail.</p> <p>The new Local Plan will be supported by up-to-date evidence of future infrastructure requirements in the period to 2041.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
<p>H1 – Amount and Distribution of Housing</p>	<p>Policy H1 is consistent with the NPPF insofar as it establishes an overall housing requirement for the plan period 2011 – 2031 (NPPF paragraph 63).</p> <p>However, the requirement itself is derived primarily from the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014 which was prepared on a countywide basis having regard to methodology and best practice in place at that time.</p> <p>Since then, the Government has introduced a standard method for establishing local housing need with the expectation that strategic policies should be informed by such an assessment unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach (NPPF paragraph 61).</p>	<p>All of the Oxfordshire local planning authorities are preparing new Local Plans and notably, none are relying on the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014).</p> <p>Oxford and Cherwell have jointly commissioned a Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) and South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse have commissioned a separate local housing needs assessment to inform their emerging joint Local Plan.</p> <p>West Oxfordshire District Council is currently in the process of commissioning its own local housing needs assessment covering the period to 2041.</p>	<p>Policy H1 and the housing requirement contained therein is underpinned by evidence dating from 2014 which was in itself prepared under now superseded national policy, methodology and best practice.</p> <p>Given the shift in national policy emphasis towards the use of the standard method to inform local housing needs assessment, the policy will need to be updated/replaced through the new Local Plan with regard to up to date evidence of housing need and other relevant considerations.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
<p>H2 – Delivery of New Homes</p>	<p>Policy H2 has two strands with the first part of the policy confirming the overall housing requirement (as per Policy H1) and how this is expected to be phased over the plan period.</p> <p>It explains how 5-year housing land supply will be calculated and what will happen should the anticipated trajectory not be achieved (i.e. an early plan review).</p> <p>For the reasons outlined above in relation to Policy H1, this aspect of Policy H2 needs to be updated to reflect current national policy and new evidence of housing need.</p> <p>The second part of Policy H2 sets out the circumstances in which new dwellings will be permitted at the main service centres, rural service centres and villages as identified by the Local Plan.</p> <p>It also sets out the circumstances in which new dwellings will be permitted in small villages, hamlets and the open countryside</p>	<p>As outlined above, none of the Oxfordshire LPAs are relying on the 2014 Oxfordshire SHMA to inform their emerging Local Plans.</p> <p>West Oxfordshire District Council is in the process of commissioning an up-to-date assessment of local housing need which will form the basis of establishing a new housing requirement to 2041 through the emerging Local Plan.</p>	<p>Like Policy H1, the first strand of Policy H2 needs updating because it is based on 2014 evidence which pre-dates the introduction of the standard method for assessing local housing need.</p> <p>It will be for the new Local Plan to establish an appropriate housing requirement to 2041 based on up-to-date evidence of housing need.</p> <p>Whilst the second strand of Policy H2 remains consistent with the NPPF and the need to promote a sustainable pattern of development and remains up to date, the review of the Local Plan presents the opportunity to consider reasonable alternatives and determine whether this current approach should be rolled forward, or a different strategy pursued.</p>

	<p>(essentially a more restrictive approach).</p> <p>The general approach of the policy is considered to remain broadly consistent with national policy which remains based on a presumption in favour of sustainable development and requires local plans to promote a sustainable pattern of development (NPPF paragraph 11).</p>		
H3 – Affordable Housing	<p>Policy H3 sets out the circumstances in which on-site affordable housing will be sought from qualifying market housing schemes as well as the circumstances in which a financial contribution towards off-site provision may be sought. The policy also addresses the issue of rural exception sites including the potential inclusion of an element of market housing to facilitate delivery.</p> <p>This approach is considered to remain consistent with national policy which requires local plans to set out the contributions expected from development including the level and type of affordable housing required (NPPF paragraph 34) and</p>	<p>Relevant national changes since the local plan was adopted include the introduction of First Homes and an increased emphasis on some new tenures including Build to Rent.</p> <p>The District Council adopted its Affordable Housing SPD in October 2021.</p> <p>As outlined above, as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan 2041, the District Council is in the process of commissioning evidence of local housing need which will provide an up-to-date assessment of the overall level of need for affordable housing in West Oxfordshire along with information</p>	<p>Whilst Policy H3 remains consistent with the NPPF in setting out the circumstances in which an affordable housing contribution will be sought from development, there have been important national changes including the introduction of First Homes as a form of affordable housing. The District Council is also in the process of commissioning new evidence of housing need including affordable housing.</p> <p>As such, the current provisions of Policy H3 will need to be considered as part of the review of the Local Plan and the policy updated and refined as appropriate.</p>

	to specify the type of affordable housing required through appropriate policies (NPPF paragraph 63).	on the type/tenure of affordable homes needed.	This will also take account of up-to-date viability evidence.
H4 – Type and Mix of New Homes	<p>Policy H4 deals with the type and mix of new homes to be provided including a requirement for all residential developments to provide or contribute towards the provision of a good, balanced mix of property types and sizes.</p> <p>This is consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of creating mixed and balanced communities (NPPF paragraph 63b) and assessing the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups (NPPF paragraph 62).</p> <p>Policy H4 offers particular support for specialist housing for older people and for those with a disability. This is consistent with NPPF paragraph 62 which specifically refers to taking account of the needs of older people and people with disabilities.</p> <p>Policy H4 also places a requirement on larger housing schemes of 50 or</p>	<p>Although Policy H4 does not stipulate the size of new homes required, the supporting text does provide an indicative guide which is drawn from the Oxfordshire SHMA (2014).</p> <p>As outlined above, the District Council is in the process of commissioning new housing needs evidence to 2041 which will provide an up-to-date assessment of the type and size of new homes which are needed.</p> <p>New evidence is also being prepared (on a countywide basis) on the specific accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers.</p> <p>There are also proposed changes to building regulations relating to accessible and adaptable homes which are likely to have an impact on the provisions of Policy H4.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy H4 remains consistent with the NPPF, the policy will need to be considered and replaced/updated as appropriate through the new Local Plan to take account of a range of factors including up to date evidence of housing need (including in relation to gypsies and travellers) and proposed changes to the building regulations.</p>

	<p>more units to provide at least 25% of those units as accessible and adaptable homes (building regulation M4(2)) and at least 5% to wheelchair adaptable standards (building regulation M4(3)).</p> <p>Again, this is broadly consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of providing a sufficient number and range of homes to meet the needs of present and future generations (NPPF paragraph 8).</p> <p>The policy also sets out the Council's intention to secure additional pitches for non-travelling gypsies and travellers and additional plots for travelling showpeople.</p> <p>This is consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of taking account of the housing needs of different groups including travellers.</p>		
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Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
H5 – Custom and Self-Build Housing	<p>Policy H5 sets out the Council’s approach towards the provision of custom and self-build housing requiring all larger housing developments of 100 or more homes to make 5% of the residential plots serviced and available for this purpose. The policy also offers general in principle support for custom and self-build housing in suitable, sustainable locations subject to compliance with other relevant policies.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to reflect the housing needs of different groups including those who wish to commission or build their own homes (NPPF paragraph 62).</p> <p>The policy must also be seen in the context of the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, which requires local authorities to keep a register of those seeking to acquire serviced plots in the area for their own self-build and custom and to</p>	As outlined above, the District Council is in the process of commissioning new evidence of housing need which will consider the specific needs of different groups in the community including those who wish to commission or build their own homes.	Whilst Policy H5 remains consistent with national policy, it will be considered and updated accordingly as part of the proposed review of the Local Plan to take account of new evidence of need as well as the implementation of the policy since the Local Plan was adopted in 2018.

	give enough suitable development permissions to meet the identified demand.		
H6 – Existing Housing	<p>Policy H6 addresses development involving changes to existing residential properties including the potential loss of dwellings to other uses, alterations, extensions or sub-division and replacement dwellings. The policy also includes reference to the re-use of empty homes.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of making effective use of land and using natural resources prudently (NPPF paragraph 8) the re-use of previously developed land (NPPF paragraph 119) and the sub-division of existing dwellings in rural locations (NPPF paragraph 80).</p>	No specific changes in evidence or circumstance have been identified other than changes to permitted development rights introduced in August 2021, allowing the change of use of a dwelling (use class C3) to a house in multiple occupation (use class C4).	<p>Whilst the policy remains consistent with national policy, the review of the Local Plan presents an opportunity to consider the success of the policy to date and whether it needs to be retained, updated or replaced.</p> <p>This will include consideration of the changes to permitted development rights introduced in August 2021.</p>
H7 – Travelling Communities	<p>Policy H7 sets out how many pitches and plots will be provided in the period 2016 – 2031 for gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople respectively.</p> <p>It explains that a 5-year housing land supply will be provided through expansion/intensification</p>	The evidence upon which Policy H7 is based was produced in 2016 and new evidence of housing need for travelling communities is in the process of being prepared on a countywide basis to help inform emerging Local Plans.	Whilst the policy remains consistent with the NPPF and the Government's separate Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2015), the evidence upon which it is based stems from 2016 and new evidence has recently been commissioned on a countywide basis covering the period to 2041.

	<p>of existing sites and the allocation of Cuckoowood Farm (see Policy H8 below).</p> <p>The policy also refers to other measures including existing sites being safeguarded and existing sites being extended where appropriate. A series of criteria are set out which any new sites will be expected to accord with.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which requires the needs of different groups including travellers to be assessed and reflected in planning policies (NPPF paragraph 62).</p> <p>The policy is also considered to remain consistent with the general provisions of the Government's separate Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2015).</p>	<p>It is also relevant to note that the allocation referred to in Policy H7 (Cuckoowood Farm) has now been implemented.</p>	<p>Policy H7 will therefore need to be updated/replaced as part of the review of the Local Plan to reflect this new evidence of need and any other relevant material considerations.</p>
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Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
H8 – Land at Cuckoowood Farm, Freeland	<p>Policy H8 allocates land at Cuckoowood Farm for the provision of up to 6 plots for showpeople as an extension to the existing showpeople’s site. It includes a number of criteria to guide the development of the site.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which requires the needs of different groups including travellers to be assessed and reflected in planning policies (NPPF paragraph 62).</p> <p>The policy is also considered to remain consistent with the general provisions of the Government’s separate Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2015).</p>	<p>The allocation has now been implemented.</p> <p>New evidence of the accommodation needs of travelling communities is in the process of being prepared.</p>	<p>The allocation has now been implemented.</p> <p>As outlined above, new evidence of need is in the process of being prepared.</p> <p>This will provide a needs figure for West Oxfordshire with the Local Plan review providing the opportunity to potentially allocate land to meet those needs.</p>
E1 – Land for Employment	<p>Policy E1 seeks to ensure that there is sufficient land for employment to meet identified needs.</p> <p>There are two strands to the policy – the provision of new employment land including a number of specific site allocations and the</p>	<p>The Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy was published in September 2019 seeking to position Oxfordshire as one of the top-three global innovation ecosystems.</p> <p>More recently the Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan has been published (2020) and a new Strategic</p>	<p>Although Policy E1 remains consistent with the NPPF, the policy will need to be updated/amended through the Local Plan review to take account of up-to-date evidence of economic needs, changes to economic trends and working patterns, existing commitments having now come forward for</p>

	<p>improvement and protection of existing employment sites.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises that planning policies should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt (NPPF paragraph 81) set criteria or identify strategic sites for local and inward investment (NPPF paragraph 82) and be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan (NPPF paragraph 82).</p> <p>National policy also emphasises that a positive approach should be taken to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose, where it would help meet identified development needs (NPPF paragraph 123).</p>	<p>Economic Plan for Oxfordshire is imminent.</p> <p>Since the plan was adopted, much of the employment land identified has been developed, particularly at Witney. Proposals for a new Science and Technology Park at Salt Cross Garden Village have also moved forward through the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP).</p> <p>Notable changes to working patterns have also taken place as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>There have also been changes to the use classes order (the introduction of Use Class E) and associated permitted development rights.</p>	<p>development and changes to national policy including the use classes order and permitted development rights.</p>
E2 – Supporting the Rural Economy	<p>Policy E2 relates specifically to the rural economy, expressing in principle support for new, small employment sites in or adjacent to larger settlements and elsewhere, in principle support for rural</p>	<p>The economic evidence base upon which the current Local Plan is based is relatively out of date and will need to be refreshed to inform the new Local Plan.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy E2 remains consistent with the provisions of the NPPF, because it is based on relatively dated evidence and pre-dates Brexit and other relevant economic considerations, it is anticipated that the policy will need to be</p>

	<p>diversification projects subject to certain criteria.</p> <p>The policy also aims to deliver communications infrastructure to support economic activity in rural areas.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of supporting a prosperous rural economy, with planning policies expected to enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings and also the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses (NPPF paragraph 84).</p> <p>Also the importance of high quality and reliable communications infrastructure (NPPF paragraph 114).</p>	<p>It is anticipated that this will provide up to date information on West Oxfordshire's rural economy, taking account of relevant considerations including Brexit as well as emerging strategies including the new Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).</p>	<p>updated/amended as part of the review of the Local Plan.</p>
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Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
E3 – Re-use of Non-Residential Buildings	<p>The policy relates to the re-use of existing non-residential buildings (both traditional and non-traditional) for different uses including employment, tourism and community uses.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of using previously developed land and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements (NPPF paragraph 85) and the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings (NPPF paragraph 84).</p>	<p>There have been a number of changes to permitted development rights since the Local Plan was adopted which have potential implications for the provisions of Policy E3.</p> <p>This includes the change of use of agricultural buildings to commercial and residential uses.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy E3 remains consistent with the NPPF, it will be necessary to consider an update/amendment to the policy as part of the review of the Local Plan to take account of current permitted development rights and implementation of the policy to date.</p>
E4 – Sustainable Tourism	<p>Policy E4 supports tourism and leisure development which utilises and enriches the natural and built environment and existing attractions of West Oxfordshire.</p> <p>The policy seeks to apply a sequential approach to the location of such development to ensure that it remains accessible. There is also significant emphasis on the</p>	<p>No specific changes in evidence or circumstances have been identified other than the preparation of a new Management Plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly known as the Cotswolds AONB).</p> <p>Tourism continues to be a key sector for the West Oxfordshire economy supporting a number of seasonal and year round jobs in</p>	<p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with the NPPF but the review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to consider whether it needs to be updated/amended or potentially incorporated into another policy.</p>

	<p>protection and enhancement of the character of the area including the Cotswolds AONB (now referred to as the Cotswolds National Landscape).</p> <p>The policy remains consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of planning policies and decisions enabling sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside (NPPF paragraph 84) as well as reducing the need to travel (NPPF paragraph 105) and protecting town centres (NPPF paragraph 87).</p>	<p>hospitality and other related businesses.</p>	
E5 - Local services and community facilities	<p>Policy E5 seeks to retain local services and community facilities to meet local needs and promote social wellbeing.</p> <p>Development proposals that would result in the loss of a community facility will only be permitted subject to certain criteria.</p> <p>The policy remains consistent with national policy which emphasises how non-strategic policies can be used to address local issues including the provision of</p>	<p>As a predominantly rural district, one of the primary deprivation measures for rural communities relates to access to services and facilities.</p> <p>The District Council has commissioned independent research on rural service provision in West Oxfordshire through the Plunkett Foundation (March 2023).</p> <p>This indicates that the district's service provision has remained relatively stable in recent years, but</p>	<p>Whilst Policy E5 remains consistent with national policy, the review of the Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider the effectiveness of the policy in the context of more recent evidence on service provision in rural areas and whether the policy should be updated/amended.</p>

	<p>infrastructure and community facilities at a local level (NPPF paragraph 28) as well as policies enabling the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities including shops and meeting spaces (NPPF paragraph 84).</p> <p>It also requires policies to plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments (NPPF paragraph 93).</p>	<p>that a smaller number of communities have seen significant change.</p>	
E6 – Town Centres	<p>The overarching aim of Policy E6 is to protect the District’s town centres and support them as the focus for shopping, leisure, community facilities and services.</p> <p>Town Centres are defined for Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Burford and Woodstock with primary and secondary shopping frontages defined for Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton.</p> <p>The policy applies the sequential approach and impact tests of the NPPF and seeks to control certain</p>	<p>Recent years have continued to see changes to people’s shopping habits, reduced demand for town centre space for traditional high street anchors and a changing role for town centres.</p> <p>There have also been a number of changes to the use classes order and to permitted development rights including change of use from commercial, business and service uses (Use Class E) to residential use (Use Class C3).</p>	<p>Although Policy E6 remains generally consistent with national policy, there have been a number of important changes since the policy was adopted including changes to the use classes order and associated permitted development rights.</p> <p>As such, the policy will be considered as part of the review of the Local Plan and updated/replaced to reflect current national policy and any up-to-date evidence relating to town centre needs and opportunities.</p>

	<p>changes of use including the loss of retail and other town centre uses.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain generally consistent with national policy, with the NPPF emphasising the importance of supporting the role of town centres, defining the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas (NPPF paragraph 86) and applying a sequential approach to development proposals outside of designated centres (NPPF paragraph 87).</p> <p>National policy also allows for the use of a locally set threshold for requiring an impact assessment (NPPF paragraph 90) as is the case with Policy E6 which applies a local threshold of 500 sq. m.</p>	<p>The District Council has also commissioned new evidence in the form of a Market Towns Study which seeks to identify improvements that could be made to the District's main market towns.</p> <p>Further evidence (e.g. retail needs) may also be commissioned as part of the review of the Local Plan.</p>	
T1 – Sustainable Transport	<p>Policy T1 aims to reduce the need to travel by private car and to maximise opportunities for walking, cycling and use of public transport.</p> <p>The policy supports additional home working and mixed-use developments in accessible, sustainable locations.</p>	<p>The provision of rural public transport has evolved in recent years. Cuts to subsidies have seen some rural bus services cut and re-established via funding from new development.</p> <p>The establishment of 20mph speed limits and low traffic neighbourhoods have been</p>	<p>In seeking to reduce the need to travel and maximising opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport, Policy T1 is considered to remain consistent with national policy.</p> <p>The policy will however be considered as part of the review of the Local Plan and updated/replaced as appropriate –</p>

	<p>Transport assessments are required for new developments with significant transport implications.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of planning policies promoting walking, cycling and public transport (NPPF paragraph 104) actively managing patterns of growth and limiting the need to travel, offering a genuine choice of transport modes (NPPF paragraph 105).</p> <p>National policy also emphasises the importance of promoting social interaction including through mixed-use development (NPPF paragraph 92).</p>	<p>introduced to make active travel safer and more attractive.</p> <p>There has been increased ownership and access to electric bicycles and scooters in recent years which may encourage active and healthy travel over longer distances.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council published a new Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) in 2022 which aims to deliver a net-zero Oxfordshire transport and travel system.</p> <p>LTCP5 includes a number of important shifts in emphasis including a move away from 'predict and provide' (whereby past data is used to determine future needs) to a 'decide and provide' approach (whereby a preferred outcome is identified and the means to accommodate that is then provided).</p> <p>The County Council also continues to roll out a programme of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS) across the District with a number of local area</p>	<p>in particular to take account of Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) and other associated plans and strategies.</p>
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		strategies also proposed for key locations.	
T2 – Highway Improvement Schemes	<p>Policy T2 seeks to ensure that all developments have safe access and an acceptable degree of impact on the highway network.</p> <p>A number of specific highway infrastructure schemes are identified to support the delivery and mitigate the impact of future development.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of assessing the potential impacts of development on transport networks (NPPF paragraph 104) and identifying and protecting sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice (NPPF paragraph 106).</p>	<p>Oxfordshire County Council published a new Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) in 2022 which aims to deliver a net-zero Oxfordshire transport and travel system.</p> <p>A number of the highway schemes referred to in the policy have progressed.</p> <p>For example, the park and ride at Eynsham is now under construction and the Shores Green Slip Roads now has planning permission.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council has also worked up detailed improvements to the A40 having secured central Government funding through HIF.</p>	<p>Policy T2 remains consistent with national policy although there have been a number of important changes since the policy was adopted.</p> <p>The proposed review of the Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider whether the policy should be updated/replaced taking account of the most recent position regarding the various highway infrastructure schemes included as well as new policy set out in the County Council's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5).</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
T3 – Public transport, walking and cycling	<p>Policy T3 seeks to locate and design development in such a way that it maximises opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport. Where appropriate, new development will be expected to contribute towards new or enhanced infrastructure.</p> <p>The policy also commits the District Council to partnership working to increase the use of public transport and provide safe and convenient travel for pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of identifying opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport (NPPF paragraph 104) and provide for attractive and well-designed walking and cycling networks (NPPF paragraph 106).</p>	<p>The provision of rural public transport has evolved in recent years. Cuts to subsidies have seen some rural bus services cut and re-established via funding from new development.</p> <p>The establishment of 20mph speed limits and low traffic neighbourhoods have been introduced to make active travel safer and more attractive.</p> <p>There has been increased ownership and access to electric bicycles and scooters in recent years which may encourage active and healthy travel over longer distances.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council published a new Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) in 2022 which aims to deliver a net-zero Oxfordshire transport and travel system.</p> <p>LTCP5 includes a number of important shifts in emphasis including a move away from ‘predict and provide’ (whereby past data is used to determine future needs) to</p>	<p>Whilst Policy T3 remains consistent with the NPPF, the policy will be considered as part of the review of the Local Plan – particularly in the context of the County Council’s Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) and other associated strategies as well as up to date evidence on the infrastructure needed to support planned development to 2041.</p>

		<p>a 'decide and provide' approach (whereby a preferred outcome is identified and the means to accommodate that is then provided).</p> <p>The County Council also continues to roll out a programme of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS) across the District with a number of local area strategies also proposed for key locations.</p>	
T4 – Parking provision	<p>Policy T4 aims to ensure that there is appropriate off-street car parking available to support town and village centres and address issues of congestion and air quality.</p> <p>Proposals for new off-street parking will be supported in accessible locations.</p> <p>Car parking in new development should be provided in accordance with County Council adopted standards and development which significantly increases parking demand will be expected to make appropriate provision or a financial contribution.</p>	<p>The Government has published a National Model Design Code and National Design Guide and national policy now emphasises the importance of the design of parking areas having to reflect these.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council has also produced a new Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) and updated parking standards.</p>	<p>Whilst T4 remains consistent with national policy, the review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to update/replace the policy to take account of more recent guidance and policy including the introduction of the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code as well as Oxfordshire County Council's LTCP5 and associated guidance and standards.</p> <p>There is also an opportunity to consider evolving infrastructure requirements such as the need for electric car charging.</p>

	<p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises that patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes (NPPF paragraph 104) and that parking standards should take account of a number of considerations including accessibility and the type and mix of development (NPPF paragraph 107).</p>		
EH1 – Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	<p>Policy EH1 seeks to ensure that development within and affecting the setting of the Cotswolds AONB, conserves and enhances the area's natural beauty, landscape and countryside, including its wildlife and heritage.</p> <p>The policy confirms that major development within the AONB will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and that the Cotswolds AONB management plan and associated guidance are relevant material planning considerations.</p> <p>It also offers in principle support for proposals that support the economy and social wellbeing of communities</p>	<p>The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is now known as the Cotswolds National Landscape.</p> <p>In February 2023 a new Cotswolds National Management Plan was adopted (and endorsed by West Oxfordshire District Council in September 2023).</p> <p>The Plan covers the period 2023-2025, during which time evidence and data is to be developed in anticipation of significant national and local policy development for protected landscapes, especially in relation to climate action.</p>	<p>The policy remains consistent with national policy. However, since it was adopted, there have been a number of relevant changes including the publication of a new management plan and associated guidance which will need to be considered in determining whether the policy needs to be updated/amended as part of the Local Plan review.</p> <p>Changes to the policy may also be needed, following consideration of potential national policy changes and further research to be undertaken by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board.</p>

	<p>including affordable housing and small-scale renewables.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs (NPPF paragraph 176) and that permission for major development in AONBs should be refused, other than in exceptional circumstances (NPPF paragraph 177).</p> <p>The policy is also consistent with the national policy emphasis on affordable homes in rural areas (NPPF paragraph 78) and community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy (NPPF paragraph 156).</p>		
EH2 – Landscape Character	<p>Policy EH2 seeks to conserve and enhance the District’s natural environment with new development required to conserve and where possible enhance the local landscape.</p> <p>The policy also addresses the issue of pollution including noise and light.</p>	<p>In recent years there has been an increased emphasis on the need to look at the environment, including maintaining and enhancing landscape, at a strategic, multi-functional landscape-scale. Consideration needs to be made, for example, of climate change, natural capital, green infrastructure</p>	<p>While the general approach of the policy remains appropriate and consistent with national policy, the policy wording or supporting text may need to be updated to reflect more recent advice on design, character, strategic scale and multi-functional nature of landscape, as well as local initiatives such as the</p>

	<p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which specifically identifies the need to conserve and enhance landscapes, including recognising the importance of local ‘character’ and ‘setting’ (NPPF paragraph 130).</p> <p>National policy also emphasises the need for planning policies to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution (NPPF paragraph 174).</p>	<p>and the inter-relationship of these issues.</p> <p>There has also been an increased emphasis placed on the importance of good design as a whole and on the concept of ‘beauty’, particularly since the publication of the National Design Guide in 2019 and National Design Code in 2021.</p>	<p>NE Cotswolds Landscape Recovery Project.</p> <p>There is also the opportunity to remove duplication with Policy EH8 (see below) which also seeks to address the issue of pollution.</p>
EH3 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity	<p>Policy EH3 addresses biodiversity and geodiversity, seeking to ensure that the biodiversity of West Oxfordshire is protected and enhanced to achieve an overall net gain. The policy sets out a number of ways in which this will be achieved.</p> <p>The policy remains broadly consistent with national policy which emphasises the need for</p>	<p>The Environment Act 2021 is introducing new incentives, actions and planning tools to drive improvements for nature, including mandatory requirements for biodiversity net gain (BNG) through the planning system (where the natural environment is left in a measurably better state post-development) and the creation of Nature Recovery Networks through</p>	<p>While the main thrust of Policy EH3 remains relevant, in light of the emerging environmental policy and context changes for biodiversity at a national, county and local level, a detailed re-appraisal of this policy and the supporting evidence will be required as part of the review of the Local Plan.</p>

	<p>plans to take a pro-active approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change taking into account biodiversity (NPPF paragraph 153) protecting sites of biodiversity value and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity (NPPF paragraph 174).</p>	<p>Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).</p> <p>The District Council has declared an Ecological Emergency. A Biodiversity Strategy is being produced for West Oxfordshire.</p> <p>An Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership has formed. Three priority areas are identified: natural capital; nature recovery; and people and nature.</p> <p>Work has begun on producing a LNRS for Oxfordshire which will include a Local Nature Recovery Network.</p> <p>In January 2024, there will be a national requirement for major developments to provide at least a 10% net biodiversity gain (and for almost all development to achieve it by April 2024).</p>	
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Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
EH4 – Public Realm and Green Infrastructure	<p>Policy EH4 seeks to protect and enhance areas of public space and green infrastructure with new developments expected to incorporate public realm and green infrastructure (GI) as integral components. The policy stipulates a number of specific criteria which development should accord with and explains that contributions towards local green infrastructure projects will be sought where appropriate.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being (NPPF paragraph 8).</p> <p>National policy also emphasises the importance of GI in supporting healthy lifestyles (NPPF paragraph 92) and adapting to climate change (NPPF paragraph 154).</p>	<p>Since the Local Plan was adopted, there has been an increased emphasis on the importance of beauty and good quality design, particularly since the publication of the National Design Guide in 2019 and National Design Code in 2021.</p> <p>In February 2023, Natural England published a new tool to help make areas greener and more nature-rich.</p> <p>The Green Infrastructure Framework introduces five key standards: Urban Nature Recovery Standard; Urban Greening Factor; Urban Tree Canopy Standard; Accessible Greenspace Standards; and a Green Infrastructure Strategy.</p> <p>Changes to Green Infrastructure will also emerge through the Environment Act 2021, for example, through BNG and the requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies.</p>	<p>While the main thrust of Policy EH4 remains relevant, in light of the emerging environmental policy and context changes for public space and green infrastructure at a national, county and local level, a detailed reappraisal of this policy and the supporting evidence will be required as part of the review of the Local Plan.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
EH5 – Sport, Recreation and Children’s Play	<p>Policy EH5 relates to the issue of sport, recreation and children’s play with new development expected to provide or contribute towards such facilities where appropriate and existing facilities safeguarded unless surplus to requirements or the benefits would outweigh the loss.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which continues to identify sport, recreation and children’s play space as important components for promoting healthy communities (NPPF paragraph 92).</p> <p>The requirement to normally protect existing provision, and for policy to be based on a robust and up-to-date assessments of need, remains (NPPF paragraphs 84 and 98 respectively).</p>	<p>Since the current Local Plan was prepared, there has been a re-connection of planning and public health. National guidance and good practice increasingly emphasises the importance of healthy place shaping and the need to address local health and wellbeing issues.</p> <p>While Sport England continue to focus on participation in sport, their emphasis is also on physical activity as a whole, including active travel and active lives.</p> <p>The government has increased its emphasis on the need for supporting infrastructure.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy EH5 remains consistent with the NPPF, the policy will be considered as part of the review of the Local Plan and could for example potentially be expanded to address the wider role and multi-functionality of facilities and open space as part of healthy place shaping.</p> <p>Part of the policy relates to the requirements of new provision through development proposals. An up-to-date assessment of need will be required to support the policy in order to strengthen infrastructure provision.</p>
EH6 – Decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy development (excepting wind turbines)	Policy EH6 addresses the provision of decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy (other than wind turbines) – offering general in principle support and setting out a number of criteria which such proposals will be required to accord	Since the adoption of the Local Plan, the need to address climate change at an international, national and local level has been receiving greater weight.	Whilst Policy EH6 remains consistent with national policy, in light of both national policy and the speed of technological advancement rapidly changing, the policy will need to be considered and updated/replaced accordingly

	<p>with including landscape, residential amenity and highway safety.</p> <p>The policy offers particular support for proposals that are led by or meet the needs of local communities.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of transitioning to a low carbon future and supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure (NPPF paragraph 152).</p> <p>National policy also requires a positive strategy for energy from renewable and low carbon energy (NPPF paragraph 155) which Policy EH6 is considered to accord with.</p>	<p>In March 2023, the Government set out its Energy Security Plan (Powering Up Britain) and, in August 2023, reiterated their commitment to deliver decarbonised power by 2035 and net zero by 2050.</p> <p>West Oxfordshire District Council has declared a Climate Emergency and produced a Climate Change Strategy 2021-2025 and a Carbon Action Plan.</p> <p>A delivery plan for the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy was published in 2019.</p> <p>Project LEO (Low Energy Oxfordshire) ran a series of trials in the county with the aim of building a broad range of reliable evidence of the technological, market and social conditions needed for a greener, more flexible, and fair electricity system.</p>	<p>as part of the review of the Local Plan.</p> <p>As more renewable energy developments are delivered, there is a need for an assessment of cumulative impacts.</p> <p>This specific requirement could be added to the policy or to any supporting detailed guidance.</p> <p>The Local Plan review also provides the opportunity to consider the potential allocation of land for renewable and low carbon energy.</p>
EH7 – Flood Risk	<p>Policy EH7 addresses the issue of flood risk and essentially confirms that national policy will be applied including the application of the sequential risk-based approach. The policy stipulates a number of specific criteria relating to the</p>	<p>As part of the stronger emphasis on the transition to a low carbon future, national policy and guidance increasingly considers flood risk in this wider context.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy EH7 remains consistent with national policy, the review of the Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider whether the policy should be expanded and strengthened to embrace the water environment.</p>

	<p>sequential test, sources of flooding, sustainable drainage, site specific flood risk assessments and flood management.</p> <p>The policy remains consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of directing development away from areas at highest risk of flooding (NPPF paragraph 159) take account of all sources of flooding (NPPF paragraph 161) safeguard land needed for flood management (NPPF paragraph 161) and incorporate sustainable drainage systems into major developments (NPPF paragraph 169).</p>	<p>As a result of, for example, the Environment Act 2021, addressing flooding is being seen as part of a wider consideration of the water environment and an integrated approach to water management, incorporating issues such as green and blue infrastructure provision, BNG, sustainable drainage systems, natural flood risk management and water quality and quantity.</p> <p>The river catchment partnerships (for the Evenlode and the Windrush) have developed a greater understanding of these systems (including through the use of Citizen Science) and have delivered measures to begin to address local issues.</p>	<p>It could for example take a more integrated water management approach, linking to nature recovery and BNG and the use of sustainable building design and construction techniques, such as incorporating flood resilience credentials.</p>
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Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
EH8 – Environmental Protection	<p>Policy EH8 addresses a range of issues related to pollution and safety including air quality, contaminated land, light pollution, noise and waste.</p> <p>In essence proposals which are likely to cause pollution or result in exposure to sources of pollution or risk to safety, will only be permitted if measures can be implemented to minimise pollution and risk to a level that provides a high standard of protection for health, environmental quality and amenity.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of ensuring that new and existing development does not contribute to, or is put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of pollution or land instability (NPPF paragraph 174).</p>	<p>Since the adoption of the local plan, there has been an increasing emphasis on healthy place shaping and a recognition of the relationship between planning and health and well-being.</p> <p>The Environment Act 2021 introduces measures for environmental improvement plans, waste and resource efficiency, air quality and the water environment.</p> <p>Project LEO and the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy considers emissions and waste.</p> <p>In West Oxfordshire the deterioration in river water quality has been well documented locally and nationally, including the impact of rural sewage treatment works and new development.</p> <p>Air Quality Action Plans are being drawn up for Witney and Chipping Norton.</p>	<p>While Policy EH8 remains consistent with national policy, some of the issues are addressed in part under other legislation.</p> <p>The review of the Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider whether the policy should be updated/replaced to strengthen it by more explicitly relating it to health and well-being, healthy place shaping and sustainable design and construction.</p>

<p>EH9 – Historic Environment</p>	<p>Policy EH9 relates to the historic environment, with all development proposals expected to conserve and/or enhance the special character, appearance and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire’s historic environment.</p> <p>The policy confirms that in determining applications, great weight will be given to conserving and/or enhancing the significance of designated heritage assets including listed buildings, conservation areas and the Blenheim World Heritage Site. It explains the relevant considerations should there be harm to any such asset.</p> <p>The policy also outlines the approach taken towards non-designated heritage assets including proposals that directly or indirectly affect their significance.</p> <p>The policy also sets out a number of criteria which all development affecting (or potentially affecting) a heritage asset will be expected to accord with.</p>	<p>There has been an increased emphasis on the importance of beauty and good quality design which is relevant to traditional buildings.</p>	<p>Although Policy EH9 remains consistent with national policy, the review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to potentially rationalise this and other policies relating to the historic environment.</p> <p>There is also an opportunity to have a stronger linkage between heritage, design, climate change and ecology for example by considering sustainability and historic buildings.</p>
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	<p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment (NPPF paragraph 20) conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance (NPPF paragraph 189) and ensuring that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification (NPPF paragraph 199).</p>		
EH10 – Conservation Areas	<p>Policy EH10 relates specifically to development within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area.</p> <p>Subject to certain criteria being met, development which can be shown to conserve or enhance the special interest, character, appearance and setting of Conservation Areas will be permitted.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of placing great weight on the conservation of designated heritage assets (NPPF paragraph 199).</p>	<p>No specific updates to evidence or changes in circumstance have been identified although the declaration of a climate emergency has placed an increased emphasis on the consideration of renewable and low-carbon energy and their potential impact on designated heritage assets.</p>	<p>Policy EH10 is considered to remain consistent with national policy.</p> <p>The review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to consider whether the policy should be updated/amended.</p> <p>For example, the requirement for local authorities to look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance (NPPF paragraph 206) and also to address the issue of climate change mitigation and adaptation.</p>

<p>EH11 – Listed Buildings</p>	<p>Policy EH11 relates specifically to listed buildings as designated heritage assets. In essence, the policy stipulates a number of criteria which development involving a listed building (e.g. change of use, addition or alteration) or within the setting or curtilage of a listed building will be expected to accord with.</p> <p>The policy remains consistent with the NPPF which emphasises the importance of great weight being given to the conservation of designated heritage assets including listed buildings (NPPF paragraph 199).</p>	<p>No specific updates to evidence or changes in circumstance have been identified although the declaration of a climate emergency has placed an increased emphasis on the consideration of renewable and low-carbon energy and their potential impact on designated heritage assets.</p>	<p>Policy EH11 is considered to remain consistent with national policy.</p> <p>The review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to consider whether the policy should be updated/amended - for example to address the issue of climate change mitigation and adaptation.</p>
<p>EH12 – Traditional Buildings</p>	<p>Policy EH12 relates to traditional buildings, with the policy stipulating criteria by which development proposals involving their conversion, extension or alteration will be judged.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in</p>	<p>No specific updates to evidence or changes in circumstance have been identified although the declaration of a climate emergency has placed an increased emphasis on the consideration of renewable and low-carbon energy and their potential impact on non-designated heritage assets.</p>	<p>Policy EH12 is considered to remain consistent with national policy.</p> <p>The review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to consider whether the policy should be updated/amended - for example to address the issue of climate change mitigation and adaptation.</p>

	determining the application (NPPF paragraph 203).		
EH13 – Historic Landscape Character	<p>Policy EH13 relates to the issue of historic landscape character setting out a number of criteria against which proposals affecting the historic character of the landscape or townscape will be judged.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain in accordance with national policy which emphasises the importance of planning policies ensuring that development is sympathetic to local character and history (NPPF paragraph 130) as well as the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (NPPF paragraph 190).</p>	<p>Since the Local Plan was adopted, there is now a stronger emphasis on a landscape led approach in terms of understanding the context, history and the cultural characteristics of a site and its surroundings.</p> <p>In recent years there has also been an increased emphasis on the need to look at the environment, including maintaining and enhancing landscape, at a strategic, multi-functional landscape-scale.</p> <p>There is also increased emphasis on the importance of good design as a whole and on the concept of ‘beauty’, particularly since the publication of the National Design Guide in 2019 and National Design Code in 2021.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy EH13 remains consistent with national policy as set out in the NPPF, the review of the Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider the policy and whether it should be updated/amended and possibly incorporated into a wider landscape policy and/or other related policies regarding design and biodiversity.</p> <p>This could provide a strong emphasis on the importance of a landscape led approach in planning and designing new development, linking this to relevant issues including climate change, natural capital and GI.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
EH14 – Registered Historic Parks and Gardens	<p>Policy EH14 relates specifically to registered parks and gardens and sets out criteria for development which would directly or indirectly affect their significance. The policy also offers in principle support for proposals that would enable the restoration of original layout and features where appropriate.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of placing great weight on the conservation of designated heritage assets (NPPF paragraph 199).</p>	<p>Since the adoption of the Local Plan there has been increased development pressure within close proximity to Blenheim WHS both in terms of housing and other proposals such as renewable energy development.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy EH14 remains consistent with national policy, the review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to consider this policy and whether it should be updated/amended.</p> <p>It may for example be possible to merge it with other policies related to heritage and/or green infrastructure.</p>
EH15 – Scheduled monuments and other nationally important archaeological remains	<p>Policy EH15 relates specifically to scheduled monuments and other nationally important archaeological remains setting out the circumstances in which development which directly or indirectly affects their significance will be permitted. The policy also addresses the issue of unavoidable harm to or loss of such assets.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance</p>	<p>No specific updates to evidence or changes in circumstance have been identified.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy E15 remains consistent with national policy, the review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to consider this policy and whether it should be updated/amended.</p> <p>There may for example be opportunities to incorporate this policy into other heritage related policies as well as the potential to include reference to the opportunity for local understanding in the</p>

	of placing great weight on the conservation of designated heritage assets (NPPF paragraph 199).		historic relevance of sites to add local education and a sense of place.
EH16 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets	<p>Policy EH16 relates to non-designated heritage assets such as non-listed buildings, and non-nationally important archaeological remains with a presumption in favour of the avoidance of harm or loss.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application and that a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset (NPPF paragraph 203).</p>	No specific updates to evidence or changes in circumstance have been identified.	Whilst Policy EH16 remains consistent with national policy, the Local Plan review provides the opportunity to consider whether the policy should be updated/amended and possibly combined with other policies.
WIT1 – East Witney Strategic Development Area	Policy WIT1 allocates land at East Witney for the provision of about 450 new homes as a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to Witney. The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a	Since the Local Plan was adopted, the landowner has submitted an outline planning application for the site which was refused. The District Council remains in discussion with the landowner with a view to bringing an acceptable scheme forward.	The policy remains consistent with national policy and the District Council will continue to work with the landowner to bring an acceptable scheme forward.

	<p>sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns (NPPF paragraph 73).</p>	<p>The associated Shores Green Slip Road (SGSR) improvements referred to in the policy have now secured planning permission.</p>	<p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p>
WIT2 – North Witney Strategic Development Area	<p>Policy WIT2 allocates land at North Witney for the provision of about 1,400 homes as a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to Witney.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns (NPPF paragraph 73).</p>	<p>The North Witney Land Consortium have recently appointed masterplanners to prepare a comprehensive masterplan for the site with a view to informing an outline planning application.</p> <p>Pre-application public consultation has recently commenced.</p>	<p>The policy remains consistent with national policy and the District Council will continue to work with the developer consortium in relation to the emerging masterplan and forthcoming outline planning application.</p> <p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
WIT3 – Woodford Way Car Park, Witney	<p>Policy WIT3 allocates land at Woodford Way Car Park, Witney for the provision of around 50 dwellings either as part of a residential or mixed-use scheme with other compatible town centre uses.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly (NPPF paragraph 69).</p> <p>As a previously developed site it is also consistent with the requirement for planning policies to make as much use as possible of such 'brownfield' land (NPPF paragraph 119).</p>	<p>The site is owned by the District Council which has started to take development forward but not yet progressed it to the planning application stage.</p> <p>It remains the Council's intention to pursue the development of this site.</p>	<p>The policy remains consistent with national policy and the District Council will continue to take it forward to the planning application stage.</p> <p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
WIT4 – Land west of Minster Lovell	<p>Policy WIT4 allocates land to the west of Minster Lovell for the provision of around 125 homes as part of a sustainable, integrated extension of the existing village. The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly (NPPF paragraph 69).</p>	<p>The site has detailed planning permission (17/01859/OUT and 18/03473/RES) and is currently under construction with completion due in 2023/24.</p>	<p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p> <p>The new Local Plan 2041 is expected to set a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041.</p> <p>Any new homes completed on this site since 1st April 2021 will therefore contribute towards meeting that requirement.</p>
WIT5 – Witney Town Centre Strategy	<p>Policy WIT5 sets out an overall strategy for Witney Town Centre, the overall objective being to maintain and enhance it as an accessible, attractive and diverse shopping, visitor and evening economy offer.</p> <p>The policy sets out a number of ways in which this will be achieved including protection of the main shopping core around the High Street, promoting Market Square and Corn Street as shopping, leisure</p>	<p>Since the Local Plan was adopted, there have been a number of relevant changes including to the use classes order and associated permitted development rights including change of retail to other uses such as residential.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council have also progressed new traffic arrangements in the High Street and Market Square and have been awarded £1.98 million by the Government’s Active Travel Fund to</p>	<p>Whilst Policy WIT5 remains consistent with national policy, the review of the Local Plan provides an opportunity to update/replace the policy to take account of a range of relevant considerations including changes to permitted development rights, Oxfordshire County Council’s work around the High Street and Market Square and any new evidence commissioned as part of the local plan process (e.g. retail needs assessment).</p>

	<p>and cultural quarters and investigating opportunities for phased, organic extension of the Woolgate shopping centre and at Welch Way to meet retailer needs.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance of planning policies supporting the role played by Town Centres and establishing a positive strategy for the future of such centres (NPPF paragraph 86).</p>	design and deliver associated street improvements.	
WIT6 – Witney Sub-Area Strategy	<p>Policy WIT6 sets out an overall strategy for the Witney sub-area as defined by the Local Plan.</p> <p>This confirms Witney as the focus for development (in line with the overall spatial strategy of Policy OS2) with development elsewhere limited to meeting local housing, community and business needs and being steered towards the larger villages.</p> <p>It confirms the number of new homes which are anticipated to be provided in the period to 2031 and the allocations which are proposed to help meet this requirement.</p>	<p>The relatively broad nature of the policy makes it difficult to identify any specific changes in evidence or circumstances but there are relevant considerations which will need to be taken into account through the proposed review of the Local Plan including the publication of a new Management Plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly the Cotswolds AONB) as well as the Council's intention to commission new housing needs evidence to help inform a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041.</p>	<p>Policy WIT6 remains broadly consistent with national policy.</p> <p>However, the new Local Plan 2041 provides the opportunity to consider whether a sub-area policy approach remains appropriate and necessary if so, any necessary updates including in relation to housing need and the overall pattern of development (spatial strategy).</p>

	<p>It explains how provision for additional employment space will be made and sets out a commitment to continue to work with partners to deliver key highway infrastructure.</p> <p>The policy includes a number of general provisions relating to enhancing walking, cycling and public transport, avoiding flood risk, protecting the character and setting of Witney, conserving and enhancing the Cotswolds AONB and ensuring development is supported by timely investment in infrastructure.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain broadly consistent with national policy including issues such as the avoidance of flood risk (NPPF paragraph 159) conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NPPF paragraph 176) the provision of supporting infrastructure (NPPF paragraph 34) and conservation and enhancement of the historic environment (NPPF paragraph 190).</p>	<p>A number of the site allocations referred to in the policy have also now come forward for development and are under construction or completed.</p>	
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Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
CA1 – REEMA North and Central	<p>Policy CA1 allocates land at REEMA North and Central for the provision of around 300 homes (net gain) in the form of a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to Carterton.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly (NPPF paragraph 69).</p> <p>As a previously developed site it is also consistent with the requirement for planning policies to make as much use as possible of such 'brownfield' land (NPPF paragraph 119).</p>	<p>Part of the site (REEMA Central) has secured planning permission for a scheme of 81 dwellings (net gain) which has now been completed.</p> <p>At REEMA North, detailed planning permission is in place for 200 units under (13/0399/P/RM) but the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has confirmed that it expects to submit a fresh planning application for 275 homes.</p> <p>This is currently awaited.</p>	<p>The policy remains consistent with national policy and the District Council will continue to work with the DIO and other relevant partners including Annington Homes.</p> <p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p> <p>As the new Local Plan is expected to set a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041, any new homes completed on this site since 1st April 2021 will therefore contribute towards meeting that requirement.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
CA2 – Land at Milestone Road, Carterton	<p>Policy CA2 allocates land at Milestone Road, Carterton for the provision of around 200 new homes as a well-integrated and logical extension of the existing built form of the town.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly (NPPF paragraph 69).</p>	<p>The site has full planning permission (21/00228/FUL) with construction now underway.</p> <p>The first completions are anticipated in 2023/24.</p>	<p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p> <p>As the new Local Plan is expected to set a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041, any new homes completed on this site since 1st April 2021 will therefore contribute towards meeting that requirement.</p>
CA3 – Land at Swinbrook Road, Carterton	<p>Policy CA3 allocates land at Swinbrook Road, Carterton for the provision of around 70 homes as a well-integrated and logical extension of the existing built form of the town.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises</p>	<p>The site has full planning permission (20/02422/FUL) and is now under construction.</p> <p>The first completions are anticipated in 2023/24.</p>	<p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p> <p>As the new Local Plan is expected to set a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041, any new homes completed on this site since 1st April 2021 will therefore contribute towards meeting that requirement.</p>

	that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly (NPPF paragraph 69).		
CA4 – Carterton Town Centre Strategy	<p>Policy CA4 sets out an overall strategy for Carterton Town Centre, the overall objective being for it to become the local retail centre of choice for those living and working in the town and surrounding villages.</p> <p>The policy sets out a number of ways in which this will be achieved including the provision of a wider range of shops and other commercial uses, high quality shopping frontages, good levels of parking and protection of retail uses in the defined primary shopping frontage. The policy also identifies a number of potential redevelopment opportunities and outlines that developer contributions towards town centre enhancements will be sought where appropriate.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which emphasises the importance</p>	<p>Since the Local Plan was adopted, there have been a number of relevant changes including to the use classes order and associated permitted development rights including change of retail to other uses such as residential.</p> <p>The District Council has also commissioned strategic advice relating to Carterton to help inform the review of the Local Plan.</p> <p>It is anticipated that this will include recommendations and actions relating to Carterton Town Centre.</p>	<p>Whilst Policy CA4 remains consistent with national policy, the review of the Local Plan provides an opportunity to update/replace the policy to take account of a range of relevant considerations including changes to permitted development rights and any new evidence commissioned as part of the process (e.g. Carterton strategic advice and any updated retail needs assessment).</p>

	of planning policies supporting the role played by Town Centres and establishing a positive strategy for the future of such centres (NPPF paragraph 86).		
CA5 – Carterton Sub-Area Strategy	<p>Policy CA5 sets out an overall strategy for the Carterton sub-area as defined by the Local Plan.</p> <p>This confirms Carterton as the focus for development (in line with the overall spatial strategy of Policy OS2) with development elsewhere limited to meeting local housing, community and business needs and being steered towards the larger villages.</p> <p>It confirms the number of new homes which are anticipated to be provided in the period to 2031 and the allocations which are proposed to help meet this requirement.</p> <p>It explains how provision for additional employment space will be made and sets out a commitment to continue to work with partners to deliver key highway infrastructure.</p>	<p>The relatively broad nature of the policy makes it difficult to identify any specific changes in evidence or circumstances but there are relevant considerations which will need to be taken into account through the proposed review of the Local Plan including the Council’s intention to commission new housing needs evidence to help inform a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041.</p> <p>A number of the site allocations referred to in the policy have also now come forward for development and are under construction or completed.</p>	<p>Policy CA5 remains broadly consistent with national policy.</p> <p>However, the new Local Plan 2041 provides the opportunity to consider whether a sub-area policy approach remains appropriate and necessary if so, any necessary updates including in relation to housing need and the overall pattern of development (spatial strategy).</p>

	<p>The policy includes a number of general provisions relating to improved town centre connections, public transport, walking and cycling, green infrastructure including Kilkenny Lane Country Park and the Shill Brook Valley, protecting the character and setting of Carterton and the identity of neighbouring villages and conserving and enhancing the historic environment.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain broadly consistent with national policy including issues such as the avoidance of flood risk (NPPF paragraph 159) the provision of supporting infrastructure (NPPF paragraph 34) and conservation and enhancement of the historic Environment (NPPF paragraph 190).</p>		
CN1 – East Chipping Norton Strategic Development Area	<p>Policy CN1 allocates land to the east of Chipping Norton for the provision of around 1,200 homes and 5 hectares of business land as a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to the town.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires</p>	<p>Two parts of the site have been completed including 73 units to the south of London Road by McCarthy & Stone and 100 units to the south of Banbury Road by Bloor Homes. The majority of the remaining land is in the control of Oxfordshire County Council and CALA Homes who in 2022 agreed to jointly commission a comprehensive</p>	<p>The policy remains consistent with national policy and the District Council will continue to work with the main landowners and other key stakeholders including the Town Council in the interests of agreeing a comprehensive masterplan and determining any subsequent planning applications that come forward.</p>

	<p>planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns (NPPF paragraph 73).</p>	<p>masterplan to guide the delivery of the site.</p> <p>However, further progress since then has been delayed due to additional survey work revealing some potentially significant archaeological constraints. The matter is currently with Historic England and their response is currently awaited.</p>	<p>The review of the Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider the current allocation and whether any amendments are required in light of the forthcoming response of Historic England in relation to the archaeological constraints which have been identified.</p>
<p>CN2 – Chipping Norton Sub-Area Strategy</p>	<p>Policy CN2 sets out an overall strategy for the Chipping Norton sub-area as defined by the Local Plan.</p> <p>This confirms Chipping Norton as the focus for development (in line with the overall spatial strategy of Policy OS2) with development elsewhere limited to meeting local housing, community and business needs and being steered towards the larger villages.</p> <p>It confirms the number of new homes which are anticipated to be provided in the period to 2031 and the strategic allocation which is proposed to help meet this requirement.</p>	<p>The relatively broad nature of the policy makes it difficult to identify any specific changes in evidence or circumstances but there are relevant considerations which will need to be taken into account through the proposed review of the Local Plan including the publication of a new Management Plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly the Cotswolds AONB) as well as the Council's intention to commission new housing needs evidence to help inform a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041.</p> <p>As outlined above, further progress with the East Chipping Norton SDA has been delayed due to additional survey work revealing some</p>	<p>Policy CN2 remains broadly consistent with national policy.</p> <p>However, the new Local Plan 2041 provides the opportunity to consider whether a sub-area policy approach remains appropriate and necessary if so, any necessary updates including in relation to housing need and the overall pattern of development (spatial strategy).</p> <p>It also provides an opportunity to consider the current strategic allocation to the east of the town and whether any amendments are required in light of the forthcoming response of Historic England in relation to the archaeological</p>

	<p>It explains how provision for additional employment space will be made and sets out a commitment to continue to work with partners to reduce the impact of traffic on the town centre, particularly lorries.</p> <p>The policy includes a number of general provisions relating to enhancing walking, cycling and public transport, conserving and enhancing the town's landscape setting and heritage assets, conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds AONB, a stronger town centre, management of public car parking and ensuring development is supported by infrastructure.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain broadly consistent with national policy including issues such as the conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NPPF paragraph 176) the provision of supporting infrastructure (NPPF paragraph 34) and conservation and enhancement of the historic environment (NPPF paragraph 190).</p>	<p>potentially significant archaeological constraints. The matter is currently with Historic England and their response is currently awaited.</p>	<p>constraints which have been identified.</p>
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Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
<p>EW1 – Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village Strategic Location for Growth</p>	<p>Policy EW1 allocates the land to the north of the A40 near Eynsham as a strategic location for growth (SLG) to accommodate a free-standing exemplar garden village, comprising about 2,200 homes and 40 hectares of business land.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns (NPPF paragraph 73).</p> <p>The site is identified as one of a number of new garden communities under the Government’s locally led garden village, town and city programme.</p> <p>It is also identified in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (2020).</p>	<p>Policy EW1 requires comprehensive development of the site to be led by an Area Action Plan (AAP). Since the Local Plan was adopted, good progress has been made with the AAP, which, having been through independent examination in 2021/22, has been found sound subject to main modifications in the Inspectors’ final report received in March 2023.</p> <p>Formal adoption of the AAP is currently on hold pending the outcome of a 3rd party legal challenge in relation to the Inspector’s conclusions on Policy 2 – Net Zero Carbon Development. It is also relevant to note that in parallel with the AAP process, the site promoter Grosvenor Developments Ltd. has submitted an outline planning application which is currently pending determination subject to the outcome of the AAP.</p>	<p>The policy remains consistent with national policy and the District Council will continue to work with the main site promoter and other key stakeholders including the Parish Council to finalise the AAP which will enable the current outline planning application to be determined and subsequent reserved matters applications to be able to come forward.</p> <p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
<p>EW2 – West Eynsham Strategic Development Area</p>	<p>Policy EW2 allocates the land to the west of Eynsham for the provision of around 1,000 homes in the form of a sustainable integrated community that forms a positive addition to the village.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns (NPPF paragraph 73).</p>	<p>Two parts of the site have been completed or are under construction including 160 units at ‘Thornbury Green’ by Taylor Wimpey (completed) and 77 homes at the former Eynsham Nursery and Plant Centre site by Thomas Homes (under construction).</p> <p>In addition, an outline planning application has been submitted for 180 homes to the west of Derrymerry Farm (20/03379/OUT). This scheme is now the subject of a non-determination planning appeal which is due to be heard in December 2023.</p> <p>The four main landowners/developers have prepared a comprehensive masterplan for the SDA which was endorsed by the District Council in March 2022.</p> <p>Planning applications for the remainder of the site are anticipated to come forward shortly.</p>	<p>The policy remains consistent with national policy and the District Council will continue to work with the relevant landowners/developers as well as key stakeholders including the Parish Council to bring the development forward successfully.</p> <p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p> <p>As the new Local Plan is expected to set a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041, any new homes completed on this site since 1st April 2021 will therefore contribute towards meeting that requirement.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
EW3 – Land East of Woodstock	<p>Policy EW3 allocates land to the east of Woodstock for the provision of around 300 homes as a well-integrated and logical extension of the existing built form of the town.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns (NPPF paragraph 73).</p>	<p>The site has detailed planning permission for 300 dwellings and is currently under construction by Pye Homes. The scheme is known as 'Park View'.</p>	<p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p> <p>As the new Local Plan is expected to set a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041, any new homes completed on this site since 1st April 2021 will therefore contribute towards meeting that requirement.</p>
EW4 – Land North of Hill Rise, Woodstock	<p>Policy EW4 allocates land to the north of Hill Rise, Woodstock for the provision of around 120 homes as a well-integrated and logical extension of the existing built form of the town.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises</p>	<p>The site was the subject of a hybrid planning application for 180 new homes consisting of full planning permission for 48 dwellings and outline permission for up to 132 dwellings (21/00189/FUL).</p> <p>The application was refused in December 2022 with an appeal subsequently lodged.</p>	<p>The policy remains consistent with national policy and the District Council will continue to work with the landowner as well as key stakeholders including the Town Council to bring the development forward successfully.</p> <p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p>

	that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly (NPPF paragraph 69).	The outcome of the appeal is currently awaited.	
EW5 – Land North of Banbury Road, Woodstock	<p>Policy EW5 allocates land to the north of Banbury Road, Woodstock for the provision of around 180 homes as a well-integrated and logical extension of the existing built form of the town.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly (NPPF paragraph 69).</p>	The site now has a resolution to grant outline planning permission for the provision of 235 dwellings (21/00217/OUT).	<p>The policy remains consistent with national policy and the District Council will continue to work with the landowner as well as key stakeholders including the Town Council to bring the development forward successfully.</p> <p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p>
EW6 – Land at Myrtle Farm, Long Hanborough	Policy EW6 allocates land at Myrtle Farm to the east of Corn Hyde, Long Hanborough for the provision of around 50 homes as a well-integrated and logical extension of the existing built form of the village.	Discussions have been ongoing between the landowner and the District Council since the Local Plan was adopted in 2018. Although the landowner does not wish to bring the site forward for development at the present time, they have	The policy remains consistent with national policy and the District Council will continue to work with the landowner as well as key stakeholders including the Parish Council to bring the development forward successfully.

	<p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly (NPPF paragraph 69).</p>	<p>confirmed that they wish to retain the site as an allocation through the review of the Local Plan.</p>	<p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p>
EW7 – Land at Oliver’s Garage, Long Hanborough	<p>Policy EW7 allocates land at Oliver’s Garage, Long Hanborough for the provision of around 25 homes as a well-integrated and logical redevelopment of an existing use within the built area of the village.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly (NPPF paragraph 69).</p> <p>As a previously developed site it is also consistent with the</p>	<p>The site has detailed planning permission under 18/03403/FUL for 25 dwellings (net gain of 22) and is currently under construction with completion expected in 2022/23.</p>	<p>The intention is to identify the site as an existing commitment in the emerging Local Plan 2041.</p> <p>The new Local Plan 2041 is expected to set a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041.</p> <p>Any new homes completed on this site since 1st April 2021 will therefore contribute towards meeting that requirement.</p>

	<p>requirement for planning policies to make as much use as possible of such 'brownfield' land (NPPF paragraph 119).</p>		
EW8 – Former Stanton Harcourt Airfield	<p>Policy EW8 allocates land at the former Stanton Harcourt Airfield for the provision of around 50 homes as a well-integrated and logical redevelopment of an existing previously developed site adjacent to the existing settlement edge.</p> <p>The allocation remains consistent with national policy which requires planning policies to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites (NPPF paragraph 68) and recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly (NPPF paragraph 69).</p> <p>As a previously developed site it is also consistent with the requirement for planning policies to make as much use as possible of such 'brownfield' land (NPPF paragraph 119).</p>	<p>The site has detailed planning permission for 66 dwellings and has now been completed by Hayfield Homes.</p>	<p>The new Local Plan 2041 is expected to set a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041.</p> <p>Any new homes completed on this site since 1st April 2021 will therefore contribute towards meeting that requirement.</p>

Policy	Consistency with national policy	Any relevant changes in evidence and/or circumstances	Conclusion
EW9 – Blenheim World Heritage Site	<p>Policy EW9 relates to the Blenheim World Heritage Site (WHS) setting out a general expectation that the exceptional cultural significance (Outstanding Universal Value) of the Blenheim World Heritage Site will be protected, promoted and conserved for current and future generations.</p> <p>In accordance with the NPPF, the policy emphasises that great weight will be given to the conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site and any harm or loss to its significance will require clear and convincing justification.</p> <p>The remainder of the policy sets out how such matters will be considered and highlights that the Blenheim Palace Management Plan will be a material consideration in assessing development proposals.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain consistent with national policy which seeks to ensure that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing</p>	<p>There have been no specific changes in evidence or circumstances relating to the Blenheim Palace WHS since the Local Plan was adopted in 2018.</p>	<p>The policy remains wholly consistent with the NPPF but will be considered as part of the review of the Local Plan to determine whether it should be carried forward and/or updated as appropriate.</p>

	justification with any substantial harm to or loss of assets of the highest significance such as World Heritage Sites, being wholly exceptional.		
EW10 – Eynsham – Woodstock Sub-Area Strategy	<p>Policy EW1 sets out an overall strategy for the Eynsham – Woodstock sub-area as defined by the Local Plan.</p> <p>This confirms Eynsham, Woodstock, the Garden Village and Long Hanborough as the focus for development (in line with the overall spatial strategy of Policy OS2) with development elsewhere limited to meeting local housing, community and business needs and being steered towards the larger villages.</p> <p>It confirms the number of new homes which are anticipated to be provided in the period to 2031 and the allocations which are proposed to help meet this requirement.</p> <p>The sub-area strategy also includes a number of more general provisions including support for rural employment opportunities, alleviating congestion on the A40,</p>	<p>The relatively broad nature of the policy makes it difficult to identify any specific changes in evidence or circumstances but there are relevant considerations which will need to be taken into account through the proposed review of the Local Plan including the publication of a new Management Plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly the Cotswolds AONB) as well as the Council’s intention to commission new housing needs evidence to help inform a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041.</p> <p>Eynsham and Woodstock both now have neighbourhood plans in place (adopted in 2020 and 2023 respectively).</p> <p>Additional work on the infrastructure requirements of the Eynsham Area has been undertaken in support of the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) examination.</p>	<p>Policy EW10 remains broadly consistent with national policy.</p> <p>However, the new Local Plan 2041 provides the opportunity to consider whether a sub-area policy approach remains appropriate and necessary if so, any necessary updates including in relation to housing need and the overall pattern of development (spatial strategy).</p>

	<p>enhancing public transport, walking and cycling and the provision of supporting infrastructure.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain broadly consistent with national policy including issues such as the protection of the Oxford Green Belt (NPPF paragraph 137) and conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (NPPF paragraph 176).</p>	<p>A number of the site allocations referred to in the policy have also now come forward for development and are under construction or completed.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Investment Plan (2020) highlights the importance of the proposed science and technology park at Salt Cross Garden Village.</p>	
BC1 – Burford – Charlbury Sub-Area Strategy	<p>Policy BC1 sets out an overall strategy for the Burford – Charlbury sub-area as defined by the Local Plan.</p> <p>This confirms Burford and Charlbury as the focus for development (in line with the overall spatial strategy of Policy OS2) with development elsewhere limited to meeting local housing, community and business needs and being steered towards the larger villages.</p> <p>It confirms the number of new homes which are anticipated to be provided in the period to 2031.</p>	<p>The relatively broad nature of the policy makes it difficult to identify any specific changes in evidence or circumstances but there are relevant considerations which will need to be taken into account through the proposed review of the Local Plan including the publication of a new Management Plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly the Cotswolds AONB) as well as the Council's intention to commission new housing needs evidence to help inform a new housing requirement for the period 2021 – 2041.</p>	<p>Policy BC1 remains broadly consistent with national policy.</p> <p>However, the new Local Plan 2041 provides the opportunity to consider whether a sub-area policy approach remains appropriate and necessary if so, any necessary updates including in relation to housing need and the overall pattern of development (spatial strategy).</p>

	<p>The sub-area strategy also includes a number of more general provisions including the provision of supporting infrastructure, avoiding risk of flooding, retention and development of local services and facilities etc.</p> <p>The policy is considered to remain broadly consistent with national policy including issues such as the conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds AONB (NPPF paragraph 176) enhancing public transport and pedestrian and cycle routes (NPPF paragraph 104) and the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and heritage assets (NPPF paragraph 190).</p>	<p>Charlbury now has an adopted Neighbourhood Plan in place (June 2021).</p> <p>The issue of HGV movement through Burford has also been further considered by Oxfordshire County Council through a temporary weight restriction.</p>	
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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 OCTOBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>TREASURY MANAGEMENT QUARTERLY UPDATE REPORT</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance. Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>James Howse – Interim Director of Finance. Email: james.howse@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>James Howse – Interim Director of Finance. Email: james.howse@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To provide a quarterly update on the Council's Treasury Management operations.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Treasury Management Quarter 1 Report</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i> <i>a) Note the contents of the report.</i></p>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>The Council's commissioned treasury management advisor has provided some advice as to the content of this report.</p>

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Council's Treasury Management Strategy was approved by full Council on 15 February 2023. This Strategy sets out the Council's arrangements for managing cash, investments and borrowing, and the associated risks.
- 1.2** The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the CIPFA Code) requires the Authority to report its performance against this Strategy.
- 1.3** This report sets out its performance in terms of treasury management for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1** The Council had an investment balance of £21.801m at 30 June 2023 (£21.599m at 31 March 2023).
- 2.2** Interest of £0.171m was generated which represented a 4.58% return. This compared to a sector benchmark of 4.32%.
- 2.3** The Council has, with regard to the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year, and in the context of its approved Treasury Management Strategy:
 - Complied with its investment limits.
 - Complied with its limits for long term treasury management investments.
 - Met its average credit rating target for its investment portfolio.
 - Complied with the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt.
 - Met statutory guidance in terms of Council debt remaining below its capital financing requirement.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1** As set out in the report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** None.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1** Investments and borrowings have been administered in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy which sets out the Council's approved approach to treasury risk management.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1** None.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 Treasury Management Strategy (approved at Council on 15 February 2023).

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Annex A

Capital

The Authority measures and manages its capital expenditure, commercial and service investments with reference to the following indicators.

It is now a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code that these are reported on a quarterly basis.

Capital Expenditure: The Authority has undertaken and is planning capital expenditure as summarised below

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 budget	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget
General Fund services	15.29	14.44	9.44	7.01	3.89
Capital investments	0	0	0	5.00	5.00

The capital budget for 2023/24, including slippage, assumed £5m expenditure on Investment Recovery. The estimate for the current year has been reduced based on the lack of available projects that would cover the cost of capital given current high interest rates.

Capital Financing Requirement: The Authority's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure funded through either internal or external borrowing and reduces with Minimum Revenue Provision (set aside annually), loan repayments and capital receipts.

	31.3.2023 actual	31.03.2024 budget	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 forecast	31.3.2026 forecast
General Fund services	8.16	13.44	17.60	24.61	28.50
Capital investments	20.22	34.62	20.22	25.22	30.22
TOTAL CFR	28.38	48.06	37.82	49.83	58.72

Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement: Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short term. The Authority has complied and expects to continue to comply with this requirement in the medium term as is shown below.

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget	Debt at 30.6.2023
Debt (incl. PFI & leases)	0	0	5.00	10.00	0
Capital Financing Requirement	28.38	37.82	49.83	58.72	

Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary: The Authority is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the Authorised Limit for external debt) each year. In line with statutory guidance, a lower “operational boundary” is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

	Maximum debt Q1 2023/24	Debt at 30.6.23	2023/24 Authorised Limit	2023/24 Operational Boundary	Complied? Yes/No
Borrowing	5.013m	0	55.06	50.06	Yes
PFI and Finance Leases	0	0	0	0	Yes
Total debt	5.013	0	0	0	Yes

The operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring. It is not significant if the boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure.

Net Income from Commercial and Service Investments to Net Revenue Stream: The Authority’s income from commercial and service investments as a proportion of its net revenue stream has been and is expected to be as indicated below.

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 budget	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 forecast	2025/26 forecast
Total net income from service and commercial investments	3.92m	6.63m	5.45m	6.98m	7.08m
Proportion of net revenue stream*	44.00%	59.14%	44.63%	57.16%	70.56%

*Net revenue stream is made up of income from Council Tax, Business Rates and Government Grants.

Net income estimates for 2023/24 have been reduced in line with Q1 reporting of Investment Property rents. The 2025/26 forecast includes the MTFs assumptions for the Business Rates Reset due to come into force in 2025/26 which will result in a significant loss of income to the Council. Any Government

compensation funding to smooth the effect of the Reset is not yet known.

Proportion of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream: Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants.

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 forecast	2025/26 forecast
Financing costs (£m)	0.433	0.546	0.831	1.116
Proportion of net revenue stream	3.86%	3.92%	6.80%	11.12%

The Capital Strategy approved in February 2023 anticipated higher levels of capital expenditure of £30m in 2022/23 and £12m in each of 2023/24 & 2024/25. These estimates have been reduced based on the lack of available Investment Recovery strategy projects that would cover the cost of capital given that interest rates are currently high. The Capital, Treasury Management and Investment Strategy will be updated as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

Treasury Management

Table 1: Treasury Management Summary

	31.3.23 Balance £m	Movement £m	30.6.23 Balance £m	30.6.23 Rate %
Short-term borrowing	(5.013)	5.013	0.00	4.40
Total borrowing	(5.013)	5.013	0.00	4.40
Long-term investments	13.376	(0.210)	13.166	4.42
Short-term investments	0.064	(0.064)	0.00	
Cash and cash equivalents	8.159	0.476	8.635	4.83
Total investments	21.599	0.202	21.801	4.58

Net investments	16.586	5.215	21.801	
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Treasury Management

On 31st March 2023, the Authority had net investments of £16.586m arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. The treasury management position at 30th June and the change over the quarter is shown in the table below.

Treasury Management Summary

	31.3.23 Balance £m	Movement £m	30.6.23 Balance £m	30.6.23 Rate %
Short-term borrowing	(5.013)	5.013	0.00	4.40
Total borrowing	(5.013)	5.013	0.00	4.40
Long-term investments	13.376	(0.210)	13.166	4.42
Short-term investments	0.064	(0.064)	0.00	
Cash and cash equivalents	8.159	0.476	8.635	4.83
Total investments	21.599	0.202	21.801	4.58
Net investments	16.586	5.215	21.801	

Borrowing

CIPFA's 2021 Prudential Code is clear that local authorities must not borrow to invest purely for financial return and that it is not prudent for local authorities to make any investment or spending decisions that will increase the capital financing requirement and so may lead to new borrowing, unless primarily related to the functions of the Authority. PWLB loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield unless these loans are for refinancing purposes.

The Authority has reviewed its capital programme in light of the Prudential Code 2021 requirements and PWLB lending arrangements to ensure that borrowing to invest purely for commercial return is no longer undertaken.

The Authority currently holds £51.3m in commercial investments that were purchased prior to the change in the CIPFA Prudential Code.

Treasury Investment Activity

The Authority holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. The investment position at both 2022/23 year end and Q1 2023/24 is shown in the table below.

	31.3.23 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	31.6.23 Balance £m	31.6.23 Income Return %
Banks & building societies (unsecured)	3.84	-0.84	3	4.25
Money Market Funds	4.3	1.335	5.635	4.35
Other Pooled Funds				
- <i>Equity & Multi Asset income funds</i>	8.838	-0.083	8.755	4.12
- <i>Bond income funds</i>	3.537	-0.116	3.421	3.75
- <i>Real Estate Investment Trusts</i>	1.00	-0.01	0.99	2.89
Total investments	21.515	0.286	21.801	4.58

The progression of risk and return metrics are shown in the extracts from our Treasury advisor's quarterly investment benchmarking in the Table below.

Treasury investments managed in-house

	Credit Score	Credit Rating	Bail-in Exposure	Weighted Average Maturity (days)*	Rate of Return %
31.03.2023	A+	A+	100%	1	4.09
30.06.2023	A+	A+	100%	1	4.58
Similar LAs All LAs	A+	A+	63%	11	4.32

*Weighted average maturity

Externally Managed Pooled Funds: £13.3m of the Authority's investments is invested in externally managed strategic pooled bond, equity, multi-asset and property funds with the objective of maximising revenue income. These investments are designed to be long term and are made in the knowledge that capital values will move both up and down over time.

Treasury Performance

The Authority measures the financial performance of its treasury management activities both in terms of its impact on the revenue budget and its relationship to benchmark interest rates, as shown in the table below.

	Q1 Actual £m	2023_24 Budget £m	Over/ under	Actual %	LA's Average Benchmark %	Over/ under
Short-term investments	0.007	0.00	.007	4.83	4.44	0.39
MMF & Call Accounts	0.071	0.162	(0.091)	4.83	4.44	0.39
Strategic Funds	0.085	0.660	(0.575)	4.42	4.01	0.41
Other Long-term loans	0.008	0.280	(0.272)	3.50	n/a	n/a
Total treasury investments	0.171	1.102	(0.931)	4.58		

Compliance

The Chief Finance Officer reports that all treasury management activities undertaken during the quarter complied fully with the principles in the Treasury Management Code and the Authority's approved Treasury Management Strategy. Compliance with specific investment limits is demonstrated in the table below.

Investment Limits

	2023/24 Maximum £m	30.6.23 Actual £m	2023/24 Limit £m	Complied? Yes/No
Any single organisation, except the UK Government	3	0	5	YES
Any group of organisations under the same ownership	3	0	5	YES
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	0	0	5	YES
Limit per non-UK country	0	0	1	YES
Registered providers and registered social landlords	9.8	9.8	10	YES
Unsecured investments with banks	3	3	10	YES
Money Market Funds	15	5.635	25	YES
Strategic pooled funds	14	14	25	YES
Real Estate Investment Trusts	1	1	5	YES

Compliance with the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt is demonstrated in the table below.

Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

	Q1 2023/24 Maximum £m	30.6.23 Actual £m	2023/24 Operational Boundary £m	2023/24 Authorised Limit £m	Complied? Yes/No
Borrowing	5.00	0	50.06	55.06	YES
Total debt	5.00	0	50.06	55.06	

Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if the operational boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure.

As required by the 2021 CIPFA Treasury Management Code, the Authority monitors and measures the following treasury management prudential indicators.

Long-term Treasury Management Investments: The purpose of this indicator is to control the Authority's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The prudential limits on the long-term treasury management limits are:

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	No fixed date
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£20m	£20m	£20m	£20m
Actual principal invested beyond year end	£14m	£14m	£14m	£14m
Complied	YES	YES	YES	YES

Long-term investments with no fixed maturity date include strategic pooled funds, real estate investment trusts and directly held equity but exclude money market funds and bank accounts with no fixed maturity date as these are considered short-term.

The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

	2023/24 Target	30.6.23 Actual	Complied?
Portfolio average credit rating	A-	A+	YES

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