WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Tuesday 5 December 2023
Re-Issued: Wednesday 6 December 2023

Tel: 01993 861000
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EXECUTIVE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Executive, which will be held at Charlbury Community Centre, Enstone Road, Charlbury, Oxfordshire OX7 3PQ on **Wednesday 13 December 2023** at **2.00pm.**

Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Executive:

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Alaric Smith, Joy Aitman, Charlie Maynard, Andrew Prosser, 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.

West Oxfordshire District Council, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, OX28 1NB
www.westoxon.gov.uk Tel: 01993 861000

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 5 - 14)
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 15 November 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. **Council Tax Support Scheme 2024** (Pages 15 - 28)
Purpose:
To present the results of the public consultation, on proposals for revising the current Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1 April 2024.

Recommendations:
That the Executive Resolves to:
   1. Recommend to Council to:
      a) Agree the increase in Council Tax Support, as detailed in paragraph 2.4, from 1 April 2024;
      b) Agree that any surplus in the Support Fund is transferred over to 2024/2025, for reasons detailed in paragraphs 2.6 and 2.7;

c) Approve the amendment to the Council Tax Support Policy as recommended in paragraph 2.8.

7. **Windrush Leisure Centre - PSDS 3c Funding Bid** (Pages 29 - 40)

Purpose:

To seek approval, ahead of an award decision, to accept Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding for Windrush Leisure Centre and to contribute a maximum of £244,866, equating to 12% of total project costs.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

1. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Executive Members for Finance and Climate Change to:
   a) Accept the grant funding, if awarded to the Council, and earmark the required client contribution of £224,866 in the 2024/25 budget.
   b) Note that project risks have been identified and that project gateways will be used where any decision relates to capital spend.

8. **Service Performance Report 2023-24 Quarter Two** (Pages 41 - 94)

Purpose:

To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2023-24 Quarter Two (Q2).

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

1. Note the 2023/24 Q2 service performance report.

9. **Review of Weekly Markets** (Pages 95 - 162)

Purpose:

To consider the outcome of a review of the outdoor markets of West Oxfordshire as completed by the consultant.

Recommendations:

That the Executive Resolves to:

1. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economic Development, to undertake an Expression of Interest exercise to select a commercial market operator to run the weekly retail markets in Witney and Chipping Norton;
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for Economic Development, to appoint a commercial market operator for an initial period of two years.

10. **Review of Legal Services** (Pages 163 - 172)

Purpose:

To outline the conclusions and recommendations from the strategic review of the shared Legal Service by an external organisation, Cadence Innova Limited, and to seek agreement to invest in the Legal Service.

Recommendations:
That the Executive Resolves to:

1. Approve:
    a) Ongoing revenue investment of £40,000 per annum into the shared Legal Service to recruit two additional roles, with any 2023/24 costs to be funded from reserves;
    b) A one-off funding of £26,000 to contribute to a temporary (12 months) Legal Services Change Manager role to be funded from reserves;
    c) A maximum contribution of £45,000, (in total over a four-year period), for the procurement of legal case management software.
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Director of Governance, the signing off of the Shared Legal Services Collaboration Agreement between Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council;
3. Note that a further update report will be provided to the Executive in six months detailing the transformation to date.

11. **Update on Improvement Works with Thames Water** (Pages 173 - 176)

Purpose:
To consider the improvements as a result of closely working with Thames Water over the past 12 months.

Recommendations:
That the Executive Resolves to:

1. Note the content of the report.

12. **Draft Budget 2024-2025** (Pages 177 - 192)

Purpose:
To provide an update on the developing budget for 2024/25.

Recommendations:
That the Executive Resolves to:

1. Note the update on the developing budget for 2024/2025.

(END)

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of
Executive.
Held in Committee Room One, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB at 6.00pm on
Wednesday 15 November 2023.

PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham, Duncan Enright, Carl Rylett, Andrew Prosser, Alaric Smith, Geoff Saul, Lidia Arciszewska and Tim Sumner.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Bill Oddy (Assistant Director for Commercial Development), Phil Martin (Assistant Director for Business Support), Charlie Jackson (Assistant Director - Planning and Sustainability), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Support Officer, Democratic Services), Philip Measures (ERS Service Leader), William Barton (Business Development Officer), Georgina Dyer (Chief Accountant), Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager), Michelle Ouzman (Democratic Services Officer), Barry Clack (Communications Officer) and Elise Chowdhury (Communications Officer).

Other Councillors in Attendance: Michele Mead, Harry St. John, Charlie Maynard, Liam Walker, Phil Godfrey, Thomas Ashby, Rosie Pearson, David Melvin, and Julian Cooper.

100 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Joy Aitman.

101 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, made a declaration on behalf of the Publica Officers in attendance, stating the Officers had a pecuniary interest in agenda item 13 (Publica Review), adding they would leave the room whilst the report was considered by the Executive.

There were no Declarations of Interest made by Members of the Executive.

102 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 11 October 2023, be agreed by the Executive as a true and accurate record, and signed by the Leader of the Council.

This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 11 October 2023, as a true and accurate record.

103 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 also welcomed the public watching proceedings on the Council's website.

The Leader advised attendees of the rationale for the meeting starting at 6.00pm, rather than the usual time of 2.00pm, which was in order to allow greater public attendance at the meeting, which could not have ordinarily been achieved by holding the meeting during normal working hours.

The Leader gave the public and officers in attendance an overview of the way that the meeting would run. Public attendees were also advised that Members of the Executive would remain in attendance after the meeting had concluded, so that those in attendance could meet each other on an informal basis.

The Leader further advised that the final two Agenda Items contained commercially sensitive information and details of a private nature, and as such, the meeting would need to agree to enter private session with the appropriate juncture being highlighted when necessary.

The Leader announced that the meeting was the final meeting that Councillor Carl Rylett would be in position for as the Executive Member for Planning and Sustainability. Councillor Rylett would step down from the Executive and be replaced by Councillor Charlie Maynard with effect from the following day.

Members of the Executive thanked Councillor Rylett for his hard work and commitment as a Member of the Executive, and stated they looked forward to continuing to work with him in the future.

The Leader also announced that the latest version of the 'WODC Voice' newsletter had been released and would be sent by mail to residents of the district. The Leader explained that there had been positive feedback after the previous newsletter, and was pleased to see the newsletter reaching residents to keep them informed of the latest activities undertaken by the Council.

The Leader also announced that the next Executive meeting would be held on Wednesday 13 December, and that the meeting would be the next meeting in the series of "Executive on Tour". The meeting would be held at Charlbury Community Centre, starting at 2.00pm, and further details would be cascaded at the right time by Officers.

Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainability, gave the Executive an update regarding the Council's Housing Numbers Position, which embodied the Council's 5-Year Housing Land Supply. The Executive Member announced that the Council had reached a position where it was able to demonstrate a 5-Year Housing Land Supply. The Executive member stated that this would give the Council a greater say when determining applications for development within the district.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, gave the Executive an update regarding events that would take place over the Christmas Period of 2023. The Deputy Leader stated that events were detailed in the recently published 'WODC Voice' newsletter. The Deputy Leader also affirmed the aspirations of the Council to work together with local businesses, Town Councils, churches, and hospitality settings, and that promoting events more widely, and on an annual basis, would help to achieve greater prosperity. Planned events included a Christmas Market, which would take place at Marriott's Walk in Witney between 8 and 10 December 2023, with over 30 wooden chalets, offering a range of festive fun and treats.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment, announced the release of a new draft flood map for the Ducklington area, in particular 'The Moors', which had been devised by the Environment Agency (EA), and had come forward after work undertaken between the Council, and the local community.

The Executive Member stated that the EA had reviewed the flood mapping for the area, and that the update would also help the Council to better determine applications for development. The Executive Member thanked the EA, Councillors, and the local community for their work and engagement respectively,

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, announced that the Council, in conjunction with Cottsway Housing Association, had secured an additional 23 units for affordable housing within the district, which would accommodate in the first instance, refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan. The Executive Member stated that the units had arisen from receipt of Government funding, and at no cost to local residents.

Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, announced that through the Sports England Swimming Pool Support Fund, the Council had been awarded £354,000, which would benefit the swimming pools in Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney.

The Executive Member further stated that a 'Phase 2 of Funding' had been applied for, which would further help the pools in Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney, as well as the pool located in Woodstock.

The Executive Member paid tribute to those who had worked on the project in order to secure the funding.

104 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation at the meeting.

105 Proactive Delivery of Affordable Housing

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, introduced the report, which outlined the Council's aspiration for a more proactive approach to increasing the supply of affordable housing within the district. The report further outlined how this could be achieved with the required resources.

Councillor Geoff Saul proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the suggestions to be explored, in order to increase the supply of affordable homes within the district;
2. Approve the appointment of a new Strategic Housing Development & Enabling Manager.

106 Oxfordshire Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (OXLEVI) Programme

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change, introduced the report, which sought to approve the submission of the countywide Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Stage 2 application, to install electric vehicle (EV) charging Infrastructure in West Oxfordshire.

Councillor Andrew Prosser proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Delegate authority to the Council's Director of Finance, in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and Climate Change to:

   i. Approve Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC's) submission of a stage 2 application to the Office for Zero Emissions Vehicles for Oxfordshire's allocation of £3.655 million LEVI funding;

   ii. Approve that OCC accept and spend LEVI funds in accordance with the submitted proposal;

   iii. Approve that OCC tender for EV charging contracts in Oxfordshire; the tender will be a joint tender on behalf of all Oxfordshire County and district councils, which OCC will lead;

   iv. Approve that WODC enter directly into the contract with the Charge Point Operator (CPO) following the tender process and completion of full feasibility studies and sign off at the OXLEVI Programme Board.

107 Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Penalty and Prosecution Policy

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the report, which presented the Executive with an updated Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Penalty and Prosecution Policy for approval.

Councillor Alaric Smith proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Geoff Saul, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Adopt the Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Penalty and Prosecution Policy;
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance to approve future minor amendments to the Policy, in consultation with the Business Manager Environmental, Welfare and Revenue Service and the Head of Service, Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit.

108 UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, introduced the report, which provided an overview of the progress on the planning and delivery of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund.

The Deputy Leader gave the Executive a detailed overview of some of the planned projects which would be supported by the funds, and how the implication of the funds would be of wider benefit to the district. It was further highlighted that reports relating to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, were able to be found on the Council's website.

Councillor Duncan Enright proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the progress on planning and delivery of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund;
2. Delegate authority for the approval of future schemes and expenditure to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, in consultation with the Council's UKSPF / REPF Delivery Group.

109 Financial Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter Two

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the report, which provided details of the Council's financial performance for Quarter Two 2023-2024.

The Executive Member also referred to a recommendation made from the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which requested that the Council drew up plans for major refurbishment works to be undertaken at Chipping Norton Leisure Centre.

The Executive Member stated that the Executive were supportive of the recommendation in principle and were keen to address the issues caused by the water damage. The Executive stated they would, however, want a more extensive capital refurbishment programme to be an informed piece of work more generally.

A recently commissioned Strategic Outcomes Planning Model would provide the evidence base for the most effective use of a capital allocation at Chipping Norton Leisure Centre.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the Council's Financial Performance for Quarter Two 2023-2024.

110 Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2022/23

Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, introduced the report, which sought to note the West Oxfordshire Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) for 2022/23.

Councillor Carl Rylett proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendation as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Prosser, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the content of the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS), with a view to it being published on the Council's website by 31 December 2023 in accordance with legislative requirements.

111 Fixed Penalty Notice Level Increases for Fly Tipping and Waste Crime Offences

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment, introduced the report, which set out the new maximum level fines proposed by the Government, to deter and punish the offences of littering, fly-tipping, householder duty of care, flyposting & the distribution of free printed matter. The report also sought approval to introduce these new fine levels.

In debate, the Executive thanked the work of officers who had ensured that communications regarding illegal fly-tipping were published through the Council's online channels, and to officers who had ensured that prevention and monitoring work had taken place effectively.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Prosser, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the content of the report;
2. Recommend to Council to agree to an increase in the fine levels to the maximum levels permissible, as outlined in Table 1;
3. Recommend to Council to agree an early payment discount as outlined in Table 1;
4. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to increase levels of fines, subject to the resolutions of Council on 29 November 2023.

112 Publica Review

Ahead of the item of business being considered by the Executive, Officers employed by Publica Group left the Committee Room.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which outlined conclusions from the recent Strategic Review of Publica Services, carried out by Human Engine on behalf of the four Publica Councils, and further sought to consider the next steps.

The Leader gave a detailed, high-level overview of the implications that were associated with the report, and explained that, whilst not fully known, a wide-ranging scale of financial costings would be associated with the proposals, as well as legal and recruitment implications, and that a full transitional plan and full business case would be formulated, to enable that residents remain foremost in the aims of the Council.

The Leader explained that the review process would take time, and that every stage will have the due diligence associated with it, to manage a smooth transition of services, as recommended to the Council.

The Leader further advised the Executive that the proposals would be considered by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at a 'spotlight' meeting being held on 18 December 2023 at 5.30pm, before being re-considered by the Executive and then Council.

In debate, a number of non-executive members were invited to speak and expressed their disappointment at the decisions that were to be taken, and referred to Publica being owned by the Council, rather than being an external organisation. Members also suggested that a better course of action would have been to invest in Publica and re-formulate the working partnership that was already in place, rather than strip it back to a level similar to previous arrangements that existed before Publica's creation.

Members also highlighted an apparent lack of Transitional Management qualifications, and questioned whether the Chief Executives of the partner Councils were qualified in that field. It was subsequently confirmed that an external Programme Director would be appointed to oversee the proposed transition.

Reference was also made to the residents of West Oxfordshire being dissatisfied with the Publica 'model' of operation, and that residents were keen to see services delivered by the Council in its own right.

Members of the Executive stated that the operation of Publica was perceived to be 'opaque', and that partner Councils were willing to change the status quo. Members of the Executive unanimously agreed that throughout the process, the aim was to help deliver services for the better, and to put residents of the district first. The Executive also provided reassurance that the proposals had not arisen as a reflection of the efforts of staff employed by Publica but were reflective of the operating model in its current form.

Members also expressed caution about the proposals being considered, whilst all of the financial facts and implications were not fully detailed, and that this would make the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee difficult when it scrutinises the proposals. The Chief Executive reassured Members that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would have the appropriate time to consider the review proposals, allowing time for the fullest financial, modelling and governance implications to be scrutinised.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note any decisions taken by the Cabinets at Cotswold District Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Forest of Dean District Council;
2. Support in principle the direction recommended in the Human Engine report to return a range of services back to the Council and reshape Publica;
3. Instruct the Chief Executive to commence preparatory work and prepare a business case for a new operating model, and an associated transition plan identifying any necessary consultations, in partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Publica, and to report back to Executive with these;
4. Instruct the Chief Executive to prepare an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the preparatory work;
5. Agree to set the following principles to help guide the preparatory work and transition plan:
    a. Recognise the significant contribution of Publica staff and management to West Oxfordshire;
    b. Ensure that human resources processes are fair and appropriate, and that there is effective engagement with Unions and staff;
    c. Support the financial sustainability of the Council, and the delivery of the Council's ambitions as set out in the Council Plan;

d. Explore the potential for delivering services in partnership to ensure adequate capacity and capability, and realise economies of scale;

e. Ensure that there are effective governance, management and staffing structures in place for the Council, any partnership services, and for Publica, both through the transition process and afterwards;

f. That the transition costs from changes are shared fairly amongst all of the partner Councils;

g. That the funding model for Publica and partnership services in the future is fair and reflects the extent of services received.

6. Instruct the Chief Executive to commence the process for Union recognition for West Oxfordshire District Council staff;
7. Refer the Publica Review and Human Engine Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments, prior to further consideration at the Executive and consideration by Council;
8. Agree to set aside £100,000 from the Corporate Priorities earmarked reserve to fund potential transition and preparatory work required for the Council and for the Publica Partnership during the 2023/24 financial year;
9. Agree to set aside a further £200,000 of earmarked reserve to 2024/25 transition costs within the ongoing budget setting process for 24/25 (and update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy);
10. Agree that for the 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (currently being developed for presentation to Council in February 2024) to consider the financial implications more broadly, including on Council's revenue and capital budgets, its risk profile, and its balance sheet (reserves and liabilities).

Attendees and Officers employed by Publica Group, returned to the Committee Room at the conclusion of the item.

113 Exclusion of Press and Public

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed that Executive agree to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the remaining exempt items of business, on the basis that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Prosser, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 to:

1. Exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, with the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighing the public interest in disclosing the information.

114 Lease of Council Offices (Elmfield)

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the report, which requested approval for the lease of the Council's Elmfield Offices and the Gables, as detailed in the report.

In debate, the Executive highlighted the effective use of Council assets that the proposal would bring, and that the leasing would be of use to local businesses who would look to work more flexibly, as well as being helpful to the Council. The Executive gave particular thanks to the work of the proposed tenant for their commitment to secure a vital lease for their services in the longer term.

Councillor Alaric Smith proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the letting of Elmfield Offices and The Gables on the terms detailed within the report;
2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Property & Regeneration, in consultation with Executive Member for Finance and the Director of Finance, to agree the final terms of the lease, including the cost of the Landlord's works.

115 Disposal And Development of Land At Walterbush Road, Chipping Norton For Custom Build Zero Carbon Homes

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, introduced the report, which considered a new delivery model for the development of homes at Walterbush Road, Chipping Norton.

Councillor Geoff Saul proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree to proceed with GreenAxis, based on the model set out in the report, subject to suitable legal agreements being put in place to protect the council's interest;
2. Proceed, if agreement cannot be reached, with seeking formal Expressions of Interest on the site for a development, as agreed by the Executive in June 2023.

The Meeting Closed at 7.31pm.

CHAIR

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and Date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 13 DECEMBER 2023**
Subject	**COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2024**
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance. Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Jon Dearing – Assistant Director, Resident Services. Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk
Report Author	Mandy Fathers – Business Manager, Environmental, Welfare and Revenues. Email: mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To present the results of the public consultation, on proposals for revising the current Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1 April 2024.
Annexes	Annex A – Consultation Responses
Recommendations	That the Executive Resolves to: 1. Recommend that Council: a) Agrees the increase in Council Tax Support, as detailed in paragraph 2.4, from 1 April 2024; b) Agrees that any surplus in the Support Fund is transferred over to 2024/2025, for reasons detailed in paragraphs 2.6 and 2.7; c) Approves the amendment to the Council Tax Support Policy as recommended in paragraph 2.8.
Corporate Priorities	• Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/	Full public consultation including consulting major precepting authorities.

Consultation	Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer, Interim Head of Legal Services. Assistant Director, Director of Finance (Publica)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Councils are required to review their Council Tax Support (CTS) schemes each year for those people of working age and decide if they want to make any changes. Before any changes can be implemented, they must be subject to public consultation. In August 2023, officers proposed changes to the scheme, which Executive approved to be consulted upon.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1 The Council implemented its own local CTS scheme to help those people on low incomes pay their Council Tax in April 2013. Further changes were made in April 2020 introducing the income banded scheme.

2.2 Since 2021 household income had increased which resulted in some households being moved into a higher income band, and therefore receiving a lesser percentage of support, so in 2022 proposals were made to amend income band 2 by £10.00 a week, income band 3 by £15 a week and income bands 4 to 6 by £25 a week. The Council approved these amendments in February 2023. The scheme was based on the following bands:

Income Band	Single £	Couple £	Lone Parent £	Couple with Children £	Maximum % Entitlement
1	0 - 125	0 - 140	0 - 175	0 - 225	100
2	125.01 - 185	140.01 - 200	175.01 - 210	225.01 - 285	80
3	185.01 - 240	200.01 - 255	210.01 - 265	285.01 - 340	60
4	240.01 - 295	255.01 - 310	265.01 - 320	340.01 - 395	30
5	295.01 - 350	310.01 - 365	320.01 - 375	395.01 - 450	10
6	350.01 +	365.01 +	375.01 +	450.01 +	0

2.3 With inflation around 6% in August, it is anticipated that national benefit payments will increase by this amount from April 2024. Without changes to the CTS scheme, this would result again in more households being moved into a higher income band and therefore having to pay a higher share of the Council Tax for their property.

2.4 Following discussions with Citizens Advice, and to support residents, proposals were made to: -

- increase income band 1 by 6%, which in turn would increase all subsequent income bands
- increase the maximum entitlement in band 4 from 30% to 40%, and band 5 from 10% to 20%
- expand all bands to account for larger families with more dependent children, as follows:
- extend backdating of claims from one calendar month to six calendar months, where 'good cause' is demonstrated

Income Band	Single	Couple	Lone +1	Lone + 2	Lone + 3	Maximum % Entitlement
1	0 - 132.50	0 - 148.40	0 - 185.50	0 - 206.70	0 - 227.90	100
2	132.51 - 192.50	148.41 - 208.40	185.51 - 220.50	206.71 - 241.70	227.91 - 262.90	80
3	192.51 - 247.50	208.41 - 263.40	220.51 - 275.50	241.71 - 296.70	262.91 - 317.90	60
4	247.51 - 302.50	263.41 - 318.40	275.51 - 330.50	296.71 - 351.70	317.91 - 372.90	40
5	302.51 - 357.50	318.41 - 373.40	330.51 - 385.50	351.71 - 406.70	372.91 - 427.90	20
Income Band	Lone + 4	Couple + 1	Couple + 2	Couple + 3	Couple + 4	Maximum % Entitlement
1	0 - 270.30	0 - 238.50	0 - 259.70	0 - 280.90	0 - 323.30	100
2	270.31 - 305.30	238.51 - 298.50	259.71 - 319.70	280.91 - 340.90	323.31 - 383.30	80
3	305.31 - 360.30	298.51 - 353.50	319.70 - 374.70	340.91 - 395.90	383.31 - 438.30	60
4	360.31 - 415.30	353.51 - 408.50	374.71 - 429.70	395.91 - 450.90	438.31 - 493.30	40
5	415.31 - 470.30	408.51 - 463.50	429.71 - 484.70	450.91 - 505.90	493.31 - 548.30	20

2.5 A consultation took place for a six-week period between 11 September 2023 to 22 October 2023. A summary of response to the consultation can be found in Annex A, attached to this report.

2.6 In 2022/2023 the Council implemented a Hardship Fund to support those residents who were struggling financially and provided the Council with evidence of financial hardship. This fund was created with financial support from Oxfordshire County Council, and West Oxfordshire District Council. The fund was originally set at £100,000. To date there remains in excess of £90,000.

2.7 Recommendations are being made to transfer any funding surplus into the financial year 2024/2025 to ensure the Council continues to support those residents in financial hardship.

2.8 To protect the finances of the authority and in the interests of all council taxpayers, it is also recommended that an amendment to section 101 of the CTS Policy, Counter Fraud and Compliance be made to include:

- Where the Council has evidence of fraud and/or error, it reserves the right to withhold and/or recalculate Council Tax Support whether or not the customer is in receipt of a benefit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions.

2.9 This amendment will avoid delays within administration as well as the council recalculating CTS claims based on evidence obtained.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 The criteria for the CTS scheme are at the Council's discretion, and therefore various alternative and options are open to the Council; however, any amendments must be consulted on, and the scheme must be approved by 11 March 2024.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Council administers a Council Tax Support scheme with an annual expenditure of £5.7 million. In 2013/2014, the government reduced the level of funding for the local scheme effectively creating a grant reduction of 10% a year across all the precepting authorities.

4.2 With effect from 2013/2014 the scheme was funded through Formula Grant rather than direct subsidy and consequently the government has transferred the risk, and therefore the cost, of increased take up within the scheme to the local taxpayer, from the national taxpayer. An increase in cost will lead to a reduced tax-base and therefore reduced income to the precepting bodies.

4.3 The proposed changes increase the cost of the CTS scheme by £170,726. This will be reflected in a decrease in the council tax base and council tax recognised in the collection fund. The decrease in income will be spread proportionately across the major precepting authorities (Oxfordshire County Council, The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and West Oxfordshire District Council as well as Town and Parish Councils) Making these proposed changes will decrease the total tax base by around seventy-seven band D properties and a loss of income as follows:

Financial Year	OCC	Police	West Oxfordshire	Town/Parish	Total
2024/2025	134,085.80	19,817.14	9,231.18	7,591.88	170,726

4.4 Any surplus funding from the Hardship Scheme will be rolled into 2024/2055.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit and instead required each authority to design a scheme specifying the reductions, which are to apply to amounts of council tax.

5.2 The CTS scheme is required under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 ("the Act"), as amended. The Act states that for each financial year, Billing Authorities must consider whether to revise their CTS scheme or replace it with another scheme. The prescribed regulations set out the matters that must be included in such a scheme. Before making any changes, under Section 40 of the Act, the Council must:

- Consult with any major precepting authorities
- Publish the draft scheme
- Consult other parties likely to have an interest in the scheme

5.3 The deadline for making decisions is 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to take effect (under paragraph 5, schedule 1A of the Act). If the council does not make/revise a CTS scheme by 11 March 2024, a default scheme will be imposed on the Council, which will be effective from 1 April 2024.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 There are two risks to consider:

- That the benefit caseload increases significantly, resulting in expenditure exceeding the levels estimated within this report
- That the administrations, collection and recover costs (including the costs for write-offs) could increase as a result of creating additional and relatively small liabilities

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 To ensure compliant with the Equality Act 2010 an Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted which concludes there is no negative impact on any of the protected characteristics.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None

(END)

Annex A

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Don't know	
Do you agree that this would be a fair way to help people on low income and with larger families?	45.45%		18.18%		9.09%	27.28%	
Under the current scheme we restrict backdating of claims where good cause is shown to one calendar month. We are proposing extending this to six months to help people who may have exceptional circumstances	45.45%	27.28%		18.18%	9.09%		

Responses	Currently in receipt of Council Tax Support	
	Yes	No
	36.36%	63.64%

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Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form

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

a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;

b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

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

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

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Mandy Fathers	
Date of assessment: 25/10/2023	Telephone: 01285 623571 Email: mandy.fathers@weston.gov.uk

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

Existing – Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/2025

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

To make amendments to the Banding in the scheme for 2024/2025

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

Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 states a CTS scheme is required and Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 states that the council must consult. Under paragraph 5, schedule 1A of the same Act, the Council is required to have a scheme approved by 11 March 2024.

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	☐✓	Demographic data was used when modelling the scheme
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	☐	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	☐✓	A 6 week consultation was undertaken from 11/9/23 to 22/10/23. A CAB officer in Oxfordshire as well as Gloucestershire assisted with modelling the scheme
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	☐	
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Gloucestershire	☐✓	A CAB officer in Oxfordshire had input into the modelling of scheme
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	☐✓	Comparisons with previous schemes and those of neighbouring LA's has been considered
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	☐	
Other:	☐	

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

N/A

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

Yes

Details of Consultation: Consultation took place between 11/9/23 to 22/10/23. This was published on the Councils website. Letters/emails sent to major precepting authorities

If NO please outline any planned activities

N/A

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

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	☐
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	✓☐
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	☐
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	☐
Comments: e.g. Who will this specifically impact?	

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			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of different age groups, but it is not specific to age	
Age – Old People			✓	The scheme is for working age people only – Pensioners have a different CTS scheme which is mandated by Central Government	
Disability			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people with disabilities but is not specific to disability	
Sex – Male			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	

Sex – Female			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all races, but it is not specific to race	
Religion or Belief			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all religions, but it is not specific to religion	
Sexual Orientation			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all types of sexual orientation, but it is not specific to sexual orientation	
Gender Reassignment			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	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			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the West Oxfordshire district	
Other Groups			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all other groups that are not mentioned	
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			✓	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
Change Policy when approved	Mandy Fathers	Craig Fisher	Following full Council approval in early 2024

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

n/a

Declaration

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

Completed By:	Mandy Fathers	Date:	25.10.23
Line Manager:	Jon Dearing	Date:	26/10/2023
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:	Cheryl Sloan	Date:	06/11/2023

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and Date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 13 DECEMBER 2023**
Subject	**WINDRUSH LEISURE CENTRE – PSDS 3C FUNDING BID**
Wards Affected	WITNEY SOUTH
Accountable Member	Councillor Andrew Prosser – Executive Member for Climate Change. Email: andrew.prosser@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Hannah Kenyon – Climate Change Manager. Email: hannah.kenyon@publicagroup.uk
Report Author	Lily Paulson – Climate Change Officer. Email: lily.paulson@publicagroup.uk
Purpose	To seek approval, ahead of an award decision, to accept Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding for Windrush Leisure Centre and to contribute a maximum of £224,866, equating to 12% of total project costs.
Annexes	Annex A – Project Costs Annex B – Climate Impact Assessment (CIA)
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive Resolves to: 1. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Executive Members for Finance and Climate Change to: a) Accept the grant funding, if awarded to the Council, and earmark the required client contribution of £224,866 in the 2024/25 budget. b) Note that project risks have been identified and that project gateways will be used where any decision relates to capital spend.
Corporate Priorities	• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
Key Decision	YES

Exempt	TBC
Consultees/ Consultation	Councillor Prosser – consulted in parallel to the Management Team, awaiting comments. Ward councillors – to complete.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 West Oxfordshire District Council (the Council) declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019, making its pledge to become a carbon neutral council by 2030. This means reducing the council's emissions to as close to zero as possible then offsetting the remainder through verified schemes. The decision was taken at a Full Council meeting on 26 June 2019.

1.2 Carbon emissions from leisure sites accounted for 38% of the council's emissions in 2021/22. Decarbonising the leisure centre's heating systems is on the critical path to meeting our carbon neutral target.

1.3 The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) provides grants to help fund the conversion from gas powered systems to more sustainable options like air source heat pumps, often coupled with solar panels and energy efficiency measures. It is administered by Salix Finance, on behalf of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero.

1.4 The Council has been successful in previous PSDS rounds, securing PSDS 3b funding for the heat decarbonisation of Carterton Leisure Centre.

1.5 The PSDS 3c funding round opened for submissions on 7 November 2023 and the Council submitted a proposal to decarbonise Windrush Leisure Centre in Witney as a two-year project starting in April 2024 and finishing by March 2026.

1.6 Applicants are expecting to be notified of the outcome of their applications by March 2024, though previous funding rounds have notified applicants as early as December. This year, there was a four-week delay to the portal opening for PSDS 3c, so we expect announcements to be slightly delayed.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1 GEP Environmental Ltd. was appointed in September 2023 to design a low-carbon heating system for Windrush Leisure Centre. GEP is a specialist engineering company who are also one of the six companies nationally appointed to review the PSDS funding applications on behalf of Salix. They produced a RIBA Stage 2 design for the leisure centre, following a site visit on 27 September 2023.

2.2 An application to replace the end-of-life boilers at Windrush Leisure Centre with a low-carbon heating system and solar panels was submitted on 7 November 2023. The proposed system is to install a CO2 air source heat pump (ASHP) which will provide high temperature hot water to the building, and a new air-handling unit with an integrated direct expansion heating system to provide space heating and serve to top-up high water temperatures if needed.

2.3 Most of the work will be limited to the plant room and exterior of the building, meaning minimal disruption for leisure centre users. 115 kW of solar panels will be added to the roof and resurfacing works have been accounted for in the project costs. The amount of rooftop solar has been maximised and will provide around 20% of the electricity demand of the new system.

2.4 If the Council is awarded grant funding, the offer must be accepted or rejected within 10 days of the award date. Therefore, a decision must be taken ahead of time to agree whether to accept funding if it is offered.

2.5 The total project value is £1,873,879. This includes a mandatory 12% client contribution from the Council of £224,866 which acts as contingency for the project. The total grant value requested is £1,649,013. This is split across two years and the Council is committed to spending the amount allocated to each year or losing the amount that has not been spent. Officers worked with the contractor to estimate a reasonable spending split: £949,217 in 2024/25 and £699,796 in 2025/26.

2.6 Accepting the funding at this stage does not necessarily commit the Council to proceeding with the build-out stage of the project or to spending the client contribution (£224,866). As long as progress with the project is made ‘in good faith’ with the intention of completing the project, then irresolvable barriers to the project’s delivery can justify withdrawal.

2.7 The project programme anticipates that 2024/25 will be the planning and design year, with April 2024 to August 2024 allocated to the development of a robust detailed design. Following lessons learned from the PSDS 3b project, more time has been allocated to this process to ensure there is sufficient time for engagement with GLL and other stakeholders, and to bring the RIBA stage 3 and final stage 4 designs to Executive for approval. Development of the Stage 3 design, starting in April 2024 at the latest, will provide detail on capital costs and operational costs if the low-carbon design was implemented.

2.8 A decision gate has been included in the project programme after the Stage 4 design has been received to allow the Council to decide whether to proceed with the build-out phase of the project in 2025/26. Therefore, Salix is aware of the risk that project costs and the viability of delivering the leisure service will be considered at this stage and may constitute a withdrawal from the project if the barriers cannot be overcome. As long as grant funds are spent ‘in good faith’, with the intention of completing the project, then this will not need to be repaid.

3. RECOMMENDED OPTION

3.1 It is recommended that the Council accepts the PSDS 3c grant funding, if it is awarded, and earmarks the required client contribution for 2024/25.

3.2 Identified project risks will be mitigated by introducing project gateways, where a decision will be made to proceed to capital spend if an acceptable contract variation is agreed with GLL and if completion of the Stage 3 design in June 2024 gives confidence around system performance, energy usage, and costs.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 Not to accept the PSDS 3c grant funding. The Council could apply for later rounds of PSDS funding if these become available.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The decarbonisation of Windrush Leisure Centre is necessary to achieve carbon neutrality as a council by 2030. If awarded to the Council, the PSDS 3c funding will enable the decarbonisation to happen by 2026.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The total grant value requested is £1,649,013, which is the maximum amount that the Council will receive from Salix Finance. It is possible that Salix will offer a reduced grant amount if they disagree with the costs included in the application.

6.2 The Council is required to deliver the project and spend the total grant value by 31 March 2026. The grant funding is split across two years and the Council is committed to spending the amount allocated to each year or losing the amount that has not been spent. Officers worked with the contractor to estimate a reasonable spending split: £949,217 in 2024/25 and £699,796 in 2025/26.

6.3 A mandatory 12% client contribution is required from the Council. This amounts to £224,866 and acts as contingency for the project.

6.4 The project costs have been estimated by the contractor based on their experience of working on PSDS projects, with input from the project team based on lessons learnt from the PSDS 3b project at Carterton Leisure Centre. A 10% contingency has been accounted for in all material and installation costs. A further 10% of total project costs has been added to cover the use of an external project manager to support the project, as this has been critical to the PSDS 3b project.

6.5 As the project costs are currently contractor estimates, it is likely that these will change once the design has been finalised. However, contingency has been built into all the costs to account for this.

6.6 If the project costs increase beyond the figure submitted in the application form, the Council will be required to cover the additional cost or reduce the scope of the project to cut costs (e.g. by excluding solar PV from the project). No additional funding from Salix will be possible.

6.7 At this stage, the impact of the project proposals on the operational cost to the leisure providers, GLL, is unknown. This will be a focus of the RIBA Stage 3 design that will be commissioned in April 2024. If the outcome of that detailed design shows that the project is not financially viable and jeopardises GLL's ability to deliver leisure services, then there is a decision gate in the project programme which allows the Council to make the choice to withdraw from the PSDS 3c project.

6.8 Accepting the funding at this stage does not commit the Council to proceeding with the build-out stage of the project or to spending the client contribution of £224,866.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal will review the PSDS 3c T&Cs. Other than this, there are no legal implications arising directly from the report.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 If an offer of grant funding is accepted and later a decision is made that the project cannot be delivered, there is a reputational risk to the Council which may also jeopardise the council's ability to be successful in future PSDS funding rounds. There are a number of external risks that may impact the deliverability of the project, such as detailed design costs showing significantly higher project costs than originally accounted for, constraints regarding the district network operator (DNO) or high connection upgrade costs, DNO timeframes delaying the installation of new equipment, or product order and delivery times impacting project timeframes. All these risks have been logged in the risk register and will be carefully managed by the project team, project manager and contractor.

8.2 If project costs come in higher after the design phase, a decision gate is in place where the Council could decide not to proceed. As long as all works were undertaken in 'good faith' up until that point, the Council will not need to repay any grant funding it has already spent.

8.3 The boilers at Windrush Leisure Centre are 17 years old and approaching their end of life. If the decision is to not accept PSDS funding at this time, then there is a risk that the boilers might fail, and an emergency decision would need to be taken which would likely favour a replacement gas boiler. This would be contrary to the council's climate emergency declaration and carbon neutral target.

8.4 If the decision is taken not to accept PSDS funding, delivering a decarbonisation project at Windrush Leisure Centre will not be achievable due to the capital cost of the project. This will mean waiting for further funding rounds, which have not been confirmed.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 The recommendation in this report does not have any equalities impacts on any group.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 In the short-term, the decision to proceed with the PSDS 3c project at Windrush Leisure Centre, if the funding is offered, will have slight negative impacts on greenhouse gas emissions, air quality, and waste because of the renovation and construction works on-site. However, these would be offset by the long-term benefits of completing the decarbonisation project, which include the significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from heating the building, improvements in air quality and reduction in energy use.

10.2 Assuming the PSDS project is successful, this will lead to a 58% decrease in carbon emissions from that site. Over time, as the national grid uses more renewable energy, this will reduce even further.

10.3 The full climate implications of the PSDS project at Windrush Leisure Centre are detailed in Annex B. These are broken down into the delivery phase of the project (the design and build phase) and the outcome of the project.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

(END)

Annex A: Project Costs

Measure	Cost*	Energy savings (kWh)	Saving as % of annual energy use	Annual financial savings**	Payback (years)
Insulate internal pipework	£4,950	98,550	7%	£9,076	0.55
Insulate external pipework	£825	16,425	1%	£1,513	0.55
Install 115 kW of rooftop solar PV	£383,486	92,150	20%	£30,962	12.67
Install high temperature CO_2 ASHP	£988,368	340,859	—	-£450	—
Install pool vent integrated ASHP	£371,250	629,731	—	£17,844	20.8
DNO costs	£125,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	**£1,873,879**	**—**	**—**	**£58,246**	**28**
Y1	£949,217				
Y2	£699,796				

* Cost includes design and engineering, material, installation, enabling, contingency and PM costs.
** Savings based on 9.21p/kWh for gas and 32.84p/kWh for electricity (GLL Q2 2023 energy prices)

Like-for-like replacement cost for gas boilers:

Cost item	Price
Removal of existing equipment	£5,000
New main equipment and control	£56,000
Plinth, pipework, connections, insulation	£25,000
Installation	£25,000
Commissioning	£3,000
Total	**£114,000**

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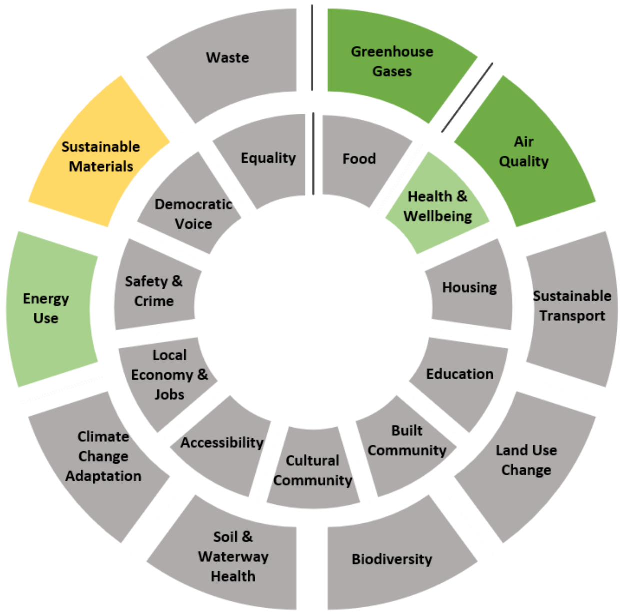
Annex B: Climate Impact Assessment

Delivery phase impacts

Criteria	Score	Justification
Energy Use	2	ASHPs being installed are 3 to 4 times more efficient than the boilers they are replacing, therefore reducing energy use. Additionally, solar PV is being installed to supplement the energy demand of the building.
GHGs	-2	Emissions from ordering and shipping equipment and materials, contractor travel and construction emissions are accounted for in the short-term. These will be minimised as much as possible by requesting contractors consider embodied carbon in their selection of products, and travel in a way to minimise emissions.
Air quality	-1	Construction will increase air pollution in the short term, as will the additional contractor travel.
Land use change	0	No net changes to land use. Some equipment may be installed at ground level, with some surfacing changes required but this will be no different or worse than the existing paving and concreting.
Soil and waterway health	0	Potential for some impacts from construction but these are not currently known.
Waste	-2	Construction waste will be produced, increasing the overall quantities of waste produced during the delivery phase of this project. A waste plan, in line with the waste hierarchy, will be requested of contractors to maximise the amount of waste that can be recycled or re-used.
Sustainable Transport	0	Not applicable.
Biodiversity	0	Not applicable.
Climate Change Adaptation	0	No direct adaptation impacts.
		This impact will be reduced as much as possible by requiring that contractors consider the embodied carbon of the products
Food	0	Not applicable.
Health	-1	During the construction and delivery phase, there may be some impacts on access to the leisure centre. Additionally, noise and general disruption from the works may impact wellbeing, though everything will be done to minimise this impact (e.g. working out of hours).
Housing	0	Not applicable as not a housing project.
Education	1	Social value requirements of the project will likely include offering learning opportunities to local students.
Built Community	0	No net change.
Cultural Community	-1	There may be slight, short-term negative impacts to provision of leisure services during the switch-over from gas to electricity. The council will need to provide compensation for any closure of the leisure centre.
Accessibility	0	No impacts on accessibility.
Local Economy and Jobs	2	A social value requirement of the contract will be to use local contractors and employees for the work.
Safety	-1	During the construction phase, there will be a slight increase in safety risks for contractors and the public. These will be mitigated with a safety strategy.
Democratic Voice	1	The decision to proceed will be dependent on engagement with the leisure provider. Engagement with the wider public will be limited to advisory notices.
Equity	0	No impacts on groups with protected characteristics.

Project outcome impacts

Criteria	Score	Justification
Energy Use	2	ASHPs being installed are 3 to 4 times more efficient than the boilers they are replacing, therefore reducing energy use. Additionally, solar PV is being installed to supplement the energy demand of the building.
GHGs	4	Decarbonisation of the heating system will significantly reduce GHG emissions from gas use. Shifting to an electric system will mean that, as the national grid decarbonises, the building will become carbon neutral in operation in the future.
Air quality	4	Reducing gas use will have a positive effect on indoor air quality but also on air quality at a national level.
Land use change	0	No net changes to land use. Some equipment may be installed at ground level, with some surfacing changes required but this will be no different or worse than the existing paving and concreting.
Soil and waterway health	0	No impact of the proposals on soil and waterway health.
Waste	0	The end-of-life options for the materials and technologies will be considered as part of the stage 4 design to ensure that as much of the installed equipment as possible can be recycled or re-used to prevent waste in landfill.
Sustainable Transport	0	No impact on sustainable transport.
Biodiversity	0	No impact on biodiversity, though an assessment should be undertaken to ensure there is no disruption from the proposed measures.
Climate Change Adaptation	0	No direct adaptation impacts from this project.
		This impact will be reduced as much as possible by requiring that contractors consider the embodied carbon of the products they
Food	0	No impact on food.
Health	1	Slight increase in health outcomes due to the removal of gas reducing air pollutants both indoors and more widely.
Housing	0	Not applicable as this is not a housing project.
Education	0	No educational opportunities once the project has been delivered.
Built Community	0	Not applicable.
Cultural Community	0	No impact on cultural community.
Accessibility	0	No changes to accessibility as a result of the project.
Local Economy and Jobs	0	The delivery phase will support the local economy but the outcome of the project will have no net change, as running costs are likely to remain similar.
Safety	0	No impacts.
Democratic Voice	0	Once the project has been delivered, public engagement is not applicable.
Equity	0	No impacts on groups with protected characteristics.



WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and Date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 13 DECEMBER 2023**
Subject	**SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24 QUARTER TWO**
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Alison Borrett – Senior Performance Analyst. Email: alison.borrett@publicagroup.uk
Purpose	To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2023-24 Quarter Two (Q2).
Annexes	Annex A – Council Priorities Report; Annex B – Corporate Strategy Action Tracker; Annex C - Performance Indicator Report.
Recommendation.	That the Executive Resolves to: 1. Note the 2023/24 Q2 service performance report.
Corporate Priorities	• Putting Residents First • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Publica Directors, Assistant Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The new Council Plan was adopted in January 2023 and the Action Plan setting out how the priorities within the Council Plan will be delivered then followed. Additionally, following on from the external audit report in August 2023 which included a recommendation to review performance management to match the Council Plan and measure performance, a new performance framework has been developed to include a Corporate Action Plan Tracker and a Priority Report alongside the service output metrics.

1.2 A high-level Commissioning Framework was approved by the Executive in October 2020 which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica provides the necessary information, including a range of performance indicators, to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and standard.

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

2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT

2.1 Progress on actions in the Corporate Plan for Q2 include:

- The Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan has been created on the Modern.gov system but has not yet been published to the website.
- Outstanding information has been provided to consultants in relation to the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) alongside ongoing discussions with key stakeholders including landowners/developers with regards to development typologies to be tested and the approach to consultation with key stakeholders including landowners/developers.
- A Proactive Approach to Affordable Housing Delivery paper was presented and approved by the Executive on 15 November.
- Options for a new proposal of the new Net-Zero Carbon housing development at Waterbush Road, Chipping Norton is being worked up with Green Axis, the Planning service and Homes England.
- Improvement works to the bridges for the Deer Park South Access Project have been completed.
- Regulation 18 for the Local Plan is ongoing with four public exhibitions and three Town and Parish Council workshops undertaken during September and October.
- The planning application has been submitted in late August for the decarbonisation of Carterton Leisure Centre.
- Crowdfunding website, in collaboration with Spacehive, launched in October.

2.2 An overview of progress against all actions in the Corporate Plan is attached at Annex A and the Council Priority highlight report is attached at Annex B.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

3.1 Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (64.26% against a target of 53%)
- Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates collected (63.85% against a target of 57%)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (3.25 days against a target of 5 days)

- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.11% against a target of 0.35%)
- Customer Satisfaction (96.51% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (92.59% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (86.39% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (96.49% against a target of 80%)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (4313 memberships against a target of 3990 memberships and 179007 visits against a target of 184970)
- Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales (100% against a target of 95%)
- Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 90%)

3.2 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (23.98 days against a target of 20 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (9.83 days against a target of 4 days)

Q2's standalone figures show that Council Tax New Claims are being processed in 17.05 days, against the target of 20 days and Housing Benefit Changes of Circumstance are being processed in 6.07 days against a target of 4 days, however, as the targets are cumulative the rolling statistics are above target for average processing days.

(Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events however remains well within the target of 5 days.)

The Resolution: Following procedural changes to manage the work received directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and customers, we are now achieving a level of 60-70% of automation for the DWP work up from 40-45% in Q1 allowing for more focus on applications and other reported changes. The Universal Credit (UC) section of DWP is currently investigating improvements to the data that is sent through to local authorities via a Working Group. Once the improvements have been made there is the potential, in conjunction with our software supplier, to automate additional DWP work items.

The outstanding workload is reducing week by week and management of the resource to support the reduction is underway. The improvements to the automation system have freed up officer capacity to help reduce the backlog of claims. It is anticipated that the trial for reduced phone line opening hours will further free up capacity for officers to process claims.

Publica remains committed to further improving its performance and service delivery and is actively investing in the development and implementation of automation and self-serve options for customers. By providing accessible and efficient self-help tools, customers can address their queries and concerns independently, leading to a decrease in the need for repeated interactions with services. Publica will continue to monitor, assess, and report on the impact of improvement programs in reducing customer contact and enhancing operational efficiency.

Building Control Satisfaction (50% against a target of 90%)

Two surveys were returned during Q2, one of which was satisfied.

The Resolution: Each month, the service conducts telephone interviews with customers who have received a completion certificate during the month. The customer rates the service on helpfulness of staff, quality of technical advice and other information, responsiveness, value for money, and overall satisfaction. Given the low numbers of survey returns discussions are proposed with ICT to investigate an SMS notification service linking customers to an online survey. The service retains a strong hold in the share of the market.

Missed Bins per 100,000 (135.31 against a target of 120)

The number of missed bins per 100,000 has increased since last quarter but is lower than this time last year. This has been attributed to the retirement of an experienced crew member and the misreporting of Service Failures, which were incorrectly logged as access issues in the in-cab technology (Alloy).

The Resolution: Additional training with crews and supervisors to bring the misses down. Performance will be continuously under review by the Contract Monitoring Team.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (83.58% against a target of 90%)

The Councils performance has improved dramatically since last year but is lower than last quarter and below target.

The Resolution: Monthly performance meetings with the Assistant Director responsible for most of the answering teams have been set up, where issues are discussed to ensure the process runs efficiently and teams where delays are occurring can be identified and action taken to ensure targets are met. Tweaks to the current escalation process, has improved responses times so reducing delays and sessions lead by the Land Charges Team Leader has raised the awareness of the importance of responding to requests within the timescales set.

The service would benefit from all searchable records being digitised and standard procedures being in place for system use. This would in turn streamline searches. Further training and discussions with internal consultees are planned to ensure good practice. The migration of the local land charges register under the HMLR project was completed earlier this year.

Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (126 against a target of 138)

Eighty-one properties including 51 for affordable rent and 30 for shared ownership have been delivered at Woodstock, Witney, Stanton Harcourt, Eynsham during Q2 with forty-five delivered during Q1.

The Resolution: The service reports that completions fluctuate over the year. A housing development period is at least 12 months, with some schemes phased over several years. The slightly lower numbers are attributed to forecasted completions at Carterton and Enstone having been delayed. They are now due to be completed during Q3 and Q4.

3.3 A full report is attached at Annex C and should be looked at in conjunction with this report.

3.4 As previously agreed, where possible, broader benchmarking has been included in the full performance report to gain a more robust and insightful evaluation of performance. Where benchmarking data is not currently available or outdated, this is noted, and further investigations will be undertaken to look at options.

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.1 This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 6 December 2023; and any comments from the Committee will be recorded and shared with relevant Cabinet Members.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None specifically because of this report. However, a failure to meet statutory deadlines or standards in some services may expose the Council to legal challenge and/or financial liability.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 Contained in this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 None

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Contained in this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

(END)

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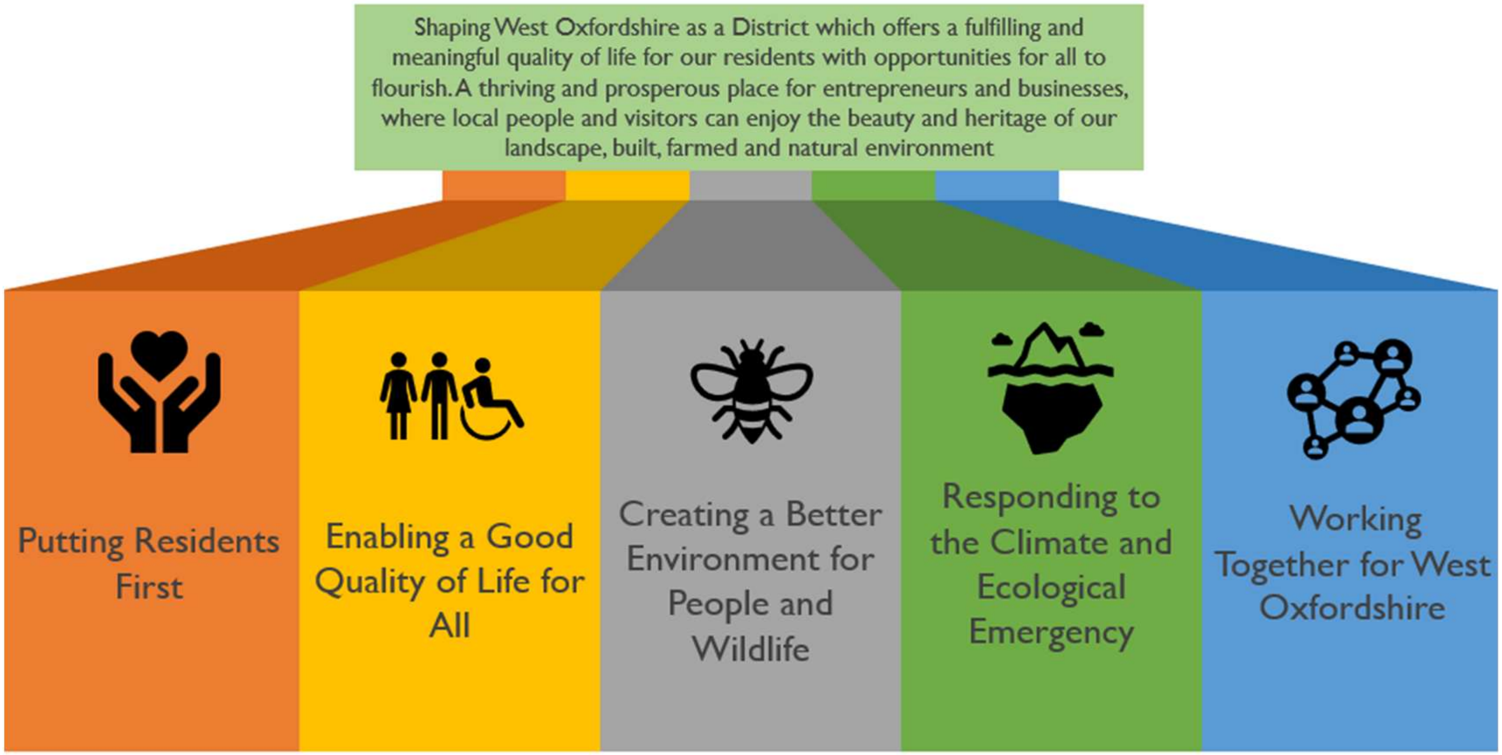
WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITIES REPORT

July 2023 - September 2023

Background

The Executive Action Plan was created to outline the steps needed to carry out the vision of the Executive after the new Council Plan was adopted in February 2023. In the Council Plan, the Executive looks to the district's future and establishes a vision for West Oxfordshire. In addition to updating the public on the status of each priority at regular meetings across the plan's four-year duration, a new performance framework has been created to offer timely updates for actions taken in relation to the priorities.



Putting Residents First

Actions we are taking

The Council is working in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, district and city councils, and town and parish councils and parish meetings to develop a shared charter. The charter will be a commitment of principles to support successful partnership working across all councils in Oxfordshire. An event has been hosted where representatives of our local councils were invited to share their reflections to help shape the content of the charter. An online survey providing further opportunity for councillors to shape the priorities, aims and principles of the charter is now live (https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ox-councils-charter). It is intended that the Charter will be brought to Executive for endorsement following a Town and Parish Forum to discuss this in March 2024.

Our House launched in 2018 and is run by Cottsway Housing in partnership with WODC and specialist support provider Aspire. Funded by the Government's Community Housing Fund, the project offers accommodation and support to up to 12 individuals, known as 'trainees', and offers assistance to get them back into employment, education, or occupational training. The Council continues to work together with partners and the community to combat homelessness and ensure safe and secure housing options for everyone. The current funding arrangements were set to expire in October 2023, but the Council's commitment to the safety and well-being of its residents has led to the decision to continue supporting this vital initiative for a further year, until November 2024.

Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All

Actions we are taking

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Government through the Planning Act 2008 to provide a fair and transparent means for ensuring that development contributes to the cost of the infrastructure it will rely upon, such as schools and roads. In March 2023, the Council's Executive agreed that fresh viability evidence should be commissioned to inform a new draft CIL charging schedule. The Council is actively moving forward with the adoption and implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Progress has been made with additional supporting information supplied to the appointed consultants, Dixon Searle Partnership, with discussions underway regarding the development typologies to be tested and the preferred approach to the consultation process with key stakeholders, including landowners and developers. A consultation survey is due to be sent out imminently by the Council on behalf of the consultants to gather input from the community for a well-informed and collaborative implementation of the CIL.

The Strategic Housing Project at the Council is undergoing significant developments with a proposal regarding internal management and modelling to be presented to the Executive in a paper compiled by the Publica Assistant Director of Planning and Sustainability during the November Executive session. Simultaneously, a Proactive Approach to Affordable Housing Delivery paper is set to go before the Executive on the 15th of November. As part of this strategic approach, a new role, the "Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager," is in the process of creation, with a completed job specification and recruitment planning underway. This new role will lead project work focused on identifying and advancing innovative ideas and models for increased affordable housing. The project includes assessing the scope for investment and modelling, exploring the best route for more interventionist housing delivery, developing business cases for existing Council-owned sites, and further exploration of modular building options. This comprehensive strategy underscores the council's commitment to addressing housing challenges through proactive planning and innovative solutions.

The Weavers Fold development of eight 2 and 3 bedroom zero carbon homes, offered at discount market sale, in the market town of Chipping Norton will be custom built allowing buyers to influence elements of the design and specification of their new home. Whilst delays have occurred with a project a new delivery model proposal, jointly developed by Green Axis and Homes England, is set to go to the Executive in November to resolve the next actions for the development.

The Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) is an innovative capital fund that supports local authorities in England to obtain housing for those who are unable to find settled accommodation on resettlement schemes. The Council were successful in their bid for funding to use to relieve pressures on short term accommodation with a longer term of objective to see the housing being used for more general affordable purposes. During Q2 the Council exchanged contracts between Cottsway and Miller Homes for delivery of an additional 23 affordable units within the district.

Salt Cross Garden Village is a proposed new standalone settlement, self-contained with its own village facilities, such as schools, community resources and employment opportunities. The initial garden village proposals set out in the Local Plan include 2,200 new homes and a new science business park which will give local people an alternative to driving to work in Oxford. Nearby Hanborough railway station together with a new Park and Ride facility to the north of Eynsham will give people an alternative to using their cars. The Area Action Plan (AAP) has undergone a thorough revision, encompassing modifications identified during the examination process in preparation for its adoption. After the Inspector's report was received, a legal challenge was submitted focusing on the conclusions reached by the Inspector in relation to the soundness of AAP Policy 2 – Net Zero Carbon Development. The case is to be heard in the High Court on 14 November 2023.

A Market Towns Study was commissioned as part of the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Levelling Up scheme to help identify issues to be addressed through the fund. The study recommended establishing town partnerships in order to identify detailed projects in each of the towns, for which £158,000 has been allocated to. Witney Town Partnership has been established as the first of the Town Partnerships in Quarter 2. The priorities for the Witney Town Partnership were agreed as:

- Develop a long term strategic plan for the Town
- Promote the town to increase footfall
- Improve wayfinding and signage

The latter is being informed by a detailed audit of signage and wayfinding issues currently underway. Officers from both planning and parking teams are involved to ensure that any proposals will be acceptable in planning terms and also to tie up with existing WODC work to update carparking signage in Witney.

Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife

Actions we are taking

The Council has committed to the preparation of a new Local Plan covering the period up to 2041. The emerging plan is currently at the 'Regulation 18' stage of plan preparation where views are sought on the content of the plan and different options and alternatives considered and tested. An initial public consultation 'Your Voice Counts' took place from August – October 2022 seeking general views on what sort of issues the new plan should focus on. More recently, a further public consultation took place from 30 August – 25 October 2023 and sought specific views on potential draft objectives for the new plan along with different scenarios for the potential future pattern for growth and ideas/opportunities for how land might be used across the District. The consultation was held predominantly online via the Council's digital engagement platform citizenlab (https://yourvoice.westoxon.gov.uk/en-GB/) but also included a number of 'in-person' events. 225 individuals and stakeholder organisations responded through citizenlab and a further 180 representations were received via email/letter. Further public consultation will take place in the new year as the Local Plan moves forward through further Regulation 18 consultation. It is anticipated that this will comprise a series of preferred policy approaches building on the consultation feedback to date and emerging technical evidence on issues such as housing need.

A Biodiversity Land Management Plan has been created in collaboration with Ubico which aims to establish habitat enhancements, comprising decreasing mowing frequency, establishing urban meadows, adjusting floodplain meadow management, implementing invasive species control, and addressing subsidence issues. Ubico successfully concluded summer works of invasive species and meadow management. A review of the summer and winter activities has been undertaken which highlighted the challenges in the rise of the volume of grass arisings and addressing the Madley pond management intricacies.

The Deer Park South Access Project is progressing with infrastructure improvements designed to enhance public access to the woodland adjacent to the strategic development area with the installation of two new bridges over the Colwell Brook. Footpath improvements are scheduled, and the contractor is due to visit during Q3 to explore ways to enhance access from the bridleway to the designated view place. Additionally, the project team is collaborating with a local artist and local schools to craft a woodland trail which provides an opportunity for young people in the local area to influence the shaping of this space.

Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Actions we are taking

In June 2019, the Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and pledged to become a carbon-neutral council by 2030. In January 2020, the Council published a report on Climate Action for West Oxfordshire which set out a proposed framework for developing a Carbon Action Plan to deliver the Councils carbon-neutral commitment and developing a Climate Change Strategy for West Oxfordshire.

The decarbonisation of Council owned buildings continues with funding secured, via the Local Carbon Skills Fund, for heat decarbonisation plans at Elmfield Council Offices and Welch Way. Commissioned work includes the preparation of a heat decarbonisation plan for Windrush Leisure Centre, aligning with the objectives of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 3c (PSDS3c) to return leisure centre emissions to Scope 1. Under the previous phase of the scheme the Council secured funding for the works to Carterton Leisure Centre, focusing on carbon reduction through the replacement of the heating and hot water system with a low-carbon alternative and the expansion of on-site solar PV with a planning application submitted in late August.

The Council is working on a Carbon Action Plan for 2030, covering scope 3 emissions, district carbon budgets, route maps to net zero, and actionable steps. The plan, still in draft, underwent market testing for the Climate Change Strategy's carbon baseline. Reflecting its sustainability commitment, the Council is testing the Climate Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT) with the aim of making it a mandatory requirement, embedding climate and nature considerations into decision-making processes.

The business case and Council investment for solar PV and battery storage at the Council's offices at Woodgreen and two other tenanted site was agreed by Executive and Council in July. System design discussions are now well underway with the appointed installer, with the expectation of installation before the end of the year. The installation of electric vehicle charge points are delayed but ongoing with a funding application submitted for the charging points at Woodgreen.

The Greenlight initiative, a nature and online hub fostering community action for a greener future, was successfully launched on July 17, 2023, incorporating a greenspace competition, Q&A sessions, and local group events.

The Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) is countywide initiative aimed at enhancing energy efficiency and promoting low carbon heating solutions, particularly targeting low-income households residing in the least energy-efficient off-gas grid homes. The council, in collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council, are highlighting the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) to those residents that may be eligible with communications to residents outlining the Welcome the Warmth Oxfordshire Scheme.

Working Together for West Oxfordshire

Actions we are taking

The Community Infrastructure Fund, hosted on the Westhive platform, https://www.spacehive.com/movement/westhive/, has been introduced specifically to revitalise and grow local infrastructure as part of the government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund Levelling Up scheme by offering capital grants of up to £20,000 or 50% of the projects crowdfunding target. With a generous budget of £40,000 this financial year - £226,000 in total over two years - this fund will back projects that restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging and contribute positively to health and wellbeing. The Council will be encouraging submissions of projects that champion environmental sustainability, support those who are most vulnerable in our communities, and those that face exclusion, whether due to mental health, physical or mental disability, or financial hardship. There will also be a focus on projects brought forward by or designed to meet the needs of young people, as part of the Council's commitment to empowering young voices. A well attended project creators workshop was hosted by the Spacehive team to inform potential applicants how to develop a project and secure funds to enable project delivery. The Council will pledge up to £10,000 for eligible projects alongside monies pledged from the wider public via the platform.

Funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Wild Oxfordshire, a charity which seeks to create a more natural, resilient, and biodiverse Oxfordshire for the benefit of all, is working with Officers to update a Biodiversity Toolkit that will provide guidance for Town and Parish Councils wishing to manage their land in nature-friendly ways. Three pilot projects in Asthall, Eynsham and Filkins & Broughton Poggs will be used to demonstrate the toolkit in action and produce case studies which will assist other parishes to work towards nature recovery through the management of their land.

WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Corporate Strategy Action Tracker

		Our Focus	Actions	Quarter 2 Update	Start Date	Date Due	Status	Executive Member	Link Officer	Updates Provided by
1.1	**Putting Residents First**	The Council will listen and act in the best interests of residents by: -Being an outward facing, accessible, inclusive and open Council, improving our use of technology to increase understanding and access to what we do, how we work and the decisions we take -Providing easy to use platforms for public consultations that are effective, accessible and timely so that the voice of residents can be heard in planning and other Council decisions -Positively engaging with and listening to locally elected representatives on Town and Parish Councils -Actively seeking the voice of the seldom heard, including those of young people, to understand their particular needs and ensure that the Council is taking decisions that meet these needs.	Explore how the Council leads Youth Engagement, ensuring youth are engaged across the wide range of activity it undertakes.				Not Scheduled to Start	Joy Aitman	Emmy-Lou Bossard / Heather McCulloch	
			Customer Experience Improvement Programme	HMLR project has been completed to target and has now become Business as Usual. Channel Choice project key milestones are being met through the Customer Services project which goes live week commencing 16th October 23. ICT are continuing to work to timeframes to complete projects in line with the spec. Open Portal changes are increasing.	01/07/2020	01/01/2024	On Target	All	Giles Hughes	Michelle Clifford
1.2	Putting Residents, Young and Old, at the Heart of What We Do	The Council will act with outstanding levels of transparency and accountability, with high standards of governance and trustworthiness.	Proposal to implement a robust system and process for: > the allocation of matters to the councils' forward plans > report preparation, consultation and approval > transparency and publication of decision making; and > decision tracking.	Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan has been created on the Modern.gov system (but not yet published to the website).	01/05/2021	31/12/2023	On Target	Andy Graham	Giles Hughes	Andrew Brown
1.3		The Council will actively manage Council budgets, delivering good levels of service through the wise and efficient use of funds available as well as enabling those budgets to grow so that the Council can take action towards the priorities of this Council Plan.	Procurement: Publica-wide project to embed climate, ecological and social value considerations in procurement processes to maximise the use of sustainable suppliers and support local businesses.				Ongoing	Alaric Smith	Ciaran O'Kane / Phil Martin	Ciaran O'Kane
1.4		The Council will seek to attract inward investment in our towns, villages and rural areas so that they can flourish and be sustained with new jobs and housing and infrastructure that are designed to meet the needs and aspirations of our current and future residents.					Ongoing		Will Barton / Chris Jackson	
2.1	**Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All**	Ensure the timely provision of built and green infrastructure which meets the needs of existing and incoming residents and that supports health and care to enable physical and mental well-being, community cohesion and delivers a high quality of life.	Adopt and implement CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy).	Further outstanding information provided to consultants. Discussions ongoing in relation to development typologies to be tested and approach to consultation with key stakeholders including landowners/developers. WODC has sent out survey information on behalf of consultants - responses currently awaited. Updated overall project timetable requested from consultant.	01/11/2019	31/08/2024	On Target	Charlie Maynard	Giles Hughes / Charlie Jackson / Chris Hargraves	Chris Hargraves
			Commission (Sport England) Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) through Max Associates to inform a West Oxfordshire Leisure, Health and Wellbeing Strategy which will define a more holistic leisure provision offer (inc. arts, culture, entertainment and sport). The SOPM will also inform the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (and Local Plan Review) and Town Centre regeneration plans.	Max Associates are currently working through stage 1 and 2 of the Strategic Outcomes Planning model. This involves stakeholder engagement, analysis of data and a review of the current leisure provision. We anticipate completing stage 1 by the end of the November, therefore I propose presenting the findings of the outcomes review at Informal executive early December. Leisure Net are in the process of developing the online residents survey which will go live in December. Stage 3 which is the determination of service and facility interventions will be developed in the early part of the new year, with the final report due to be received by the end of March 2024.	01/09/2023	01/04/24	On Target	Tim Sumner	Rachel Biles	Rachel Biles
			Explore opportunities for green investment for strategic development areas eg through the Carterton Masterplan and also through the Pan-Regional Partnership.	BE Group and Hyas have been commissioned to prepare a Strategic Plan for Carterton to feed into the Local Plan review process and also provide the Council with more general advice to inform actions through non-planning related activities. The consultants work will progress in three distinct phases: 1.Undertake a socio-economic profile for Carterton, including a SWOT analysis. 2.Prepare an action plan. 3.Prepare a delivery plan Phase 1 started with inception and site meetings together with scoping of communication plan and approach to stakeholder engagement . No specific work has been identified yet regarding opportunities around green investment.			Not Scheduled to Start	Tim Sumner, Andrew Prosser	Philippa Lowe	Philippa Lowe

			Explore how the Local Plan can address the issue of securing long term maintenance of green infrastructure on large SDA's.	The issue of stewardship and maintenance of community assets (including green infrastructure) was included as part of the recent informal (Regulation 18) consultation on the emerging Local Plan. The next step is to scope out what a relevant policy or policies might look like and what if any evidence is likely to be needed to support it at examination. Discussions are also ongoing in terms of maintenance and stewardship arrangements as part of S106 negotiations for a number of SDAs including West Eynsham.	31/08/2022	31/08/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Chris Hargraves	Chris Hargraves
			Consideration of community stewardship and maintenance of Strategic Development Areas – how do we enable this?	The issue of stewardship and maintenance of community assets (including green infrastructure) was included as part of the recent informal (Regulation 18) consultation on the emerging Local Plan. The next step is to scope out what a relevant policy or policies might look like and what if any evidence is likely to be needed to support it at examination. Discussions are also ongoing in terms of maintenance and stewardship arrangements as part of S106 negotiations for a number of SDAs including West Eynsham.	31/08/2022	31/08/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Chris Hargraves	Chris Hargraves
2.2		Work with Oxfordshire County Council and others to increase the opportunity for residents to travel around and beyond the District on foot or by bike, or on public transport, to reduce car dependence and benefit from the health and economic benefits of doing so.						Andrew Prosser?	Hannah Kenyon?	
2.3		Explore the scope for alternative means of delivering the range of homes in the District that meet the diverse needs of our communities, such as investment in tenures and sizes of homes that the market does not currently deliver enough of.	Strategic Housing Project: Internal management and modelling – proposals to be presented to Executive in paper compiled by Publica Assistant Director Planning and Sustainability to November Executive.	Proactive Approach to Affordable Housing Delivery paper going to Exec 15th November.	01/04/2023	15/11/2023	On Target	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	Charlie Jackson
			Strategic Housing Project: Assessing scope for investment and modelling.	New role "Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager" to be created. Job specification complete and recruitment process being planned. Anticipate advertising in December, following Exec on 15th November. Once in post this new role will lead project work to identify and take forward new ideas and models to deliver more affordable housing.	01/04/2023		Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Alaric Smith, Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	Charlie Jackson
			Strategic Housing Project: Overview of modelling options and delivery. Proposed approach to the November Executive.	Proactive Approach to Affordable Housing Delivery paper going to Exec 15th November.	01/04/2023		On Target	Tim Sumner, Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	Charlie Jackson
			Further exploration of the best route to be more interventionist in housing delivery via direct provision – clarity needed over the desired objectives of establishing the council owned housing company or pursue an alternative route eg via a Joint Venture (OxPlace/Oxfordshire wide).	New role "Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager" to be created. Job specification complete and recruitment process being planned. Anticipate advertising in December, following Exec on 15th November. Once in post this new role will lead project work to identify and take forward new ideas and models to deliver more affordable housing.	01/04/2023		Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	Charlie Jackson
			Development of business cases for existing Council owned sites – initial focus should be on Woodford Way – a housing scheme which integrates carparking (what is needed/tie in with EVPC). Key landowners/development partners.	New role "Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager" to be created. Job specification complete and recruitment process being planned. Anticipate advertising in December, following Exec on 15th November. Once in post this new role will lead project work to identify and take forward new ideas and models to deliver more affordable housing.	01/04/2023		Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Geoff Saul	Andrew Turner	Charlie Jackson
			Further exploration of modular building – how, where and with whom including visits manufacturers. To understand options for delivery.	New role "Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager" to be created. Job specification complete and recruitment process being planned. Anticipate advertising in December, following Exec on 15th November. Once in post this new role will lead project work to identify and take forward new ideas and models to deliver more affordable housing.	01/04/2023		Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	Charlie Jackson
			Emergency accommodation – Acquisition of - consider the balance – single/couple and family accommodation).				Not Scheduled to Start	Geoff Saul	Frank Wilson / Jon Dearing	
			Completion of housing development at Walterbush Road, Chipping Norton.	New proposal developed with Green Axis, planning and Homes England. Report being considered at November Executive.	01/10/2021	31/07/2023	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Geoff Saul	Andrew Turner	Andrew Turner
			Deliver the Local Authority Housing Fund as a means to relieve pressures on short term accommodation and bridging hotels with a longer term of objective to see the housing being used for more general affordable purposes.	Contracts exchanged between Cottsway and Miller Homes for delivery of an additional 23 affordable units supported by £<>m of government funding.	01/04/2023	31/09/2024	On Target	Geoff Saul	Jon Dearing	Jon Dearing
2.4	**The Council will be a hive of activity to help build and support thriving towns and villages that provide residents with a high quality of life by supporting a vibrant local economy, homes and infrastructure that meet people's needs, excellent health and wellbeing and ensuring equal access to opportunity for all.**	Work with partners to support a vibrant local economy which gives residents the opportunity to prosper and fulfil their ambitions through secure jobs and exciting careers, entrepreneurship and developing new skills to participate in and contribute to the local economy.	Work with Carterton Town Council and other relevant stakeholders to identify economic regeneration priorities for the town and immediate area following completion of the UKSPF funded Carterton Strategic/Master Plan.	BE Group and Hyas have been commissioned to prepare a Strategic Plan for Carterton to feed into the Local Plan review process and also provide the Council with more general advice to inform actions through non-planning related activities. The consultants work will progress in three distinct phases: 1.Undertake a socio-economic profile for Carterton, including a SWOT analysis. 2.Prepare an action plan. 3.Prepare a delivery plan Phase 1 started with inception and site meetings together with scoping of communication plan and approach to stakeholder engagement .			Not Scheduled to Start	Duncan Enright	Will Barton / Chris Hargraves	
			Strategy and plan for reinvigorating the District's Charter Markets	Report to December Executive			On Target	Duncan Enright	Will Barton	
			Take an active role as member of Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and engagement with neighbouring LVEP's.	Lead role in Cotswolds Plus LVEP - eight work streams agreed with associated action plans being drawn up for each activity area: sustainability (transport & active travel); sustainability (business practices & biodiversity); accessibility & inclusion; skills & training; research & data; business support; travel trade; conferences and meetings			On Target	Duncan Enright	Chris Jackson	Chris Jackson

			Set future project priorities for Council and Stakeholders to secure the long term viability of our Market Towns via enhancements inc wayfinding & signage, public realm and support for independent retailers and appropriate market promotions/attractions.	The Market Towns Study report received from the consultant was of poor quality and lacked the level of detail requested however the next stage works to form town partnerships had begun for Witney and Chipping Norton.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Duncan Enright	Will Barton	Will Barton
			Oxfordshire County Council improvements to Witney Town Centre linked to Marriotts Walk redevelopment where appropriate.	Vegan market in Marriotts walk taken place. Chirstams market in Marriotts planned for December. Work to deliver food and drink festival in the spring under way			On Target	Duncan Enright	Will Barton	Will Barton
2.5		Support the retention of existing and development of new services and facilities that contribute to the local economy, community wellbeing and cohesion.	The commissioning of the Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (through Max Associates) to inform the development of a West Oxfordshire Leisure, Health and Wellbeing Strategy.				Not Scheduled to Start	Joy Aitman		
			Guide the future delivery of Salt Cross new garden village and associated infrastructure to enable delivery of Salt Cross Science Park.	**Area Action Plan (AAP)** - revised AAP incorporating modifications made at examination completed in preparation for adoption. (Subject to Net Zero outcome of High Court action by community against Inspector modifications made - 14 & 15 November 2023). **Outline Planning Application (OPA)** - WODC have agreed a programme with GDL to review the July 2020 (pre AAP examination) application. GDL awaiting certainty around the AAP before mobilising design teams. **Housing** - Salt Cross self build / community led affordable homes toolkit / SPD including design code underway. **Stewardship** - positive discussions with GDL / EPC commenced October 2023. EPC to update their Sec 106 ask (a number of items have now been delivered.) **Reporting to Homes England** - Capacity funding underspend reported. **A40 Improvements** - revised / reduced scheme being negotiated by OCC with Homes England (advised by Homes England) to meet agreed budget / timescales. OCC to present revised scheme to OCC officers & outline impacts of the reduced scheme on strategic housing delivery / viability.	01/01/2018	31/12/2034	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Duncan Enright	Andrea Clenton / Will Barton	Andrea Clenton
			Marriotts Walk – implementation of CBRE recommendations inc. securing new tenants, public realm improvements & making enhanced use of the square.	Work is underway with CBRE recommendations inc. securing new tenants and marketing			On Target	Duncan Enright	Jasmine McWilliams	Andrew Turner
			Development of the Carterton Strategic/Master Plan to regeneration the town and in doing so redressing balance between housing development with investment in the town centre, leisure and culture facilities, community space and business opportunities. Will seek to determine the best way to maximise the economic benefit of the RAF's largest airbase for the town and immediate area.	BE Group and Hyas have been commissioned to prepare a Strategic Plan for Carterton to feed into the Local Plan review process and also provide the Council with more general advice to inform actions through non-planning related activities. The consultants work will progress in three distinct phases: 1.Undertake a socio-economic profile for Carterton, including a SWOT analysis 2.Prepare an action plan 3.Prepare a delivery plan Phase 1 started with inception and site meetings together with scoping of communication plan and approach to stakeholder engagement Work is underway and there is an expectation that a draft report will be available by the end of November. Consultants have been asked to meet with parish councils individually rather than as a group.	01/02/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Alaric Smith, Charlie Maynard, Geoff Saul, Tim Sumner	Philippa Lowe	Mikki Liddiat
3.1	Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife	Work with others, and fulfil our statutory obligations, to ensure that land, air and water support biodiverse habitats, reduce pollution and bring about nature recovery to the District, putting it at the forefront of local decision making.	Ubico Grounds Maintenance Contract – review contract with aim of securing both biodiversity enhancements and budgetary savings.		01/03/2025	01/03/2026	Not Scheduled to Start	Lidia Arciszewska	Rachel Crookes / Bill Oddy	
			Biodiversity Land Management Plans - Working with Ubico to change land management processes across key WODC sites, for example reduced mowing frequency, creation of urban meadows, changes to floodplain meadow management, invasive species action, subsidence works, to improve them for both wildlife and people.	Ubico completed summer works, including invasive species work and meadow cut and collecting. Summer/winter review also completed, discussed challenge of large volume of grass arisings and Madley pond management. Winter works confirmed.	01/02/2022	01/03/2026	On Target	Lidia Arciszewska	Rachel Crookes / Bill Oddy	Rachel Crookes
			Support DEFRA funded Landscape Recovery Project (contiguous with the Evenlode and Windrush Catchments) in partnership with the North East Cotswolds Farmer Cluster and the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership.	Initial meeting with the NE Cotswold Farmer Cluster and Local Nature Partnership in July 23 to understand the scope of the project and how WODC can support its delivery.			On Target	Lidia Arciszewska	Janice Bamsey / Chris Hargraves	
			Windrush in Witney funding bid, in partnership with Wychwood Forest Trust - Landscape-scale enhancements across the Witney Floodplains, working with OCC, WTC and Wychwood Forest Trust to introduce grazing, improve floral diversity, pollard willow trees, establishment of a new volunteer group and delivery of a series of community engagement / rural skills training events. Linked to 3.5.	Expression of Interested accepted by Heritage Lottery Fund.	01/05/2022	01/03/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Nick Dalby / Rachel Crookes	Rachel Crookes
3.2		Recognise and support the vital role of farming in natural ecosystem conservation, local food production and economic resilience, and the role that environmentally sustainable farming can play in achieving this.	Engaging with farmers as part of a wider consideration of the District's rural economy. How can WODC work to support(within its powers) a strong local rural economy, including diversification and the visitor economy.				Not Scheduled to Start	Lidia Arciszewska, Andrew Prosser	Will Barton / Chris Jackson	

3.3	**The Council will be a progressive custodian of our environmental resources, supporting a healthy natural landscape and functioning ecosystem which is rich in wildlife and habitats that are enjoyed by and benefit all.**	Help people to connect with nature by improving understanding of and public access to green spaces and the countryside.	Deer Park South Access Project – Infrastructure improvements to enhance public access to woodland adjacent to strategic development area.	There has been a slight concern that the bridges were not high enough, but the contractors have resolved this by removing some slabs. There is already good feedback from residents on the improvements. Next steps: The footpath contractor is due to visit the site and look at ways to improve access from the bridle way to the view place.The team are working with a local artist to design a woodland trail in collaboration with the two local schools. An information plaque will also be installed but this will go in after the trail.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Duncan Enright	Rachel Crookes	Mikki Liddiatt
3.4		Be an active participant in the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and contribute to the production of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to establish priorities and map proposals for action to drive nature's recovery, achieve Biodiversity Net Gain and provide wider environmental benefits specific to West Oxfordshire.	Officer group to convene with Local Nature Partnership-maintain relationship with LNP and work with partners to develop workstreams.	Officers are attending LNP sub-groups including Policy, Biodiversity advisory group, BNG group, Natural capital/green finance, LNRS and Health group	01/07/2022	01/07/2025	On Target	Lidia Arciszewska, Duncan Enright	Janice Bamsey / Rachel Crookes	Janice Bamsey / Rachel Crookes
			Explore the potential for the Council to acquire land for Biodiversity Net Gain and nature-based carbon sequestration.				Not Scheduled to Start	Andrew Prosser	Frank Wilson / Hannah Kenyon	
3.5		Work with others to facilitate environmentally sensitive flood management of our river catchments.	Support of the Catchment Partnerships including the promotion (where appropriate) of other water quality campaigning groups. Sewerage and Water Agency Group continue to facilitate (Links with the Pan Regional Partnership – Scoping and Modelling Work).				Not Scheduled to Start	Lidia Arciszewska, Andy Graham		
			Delivery of the Local Plan – overview including how can the site allocations process through the Local Plan review play a positive role in water management? Coordination of policy. Linked to 4.2.	8-week informal (Regulation 18) consultation remains ongoing. Two public exhibitions held with 2 more to come. Town and Parish Council workshops arranged for 10 and 18 October. Next meeting of Member Working Group due to be held on 18 October. Officer working group expected to meet in November. Supporting evidence base in preparation including appointment of consultants for GTAA (countywide study). Timing of consultation is such that next stage (preferred policy approach) is now likely to slip to the new year).	01/06/2022	31/12/2024	On Target	Charlie Maynard	Will Barton / Chris Hargraves	Will Barton / Chris Hargraves
4.1	**Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency**	Drive down carbon emissions from Council operations including leisure, waste and street cleansing and running of the Council's estate, and in so doing lead by example to inspire others to take action to collectively reduce the overall carbon emissions of the District.	Decarbonisation of council owned buildings, including leisure centres and sports pavilions – secure external PSDS funding and extend the MEES project to include the full decarbonisation of tenanted buildings.	Secured funds for heat decarbonisation plans for Elmfield Council Offices and Welch Way from the Low Carbon Skills Fund and commissioned the work. Prepared for the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 3c by commissioning a heat decarbonisation plan for Windrush Leisure Centre and returning leisure centre emissions to Scope 1in the carbon account..			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser, Dan Levy, Alaric Smith	Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
			PSDS 3b funded Carterton Leisure Centre decarbonisation - Carbon reduction through the replacement of the heating and hot water system of the building with a low-carbon alternative and increasing the amount of solar PV on site.	Planning application submitted in late August. Work is progressing with the preparation of the IGP (investment grade proposal) Options to resolve roof leak being addressed.			Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Andrew Prosser, Tim Sumner	Claire Locke	Claire Locke / Andrew Turner
			Waste Vehicle Strategy - Supporting the Waste team on the development of the strategy to reduce emissions from the Council's waste vehicle fleet.				Not Scheduled to Start	Lidia Arciszewska	Simon Anthony / Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
			Carbon Action Plan to 2030 and Climate Change Strategy to 2050 - Update of the Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change strategy to include scope 3 emissions, district carbon budgets, route maps to net zero, and actions.	Drafted Carbon Action Plan. Tested the market for the carbon baseline for the Climate Change Strategy.	01/07/23	30/6/2024	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
			Climate Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT) – Develop the tool as a mandatory requirement on projects so as to embed climate and nature considerations in council decision making.	Reviewed the pilot phase and drafted recommendations to make the assessment mandatory.	01/02/2023	01/04/2024	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
			Solar PV project for tenanted buildings - A Publica-wide long-term project to install rooftop solar panels on council owned buildings, increasing the amount of renewable energy generated in the District.	The project team are currently preparing a financial appraisal report for each site for the CFO to review and approve.	01/08/2022	01/12/2023	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Andrew Turner	Andrew Turner
4.2		Encourage the use of nature based solutions to sequester carbon and combat the risks arising from climate change at a river catchment scale, such as restoration of meadows and trees to reduce flooding and improve water quality.	Biodiversity Action Plan – Develop and deliver workstreams to restore nature and enhanced biodiversity in the District.	Scoped Biodiversity Action Plan, ensuring consistency between climate plans and strategies.	01/03/2023	01/03/2024	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Rachel Crookes	Rachel Crookes
4.3		Work with partner organisations and residents to facilitate the retrofit of carbon reduction measures in homes and businesses and pursue a drive to net zero carbon buildings in new developments through planning policy	Consider how proactive should WODC be in facilitating retrofit for the 'able to pay' market.	Contributed to the Innovate UK bid preparation for the FutureFit Oxfordshire project to develop a standard for One Stop Shops. Bid was submitted on 5/9/23.			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
			Greenlight – nature and online hub to facilitate community action for a greener future.	Greenlight launched on 17/7/23 with greenspace competition, Q&A, local groups and events.			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
			Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) project for tenanted buildings - A Publica-wide review of tenanted buildings to determine what measures are needed to bring the EPC rating up to a B or above by 2030.	Executive paper to be brought forward on options for assessment of buildings.	01/07/2023		On Target	Andrew Prosser	Jasmine McWilliams	Jasmine McWilliams
			Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) - A countywide scheme to upgrade energy efficiency and low carbon heating for low-income householders in the worst performing off-gas grid homes.	Working in partnership with OCC to deliver HUG 2 funding. OCC led a mailout to residents and door knocking campaign to residents in the Dsitrict who had already received the letter. WODC comms followed the Welcome the Warmth social media accounts.	01/06/2023	01/03/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon	Louise Croot

4.4		Encourage renewable energy generation at appropriate sites in the District, improving local energy and economic resilience and supporting the community benefits that this resilience will bring.	Explore opportunities with partners to encourage renewable energy within the District.	Contributed to the Eynsham Community Action Plan for Zero Carbon Energy. Started to examine local area energy planning with others, including links to the Local Plan review.			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser	Giles Hughes / Claire Locke / Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
4.5		Work with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver on our joint commitment to active travel and public transport, including through improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and better public transport services.	Install EV charging points across the District.	Prepared Oxfordshire Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure bid, in partnership with OCC and other councils. Woolgate - The contract is currently with the Legal team for review. Funding application has been made for Woodgreen - awaiting on DNO.	26/5/23	1/1/25	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
5.1	**Working Together for West Oxfordshire**	Target available Council grant budgets to proposals by other organisations that will deliver on Council priorities.	Enable delivery of agreed project interventions on Government approved Investment Plan under UKSPF and REPF.	Work underway. Update to Executive 15 November 23			On Target	Duncan Enright	Will Barton	Will Barton
			Successful implementation of new Grant Scheme: a) Crowdfunding, b) Community and Voluntary Sector Service Level Agreements and c) Youth initiatives.	**Crowdfunding** Working with Spacehive, our selected crowdfunding platform provider, the website has been built ready for launching during October 2023. A range of marketing and promotional has been produced to raise awareness of Westhive community crowdfunding. An all Member briefing was held on 27 September. **Community and Voluntary Sector Service Level Agreements** At its September meeting the Executive agreed the maximum SLA award will be £25,000 per annum, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The commissioning approach has been agreed and the application process designed. A launch event for interested organisations took place on 5 October. **Business Support Grants** In 2023/24 there is £140,000 in REPF capital funding that will be apportioned in 28 grants of £5,000. A meeting with Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit, took place on 20 September to work through regulatory requirements of the scheme.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Joy Aitman	Andy Barge	Andy Barge
5.2		Work with existing businesses and new start-ups to access support available to enable their success.								
5.3		Support Town and Parish Councils to represent their communities energetically and take action on issues important to their locality.	Towns and Parish Biodiversity project– UKSPF funded project to provide case studies for communities on how to enhance biodiversity in different habitats.	Wild Oxfordshire (WO) are the selected partners for this project, but the contract has not yet been signed. The issue lies with liability over workplace accidents. It was suggested that a waiver for participants may be a solution. WO have narrowed down their selection of parishes from 5 to 3. The write up of the demonstrator projects is due to happen over the Christmas period with the intention of scheduling walk-throughs in February 2024.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Rachel Crookes	Mikki Liddiatt
5.4	**The Council recognises that to deliver on our aspirations and the priorities in this Council Plan for West Oxfordshire, working collaboratively with others will be essential**	Support the Voluntary and Community Sector to continue to undertake activity which serves the needs of residents including established organisations and more informal groups working to address particular needs such as access to food, youth support and cultural provision.	Community Grants	**Crowdfunding** Working with Spacehive, our selected crowdfunding platform provider, the website has been built ready for launching during October 2023. A range of marketing and promotional has been produced to raise awareness of Westhive community crowdfunding. An all Member briefing was held on 27 September. **Community and Voluntary Sector Service Level Agreements** At its September meeting the Executive agreed the maximum SLA award will be £25,000 per annum, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The commissioning approach has been agreed and the application process designed. A launch event for interested organisations took place on 5 October.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Joy Aitman	Andy Barge	Andy Barge
5.5		Make a dedicated effort to further understand and meet the needs of our young people and support their mental health, including children, teenagers and young adults leaving school, entering the world of work and/or seeking to set up home in the District.	Focussed programme of engagement with young people, and other groups, on mental and physical health, local facilities and spaces for young people, to ensure future leisure, sport, culture and arts provision in the District best provides for these.				Not Scheduled to Start	Joy Aitman, Tim Sumner		
			Have Your Say Events – focussed topic event for young people.				Not Scheduled to Start	Joy Aitman	Emmy-Lou Bossard / Heather McCulloch	
5.6		Look to invest in the building of homes that meet the diverse housing needs of our residents at all stages of their lives, including for those seeking to downsize or affordable social housing.								

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT:

July 2023 - September 2023

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A note on performance benchmarking

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

When we embark on performance benchmarking, it is important to understand that we are often looking at one aspect of performance i.e. the level of performance achieved. It does not take into account how services are resourced or compare in terms of quality or level of service delivered, for example, how satisfied are residents and customers? Furthermore, each council is unique with its own vision, aim and priorities, and services operate within this context.

Benchmarking has been included wherever possible and additional investigations are underway to provide it for those metrics that are missing comparisons.

Overall Performance

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Council's performance has been mixed, with commendable progress in Tax Collection Rates and and Planning Determination Times. However, the cost of living crisis continues to result in increased customer contact for certain services. The challenging economic situation has put additional strain on residents, leading to an upsurge in queries and concerns.

There are some indicators that are exhibiting a negative trend including the Missed Bins per 100,000 and Official Land Charge Search Times.

The Council remains committed to further improving its performance and service delivery and actively investing in the development and implementation of automation and self-serve options for customers. By providing accessible and efficient self-help tools, customers can address their queries and concerns independently, leading to a decrease in the need for repeated interactions with services. It will continue to monitor and assess the impact of improvement programs in reducing customer contact and enhancing operational efficiency.

Note: Currently, the Waste Data Flow Data is received by the data team from Oxfordshire County Council, but it is a quarter behind. Therefore, the narrative and graphs within this report pertain to Q1 2023/2024 (April - June).

Percentage of Council Tax Collected

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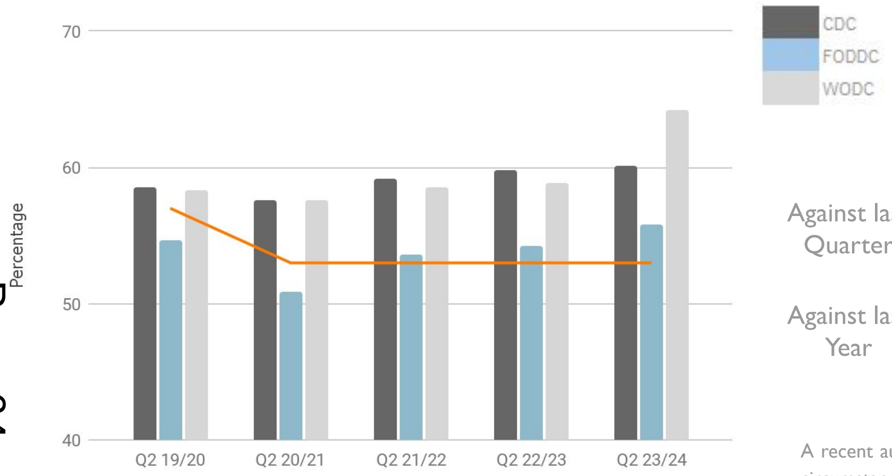


Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	N/A	N/A	N/A
Against last Year			

Improved since last year

Q2 Target
(high is good)

53%

2023/24 Target

99%

How do we compare?

Council tax collected by 31 March 2023 as a % of amount collectable - SPARSE
There are 181 district councils in England. All 3 councils are predominantly rural

2022-23 Benchmark	%	District Rank	County Rank	Predominantly Rural Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	97.97	52/181	3/6	32/72	Second
Forest	97.76	70/181	4/6	40/72	Second
West	97.12	94/181	4/5	49/72	Third

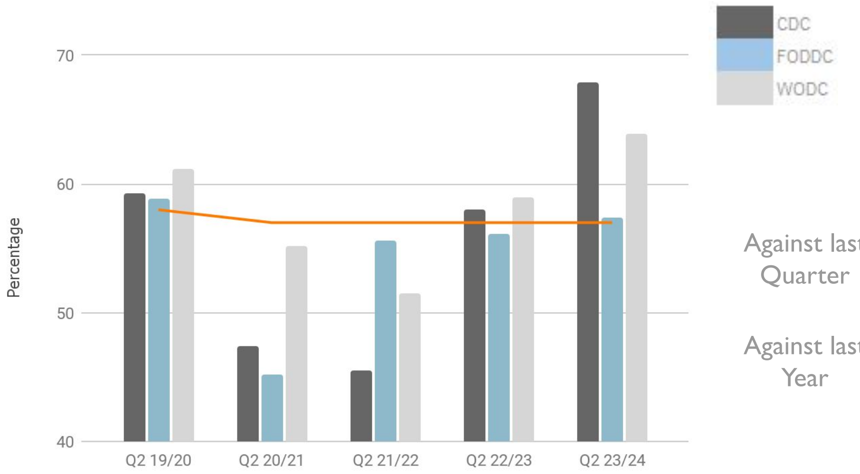
A recent audit of the Council Tax Services indicated that a significant sum of arrears had accumulated during challenging circumstances associated with the pandemic. The recovery of these arrears had been suspended to support customers in difficult financial circumstances and to facilitate the adoption of a new Council Tax platform enabling self service payments. The recovery process has now been reinstated and the current cycle is up to date, resulting in significant improvements in the collection of those arrears through manageable payment schedules for those residents affected.
The service reports progress in collecting previous year's debt. The below table shows the percentage of aged debt that has been collected and the total outstanding:

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	Total Outstanding
WODC	10.44%	16.57%	16.01%	£5,233,646

By the end of March 2023, authorities in England had collected £35.7 billion of council tax that related to 2022-23 (plus an additional £800 million of aged debt) and achieved an average in-year collection rate of 96.0%, an increase of 0.2 percentage points over 2021-22.

The collection rates for Q2 are well above target and are the highest they have been since prior to 2018/19.

Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected



Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	N/A	N/A	N/A
Against last Year	⇧	⇧	⇧

Improved since last year

Q2 Target
(high is good)

57%

2023/24 Target

99%

How do we compare?

Non Domestic Rates collected by 31 March 2023 as a % of amount collectable - SPARSE
There are 181 district councils in England. All 3 councils are predominantly rural

2022-23 Benchmark	%	District Rank	County Rank	Predominantly Rural Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	94.07	177/181	6/6	71/72	Bottom
Forest	95.97	161/181	5/6	67/72	Bottom
West	98.39	53/181	2/5	20/72	Second

The current recovery cycle is up to date with the service reporting progress in collecting previous year's debt. The below table shows the percentage of aged debt that has been collected and the total outstanding:

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	Total Outstanding
WODC	33.49%	45.53%	17.46%	£1,240,917

The arrears outstanding for previous year's debts for Business Rates include some data where the amount outstanding now is more than that brought forward at the beginning of the financial year. There are some processes which can increase the amount that needs to be collected, such as Rateable Value changes and amendments to liability. As Business Rates deals with large amounts of money, the outcome can outweigh the amount that has been collected.

The collection rates for Q2 are well above target and are the highest they have been since prior to 2018/19.

Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims

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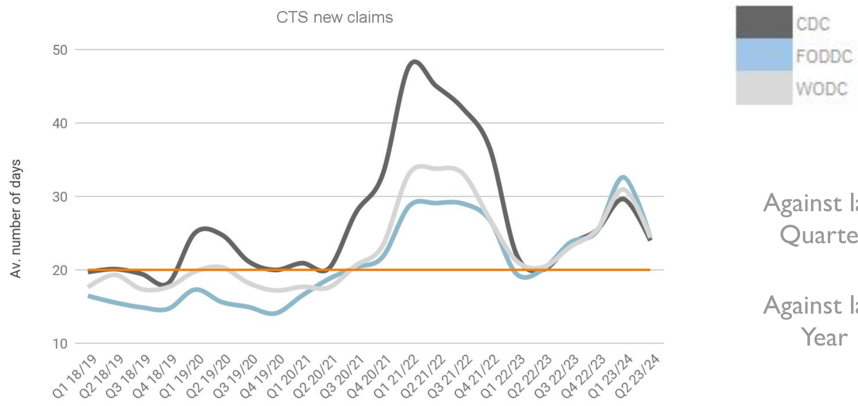

Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	↓	↓	↓
Against last Year	↑	↑	↑

Improved since last quarter but increased since last year

Q2 Target
(low is good)

20

How do we compare?

Gov.uk produces tables to show a snapshot of the number of CTS claimants at the end of each financial year. The below table shows number of claimants at the end of March 2023 and the percentage change from Q4 2022 for each authority, plus the data for all authorities in England

	Number of Claimants at end of March 203	Percentage Change since March 2022
Cotswold	1,926	-0.7%
Forest	2,240	-4.1%
West	1,745	-2.0%
England	1,393,323	-1.9%

The processing stats for new CTS claims for Q2 are below the target of 20 days with West averaging 17.05 days, however, given the target is cumulative, the rolling stats are above target. It should be noted that the cumulative processing time decreased by 6.54 days from last quarter.

Following procedural changes to manage the work received directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and customers, we are now achieving a level of 60-70% of automation for the DWP work up from 40-45% in Q1 allowing for more focus on applications and other reported changes. The Universal Credit (UC) section of DWP is currently investigating improvements to the data that is sent through to local authorities via a Working Group. Once the improvements have been made there is the potential, in conjunction with our software supplier, to automate additional DWP work items.

The outstanding workload is reducing week by week and management of the resource to support the reduction is underway. The improvements to the automation system have freed up officer capacity to help reduce the backlog of claims. It is anticipated that the trial for reduced phone line opening hours will further free up capacity for officers to process claims, however, pressure on the team remains high.

It is worth making clear that, especially for HB COCs, our main sources of HB changes come about after Christmas and in early January when we receive uprating information & rent increases from housing associations. The service indicates that processing days will reduce, but it will not be a rapid process.

Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events

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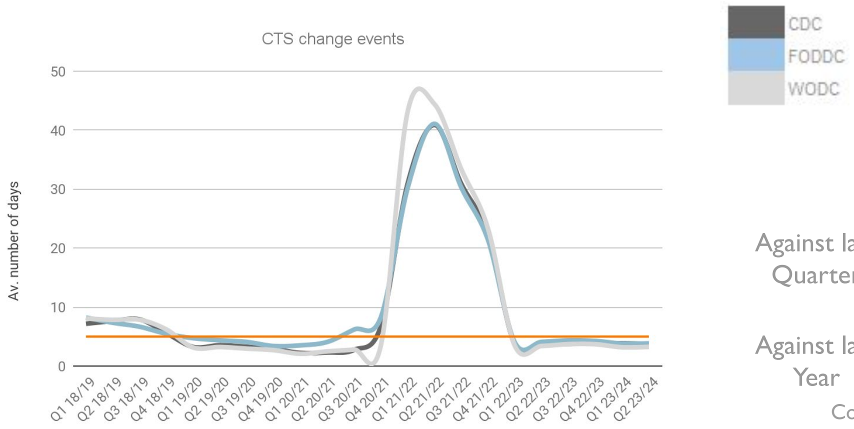

Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇩	⇧	⇧
Against last Year	⇧	⇩	⇩

Cotswold - Improved since last quarter but increased since last year
Forest and West - Increased since last quarter but improved since last year

Q2 Target
(low is good)

5

Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events remains well within the target of 5 days. Although there has been a small increase from last quarter, the change is only marginal (0.07).

How do we compare?
Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances

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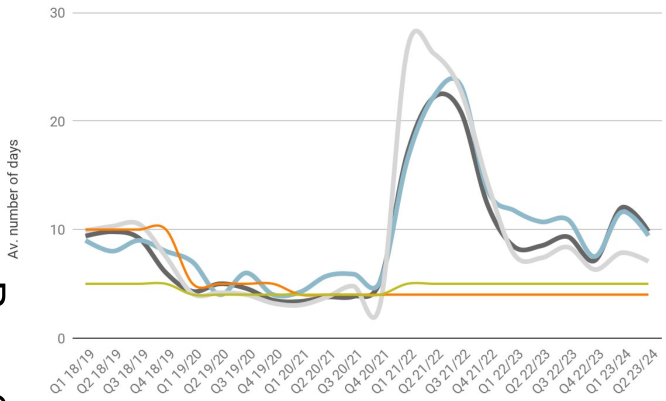

Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇩	⇩	⇩
Against last Year	⇧	⇩	⇨

Q2 Target
(low is good)

4

Cotswold - Improved since last quarter but increased since last year
Forest - Improved since last quarter and last year
West - Improved since last quarter and slightly improved since last year

How do we compare?

SPARSE provide benchmarking data on the speed of processing for HB CoCs. The latest data set is 2022-23

2022-23 Benchmark	Days	District Rank	County Rank	Predominantly Rural Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	7	143/176	2/5	59/70	Bottom
Forest	8	155/176	3/5	63/70	Bottom
West	6	137/176	4/4	57/70	Third

Please see [Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims.]
The observation for HB CoCs should be read in conjunction with the observation for HB CTS new claims and changes indicators as the work is performed by the same team.
At the end of Q2, the average days to process HB changes decreased to 6.07 days, however, since the target is cumulative, the ongoing statistics show higher figures. Although above target, the reduction in HB Change applications means any delay in assessing an application due to outstanding evidence required has a more visible impact to the average processing days. As a significant amount of changes that affect HB are usually received during Q4 we may potentially see a decrease to the processing times.
It should be noted that the number of expected changes that would affect Housing Benefit are reducing significantly as can be seen by the number of HB changes assessed compared to the number of CTS changes assessed.

HB Changes - 920
CTS Changes - 3141

Managed migration of Housing Benefit to Universal Credit is being rolled out from April 2024 across the country.

Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay

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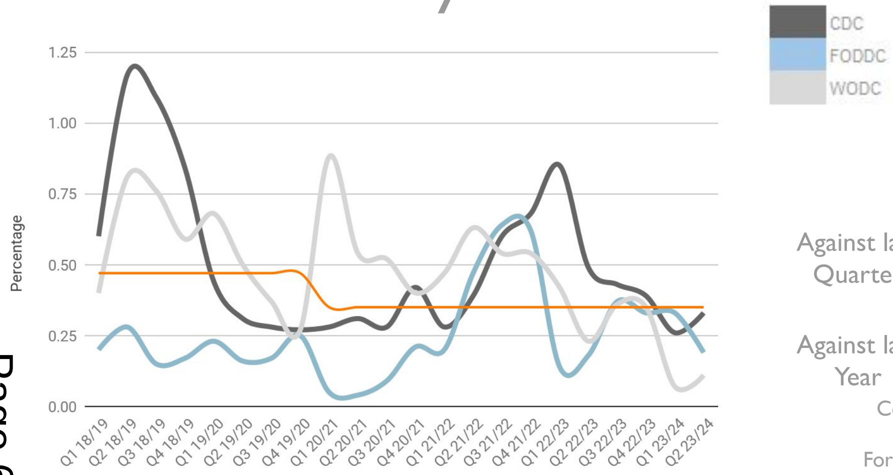

Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	↑	↓	↑
Against last Year	↓	→	↓

Cotswold and West - Increased since last quarter but improved since last year
Forest - Improved since last quarter but slightly increased since last year

Q2 Target
(low is good)

0.35

Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment error is 0.11% for Q2.

Measures are in place to ensure that HB overpayments due to local authority error are reduced as far as possible. Around 20% of the HB caseload is checked by Quality Assurance officers who target areas which have high error rates such as calculation of earnings. In addition to this work, the service is signed up to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Housing Benefit Award Accuracy (HBAA) initiative to tackle fraud and error.

How do we compare?
TBC

Note: the national target is 0.47%. In 2020-21, the service set a more stringent target of 0.35%

Customer Satisfaction - Telephone

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Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇩	⇩	⇩
Against last Year	⇩	⇩	⇩

Declined since last quarter and last year

Q2 Target
(high is good)

90%

2023/24 Target

90%

How do we compare?

The Govmetric Channel Satisfaction Index is a monthly publication of the top performing councils across the core customer access channels. At least 100 customers need to be transferred to the survey to be included in the league table so even if satisfaction is high, it may not be included i.e. September for the partnership in the below table. This is a national comparator

	July Rank	July Net Sat.	Aug Rank	Aug Net Sat.	Sept Rank	Sept Net Sat.
Cotswold	5	96%	3	97%	N/A	N/A
Forest	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
West	4	96%	1	98%	N/A	N/A

Services provided via the telephone consistently yield high satisfaction, and there has been a notable uptick in survey participation compared to the previous quarter. In Q2, there was a concerted effort to encourage advisors to actively promote the survey among residents.

The Council continues to achieve top-tier performance levels, when a sufficient number of surveys are included in the Satisfaction Index. Although this is a very small proportion of our calls, numbers are comparable to other District Councils, hence the 'league tables' being a useful comparator.

Customer Satisfaction - Email

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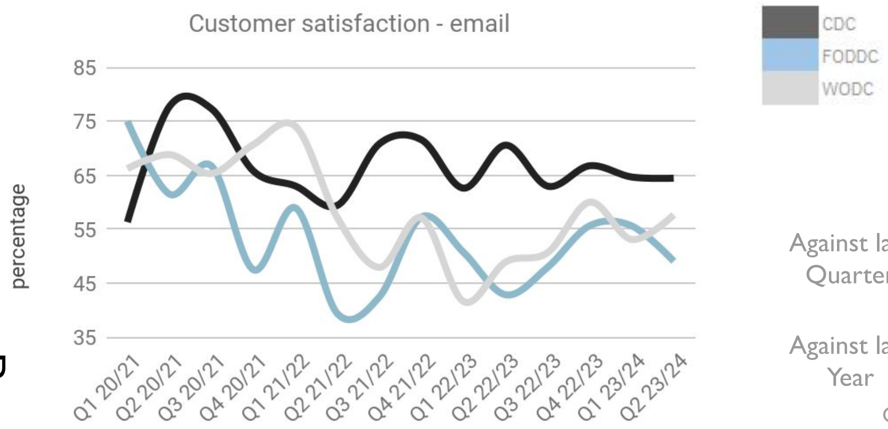

Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇨	⇩	⇧
Against last Year	⇩	⇧	⇧

Cotswold - Steady since last quarter but declined since last year
Forest - Declined since last quarter but improved since last year
West - Improved since last quarter and last year

Q2 Target
(high is good)

No Target

541 residents responded to the survey of which 312 were satisfied. This equates to a rate of 57.67% satisfaction for the quarter.
All outbound emails sent by customer services from Salesforce contain a link to the survey.
A piece of work was undertaken to review the responses from the email surveys due to the more negative responses. Upon review it appears to be dissatisfaction surrounding service failure; missed bins, container deliveries, responses from Planning or Housing etc. System and process improvements by the individual services are being implemented which may affect these figures in the future.

How do we compare?
Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

Customer Satisfaction - Face to Face

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Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇩	⇧	⇧
Against last Year	⇩	⇧	⇧

Cotswold - Declined since last quarter and last year
Forest and West - Improved since last quarter and last year

Q2 Target
(high is good)

90%

2023/24 Target

90%

Customer Satisfaction from face to face interactions continues to be high with a 95.45% satisfaction rate for the quarter. 42 out of 44 surveyed were satisfied with the service.

How do we compare?
Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

Note that any gaps in the data indicate no surveys were returned. This is especially apparent when the offices were closed during the pandemic.

Customer Call Handling - Average Waiting Time

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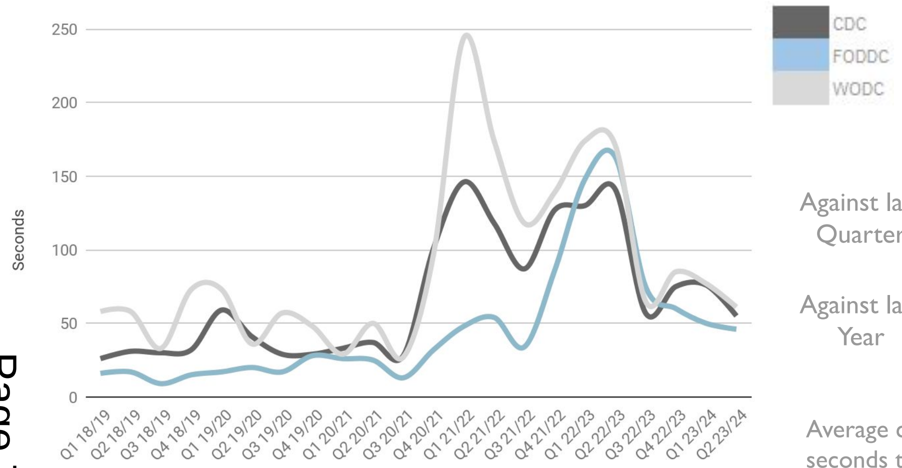


Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter			
Against last Year			

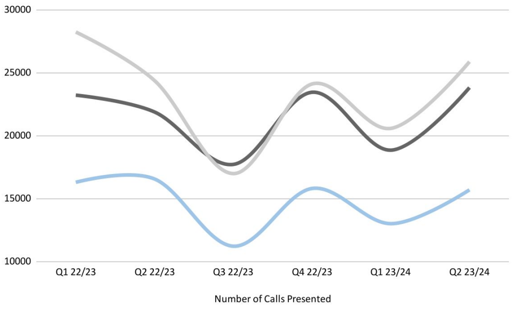
Improved since last quarter and last year

Q2 Target
(low is good)

NO TARGET

Average call waiting time for the Council saw reductions in comparison to last quarter by 16 seconds to an average of 61 seconds. There has been a marked improvement from Q2 2022-23 with reductions in average from just under 2 minutes. The peak waiting time during Q2 was 16 minutes 38 seconds.

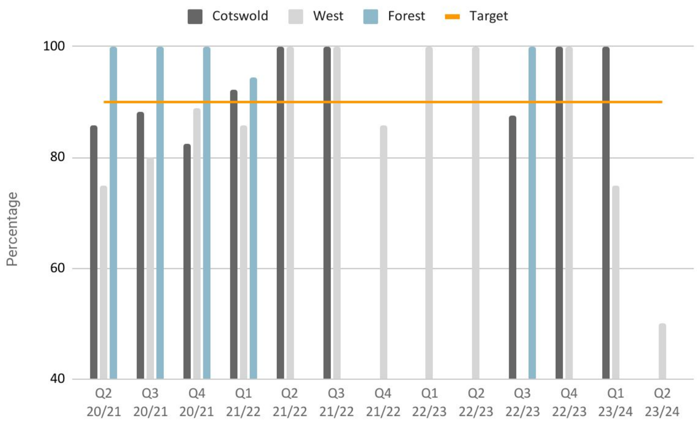
Call numbers increased in comparison to last year and last quarter as can be seen from the chart to the right. The data indicates and overall decline in call numbers over time which is expected to continue with further work surrounding Channel Choice encouraging customers to self-serve where possible. The service are proactively working with other services to reduce processing times and repeat contact by using direct links to back office systems resulting in improved customer experience.



How do we compare?

SPARSE are investigating pulling together Customer Services benchmarking data and if there is sufficient demand and suitably similar metrics to provide comparison across similarly rural local authorities we will work with them to assess any crossover in metrics and potential presentation.

Building Control Satisfaction



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Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	N/A	N/A	⇩
Against last Year	N/A	N/A	⇩

Cotswold and Forest - No Data
West - Declined since last quarter and last year

Q2 Target
(high is good)

90%

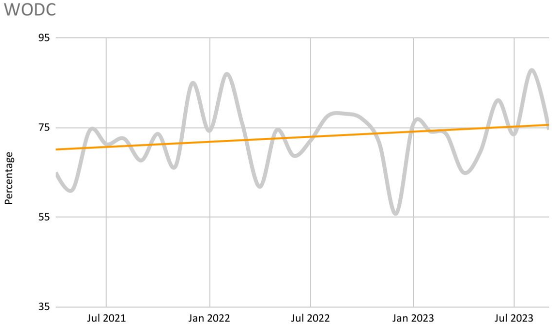
2023/24 Target

90%

Each month, the service conducts telephone interviews with customers who have received a completion certificate during the month. The customer rates the service on helpfulness of staff, quality of technical advice and other information, responsiveness, value for money, and overall satisfaction.

The data still suffers from low numbers of satisfaction survey returns within two surveys having been returned during Q2, one of which was satisfied. Discussions are proposed with ICT to investigate an SMS notification service linking customers to an online survey.

Building Control had 167 applications in Q2 and retains a strong hold in the share of the market. The below chart show market share over time.



How do we compare?

Percentage of share in the market

	July	August	September	Number of Apps for Quarter
Cotswold	62%	52%	55%	140
Forest	84%	61%	55%	112
West	74%	88%	75%	167

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Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (including AEOT)

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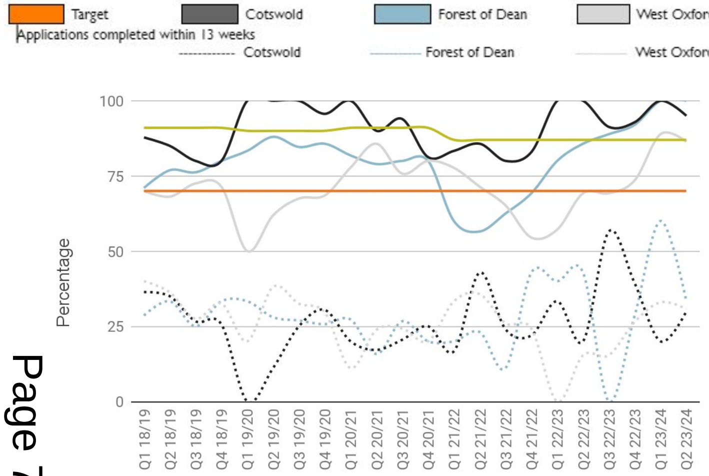

Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	↓	→	↓
Against last Year	↓	↑	↑

Cotswold - Declined since last quarter and last year
Forest - Steady since last quarter but improved since last year
West - Declined since last quarter but improved since last year

Q2 Target

(high is good)

70%

How do we compare?

Major Developments - % within 13 weeks or agreed time
PLEASE NOTE SPARSE PROVIDE BENCHMARK DATA FOR CALENDAR YEARS AND THE CHART ABOVE AND STATS IN THE NARRATIVE ARE ROLLING

June 2022 - June 2023 Benchmark	%	District Rank	County Rank	Predominantly Rural Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	90.00	83/164	3/6	29/59	Second
Forest	96.77	31/164	1/6	9/59	Top
West	83.33	117/164	5/5	43/59	Third

The service has also performed very well processing Major applications within times, slightly dipping in comparison to last quarter from 88.89% to 86.36% for Q2 but notably increasing by 17.13% in comparison to the same period last year.

Thirteen major applications were determined during Q2.

See slide for Minor Developments for further narrative

Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (including AEOT)

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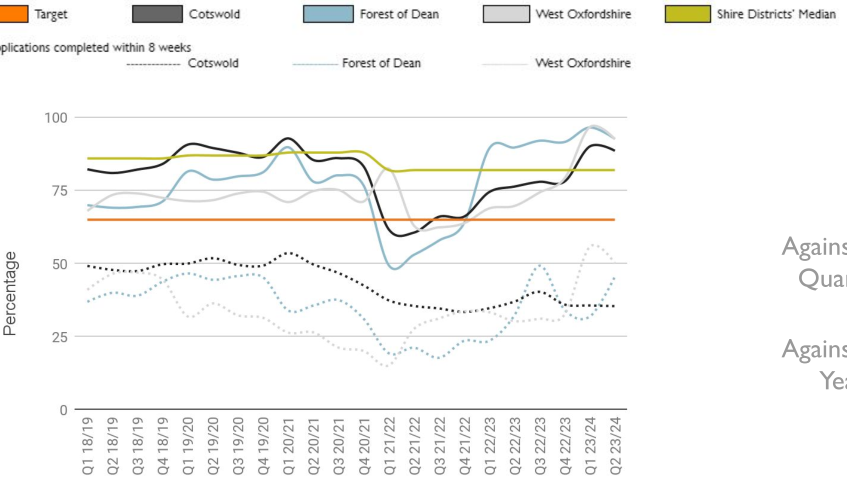

Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇩	⇩	⇩
Against last Year	⇧	⇧	⇧

Declined since last quarter but improved since last year

Q2 Target

(high is good)

65%

How do we compare?

Minor Developments - % within 8 weeks or agreed time

PLEASE NOTE SPARSE PROVIDE BENCHMARK DATA FOR CALENDAR YEARS AND THE CHART ABOVE AND STATS IN THE NARRATIVE ARE ROLLING

June 2022 - June 2023 Benchmark	%	District Rank	County Rank	Predominantly Rural Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	82.21	97/164	4/6	33/59	Third
Forest	93.18	25/164	1/6	6/59	Top
West	85.58	83/164	2/5	27/59	Third

The service has performed very well processing Minor applications within times. 74 minor applications were determined in Q2.

Performance for Development Management continues to improve across the application types.

The key findings requiring Member authorisation from the PAS report that went to cabinet this quarter are currently being implemented with the Negotiation Protocol the first to be rolled out.

The service reports that due to impending resourcing challenges within DM, it is anticipated that the number of applications determined within time is likely to decrease over the next quarter.

Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (including AEOT)

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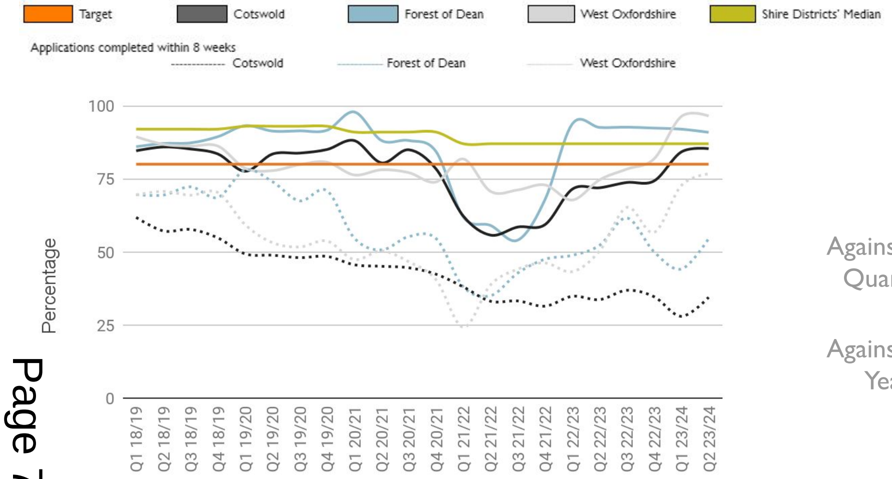

Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇧	⇩	⇧
Against last Year	⇧	⇩	⇧

Cotswold and West - Improved since last quarter and last year
Forest - Declined since last quarter and last year

Q2 Target

(high is good)

80%

How do we compare?

Other Developments - % within 8 weeks or agreed time
PLEASE NOTE SPARSE PROVIDE BENCHMARK DATA FOR CALENDAR YEARS AND THE CHART ABOVE AND STATS IN THE NARRATIVE ARE ROLLING

June 2022 - June 2023 Benchmark	%	District Rank	County Rank	Predominantly Rural Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	77.33	154/164	6/6	55/59	Bottom
Forest	91.90	68/164	1/6	21/59	Second
West	89.49	85/164	4/5	30/59	Third

Determination times for Other applications have also improved reaching a rate of 96.49% for the quarter, the highest they have been since prior to 2018/19.

236 Other applications were determined in Q2.

See slide for Minor Developments for additional narrative

Total Income achieved in Planning & Income from Pre-application advice

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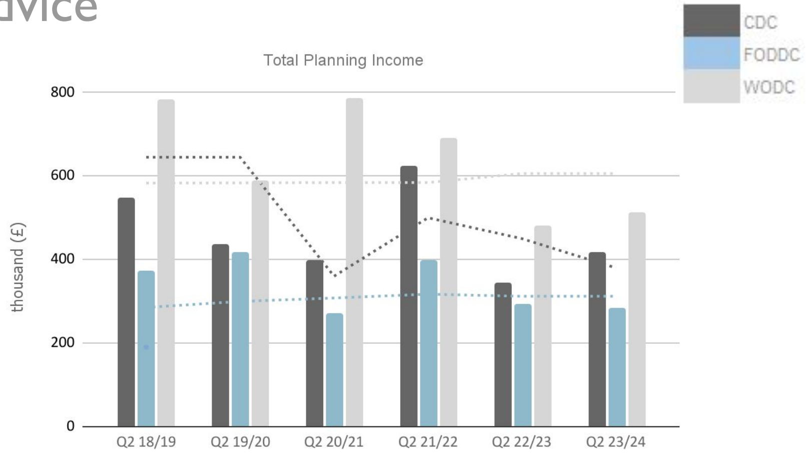

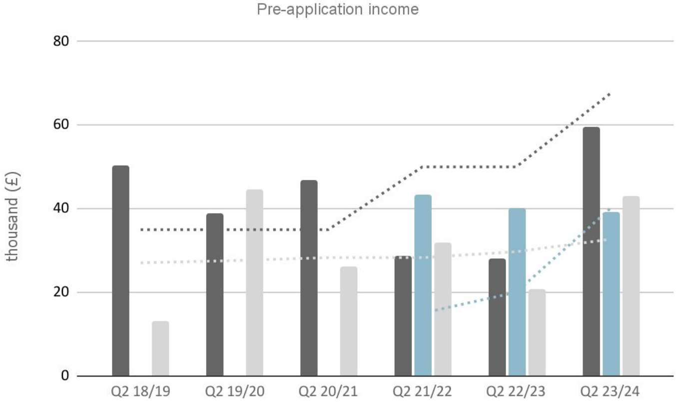

Direction of Travel

Total Income	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Qtr	↑	↓	↓
Against last Year	↑	↓	↑

Pre App Income	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Qtr	↑	↓	↑
Against last Year	↑	↓	↑

Cotswold - Total and Pre-App Income improved since last quarter and last year
Forest - Total and Pre-App Income declined since last quarter and last year
West - Total Income declined since last quarter but improved since last year, Pre-App Income improved since last quarter and last year

Q2 Targets
(high is good)

Total Planning Income

606000

Pre App Income

32687

At the end of Q2, total planning income for the Council remained slightly below target but saw an increase in comparison to Q2 2022-23. Pre-app income more than doubled within the same time period and exceeded the target during Q2.

The service indicates a decrease in the number of major applications submitted, which generate significant revenue, leading to a reduction in income for this quarter.

How do we compare?

Planning Advisory Service (PAS) planned to benchmark back in 2021. No data is available in the public domain, but the data team has been in contact with PAS to find further information and are awaiting an update.

Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative)

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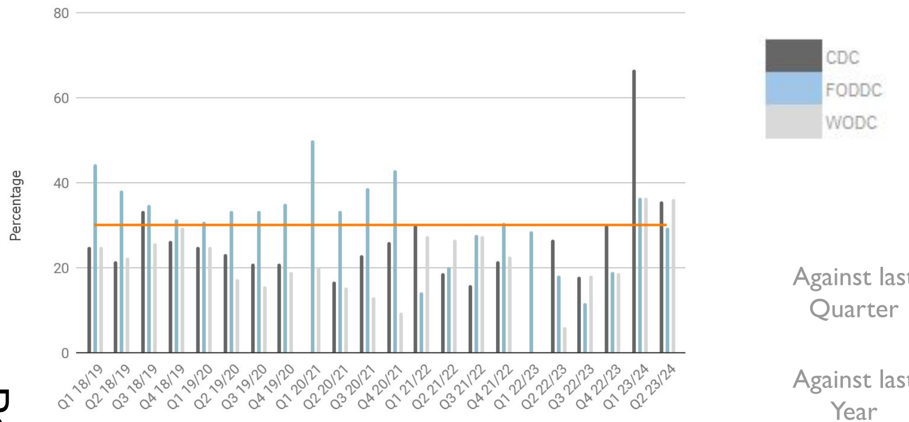


Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇩	⇩	⇧
Against last Year	⇧	⇧	⇧

Cotswold and Forest - Improved since last quarter but increased last year
West - Increased since last quarter and last year

Q2 Target
(low is good)

30%

This indicator seeks to ensure that no more than 30% of planning appeals are allowed (low is good).

Between 1 July 2023 and 30 September 2023, seven appeals were decided; of which 4 decisions were supported what one partly supported.

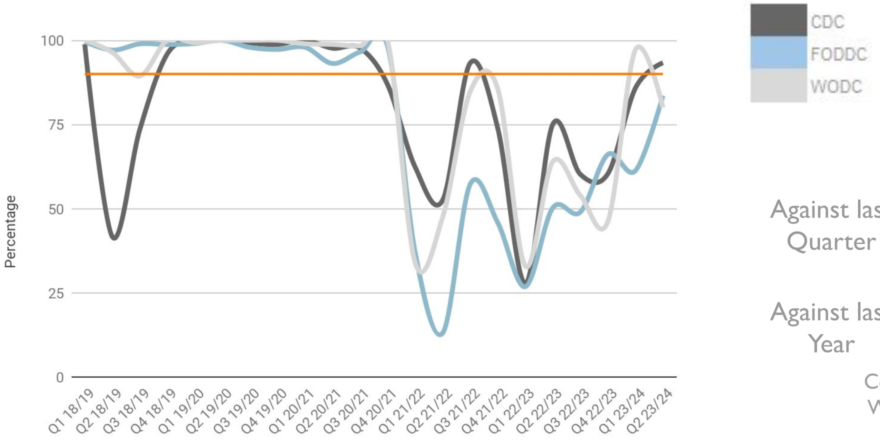
This equates to a percentage of 35.71% for this quarter but a cumulative total of 36.11% for the year which is slightly above the target. As this metric is cumulative, it may well reduce throughout the year depending on how many appeals are received.

The service reports there has been a substantial reduction in enforcement cases.

How do we compare?

The Data and Performance Team have been in touch with the Planning Inspectorate to obtain a full data set.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days



Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇧	⇧	⇩
Against last Year	⇧	⇧	⇧

Cotswold and Forest - Improved since last quarter and last year
West - Declined since last quarter but improved since last year

Q2 Target

(high is good)

90%

The Council's performance has fallen below the 90% target this quarter, standing at 80%. However, there is a notable improvement compared to the same period last year, with an increase of 16%.

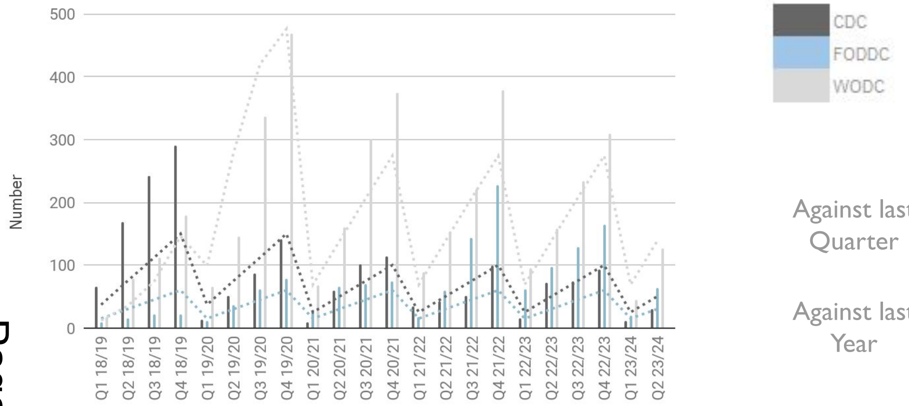
During this quarter the answering teams have faced challenges with resourcing issues which is attributed to the decrease in performance since last quarter.

The monthly performance meetings with the AD responsible for the majority of the answering teams have been successful. Workshops are being arranged to offer additional support and guidance to the teams, emphasizing the importance of timely responses to searches and requests.

Due to impending resourcing challenges within the answering teams, it is anticipated that the number of searches completed within 10 days is likely to decrease over the next quarter.

How do we compare?
No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative)



Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇧	⇧	⇧
Against last Year	⇩	⇩	⇩

Improved since last quarter but declined since last year

Q2 Target

(high is good)

138

Eighty-one properties including 51 for affordable rent and 30 for shared ownership have been delivered at Woodstock, Witney, Stanton Harcourt, Eynsham during Q2. A total of 126 affordable homes have been delivered during Q1 and Q2 against a target of 138. Forecasted completions at Carterton and Enstone have been moved back to Q3 and Q4. Looking forward a number of schemes have experienced delays and so the projected numbers of affordable houses delivered looks lower for next year.

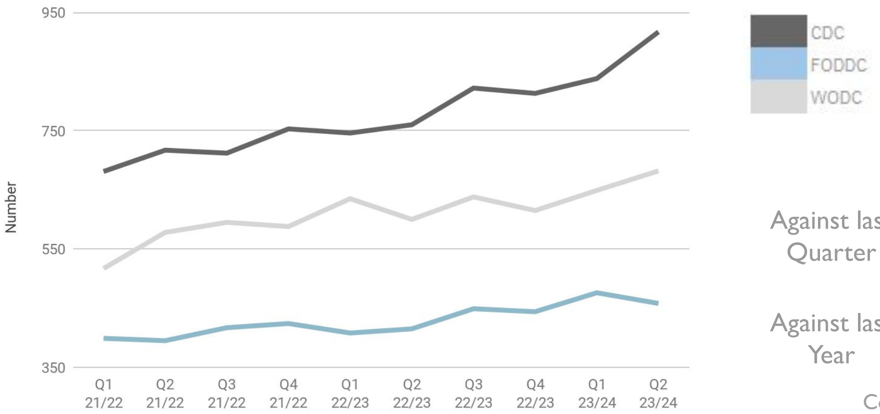
The service reports that completions fluctuate over the year. A housing development period is at least 12 months, with some schemes phased over several years.

How do we compare?

No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

Note: this data is collected cumulatively from the beginning of the financial year to account for peaks and troughs

(Snapshot) Long Term Empty Properties



Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	↑	↓	↑
Against last Year	↑	↑	↑

Cotswold and West - Increased since last quarter and last year
Forest - Improved since last quarter but increased since last year

Q2 Target
(low is good)

No Target

Properties continue to be added and removed from the list but as the graph indicates there is an upward trend.

Maintaining registers of long-term empty properties, can help monitor the situation, target interventions, and communicate with property owners more effectively. The LTE list is constantly being addressed with all owners being contacted by email, phone or letter in an attempt to bring properties back into use.

The service reports that the LTE figures continue to be influenced by a number of retirement properties reaching the six months empty point. It's common for properties of this nature to experience a lengthier selling process.

How do we compare?
No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

(Snapshot) Number of households in B&B/hotel-type accommodation & Hostels (LA owned or managed); and Number of successful 'Move On' into suitable independent/long-term accommodation from B&Bs/hotels/hostels

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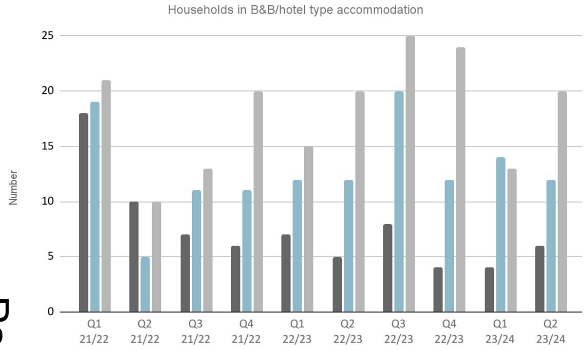
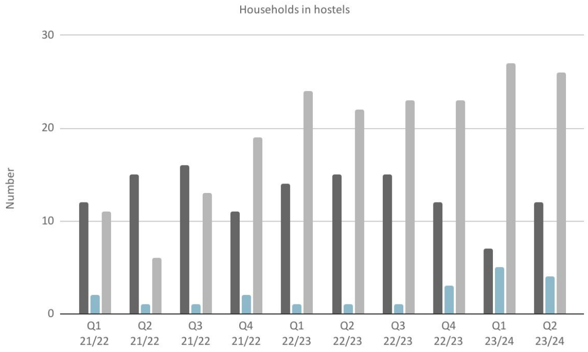
CDC
FODDC
WODC





Direction of Travel

		CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	B&B/Hotels	⇧	⇩	⇧
Against last Year	B&B/Hotels	⇧	⇨	⇨
Against last Quarter	Hostels	⇧	⇩	⇩
Against last Year	Hostels	⇩	⇧	⇧
Against last Quarter	Move Ons	⇧	⇧	⇧
Against last Year	Move Ons	⇧	⇨	⇧

Homelessness continues to be an issue and pressures on the Housing services, systems and pathways remain high. During Q2, the number of homeless rose, attributed to the change in weather conditions. In comparison to last quarter has been a slight increase in households in temporary accommodation and move ons in comparison to last quarter.

Hostels are still running at capacity. There are 2 hostels in West, one of which presently operates at 60% capacity due to ongoing maintenance.

The Executive have granted approval for the conversion of fixed-term contracts into permanent positions which is providing stability within the team.

How do we compare?

No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

Number of fly tips collected and percentage that result in an enforcement action

(defined as a warning letter, fixed penalty notice, simple caution or prosecution)

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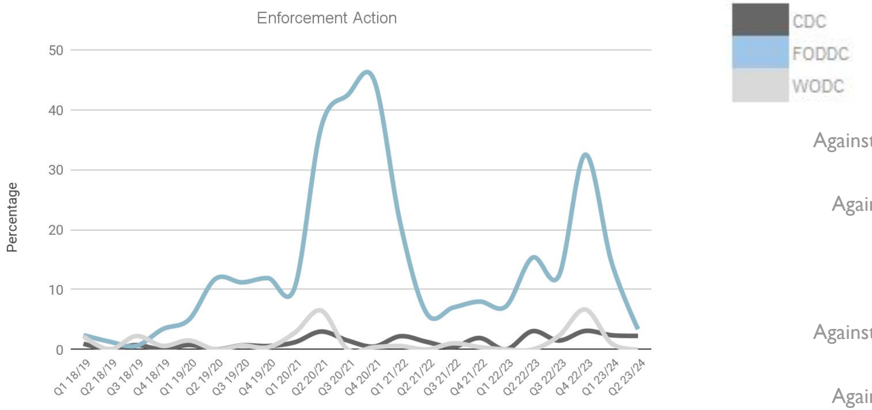


Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Number of Fly Tips			
Against last Quarter	⇩	⇧	⇧
Against last Year	⇩	⇩	⇩
Percentage Enforcement Action			
Against last Quarter	⇩	⇩	⇩
Against last Year	⇩	⇩	⇨

Fly Tips - Cotswold - Declined since last quarter and last year, Forest and West increased since last quarter and last year
Enforcement Action - Decreased since last quarter and last year, West stayed steady since last year

Q2 Target

No Target

How do we compare?

Number of Fly Tips reported for year 2022-23 for Local Authorities in England
There are 301 authorities with a total of 995545 Fly Tips reported (Range - 34830)

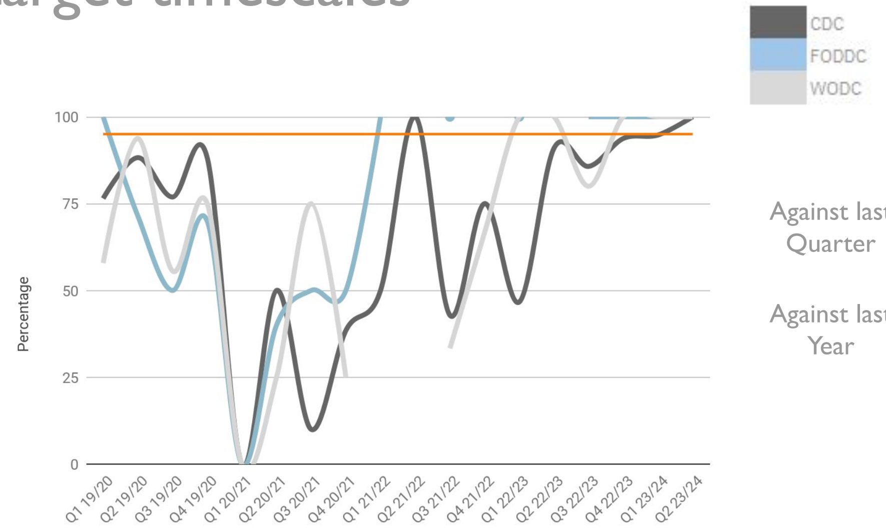
	No. Fly Tips for 2022-23	% Total Fly Tips	Absolute Value from Highest No. Fly Tips	Absolute Value from Lowest No. Fly Tips
Cotswold	1092	0.11	33738	1092
Forest	1569	0.16	33261	1569
West	1150	0.12	33680	1150

There was a slight increase in fly tipping across the district from last quarter with a drop in the enforcement action percentage.

During Q2, the here have been challenges within the team due to resource issues, delaying the implementation of proposed surveillance cameras. However, the service reports the resource issue is now resolved and the cameras will be implemented soon at fly tipping hot spots.

The amendment for increased powers for Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) has not yet been implemented.

Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales



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Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇧	N/A	⇨
Against last Year	⇧	N/A	⇨

Cotswold - Improved since last quarter and last year
Forest - No Data
West - Steady since last quarter and last year

Q2 Target
(high is good)

95%

The Council had 6 inspections, all of which were inspected within the timescales. The inspection rates for Q2 remain well above target.

High risk work is naturally prioritised which can have an impact on lower risk scheduled inspection rates. The service now has a useful dashboard which is helpful for monitoring team performance and tracking lower risk scheduled inspections within the team.

How do we compare?
APSE performance networks are introducing benchmarking for environmental sectors for 2023-24

Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day

(including food poisoning outbreaks, anti-social behaviour, contaminated private water supplies, workplace fatalities or multiple serious injuries)

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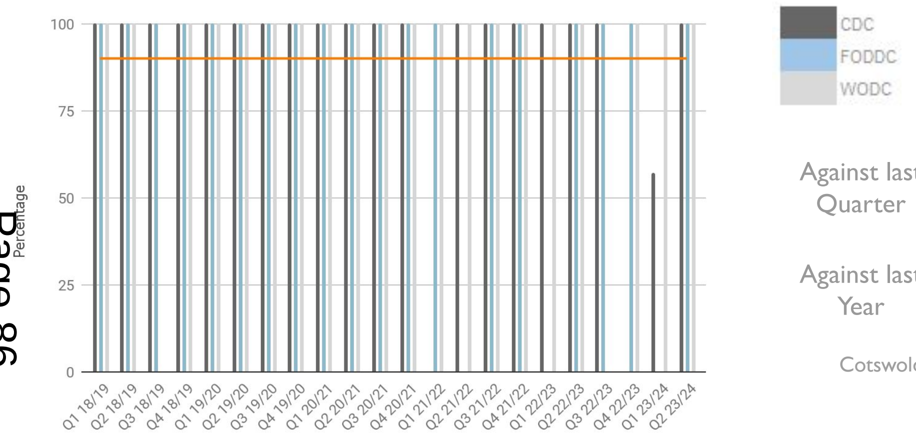


Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter			
Against last Year			

Q2 Target

(high is good)

90%

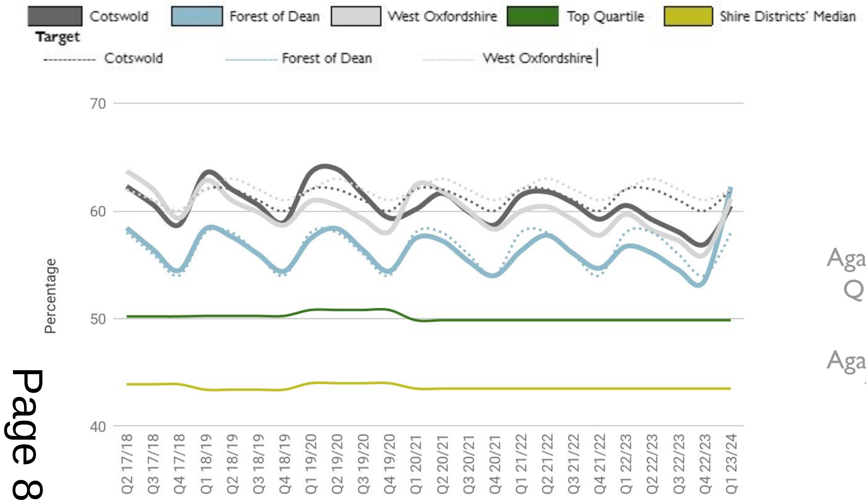
Cotswold and Forest - Improved since last quarter and steady since last year
West - Steady since last quarter and last year

There were five notifications received within Q2 regarding an alleged illegal eviction, a tenant without drinking water, concern over a child's cot in pub accommodation, a Legionnaires notification and a Private Water Supply do not drink notification. All were assessed within one working day.

How do we compare?

No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

Percentage of household waste recycled



Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇧	⇧	⇧
Against last Year	⇩	⇧	⇧

Cotswold - Improved since last quarter but declined since last year
Forest and West - Improved since last quarter and last year

Q1 Target
(high is good)

62%

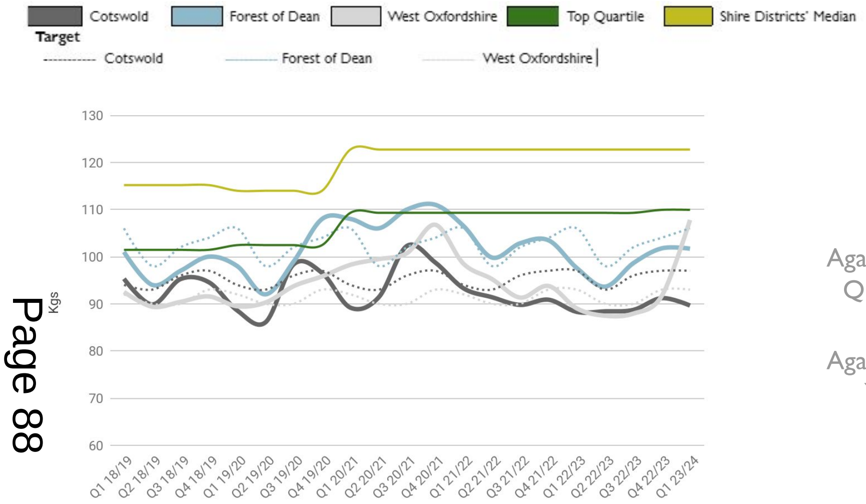
How do we compare?
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting

2021-22 Benchmark	%	District Rank	County Rank	Mainly Rural Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	59.20	9/174	1/6	2/37	Top
Forest	54.30	25/175	3/6	8/37	Top
West	57.70	15/175	3/5	4/37	Top

The data regarding recycling rates is received by the data team from Oxfordshire County Council, but it is a quarter behind. Therefore, the narrative and graphs pertain to Q1 2023/2024 (April - June).

During Q1, recycling rates saw a notable improvement of 5.18% from the previous quarter, reaching 61.13%, just shy of the 62% target. Compared to the same period last year, rates showed a modest improvement of 1.44%.

Residual Household Waste per Household (kg)



Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇩	⇧	⇧
Against last Year	⇧	⇧	⇧

Cotswold - Improved since last quarter but increased since last year
Forest and West - Increased since last quarter and last year

Q1 Target
(low is good)

93

How do we compare?
Residual household waste per household (kg/household)

2021-22 Benchmark	Tonnage	District Rank	County Rank	Mainly Rural Rank	Quartile
Cotswold	364.70	16/174	2/6	4/37	Top
Forest	412.10	38/174	4/6	12/37	Top
West	377.90	23/174	4/5	10/37	Top

The data regarding tonnage is received by the data team from Oxfordshire County Council, but it is a quarter behind. Therefore, the narrative and graphs pertain to Q1 2023/2024 (April - June).

In Q1, West saw a substantial increase in the tonnage of household waste in comparison to last quarter increasing by 16.14kg to 107.79kg. In comparison to Q1 2022-2023 the tonnage has increased by 18.78kg.

Missed bins per 100,000

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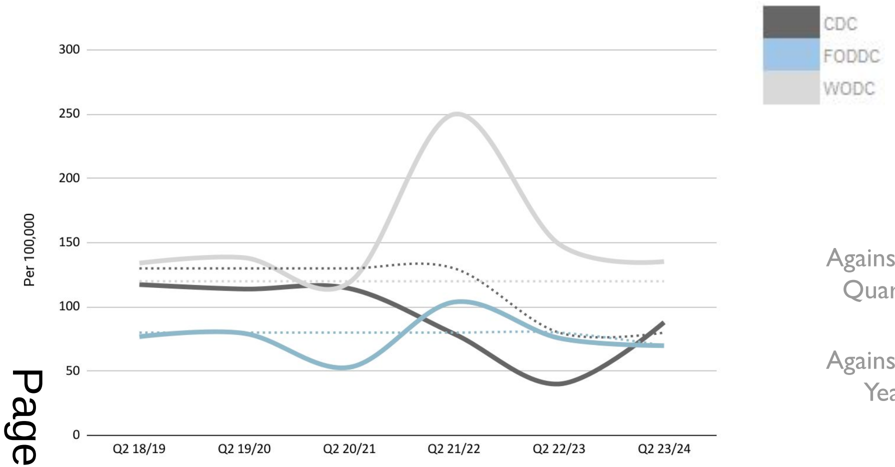

Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇨	⇧	⇧
Against last Year	⇧	⇩	⇩

Cotswold - Steady since last quarter but increased since last year
Forest and West - Increased since last quarter but improved since last year

Q2 Target
(low is good)

120

The number of missed bins for Q2 are above target and higher than last quarter but are lower than this time last year. This increase is primarily linked to the retirement of an experienced crew member and the misreporting of Service Failures, which were incorrectly logged as access issues in the in-cab technology (Alloy). Ongoing efforts are in place to train and ensure that crews accurately log issues in Alloy.

Note: since the implementation of In-Cab technology, the data source for missed collections is Alloy, In-Cab's back office system. This data source is more accurate than the previous data source.

How do we compare?
The Data Team are currently working with partners to compile the data return for APSE performance networks which will then provide benchmarking for this metric.

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

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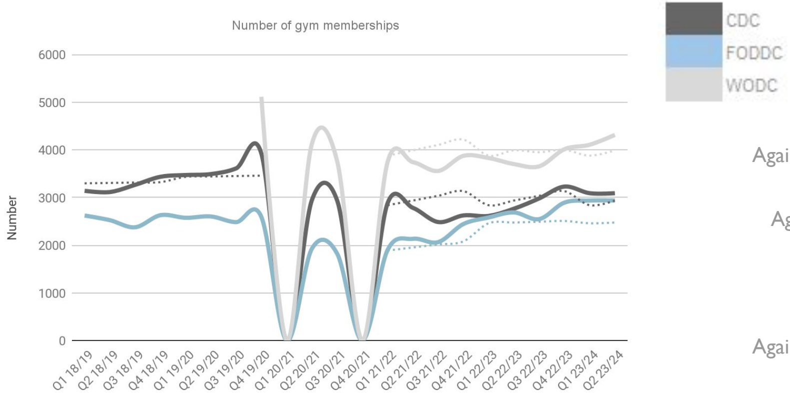

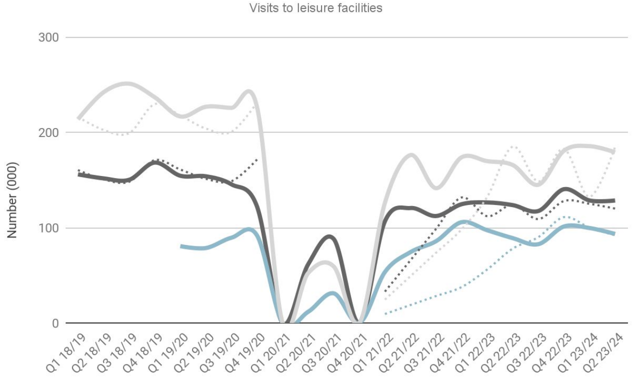

How do we compare?

The Data Team are currently working with partners to compile the data return for APSE performance networks which will then provide benchmarking for this metric.

Direction of Travel

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Gym Memberships			
Against last Quarter	→	↑	↑
Against last Year	↑	↑	↑
Leisure Visits			
Against last Quarter	→	↓	↓
Against last Year	↑	↑	↑

Gym Memberships - Improved since last quarter but declined since last year - Cotswold steady since last quarter
Leisure Visits- Declined since last quarter but improved since last year - Cotswold steady since last quarter

Q2 Targets
(high is good)

Gym Memberships

3990

Leisure Visits

185k

The leisure targets were reviewed at the end of 2021-22 which resulted in increases in the target for visitor numbers.

Visits to leisure facilities decreased in comparison to the previous quarter, but are still 13k higher than the same period last year.

Gym memberships continue to increase compared with last quarter and quarter two 2022-23.

The Learn to Swim figures show continued growth in their numbers for this quarter, despite the summer holidays, leading to a waiting list due to resourcing pressures.

The Council has been successful in their bid for a revenue grant from Sports England which awards funds to assist in the energy costs associated with running the facilities.

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

Number of complaints upheld

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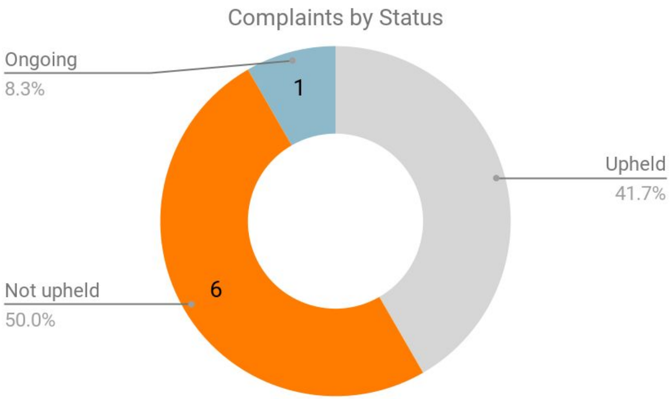

Direction of Travel

Complaints upheld or partly upheld at Stage 1

	CDC	FODDC	WODC
Against last Quarter	⇧	⇩	⇧
Against last Year	⇧	⇩	⇧

Cotswold and West - Increased since last quarter and since last year
Forest - Improved since last quarter and last year

Q2 Target

(low is good)

No Target

How do we compare?
The complaints and enquiries received in the period by the Ombudsman
The decisions made in the period by the Ombudsman
Compliance with recommendations recorded during the period by the Ombudsman

2022-23	Received	Investigated	Percentage Upheld	Percentage Compliance with Recommendations	Percentage Satisfactory Remedy
Cotswold	10	1	100%	N/A	0%
Forest	6	1	100%	100%	0%
West	12	2	50%	N/A	100%
Similar Organisation			59%	100%	15%

During Q2, the Council experienced an increase in complaints received from last quarter with a balanced picture of upheld/not upheld.

See the table on the following page for a breakdown of those upheld and partially upheld.

A new Customer Feedback Procedure went live on the 1st October 2021.
The new process has the following stages:

- Stage 1: Relevant service area responds to complaint within 10 working days
- Stage 2: Complaint is reviewed by Corporate Responsibility Team, response is signed off by relevant Business Manager, and sent to complainant within 10 working days
- Stage 3: Complaint is reviewed by relevant Business Manager, signed off by relevant Group Manager, and sent to complainant within 15 working days

Complaints Upheld or Partially Upheld Breakdown

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Service area	Description	Outcome/learning	Decision	Response time (days)
Housing	Upset with lack of response	Dealt with by Service	Upheld	4
Planning	Unhappy with service of Enforcement Notice	Dealt with by Depot/Contact Monitoring Officer	Upheld	10
Revenues and Benefits	Business Rates; Attitude of Officer	Dealt with by Service	Upheld	7
Housing	Ongoing issues with Housing dept	Reinforce training for standard of communication with customers and internal review of processes for the Council's temporary accommodation.	Upheld	15
Waste and Recycling	Upset that assisted collection for garden waste was not being made from the assisted location	Dealt with by Depot/Contact Monitoring Officer	Upheld	10

Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days

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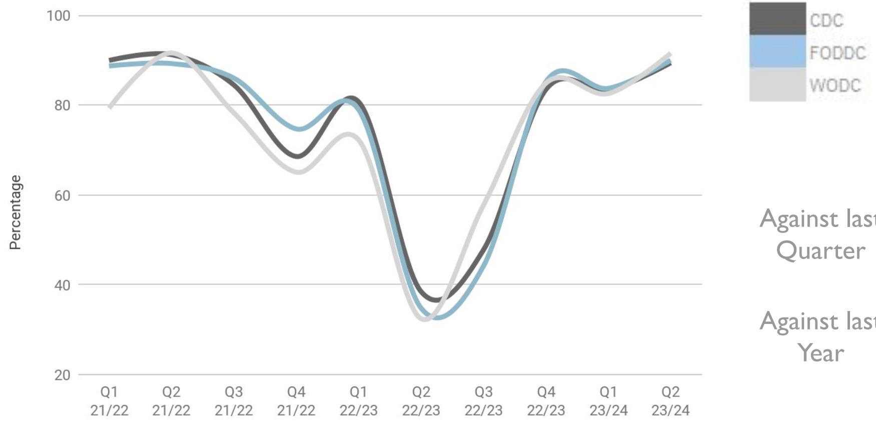
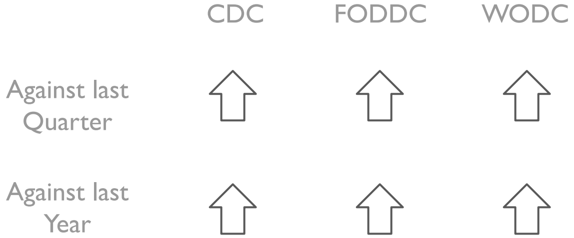


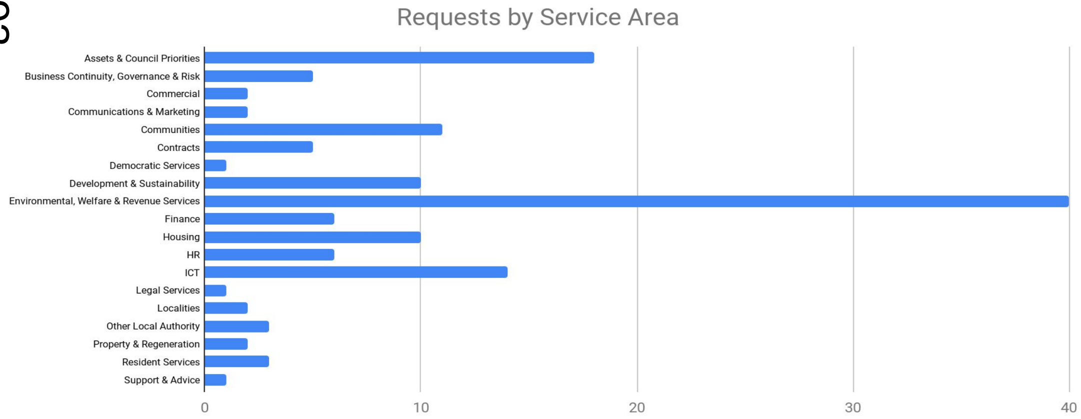
Direction of Travel

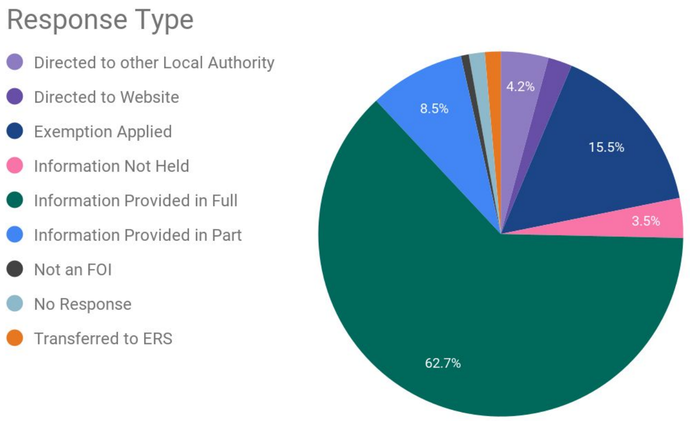


Improved since last quarter and last year

Q2 Target
(High is good)

No Target





Note: This is a new metric and the Data Team would welcome comments on the preferred observations

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and Date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 13 DECEMBER 2023**
Subject	**REVIEW OF WEEKLY MARKETS**
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Duncan Enright – Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development. Email: duncan.enright@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities. Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Report Author	Emma Phillips – Market Towns Officer. Email: emma.phillips@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the outcome of a review of the outdoor markets of West Oxfordshire as completed by the consultant.
Annexes	Annex A – Report: Retail & Charter Markets at Carterton, Chipping Norton & Witney, June 2023.
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive Resolves to: 1. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economic Development, to undertake an Expression of Interest exercise to select a commercial market operator to run the weekly retail markets in Witney and Chipping Norton. 2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for Economic Development, to appoint a commercial market operator for an initial period of two years.
Corporate priorities	• A Good Quality of Life for All • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	External consultation was undertaken by the consultant during the review of markets, evidence of this is presented in their report.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Charter Markets in Witney and Chipping Norton have been managed by West Oxfordshire District Council's Environmental Regulatory Service since 2016. The Council has delivered a basic administrative service which includes the collection of fees, processing of new applications, and the provision and maintenance of the gazebos. Carterton Town Council manages its own weekly market.

1.2 All three markets have less than 15 stalls each and have scope to both increase stallholder numbers and overall vibrancy.

1.3 Well run retail markets offer a multitude of benefits to towns and their communities, ranging from economic growth and support for local businesses, relatively low cost products for customers and sustainability. With low barriers to entry, markets are excellent incubators supporting new business. Retail markets contribute to the overall vibrancy and appeal of a town, potentially creating an enjoyable and memorable experience for both residents and visitors alike.

1.4 The vision set out in the West Oxfordshire District Council plan 2023-2027 is for the district to be a thriving and prosperous place. One of the top priorities is to help the local economy to grow, providing more jobs for local people. Improving the viability of the outdoor markets will play an important role in supporting town centres, attracting footfall and contributing to these objectives.

1.5 In February 2023, the Council appointed Wild Property Consultants to undertake a review of the weekly markets and to set out options for their future management. Carterton market was included in the review following discussion with Carterton Town Council for their information.

1.6 The key points from his report are summarised below and the full report is attached as Annex A.

2. REVIEW OF THE MARKETS

2.1 The review was derived from desktop analysis, site visits, interviews and observations. Visits were also made to neighbouring market towns to create a comparison. The observations concluded that all three subject markets had a comparatively low mix of traders compared with neighbouring market towns.

2.2 The analysis is summarised in the table below:

Town	Population	No of Stalls	Occupancy (%)	Trader mix	Frequency	Footfall (per market)
Carterton	17,000	10	50%	0.25	Weekly	108
Chipping Norton	7,000	12	60%	0.40	Weekly	272
Witney	30,000	14	70%	0.45	Twice weekly	470
Banbury	50,000	22	73%	0.40	Twice weekly	615
Bicester	38,000	29	91%	0.69	Weekly	780

Town	Population	No of Stalls	Occupancy (%)	Trader mix	Frequency	Footfall (per market)
Cirencester	20,000	25 - 50	80%	0.80	Twice weekly	800
Deddington	2,000	44	96%	0.70	Monthly	1,044
Moreton	5,000	49	95%	0.57	Weekly	2,050

Key:

- **No. of stalls** present (on days visited, with an average taken if necessary).
- **Occupancy** (the Capacity divided by the No. of stalls present, expressed as a percentage).
- **Trader Mix** (the No. of unique stalls in relation to the Capacity, as a factor of 1).
- **Footfall** generated (market customer counts over an hour, multiplied for the duration of the market).

2.3 The consultant reflections on this data are:

- The markets at Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney are by far the smallest in terms of stalls and occupancy.
- The footfall at Witney market is reasonable, compared to its comparatively small market size, suggesting this is a strength to build upon.
- Carterton not fulfilling its potential, given the overall size of the town's population and has by far the lowest score for Trader Mix.

2.4 Interviews were conducted at each of the three markets and the views expressed are summarised below:

2.5 Carterton

- Limited size and limited stall variety with poor footfall.
- There is no regular Carterton based trader at the market, the closest is Wantage based.
- No in-town market signage.
- Opportunity to bring in more customers looking for a bargain who are shopping at the nearby supermarkets and parking adjacent to the market.
- Special events draw in 4,000 people – demonstrating the town's support for gatherings and events.

2.6 Chipping Norton

- The market site location is a disadvantage.
- The orientation of stalls and curation is poor.
- The main road is a barrier and traffic emissions for traders is a concern.
- Existing building works is an understandable short-term disruption but has acted as a catalyst for traders to leave and reduce size of market.
- Nothing to encourage shoppers to linger (dwell time is low).
- No electrical supplies for stall holders.
- There is no CN based trader at the market.
- No messaging on approach or in town to announce the market day.
- Limited promotion of the market through adverts or social media.
- Market stall holders self-manage, in terms of curation and organisation.

- Christmas in Chippy market event is an example of how well a special event market can be delivered.
- Ease of pedestrian navigation around the town is poor.
- The market doesn't reflect well on the town.
- Local businesses want to see a successful market but recognise changes required.

2.7 Witney

- No messaging on approach or in town to announce the market day.
- Limited promotion of the market through adverts or social media.
- Reduced footfall at this end of town due to shop closures.
- Limited local business taking part in the market.
- Market stall holders self-manage, in terms of curation and organisation.
- Stalls holders have to self-erect the stalls, which are cumbersome, heavy and require a van for transportation.
- Stall holder financial takings are positive, demonstrating potential for market expansion.
- High Street closure and lack of clarity about it, creating town wide uncertainty and impacting customer satisfaction.
- No obvious connection between the charter market and other market events, such as the Town Council's running of the Corn Exchange (and their indoor craft markets) and the proposals at Marriotts Walk.
- Thames Valley Farmers Market restricted in their efforts to promote Witney Farmers Market with much reduced signage permitted compared to other towns in which they operate

3. CONSULTANT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Wild report sets out a series of over-arching recommendations for the way the markets could be managed within the context of active town partnerships and fitting in to a coordinated series of town centre events.

3.2 These recommendations correspond with the key recommendations of the Markets Towns report commissioned through the UKSPF scheme. Officers are already undertaking work to form partnerships in each of the towns. These partnerships will consider some of the wider issues including public realm, signage and opportunities for new businesses. They will also play a key role in the coordination and promotion of events that will draw people into the town centres including the weekly markets.

3.3 The report recommends reviewing the location of Chipping Norton market with a potential move to the High Street or 'Top Side'. This would be a significant step which would need to be undertaken in partnership with the Town Council and other town centre stakeholders as well as a full public consultation before a decision could be made. That is beyond the scope of this report but can be raised with the Town Partnership for consideration.

3.4 The two key recommendations specific to the running of the markets are forming a 'Markets Team' and appointing a commercial market operator to run the operational side of the markets. These recommendations are based on the successful model for running the market in Cirencester which the Wild report cites as an example of very good practice.

3.5 Officers have visited Cirencester market to look at the operation further and the observations are as follows:

- Cirencester Town Council is responsible for the market rather than the district council.
- The Town Council's Markets Team organises and coordinates a full calendar of different markets and events in the town centre which draws people into the town. This includes indoor markets (in the Corn Hall), antiques and collectables, craft markets, seasonal markets, farmers market, vintage and artisan markets.
- These markets are run by other organisations – the Town Council team coordinates them, produces a monthly calendar and promotes them.
- The regular Charter Market sits within the calendar but its operation is contracted out to a commercial operator - Cotswolds Markets
- The Charter Market is well run, the stalls are bespoke double fronted stalls laid out in rows, there is a wide selection of goods and produce on sale and, when officers visited, the market was busy with high footfall.

4. OPTIONS FOR MEMBERS TO CONSIDER

4.1 It is clear that maintaining the status quo will not rejuvenate West Oxfordshire's markets and allow them to draw in greater numbers of visitors to the towns. There are three fundamental options to consider:

Option 1

4.2 The first option is to retain operational control of the Witney and Chipping Norton markets in house and manage them better. At present the council has neither the staff capacity nor the skills or experience to deliver the step change in markets delivery that the Council is seeking.

Option 2

4.3 The second option is to contract out the running of the retail markets to a commercial market operator. The operator would be responsible for all operational aspects of the markets including the provision and erection of stalls, curation of the market with access to a large pool of stall-holders and the removal and disposal of waste. The operator would collect and retain the fees from the stallholders.

4.4 WODC would still have some strategic control of the markets through its contract and relationship with the operator. The Wild report stresses that a successful market requires a proper working relationship between the managing local authority and the operator – a relationship that is purely contractual will not allow the markets to reach their full potential. If this option is accepted, then time allocated to working with the operator needs to be formally written into an appropriate officer's role.

4.5 While the council would lose the stall fee income (currently circa £56,000 pa), we would charge the operator a fee which would recoup a proportion of that loss. This is covered in more detail below.

Option 3

4.6 The third option is to transfer the responsibility of running the markets to the relevant town council should they wish to take their market on. The town council would then be responsible for either running the market in house or contracting out to a commercial operator in the same way Cirencester Town Council does.

4.7 Initial indications are that both Witney and Chipping Norton town councils would be interested in discussing this option although the outcome of those discussions is unknown.

4.8 Were WODC to pursue this option and transfer the responsibility to either or both of the town councils, WODC would also be transferring strategic control and influence over future decisions to the towns themselves. The income from the markets (either stall or operator fees) would go to the relevant town council rather than to WODC.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The marginal cost of running the markets undertaking is set out below. The marginal cost is quoted rather than full cost in the budget book (which includes overheads etc) as this is the relevant measure for making a decision on whether to continue with the service provision or seek alternatives.

Current

Business Rates	£7,000
Cleansing	<u>£34,000</u>
Total Cost	£41,000
Income	£56,000
Net Income	**<u>£15,000</u>**

5.2 The financial implications of the alternative options open to the Council covered in Section 4 are set out below:-

Option 1: Retain Markets (Additional Cost to the Council)

Current Net Income is £15,000 but investment is required to improve marketing, administration and cleansing arrangements which will likely move this into a net zero position at best.

Option 2: Contract Out to Commercial Operator (Net Saving to Council £8,000 - £15,000)

The costs of cleansing and potentially business rates will be picked up by the new operator who will also retain all income receipts. It is anticipated based on soft market testing that an operator will pay up to £30,000 for the markets concession therefore the net income will be £30,000 giving a net saving of £15,000 (or net income of £23,000 if business rates liability stays with the Council giving a net saving of £8,000).

Option 3: Agree Transfer to Town Councils (Net Cost to Council £15,000)

The costs will reduce to zero but all income will be lost therefore there will be a net loss to the Council of £15,000.

5.3 Option 2 represents the best option in terms of Value for Money and offers both the potential for revenue savings and an improved markets offer subject to the outcome of the procurement process.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Option 2 looks to offer the best balance in delivering on the strategic objectives required by the Council whilst not impacting on the finances of the Council. If this option were chosen officers would run an expression of interest exercise to select the operator in consultation with the Executive Member for Economic Development.

6.2 While there are advantages to exploring Option 3 with Witney and Chipping Norton town councils, the loss of income to WODC renders this option financially unviable.

6.3 It is important however that the town councils are involved. It is recommended they be invited to take part in the process to select the operator and be invited to regular review meetings too so their views and ideas can be discussed and acted upon. In other words, the town councils be invited to be part of the 'Markets Team' for each town.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

7.1 Option 1 to retain the operation of the markets in house would require additional investment in staff resource as it has neither the skills nor experience to deliver the step change in markets delivery that the Council is seeking.

7.2 Option 3 to transfer the control of the markets to Witney and Chipping Norton town councils is discounted because the loss of income from the markets financially disadvantages WODC.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Other than the need to enter into a contract with a commercial operator, the report does not give rise to legal implications.

8.2 It is understood that the requirements of The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 for street trading consents do not apply because the markets have been established by charter.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 The main premise of the report is that well run and busy markets have the potential to draw people into the towns and help to support the businesses already there. The risk of retaining the markets in house is that they continue to decline and ultimately fail. This goes against the Council's stated aim of doing what it can to support our town centres.

9.2 There is a reputational risk associated with contracting the markets out if the existing stallholders are unhappy with the situation. We will try to mitigate this risk by talking to the stallholders and working with the operator to safeguard their position.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

10.1 The options in the report have no particular impact on equality.

11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There is no evidence to suggest that there will be any negative climate or ecological implications resulting from the options in this report.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None

(END)

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PROPERTY CONSULTANCY

Report for West Oxfordshire District Council

Retail & Charter Markets

at

Carterton

Chipping Norton &

Witney

June 2023

Commercial Property
Chartered Surveyors
Asset Management
Investment

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Registered in England and Wales No. 6691457 | VAT Reg No. 938316016
Regulated by RICS

Contents

Part 1 – Background & Context

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Wild Property Consultancy has been commissioned to provide this report, with recommendations for the improvement of three markets in West Oxfordshire District. This commission is from the Market Towns Officer.

1.1.2 We have been requested to consider these three markets.

- Twice weekly Charter Market at Witney;
- Weekly Charter Market at Chipping Norton;
- Weekly retail market at Carterton

1.1.3 In reaching our conclusions and providing our recommendations we have followed this methodology:

- A desktop review of the research papers on markets nationally, covering the markets associations, the Institute of Place Managers and other recognised bodies. These provide the UK context for this assessment and references are included where appropriate.
- Site visits on at least two occasions to each of the three markets, the subject of this report.
- Site visits to other markets in the region, to act as a comparison.
- Stakeholder engagement, to assess opinion from traders and opinion from within each town, in order to create a future vision for the markets.

1.1.4 The report has been split into the following three sections:

Part 1: Background and Context

Part 2: Appraisal and Performance Analysis

Part 3: Recommendations

Appendices: Providing more in-depth responses to the questions put to stakeholders and including the SWOT Analysis.

1.2 Wild Property Consultancy

1.2.1 Neil Wild, a Chartered Surveyor (since 1993) and Member of the Institute of Place Management (2016), brings considerable experience of the commercial property market together with in depth knowledge of Landlord and Tenant law and property values across the county.

1.2.2 Neil is the owner of Wild Property Consultancy which has hundreds of property-owning contacts and regularly brokers leases, brings landlords and tenants together and is a big supporter of local businesses, facilitating engagement with local stakeholders. This has been gained through his property consultancy work as well as rejuvenation and high street consultancy for the Oxfordshire District Councils which brought many empty and underutilised properties back into use.

1.2.3 In the Vale DC, Neil worked with Wantage Town Team (2013 to 2018) to manage the occupation of vacant units, including two successful pop up 'Flashops' and support for the Mix Community Space. This contributed towards the town winning the Great British High Street Awards in 2014.

1.2.4 In Cherwell DC, his work included Banbury Town Coordination (2014-18), which drew together private and public sector stakeholders including three tiers of local government, independent retailers, landlords and property agents, to leverage private sector finance and set up three meanwhile spaces, reducing the number of empty shops in the town from 53 to 38 (2014 to 2018).

1.2.5 As part of the Bicester Town Centre Expansion, Neil represented the town's key landlords (Sainsbury's and Cherwell DC) to help coordinate the town centre development 2009-18, including managing key town centre property, liaising with over 40 different businesses, and creating the Bicester Traders Forum for independent retailers.

1.2.6 In South Oxfordshire DC, Neil worked on the Wallingford Empty Shops Project 2015-16, securing agreement with the landlords, enabling two meanwhile units for six organisations.

1.2.7 Wild Property Consultancy is one of the Delivery Partners for Meanwhile in Oxfordshire (2021-2024), a project utilising £1.70 million of Government funding, appointed by the Oxfordshire District Councils and OxLEP.

1.2.8 As Chair of the Banbury and District Chamber of Commerce (2018 – current), which works with 150 members, Oxfordshire's business leaders, local government and OxLEP, Neil has extensive networks across the county that can be drawn upon.

1.2.9 Nationally, Neil is a member of the Government commissioned High Streets Task Force (2020 to 2024) to provide specialist guidance and advice to Local Authorities, BIDs and other stakeholders.

1.3 Context

1.3.1 Town centres

Markets function within the economic and social fabric of a wider setting. This 'place' sets the dynamic, putting the market within an economic and social context. As is widely reported, high streets, town and urban centres are changing, mainly as a result of the way we shop being different – a change that goes back many years but exaggerated through the pandemic. There is much background research and reports on such changes. As a result of our professional practice, we are well positioned to understand these changes and their impact on a particular place. There are a variety of approaches and solutions on offer to bring together a strategy or series of approaches to facilitate change and help the place adapt to meet the needs of its community.

Whilst each place is unique, there are certain conclusions that are being reached nationally across the place management industry which are helpful to set out, as they are relevant to this study and put the recommendations of this report in a wider context. These conclusions draw on the research from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Future of Retail, Future of High Street Discussion.[1]

- Towns need to transition to become unique places, driven by the needs of the local community.

- Independent Businesses need significant support and resources. These businesses are doing great work in their community and became the subject of newfound appreciation during lockdown where they supported local communities and their social fabric.

[1] All Party Parliamentary Group on the Future of Retail, Future of High Street Discussion July 2021

- Councils and other stakeholders require a shift in focus, in the way we view High Streets and town centres. The key is to move beyond shopping and to view the landscape as being about green spaces, socialisation, experiences, hospitality, food, and health and well-being. This shift is necessary because of the increased tendency for people to shop online. Then, if the non-shopping aspects are right and well-integrated, then retail will thrive because people will come to the destination.

- The biggest mistake of the 20th century was designing High Streets exclusively around the car. We need to get cars out and make town centres more walkable and attractive. If we can do this, we can create places that are really in the heart of communities where people want to meet, drink, socialise, and do business.

- Markets and events fit within this changing context. Markets go back hundreds of years and their existence is to be encouraged and enhanced but their re-integration requires proactive support so they serve the needs of the community and at same time, complement other place based curation and activity.

1.3.2 Markets

Markets are at the heart of local communities and are a part of local history. Town markets are a crucial part of town vibrancy.

The Institute of Place Management (IPM) at Manchester Metropolitan University conducted a comprehensive review of the published evidence regarding town markets which demonstrated, unequivocally, that markets contribute to the economic, social and political health of towns and cities.[2] This review was at the request of the National Association of British Market Authorities and, as part of the High Street UK2020 project.

As a result, there are plenty of national resources to draw on for Councils to assist in the setting of strategy for all their policy affecting the town centre and rural economy.

[2] Markets Matter, Reviewing the Evidence and Detecting the Market Effect. Institute of Place Management 2015

Two national organisations represent the markets industry. The National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA), which focuses on market operators—local authorities, private operators, community interest companies and charities—and the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF), which supports market traders across the UK. Both organisations currently meet the Government through the Retail Forum and the all-party parliamentary markets group.

Markets are part of the history and tradition of many towns and cities in the UK. The most recent survey of the markets industry indicates that some 1,150 traditional retail markets are now trading, and they are the outlet for an amazing more than 32,000 small and medium-sized enterprises.[3] They exist through charters from the Crown, custom and practice and statutory legislation. In addition, numerous specialist markets, continental and Christmas markets generate essential footfall for town and city centres and support local economies, tourism, hospitality, and employment.

The NABMA 2022 survey[4] was the first meaningful assessment of the state of the markets industry since the pandemic. The main headlines and questions arising from the survey of 241 markets were, first, that stall occupancy has fallen from a national average of 77% (2017-18) to 72% (2021-22). Traditional outdoor retail markets and outdoor experiencing the greatest decline. Less than half of these, trading at a surplus.

Markets feature heavily as part of town and city centre regeneration for a number of local authorities. As well as the economy, markets also have a strong connection with other strategic policies of a Council. It is important therefore to determine how to direct funding to deliver successful and modern markets with the market industry needing to attract new and younger traders.

From our own Oxfordshire experience, we know that markets provide a fantastic opportunity for individuals and small businesses to begin and further their journey as town centre businesses. Many councils have reported to us whilst undertaking our research that markets have thrived during and since the pandemic as customers have appreciated the outside space and are keen to support locally based traders. The journey for a trader might lead in a variety of directions, depending on the person and their objectives – what is

[3] Hansard Markets and Market Traders (Review of Support) Debated 17/1/23, Simon Baynes MP [Markets and Market Traders (Review of Support) - Hansard - UK Parliament]

[4] [NABMA-Survey-2022.pdf]

important is that each market provides the right opportunities and experience for each endeavour.

Drawing on the IPM report, markets are significant in the following ways.

- **Markets Matter Economically.**
    - The markets industry is a significant employer nationally and at a local level.
    - With low barriers to entry, markets are excellent business incubators and they support business formation. This not only supports local economic development and diversity of retail offer but also encourages individual empowerment - a stepping stone into enterprise for those furthest from the labour market.
    - Markets positively impact on town centres. Markets can generate footfall increases of around 25% for town centres[5].
    - Markets increase retail sales, with significant numbers of market visitors spending money in other shops.
    - Income from markets supports wider local authority services.
    - Markets support inter and intra-generational economic mobility. Many market traders are family businesses and employ extended family members on either a part or full-time basis and the emergence of youth markets and the 'teenage market' is generating income for young people.
    - Markets provide employment and self-employment opportunities that are open to all. Markets provide entry-level employment that can assist relatively unskilled or under-capitalised individuals and have proved attractive to immigrant communities.
    - Markets create multi-use and multi-scale economic environments, promoting commerce and competition. Through markets, small and micro businesses have direct access not just to individual consumers but to larger businesses to whom they can become suppliers. This provides diversity of offer and encourages co-location and competition.

[5] Markets Matter, p 22

- Markets contribute to making other businesses viable. There can be significant earnings for farmers who attend markets with increased profit margins whilst these and other markets offer income opportunities for local businesses that contribute to their sustainability.

- Markets increase town centre resilience. Resilient towns respond and adapt to change. Representing more flexible and adaptable retail space, markets can respond quickly.

- Markets attract tourists, offering an enhanced tourist experience as they allow visitors to take part in the everyday life of the place they are visiting.

➢ Markets Matter Socially

- Markets are places of social interaction. Used by all sections of society, markets are where people of different incomes, ages, genders and cultures can meet together and interact.

- Markets facilitate community cohesion and social inclusion. Because of the ease of becoming a trader, markets have traditionally been attractive to new arrivals. They encourage newcomers to become part of the community and are spaces of diversity.

- Markets are crucial to the distinct identity of a town or area. They embody a community and set it apart from those without such an asset. They are a key part of the experiential identity of the place.

- Markets animate vacant or underused space. Whether on a street, a market place or vacant premises, markets create vitality and animation, drawing customers and onlookers. Their layout can encourage exploration and discovery.

- Markets benefit disadvantaged communities. The presence of local markets offering affordable and fresh produce can increase choice for people in deprived areas and improve their quality of life and help address social problems. The benefits and functions of markets are particularly significant in relation to the growing cost of living crisis.

- Markets contribute to community development. The small business nature of markets, their entrepreneurial character and integration with the community promotes community development and connectedness.

Markets Matter Politically

- Markets promote sustainability. Environmental and ecological benefits arise from selling locally-sourced products and through serving local communities who mainly walk or use public transport.

- Markets offer food security. The network of wholesale and livestock markets and the number of businesses involved in retail markets provides food resilience and a vital link between urban and rural economies.

- Markets promote community health. The availability of fresh and affordable food, opportunities for social interaction and participation in leisure activities enhance physical and mental well-being.

- Markets are places of innovation, experiment, and education. The low operating costs, smallness of scale, availability of stalls and the fluidity of markets encourage traders to take risks and try ideas and products that may not be viable elsewhere and provide the opportunity to educate shoppers in how to use and learn more about the product.

- Markets engage people in society. The fact that markets are organised and regulated ensures participation by people from all backgrounds. This agglomeration and active engagement in shared activity has mutual benefits, both commercial and social and secures an active response from shoppers.

- Markets are flexible. They can respond rapidly to change with new innovations such as Teenage Markets, night markets, and extended trading hours.

- Markets shaped the world we live in and are part of our cultural heritage. The concept of a ‘market town’ is ancient and familiar and continues to have a profound effect on town and city centre performance - determining our very geography and culture.

➢ Item for Reflection No 1 – what is the wider town strategy?

Markets are an extremely valuable asset to a specific place. They have potential for tremendous benefits across the social, economic and political spectrum. They need to form part of the wider strategy and vision for that place – something we will consider when we set out our recommendations and next steps.

1.4 Types of Markets

1.4.1 Traditional Retail Markets (TRMs)

TRMs take place both indoors and outdoors with a broad offering including food, household goods, clothing and the like. This diverse and affordable offering distinguishing them from more focused markets such as farmers markets and other speciality markets.

TRM's are particularly important to lower income, marginalised and vulnerable people, providing access to good quality, healthy and affordable fresh food, opportunities for social and cultural interaction and relatively low-cost and accessible trading. [6]

Their stall numbers have been declining and the other trend is that the age profile of the market trader is getting older.

The reasons for this decline are multiple - upshot of poor management, changing tastes and natural retail trends in which independent businesses generally struggle.[7]

It is fair to suggest that local authorities have often failed to make the right connections with wider policy agendas and have tended to limit themselves to a regulatory role; granting licenses and making sure that markets meet health and safety regulations. Their management has not been in the hands of those with curation and marketing skills.

[6] Adrian Bua, Myfanwy Taylor and Sara González, Measuring the Value of Traditional Retail Markets
[7] Gonzalez, S and Waley, P (2013) Traditional Retail Markets: The New Gentrification Frontier? Antipode: a radical journal of geography, 45 (4). 965 - 983.

➢ Item for Reflection No 2 – where does the responsibility sit?

The future of the market cannot be left to chance or solely to the work of a specific local authority markets officer or to the business plan of the market operator. Within the Council there needs to be a responsible markets team where support and different skill sets can be drawn.

1.4.2 Farmers Markets

Farmers Markets are a regular event in a town or city when local farmers or their representatives come to sell their produce directly to consumers. The theory being that cutting out middlemen, farmers receive a higher profit and shoppers receive the freshest and most flavourful food, with minimal food miles, and local economies prosper. The particular market defines the term "local" according to the agriculture of its region and communicates that definition to the public. Farmers markets also implement guidelines and operating rules that ensure the farmers market consists principally of farms selling directly to the public, products that the farms have produced. Often these markets take place monthly, although some are more regular.

1.4.3 Food & Speciality Markets

In many towns there is an exciting range and variety of additional street and outdoor markets taking place throughout the year, often within a wider programme of town events. These markets may be one offs, Christmas, quarterly or more regular events. Often these markets are themed and aim for a large number of stalls, with the event to draw a large crowd. Chipping Norton holds a large Christmas market with over 75 outside stalls, entertainment as well as indoor events and activity. Carterton's Christmas lights switch on within the market place attracts 4,000 persons.

The latest of the three NABMA Surveys highlighted an increasing number of traders going to market events rather than standing at traditional Markets and traders working only on a part time basis.

- **Item for Reflection No 3 - Can we mix the markets?**

For instance, where a town market is low in trader numbers and mix, could one combine a retail market with a farmer's market, to boost stall numbers and appeal?

In the majority of cases nationwide, retail market and farmers markets fall on different days. In successful towns, they are part of the town's calendar and branded in a similar way but usually held on separate occasions.

In Henley on Thames, once a month the farmers markets falls on same day as the charter market. The two markets are situated adjacent with customers mixing freely from one to another.

Farmers market cooperative, Thames Valley have a strong preference for a Friday or Saturday for a farmers market.

We refer further to this in our recommendations. There is scope for mixing, provided it is within the overall brand for the town.

1.5 Methods of operation

There are different approaches to the mode of operation which include the following;

- Unitary or District Council
- Town or Parish Council
- Private Market Operator
- Trader Operated (private company, cooperative)
- Other (social enterprise, Trust)

The NABMA survey included identified that by far the majority of the markets are local authority run.

1.6 The Oxfordshire & Cotswolds Market Experience

1.6.1 Below we set out the main Oxfordshire and Cotswold towns with their market offer and method of management, beginning with the three towns the subject of this report and then others follow alphabetically.

Carterton

Weekly retail market (Thursday) which originally began in 1973 and is now situated on the Market Square. Previous locations have been built upon as part of town expansion. The market is operated by the Town Council.

Chipping Norton

Weekly retail market (Wednesday) operated by the District Council situated on the lower side of the High Street (Market Place). The monthly farmers market has temporarily ceased due to the building works in the former Nat West. In addition, there is a large Christmas market run by a group of local businesses with a financial grant support from the Town Council. The town has a long history of a weekly market and since local government reorganisation in 1974, the market has been under WODC responsibility. A WODC review in 2019 noted the challenges brough about by Nat West and HSBC closures and by out of town development including the budget food store Aldi and by the attraction of the M&S and connected shops with parking on London Road.

Witney

Twice weekly charter market (Thursday and Saturday) operated by the District Council and a monthly farmers market (Fridays) operated by Thames Valley Farmers Markets.

Abingdon

Weekly outdoor charter market (Town Council) plus monthly farmers market (Thames Valley Farmers Market Cooperative).

Banbury

Twice weekly retail charter market with 12-15 stalls and a monthly farmers market (District Council operated). These take place alongside Town Council and BID run speciality markets.

Bicester

Weekly retail charter market (a trader run cooperative) with 25 – 30 stalls, including community and youth stalls with discounted rates.

Cirencester

Twice weekly retail charter market (Town council facilitated with Cotswold Market operating), with other private operators running speciality markets throughout the year – all coordinated by the Town Council.

Charlbury

A weekly food market run by the Town Council and a large quarterly farmers market by Thames Valley Farmers Market Cooperative.

Deddington

Monthly farmers market (volunteer run, Community Interest Company). 40 outside stalls plus indoor craft market on same day with 25 stalls. Deddington Farmers' Market was given Farmer's Market of the Year 2020 & 2021 by the Oxfordshire Prestige Awards and named The Third Best UK Farmers' Market by National Geographic Magazine Dec 2017.

Eynsham

Weekly country market via a cooperative social enterprise.

Henley on Thames

Weekly charter market and twice monthly farmers market, and a monthly craft market, operated by the Town Council as well as additional speciality market events by trader groups. Once a month the farmers market falls on the same day as the charter market.

Kidlington

Twice weekly retail charter market (trader run) with up to 12 stalls.

Moreton in Marsh

Weekly outdoor retail market, privately run by Cotswold Markets, approx. 30 stalls.

Stow on the Wold

Farmers Market. Monthly (twice monthly during summer) via Fresh n Local.

Stroud

Twice weekly retail market plus the weekly farmers market. Farmers market is operated via private operator Fresh n Local. The farmer's market is multi award-winning and is well known as one of the biggest, busiest and most popular farmers' markets in the UK.

Stratford upon Avon

A range of markets including traditional street market every Friday, a Saturday "urban mix market" and a Sunday "upmarket". Markets operated privately by LSD Promotions in conjunction with the Town Council

Thame

A range of markets run by the Town Council. Weekly charter market, monthly local produce market and other specialist markets throughout the year.

Wallingford

Weekly outdoor retail charter market, Town Council operated plus occasional additional street and speciality markets during the year. Approx 12 stalls.

Wantage

Twice weekly outdoor retail market, Town Council operated with 8 – 10 stalls.

Warwick

Weekly outdoor retail market operated privately by CJ Events with the District Council.

Woodstock

Twice monthly farmers market, operated by Thames Valley Farmers Market Cooperative. Approx. 12-15 stalls.

➢ Item for Reflection No 4 – Good Partnership Working

This list does not do justice to the successful partnerships between Council and private operator in many of these towns. In Cirencester, the Town Council have significantly expanded their overall market offer since 2015. The regular markets are delivered by the private operator, Cotswold Markets, but the Town Council has a team of three staff working alongside this private company to also commission additional specialist markets. The Town Council staff also enhance the promotion and marketing of the markets, they liaise with the traders, creating an excellent rapport and relationship and they ensure the markets are curated in line with the Town Council place management strategy – not the whim of the market operator. The market square is a stage upon which to present a series of activities on an almost daily basis – the Town Council holds the responsibility for this and works with private operators to deliver it.

EVENT	WHERE	WHEN	TIME
Charter Markets	Market Place	Mondays & Fridays	Until 3pm
Indoor Markets	Corn Hall	Sunday to Thursday	10am - 5pm
Antiques & Collectibles	Corn Hall	Fridays	8am - 3pm
Craft Market	Corn Hall	Saturdays	10am - 4:30pm
Arts & Crafts Market	Market Place	Saturday 1st	9am - 5pm
Farmers' Market	Market Place	Saturday 8th	9am - 2:30pm
Bands in the Park	Abbey Grounds	Sunday 9th	2:30pm - 4:30pm
France at Home Market	Market Place	Saturday 15th	9am - 5pm
France at Home Market	Market Place	Sunday 16th	10am - 4pm
Bands in the Park	Abbey Grounds	Sunday 16th	2:30pm - 4:30pm
Farmers' Market	Market Place	Saturday 22nd	9am - 2:30pm
Twilight Market	Market Place	Saturday 22nd	6pm - 10pm
Vintage & Artisan Fair	Corn Hall	Sunday 23rd	10am - 4pm
Bands in the Park	Abbey Grounds	Sunday 23rd	2:30pm - 4:30pm
General Market	Market Place	Saturday 29th	9am - 5pm
Indoor Market	Corn Hall	Saturday 29th	10am - 4:30pm

Information correct at time of going to print
Listings are subject to change

FOLLOW US

July Markets *(Image: Cirencester Town Council)*

Markets in July - Cirencester

Part 2: Appraisal & Performance Analysis

2.1 Methodology

Our appraisal and analysis are derived from desk top analysis, site visits, interviews and observations. As well as visits to the three markets the subject of this study, we have made specific visits to other markets in the region for the purpose of this study including; Banbury, Bicester, Cirencester, Deddington, Moreton in Marsh and Woodstock as well as the farmers market at Witney and the Country Market at Eynsham.

Our analysis covers the economic, social and political considerations arising from the Markets Matter Report, referred to in Section 1. Our specific measurement has included:

- Capacity of market (max possible No. of stall pitches).
- No. of stalls present (on days visited, with an average taken if necessary)[8].
- Occupancy (the Capacity divided by the No. of stalls present, expressed as a percentage).
- Trader Mix (the No. of unique stalls[9] in relation to the Capacity, as a factor of 1).
- Footfall generated (market customer counts over an hour, multiplied for the duration of the market).
- Distance travelled by trader (in miles from home or storage unit, as appropriate).
- Turnover per stall (where the trader has provided such information in response to our survey question).

The results are set out in the following ways;

- Table of results alongside comparisons with six other local markets.
- Trader interview responses, in tabular form.
- Key comments from specific stakeholder interviews.

[8] Where a specific stall (such as fruit/veg) has more than one pitch, the total no of pitches taken is used for this purpose, for instance a fruit/veg usually takes x4 stalls and we have used 4 in this instance.
[9] In this instance fruit/veg would be counted as x1 stall

The analysis is similar in approach as other financial indices for town centres which predominately cover footfall, empty shops and town centre trader mix. The above metrics complement the NABMA toolkit designed for market operators to measure the economic performance of specific traditional retail markets.

2.2 Analysis Matrix

	Town Population	No of Stalls	Occupancy (%)	Trader mix	Frequency	Footfall (per market)
Carterton	17,000	10	50%	0.25	weekly	108
Chippy	7,000	12	60%	0.40	weekly	272
Witney	30,000	14	70%	0.45	Twice weekly	470
Banbury	50,000	22	73%	0.40	Twice weekly	615
Bicester	38,000	29	91%	0.69	weekly	780
Cirencester *	20,000	25 - 50	80%	0.80	Twice weekly	800
Deddington	2,000	44	96%	0.70	monthly	1,044
Moreton	5,000	49	95%	0.57	weekly	2,050

➢ Item for Reflection No 5 – Market Data

The markets at Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney are by far the smallest in terms of stalls and occupancy.

The footfall at Witney market is reasonable, compared to its comparatively small market size, suggesting this is a strength to build upon.

Carterton not fulfilling its potential, given the overall size of the town's population and has by far the lowest score for Trader Mix.

* Cirencester market is between 25 stalls (Monday) and 50 stalls (Fridays)

2.3 Financial Data

2.3.1 This section covers the financial data from WODC relating to the markets at Chipping Norton and Witney.

2.3.2 Annual income is the rent from stall holders and covers the year to January 2023.

2.3.3 Costs incurred includes – refuse removal and disposal, business rates and a share of the market manager.[10]

Income & Expenditure Table for Chipping Norton and Witney:

	Annual Income	Refuse collection	Business Rates	Gross Profit	Staff allocation	Net Income p.a.
Witney	£ 40,100.00	£30,000.00	£ 4,990	£ 5,000	£ 5,705	(£ 700)
CN	£ 16,500.00	£13,000.00	£ 1,572	£ 2,000	£ 2,853	(£ 850)
						(£ 1,600)

➢ Item for Reflection No 6 – Financial Data

At over £50,000 the annual income is good, with room for expansion in the size and frequency of markets on offer throughout the year, this income can be enhanced significantly. This provides interest for private operator involvement with a fee to be paid to the Council provided refuse arrangements can be rationalised. In Bicester, the market traders each take their rubbish away with them.

2.4 Interviews with Market Traders & Other Stakeholders

We have conducted interviews with each stall holder for all three markets and their comments have been added alongside the specific questions asked. For ease these are included within the Appendix.

We have also conducted interviews with customers and town shoppers, shopping centre managers, town businesses, council officers and members, private market operators, market and representatives from other towns. These are also included within the Appendix.

[10] These costs reflect information from WODC Officers

We urge you to read each of these in full as they provide a useful insight. A summary for each town is included below:

2.4.1 Carterton

- Limited size and limited stall variety with poor footfall.
- There is no regular Carterton based trader at the market, the closest is Wantage based.
- No in-town market signage.
- Opportunity to bring to bring in more customers looking for a bargain who are shopping at the nearby supermarkets and parking adjacent to the market.
- Special events draw in 4,000 people – demonstrating the town support for gatherings and events.

2.4.2 Chipping Norton

- Doesn't reflect well on the town.
- The market site location is a disadvantage.
- The orientation of stalls and curation is poor.
- The main road is a barrier and traffic emissions for traders is a concern.
- Existing building works is an understandable short-term disruption but has acted as a catalyst for traders to leave and reduce size of market.
- Nothing to encourage shoppers to linger (dwell time is low).
- No electrical supplies for stall holders.
- There is no CN based trader at the market.
- No messaging on approach or in town to announce the market day.
- Limited promotion of the market through adverts or social media.
- Market stall holders self-manage, in terms of curation and organisation.
- Christmas in Chippy market event is example of how well a special event market can be delivered.
- Ease of pedestrian navigation around the town is poor.
- Local businesses want to see a successful market but recognise changes required.

2.4.3 Witney

- No messaging on approach or in town to announce the market day.
- Limited promotion of the market through adverts or social media.
- Reduced footfall at this end of town due to shop closures.
- Limited local business taking part in the market.
- Market stall holders self-manage, in terms of curation and organisation.
- Stalls holders have to self-erect the stalls, which are cumbersome, heavy and require a van for transportation.
- Stall holder financial takings are positive demonstrating potential for market expansion.
- High Street closure and lack of clarity about it, creating town wide uncertainty and impacting customer satisfaction.
- No obvious connection between charter market and other market events, such as the Town Council's running of the Corn Exchange (and their indoor craft markets) and the proposals at Marriotts Walk.
- Thames Valley Farmers Market restricted in their efforts to promote Witney Farmers Market with much reduced signage permitted compared to other towns in which they operate

Part 3: Recommendations

We are inserting into the Recommendations, the six Items for Reflection paragraphs contained in Sections 1 and 2 of the Report. This is for ease of reference and because these items lead into the Recommendations.

- **Item for Reflection No 1 – what is the wider town strategy?**

Markets are an extremely valuable asset to a specific place. They have potential for tremendous benefits across the social, economic and political spectrum. They need to form part of the wider strategy and vision for that place – something we will consider when we set out our recommendations and next steps.

- **Item for Reflection No 2 – where does the responsibility sit?**

The future of the market cannot be left to chance or solely to the work of a specific local authority markets officer or to the business plan of the market operator. Within the Council there needs to be a responsible markets team where support and different skill sets can be drawn.

- **Item for Reflection No 3 - Can we mix the market types?**

For instance, where a town market is low in trader numbers and mix, could one combine a retail market with a farmer's market, to boost stall numbers and appeal?

In the majority of cases nationwide, retail market and farmers markets fall on different days. In successful towns, they are part of the town's calendar and branded in a similar way but usually held on separate occasions.

In Henley on Thames, once a month the farmers markets falls on same day as the charter market. The two markets are situated adjacent with customers mixing freely from one to another.

Farmers market cooperative, Thames Valley have a strong preference for a Friday or Saturday for a farmers market.

- **Item for Reflection No 4 – Good Partnership Working**

This list does not do justice to the successful partnerships between Council and private operator in many of these towns. In Cirencester, the Town Council have significantly expanded their overall market offer since 2015. The regular markets are delivered by the private operator, Cotswold Markets, but the Town Council has a team of three staff working alongside this private company to also commission additional specialist markets. The Town Council staff also enhance the promotion and marketing of the markets, they liaise with the traders, creating an excellent rapport and relationship and they ensure the markets are curated in line with the Town Council place management strategy – not the whim of the market operator. The market square is a stage upon which to present a series of activities on an almost daily basis – the Town Council holds the responsibility for this and works with private operators to deliver it.

- **Item for Reflection No 5 – Market Data**

The markets at Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney are by far the smallest in terms of stalls and occupancy.

The footfall at Witney market is reasonable, compared to its comparatively small market size, suggesting this is a strength to build upon.

Carterton not fulfilling its potential, given the overall size of the town's population and has by far the lowest score for Trader Mix.

- **Item for Reflection No 6 – Financial Data**

At over £50,000 the annual income is positive, with room for expansion in the size and frequency of markets on offer throughout the year, this income can be enhanced significantly. This provides interest for private operator involvement with a fee to be paid to the Council provided refuse arrangements can be rationalised. In Bicester, the market traders each take their rubbish away with them.

3.1 Methodology

This section draws together our research with a set of recommendations and next steps. Our aim is to produce recommendations that are easily deliverable in the short term and practical to implement, as well as complementing a wider town vitality strategy over the longer term. We know the pressing financial constraints on all local authorities and have avoided unrealistic proposals. However, we do urge the District Council to implement change and foster better collaboration with other stakeholders – a staffing resource rather than an expensive fixed cost. There is no easy fix or simple set of solutions. Studies have been done before and if the solution was simple, they would have been fixed. Nevertheless, our research shows that there are successful markets across several of our neighboring towns, and we need to draw on their experiences. Many are keen to support and share their practices.

3.2 Engage Key Partners - Partnership Approach

Successful towns build strong partnerships with relevant stakeholders each with a keen interest in delivering a vibrant and dynamic town centre. Efforts by individual stakeholders on their own leads to an incoherent set of policies. This is a key piece of advice often shared by the High Streets Task Force to local authorities commissioning advice from their panel of experts.

In Witney there is already evidence of separately planned initiatives – each positive on their own – but arguably lacking an overarching strategy. For instance, the Town Council's use of the lovely Corn Exchange is proving very successful but is there opportunity for shared promotion of the town charter market and the Town Council's craft markets?

Also in Witney, the booking of Cotswold Markets for a Christmas fair on Friday 8th and Saturday 9th December is an exciting step for Marriotts Walk. It will be the first time the Walk has put on a market - will this appear as a separately promoted and branded event at one end of town, in competition to the weekly retail market? This is not to suggest that two-day event nor the other themed markets under discussion should not occur, but how will they all complement one another? There needs to be a clear programme of market events covering all town activity.

There is an active Town Council in all three towns each already proving to be a strong activator of positive intown initiatives. Typically, a District Council will need to instigate partnerships which might need assistance from Members to initiate and staffing support to take forward.

In Chipping Norton, the partnership might start with **District and Town Council** and **business representation** forming an action plan and working on an agreed strategy for town markets. This might be a good springboard into future informal joint working or at least to formulate a joint understanding and vision.

In Witney, there are more obvious additional stakeholders to include at the outset, where a town partnership should include:

District Council **Town Council** **C of Commerce** **Marriotts Walk**

The town partnership should, as a starting point, create a single market events programme which can be shared with the public, using a single brand logo and town branded signage – underlining the joint working and joined up approach. Others may join the Partnership as the initiatives develop, such as Woolgate Centre (who do not have any current market plans or aspirations but who ought to form part of the discussions).

In Carterton, the Town Council is leading the town centre market initiative. The Officers need support and resources. We would recommend here a partnership with local **businesses and community** representation with strategic support from the **District Council.**

3.3 Engage with the Micro Businesses

We have been impressed with the support provided by the team at Cirencester Town Council to the town's market traders and town retailers. The council staff know each by name, they use social media with videos to promote the products and offers and they have a clear Balance of Trades Policy, providing clarity for possible competing businesses. This all takes place in parallel with the private operator, Cotswold Markets, organising the bookings and practicalities of the market. The Town Council ensure their own policies and vision for the market place are followed and activated. There is no hiding behind the private operator's style of management – instead the Town Council takes the lead.

3.4 Engage the Community

Each town has a catchment eager to engage and enjoy the benefits of their town centre. Many people are becoming tired of online retailing and want a fresh and real world shopping experience. There are many socially conscious individuals, looking for ways to reduce their carbon footprint and support an eco and environmentally positive way of life. Themed markets such as vegan fares, eco fares, re-use and zero waste are becoming more the norm. Youth markets, twilight and night markets are popular.

The weekly retail markets serve a loyal customer base. The cost of living crisis means that these markets are an important place for customers' weekly shop. This doesn't mean the markets only serve a specific demographic but it is a fact that retail markets provide access to affordable and healthy food often at lower prices than in stores.

Regular engagement with the community, understanding these trends and responding appropriately can be undertaken through the partnership approach recommended. **Community and customer inclusion within such a Partnership is encouraged.**

Our research confirms there is a strong community and sense of town pride in each of the three places. Connecting with the community will lead to fresh ideas and innovation. The Council need to play a key role as instigator and then facilitator, allowing others to take the lead. Christmas in Chippy is an example of a very well organised and significant town event already in the annual calendar. This proves such a themed market can be repeated perhaps on a smaller but more regular scale.

The pedestrian friendly High Street in Witney is causing a great debate in the town. Engage with the community and use the space for themed markets and street fairs.

Carterton has a fantastic community. The town might learn from other places. Levenshulme Market in Greater Manchester was only five years old when it won the Best Small Outdoor Market Award in 2020[11]. It has a huge impact on its area making environmental improvements to its trading site by improving verges, introducing planters, cycle racks and wall art. The directors engage with local organisations and schools about career plans and becoming independent traders. This is a market that has changed the dynamics of an area, and its environment, by creating a vibrant community hub. It represents a real team effort. All profits from the market go back to helping the market operate in a socially, environmentally and financially sustaining way.

3.5 Animate & Green the Space

The community come into their towns for a variety of reasons, including to enjoy the pleasant environments. The public realm and in particular the market squares should provide space for seating with trees to provide shade and tables and chairs to enjoy a drink. These market squares are also a stage upon which a series of events can be held, including the regular markets but also other animation. In Cirencester on non-market days, there is often a large NHS bus in the square to provide a drop in health facility and information point. On other days there is a coffee vendor or series of planned street entertainers and musicians. Some towns plan a specific programme of entertainment, alongside the market and also as a separate large event within the market square. In Wantage a series of musicians would set up and play next to the market each Saturday market day, the town called these Wantage presents…. this being an important first step.

Retail markets are a great way to support a town in its transition towards a zero carbon economy through locally grown produce and facilitating more pedestrian friendly streets.

[11] Great British Market Award Winners 2020 Announced! - NABMA

Carterton has a lovely market square. It attracts a huge crowd for specific town events, celebrations and occasions of remembrance. The elements are there for attracting smaller crowds on a more regular basis.

On one side of the square in Carterton is an attractive green space. This is hidden from view on market days. Consider the curation and layout of the market, so the square's permanents and attractive features are enhanced and can be appreciated.

Chipping Norton is challenged by the main road and the lack of greenery. Town centre building works are a positive step for specific properties but have shrunk the size of the market and split it in two. Further building works may impede it further. A catalyst for positive change is needed here. An expansion in the specific town locations for market stalls will help create an excitement and encourage new traders to join the regular weekly markets.

In Witney the Corn Exchange is situated adjacent to the market square and offers excellent scope to act as a base for outdoor entertainment. The fish and chip shop next to the market square loses half of its outdoor seating and window frontage on market days. Consider ways of including the business into the market and enhancing its seating. Witney has a peaceful pleasant environment enhanced by closure of traffic through the High Street. Yet the road behind which provides a vehicular access to Langdale Street is scruffy with bin bags and vans parked.

3.6 Set up a Markets Team

This structure is for the Council to determine and we anticipate funding and staffing allocations will present challenges. Our research suggests that a team approach works best. One person to be the strategic lead Officer covering markets across the District then in addition a specific Officer for each of the three markets. We would suggest approaching the Town Council in each instance as it is possible that these specific Officers could be Town Council employees. Their role to be the liaison with traders, encourage new business, marketing and social media. They would have the support of Council teams for road closures, signage to be erected as required, and to have a marketing budget. A cross council approach will hopefully assist with a collaborative role enabling a shared set of skills. A reduced or adapted version of the above, if financial constraints dictate, would be more appropriate than the current arrangement.

3.7 Join NABMA

The District should join the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) which is an umbrella organisation that helps, advises and promotes markets and events nationally. All market operators, council, private or otherwise should join for their excellent advice and help offered to members. They encourage collaboration and have the ear of Government and are constantly campaigning on behalf of the industry.

3.8 Private Market Operator

Meeting and discussions should take place with a private Market Operator. This should take place in parallel with the creation of a Town Partnership. We are advocating that the local authority retains the strategic management of its markets but outsources the operational management, to a formal medium- to long-term joint venture between the public and private sector. This model is useful where the local authority lacks the in-house capacity and capability to effectively manage the markets, and where external investment in stalls and infrastructure is required.

We imagine the private operator taking on the operation of the weekly market in Chipping Norton - assisting with the change of locations as well as the charter market in Witney.

They could take on the farmers market in Chipping Norton unless Thames Valley will reintroduce the market on a new pitch.

The selected operator should join the partnership. They should not be left in charge but to be given directions by the Markets Team. The operator would supply, erect and dismantle the stalls, take bookings and promote the opportunity. The operator would want to have an option to run other themed and speciality markets within each town.

As we have underlined already, outsourcing the markets and then stepping back is not going to work.

The private operator would assist Carterton by taking on themed markets in the market square.

3.9 Practical Steps

The following are solid steps forwards, in some cases capable of being implemented immediately.

Carterton

Objective	First Steps
Create a brand	"Market Carterton" Make the market stand out, stand tall and stand proud. Introduce flags and bunting on market day. Banners and signposting. Aim to have events in the market on other days – not as competing markets but to encourage the use of the outside space
Connect the market to the town	Encourage those who live locally to be represented as stall holders. Not necessarily existing town retailers but those living locally with a vision and passion to operate a micro business. Try and encourage a new generation of stall holders to emerge. Build on the town's history. Horticultural industry so as well as the fruit and veg, have stalls selling tomato chutney and other specialist produce. Encourage local producers, farmers and other local food connections to have stalls on market day. Carterton could have a combined retail and farmers market. Encourage more food sellers – to complement not compete with the existing cafes. If the burger van is inconsistent, find one that will commit to come each week and have two or three options. Not simply "fast food" or chip based offer, but also more wholesome food or vegan food.
Carterton presents…	Wantage and other towns have introduced music alongside the market. Encourage local bands, musicians to play music each week. Allow them to promote their music. Thought will need to go into

	the layout/curation of the square to facilitate this and for the music not to be too loud to prevent conversations amongst friends who gather to enjoy the atmosphere.
Promotion	Introduce in town signage. Start with simple desk top produced finger posts. Create a simple "Market Carterton" typeface (logo) and use as part of in-town finger posts and banners. Continue to advertise the opportunity to take on a stall, rent free.
Improve market layout/curation	Ensure benches can be used rather than the stalls impeding use. The green space is hidden behind a stall. Vets practice completely hidden each market day - open up the vet frontage so not hidden behind the stalls. A slight move of the card trader's pitch and van will overcome. Relocate vans so not within the square. There must be a call for a pet food and pet accessory supplier to have a stall, given the position of the vets.
Local Businesses	There are very few shops in the town centre relative to the size of the town's population. The market is an excellent opportunity for locally based aspiring business people to take the first steps on their journey. Advertise the opportunity, the free rents and the support on offer.
Suggestions	Encourage local community groups and charities to take part. Ask Forces Support to have a stall as a micro charity shop. Uniformed organisations (Scouts, Guides, Cadets). Carterton Educational Trust. Crocodiles of the World, situated at Brize Norton. Farm centre at Frilford and Cogges Manor Farm, nr Witney. Play Association play day in the square. Town has a wealth of sports club – how about a boxing demonstration from local club?
Enhance use of the square	Introduce permanent wooden stalls along side the wall of the Factory Shop -act as an easy way for a semi permanent pitch.

Chipping Norton

Objective	How
Create a brand	"Chippy Markets" Emphasise on the plural – a range of markets in the town. The market is to be encouraged. Christmas in Chippy demonstrates the potential.
Appearance & Curation	Introduce new locations for town wide markets. Relocate Wednesday market to the High Street (outside Boots). With a second phase and expansion to Middle Row. Retain the existing market location for special events which require a wider open space (See below).
Connect the market to the town	Current traders travel a long distance and their takings are not high – this is not sustainable. Encourage those who live locally to be represented as stall holders. There are many local people and businesses who run stalls at the Christmas market for example. Build on the strong community links.
Farmers Market	Reintroduce the once a month Saturday Farmers Market with immediate effect in new location of High Street and look to combine with the former WI market.
Operational	Add in electric points in specific locations.
Promotion	Introduce in town signage. Start with simple desk top produced finger posts. Create a simple "Chippy Markets" typeface (logo) and use as part of in-town finger posts and banners.
Practicalities	Involve the Town Council in a wider town discussion about events and markets throughout the year. Take up TC offer for use of toilets for traders.
Suggestions	Use the Christmas in Chippy example and operate from multi sites depending on the specific market and day of the week. Twilight markets. Sunday quarterly antiques market (connecting the town back to the antique shops from the past, which have now closed). Annual beer festival with Hook Norton support – encourage other local breweries to take part.

	Short outdoor theatre productions – in conjunction with theatre, to help promote forthcoming events. Include these outdoor market sites as part of the literary festival. Book event Outdoor theatre performance CN Choral society CN Vintage Sports Car Club CN Railway Club (50th year in 2024) Cycle Repair Stands – repair hub? Re-use and eco fair Farm ED – farm and food education – not for profit organisation on Burford Road just outside the town – encourage their participation. Chipping Norton news stall / Build Chippy Better stall
Town Council	Partner with the Town Council

Witney

Objective	How
Create a brand	"Market Witney" Connect the potentially different markets across the town under a single brand, with a single vision and programme of events.
Appearance & Curation	Utilise the attractive market square as a positive asset for the market. Utilise the benefits of the outside seating at Corn Exchange and the coffee shop and the fish and chip shop.
Witney presents…	Wantage and other towns have introduced music alongside the market. Encourage local bands, musicians to play music each week. Allow them to promote their music. Encourage dwell time. This could develop into a Saturday twilight music event with food stalls.
Practicalities	Involve the Town Council in a wider town discussion about events and markets throughout the year. Agree with TC, the use of Corn Exchange toilets by traders.
Promotion	Introduce in town signage. Start with simple desk top produced finger posts. Create a simple "Chippy Markets" typeface (logo) and use has part of intown finger posts and banners.
Operational	Engage in a discussion with private operator to take on the running of the twice weekly market but set clear criteria and aims/objectives for this to ensure there is a town wide focus and plan.
Local business	Encourage local business and locally based individuals to take part in the markets. Witney shops have expensive rents. Demand for the small units is high. The market offers excellent introductory opportunity for micro businesses to start their journey. Advertise the opportunity, introduce special offers for new traders.
Local butchers	There is evidence of antagonism towards fresh meat vendors at the town markets. This needs to be addressed. A farmers market cannot operate properly without a fresh meat vendor. A clear Balance of Trade Policy will help.
Use of High Street	Formulate a plan for use of High Street for special event markets such as food and craft fairs.

Suggestions	Create a strong brand that can be used for all markets in the town. Proactively encourage local traders to take part. Discounts will be needed on re-launch to encourage participation.
Town Council	Partner with the Town Council

3.10 Market Rights

When change is planned for markets it is important to consider the implications of any market rights issues.

Markets rights enable a market operator whether public or private sector, to potentially control the setting up of other markets within a defined area. Many market operators, in both the public and private sectors, take these responsibilities seriously and have adopted policies to control the setting up of markets. It is important that, as part of the consideration of an alternative model, a market operator considers the extent to which an existing markets rights policy can be accommodated.[12]

4. Conclusion

Markets breathe life into a town centre and provide positive energy. They epitomise the hustle and bustle of daily life. They are commerce in action. A customer looking for a one off bargain, or vital to one's weekly shopping on a budget or somewhere unique for lunch, the market environment is an enticing and wonderful experience. The high street is a very competitive environment and for any retailer, including markets, to survive they have to ensure they are providing what the customer wants. In addition to regularly reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of its operation, it is also important for market traders, the operators and local authorities to look for innovation and good practice from others around them. There are many towns in the region who would be delighted to offer support and advice to share the lessons they have learnt and experiences of promoting and growing markets. There are some excellent examples that we have given in this report. We encourage the Officers and Members at WODC to take up these offers of support and visit as many places as possible.

[12] From Retail Markets Management Models

Photographs

Carterton Market (30/3/23)

Carterton Market (6/4/23)

Carterton Market – vets practice frontage blocked

Carterton Market Square – Delightful green space, hidden

Carterton Market Square, War Memorial

Chipping Norton Market Day (26/4/23)

Chipping Norton Market Day (29/3/23)

Chipping Norton Market Day (26/4/23)

Chipping Norton Market Day (5/4/23) – the builders hoarding in background

Chipping Norton Market Refuse (29/3/23)

Additional pitch location – High Street Crown & Cushion

Additional pitch location - High Street Boots

Additional pitch location – Middle Row

Witney Market (30/3/23)

Witney Market (30/3/23)

Witney Market, view from High Street (13/4/23)


Witney Market, view from High Street (30/3/23)

Witney Market (vans blocking adjacent business)

Witney Market (vans blocking adjacent business)

Witney High Street (closed to cars)

Side street from Market Square

Appendix

Stakeholder Representation – we have had conversations with the following persons and grateful for their time and assistance.

District Wide
Duncan Enright Deputy Leader of WODC and the Executive Member for the Economic Development Portfolio
Pat Bliss, markets manager, Licensing team

Carterton
Nicholas Leverton, Town Counsellor and former town mayor.
Kay Linnington and Katie Zasada, Town Council

Chipping Norton
Patrick, Jaffe and Neale
Mayor Sandra Coleman and Luci Ashbourne, Town Council
Susan, an employee at Ticketty Boo
Nicola Edginton, Mark Making
Nathan, business owner Pie in the sky
Flower shop
Geoff Saul, Counsellor
Emma Kennedy, the Branch
Keith Ruddle, Chipping Norton News

Witney
Sharon Groth, Town Clerk, Town Council
David Gambier, Great Experience Travel Group and Witney Chamber of Commerce
Iain, an employee at Edgars
Rob Steere, Woolgate Centre Manager
Simon Jones, Marriotts Walk, Centre Manager

Others
Chris Gregory, Heartflood
Paul Almond, Banbury Town Council and former Street Scene at Cherwell District Council
Dermot McGillicuddy, LSD Promotions
Dave Joynes, Cotswold Markets
Richard Gould, Bicester and Kidlington Market Traders
Becky Coles, Cirencester Town Council
Alice Hemming, Cooperative Futures
David Busby, Thames Valley Farmers Markets
Nicci Taylor, Henley on Thames Town Council

Interviews with Market Traders

We interviewed each stall holder on each of the three markets. Their comments and suggestions should be considered and reflected upon.

Carterton – Interviews with Market Traders

No of stall holders	5
What other markets attend	All attend at least three markets per week
How far travel from (one way)	Average distance travelled, 33 miles. Closest is the card retailer with 18-mile journey from Wantage. Hot food seller travels the furthest, 58 miles from Ledbury. Total of 334-mile round trip by 5 traders.
What additional stalls would you like to see	Deli, artisan products, picture framer, regular hot food (as existing one not consistent).
How well out of 10 (10 highest and 1 lowest) is the market promoted to public	Positive comments about the sign on way into town (part of the Carterton welcome sign) but otherwise limited positive responses. Average of 1 – 3 out of 10.
How is the market organised. Stalls / layout / new entrants	There is much scope for additional stalls. Very limited footfall. Those traders present are all fairly long-term traders.
Takings	Four traders responded. X 3: £200 - £300 X1 £500
Council support	Admin is fine. Limited social media as TC has limitations on allowing trader comments on Facebook page. No in town signage. One trader had signs printed but not allowed to erect.
Other observations	Worst performing market for some of the traders. Market situated within triangle of supermarkets. Former locations better (town developments have led to changes).
How else can we help:	Increase footfall, better publicity, wider variety of stalls. Rent free for up to x4 weeks per year (allow holidays) Rent free /reduced rent for new traders

Chipping Norton – Interviews with Market Traders

No of stall holders	8
What other markets attend	All attend at least one other. 5 out of 8 attend another market most days.
How far travel from (one way)	Average distance travelled, 39 miles. Closest was within 20 miles and furthest 70. Total of 630-mile round trip by 8 traders.
What additional stalls would you like to see	Hot food, coffee – increase dwell time. Vegan food, pet food, cold meats and more deli offer.
How well out of 10 (10 highest and 1 lowest) is the market promoted to public	Average score: 2.50. No promotion. Other comments – need to promote alongside a strategy for whole town.
How is the market organised. Stalls / layout / new entrants	Unanimous response of the market being self-organised (by stall holders). One trader suggested a re-location to better site (less slope) but others resigned to existing tricky trading locations. Lack of toilet facility.
Takings	Six traders responded. x2: under £100 X2: £200 - £300 X1: £300 - £400 X1: £1000 +
Council support	Much appreciation and loyalty to Pat Bliss notwithstanding the poor promotion.
Other observations	Tricky site, on a slope. Exposed to weather and traffic – wind and traffic emissions (next to traffic crossing, static vehicles with engine running) Need to retain vans alongside the stall to provide shelter and anchor down. Worst performing market out of those attended by traders. No electric provision.
How else can we help:	Remove the hoarding (due to building works) which limits the pitches, splits the market in two parts and prompted retirement by 2 traders. Rent free for up to x4 weeks per year (allow holidays) Rent free /reduced rent for new traders Promotion and advertising In town signage Shuttle bus from villages

Witney – Interviews with Market Traders

No of stall holders	9
What other markets attend	Majority do 3+ in a week. Picture framer and plant stall only attend Witney.
How far travel from (one way)	Average distance travelled 30 miles. Closest less than 3 miles (the relatively new cake stall) and furthest is 69 miles. Total of 532-mile round trip by 9 traders.
What additional stalls would you like to see	Regular plant and cut flowers stall (existing Thursday trader is infrequent due to family circumstances). Hairdresser, cold meats, bric a brac, coffee, pet food. Artisan and crafts. One trader suggested an additional fruit/veg stall at other end.
How well out of 10 is the market promoted to public	Average score: 1.50 out of 10 (out of six expressing a score). One trader expressed satisfaction as has regular repeat customers.
How is the market organised. Stalls / layout / new entrants	Most keen for the high street to be re-opened. One trader happy with closure and suggesting use the space for stalls instead of traffic. Most not advocating a return to pre covid layout where central area had stalls. One trader been coming 4 weeks – had limited introduction and assistance with practicalities. Stalls are generally a bug bear for many. Require a van due to their size. Too heavy for average person to self-erect. Intimidating for new entrants. Lack of toilet facility.
Takings	Five traders responded. X1: £100 - £200 X1: £300 - £400 X1: £900 - £1,000 X 1: £1,000 X1: £2 - £2,500
Council support	Appreciation and loyalty to Pat Bliss notwithstanding the poor promotion.
Other observations	One trader aspiring to have own shop after period of market trading. Cheese seller noted that customers prefer quality over value.
How else can we help:	Bring in more stalls, fill in the gaps.

Comments from Pat Bliss, WODC Licencing

Chipping Norton –

The Charter (for Market and Mop Fair) has been in place for many centuries.
The market which I have known for several decades is at present in the midst of external building works which have cut the ground area and made access difficult. A number of traders stopped trading as there was not sufficient space.
Chipping Norton lower car park is on a quite considerable gradient and this does curtail some pitches especially during building works.
Chipping Norton was hit by the closure of the two big banks, by the market, which served the town and surrounding communities.
For many years all the outlying villages were served by buses and a regular bus run was always present on Market Day and weekends. The idea of people shopping, drinking, socialising etc in Chipping Norton is fine but the people who would use the town need their cars to get into Chipping Norton and therefore need parking.
Parking is a big issue in Chipping Norton and the recent change from WODC to OCC has made it difficult and likely to get worse. The whole of the top car park is always full and would be difficult to use for any other purpose.

Witney –

Again this and the Fair are within a Charter.
Loss of footfall has been noticeable since the High Street was closed to traffic.
The use of WODC Gazebos has been a problem as they are far too heavy for most stall holders and we have allowed traders to use their own as long as they are safe and in keeping. Unless WODC are willing and able to handle and erect the Gazebos they are not a good idea for the future.
To run further markets within the Town, the Square or on the Green would be for WTC and OCC as they are in charge of these areas except on Thursday/Saturday Charter Markets.
We do have several enquiries at present and hope to set up further stalls in the centre of the Market which was cleared and spaced out due to Covid.
With both Towns, the idea of other smaller individual markets is fine but needs to be closely monitored for Health & Safety, Public Liability, Food & Hygiene etc.

Interviews with Other Stakeholders

Carterton – Interviews with Other Stakeholders

Appearance & Curation	Too few stalls. Pleasant market square.
Community Value	
Operational	Consistent
Promotion	Lack of in town signage, finger posts
Practicalities	Former locations better
Suggestions	
Town Benefits	Provides a market town narrative and connects back to its formation (horticultural business)

Chipping Norton – Interviews with Other Stakeholders

Appearance & Curation	Not good visually Vans and stall backs create a barrier Slope doesn't facilitate increased dwell time Hard to see from High Street Not a good advert for the town Limited stall mix
Community value	Forms part of the weekly routine but disappointing offer and mix of stalls. Loyal customer base. Sells products not available elsewhere in town centre.
Operational	Disruption from the building works Potential for further disruption when HSBC developed.
Promotion	Little if any promotion of the market to public/visitors/tourists. Council have left it to its own devices and its own fortunes.
Practicalities	Arguably in wrong location – sloping site, exposed to elements and road noise and road pollution No electrical supplies (other than from local shop keeper) Discussion on markets quickly linked to town centre accessibility. Market on a slope is part of the overall challenge of navigating round town on foot.
Suggestions	Create a common branding for each stall. Add stall mix with offer to help increase dwell time – food stalls with seating. Create boards with "The Chippy Market – on Today" (or similar) for the stall holders to use as wind breaks instead of the vans, while making it look appealing and being advertising at the same time. A town with strong community spirit. Engender some of this spirit with local involvement. Town Council willing to consider market support and operation, provided costs covered.

Suggestions (continued)	Ensure the proposals from the LCWIP complement the accessibility to/from the market's location. Consider re-locating the market. Look how Christmas in Chippy is run and locations of market stalls. Best way to implement change is to start afresh with new location. Enhance the long stay parking, build a second tier.
Town Benefits	Other town traders keen to see it be successful but at present operating below par and potential. Willing to see changes in operation and location for sake of improvements.

Witney - Interviews with Other Stakeholders

Appearance & Curation	This end of town has become quieter. Loss of some key retail units and significant empty units. Benefit of two adjacent cafes (Corn Exchange and Coffee #1) with outside seating
Community value	Question over competition with town retailers (butcher) and whether extra stalls will negatively impact.
Operational	
Promotion	No in town promotion
Practicalities	Loss of traffic to High Street is suggested to be leading to a loss of customers although opportunity for improved street scene and more pedestrian friendly town centre on back of the changes.
Suggestions	Include music and other entertainment
Town Benefits	

2.6 SWOT ANALYSIS

ASSESSING: CARTERTON WEEKLY RETAIL MARKET

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1. Designated market square, fully pedestrianised 2. Adjacent to town centre parking 3. Large town 4. On the spot Town Council with designated staff support	1. limited local businesses taking part 2. Limited existing footfall 3. No clear branding 4. No income generated, as rent free to traders 5. No link to a wider town centre strategy 6. Limited community group representation
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
1. Growing town with new housing 2. Lovely square with attractive public realm 3. Limited retail provision in town centre, provides a unique opportunity for more traders on the market 4. Close to supermarkets and car parking, opportunity for more trade 5. Chance to get more involvement from local businesses and community groups 6. Build on the RAF connection and the war memorial situated within the market square 7. Chance to improve curation and layout 8. Space exists for more stalls.	1. Increasing strength of the three town supermarkets 2. Potential for additional supermarket 3. Strength of Witney town centre – draws people away

SWOT ANALYSIS

ASSESSING: CHIPPING NORTON WEEKLY RETAIL MARKET

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1. Long standing market presence in town centre 2. Loyal customer base 3. Long standing traders present 4. Town with strong pride and community strength 5. Compact town centre – enabling cross visibility	1. No local businesses trading 2. Practically difficult site 3. Busy road cutting through the small town 4. No or little promotion to the public 5. No branding 6. Poor visibility from top side of High Street 7. Poor curation of stalls, compounded by site impracticalities 7. Building works on adjacent property causing disruption and disjointed layout – led to cessation of the farmers market 8. Loss of parking spaces when market trading 9. No electric points 10. No other regular town markets or events (apart from Christmas) 11. No clear town centre strategy 12. Loss of farmers market, compounds bad news
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
1. Growing town with new housing 2. Chance to get more involvement from local businesses and community groups 3. LCWIP provides opportunity to improve street scene for pedestrians 4. Build on the success of Christmas in Chippy 5. Town Council willing to support 6. Options to re-locate and add to the pitch locations throughout the town	1. Increasing pressure on town car parking due to new housing on edge of town 2. Reliance on traders who travel great distance to reach the town 4. Older generation traders who may retire 5. Potential for more building work disruption from HSBC renovations 6. More residents travelling away from town for work, less shopping on midweek days

SWOT ANALYSIS

ASSESSING: WITNEY CHARTER MARKET

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
1. Long standing market presence in town centre 2. Loyal customer base 3. Long standing traders present 4. Town with strong pride and community strength 5. Attractive market square 6. Positive buildings and uses adjacent	1. Only 1 local business trading 2. Footfall drops at this end of town centre 3. No or little promotion to the public 4. No branding 5. No connection with Town Council operated Corn Exchange with its own craft market 6. No other regular town markets or events 7. No clear town centre strategy
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
1. Growing town with new housing 2. Chance to get more involvement from local businesses and community groups 3. High Street pedestrianisation provides chance for additional markets 4. Town Council willing to support	1. Loss of trade due to high street road closure 2. Reliance on traders who travel great distance 3. Older generation traders who may retire 4. Markets at Marriotts Walk will draw people away and highlight weakness of the charter market

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and Date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 13 DECEMBER 2023**
Subject	**REVIEW OF LEGAL SERVICES**
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Andrea McCaskie – Director of Governance. Email: andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Andrea McCaskie – Director of Governance. Email: andrea.mccaskie@westxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To outline the conclusions and recommendations from the strategic review of the shared Legal Service by external organisation, Cadence Innova Limited, and to seek agreement to invest in the Legal Service.
Annexe	Annex A – Legal Services Structure Chart
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive Resolves to: 1. Approve: a) Ongoing revenue investment of £40,000 per annum into the shared Legal Service to recruit two additional roles, with any 2023/24 costs to be funded from reserves; b) A one-off funding of £26,000 to contribute to a temporary (12 months) Legal Services Change Manager role to be funded from reserves; c) A maximum contribution of £45,000, (in total over a four-year period), for the procurement of legal case management software. 2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Director of Governance, the signing off of the Shared Legal Services Collaboration Agreement between Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and

	West Oxfordshire District Council; 3. Note that a further update report will be provided to the Executive in six months detailing the transformation to date.
Corporate Priorities	• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Leader, Chief Executive, Director of Finance, and Head of Legal Services.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Currently Forest of Dean, West Oxfordshire and Cotswold Councils share a joint legal service. The Service operates on an informal footing with all legal staff being made available by and to the other participants on a co-operative and collaborative basis. The staff are however retained by their employing authority. A mutual co-dependency has developed between the councils with each reliant on the other for legal service provision. Including the Head of Legal Services, the current team is made up of eight qualified lawyers and a trainee. Of that team, this council currently employs two qualified lawyers. The current structure chart, showing the proposed additional roles requested in the report, is attached at Annex A.

1.2 In 2022, Cotswold District Council completed a review of Legal Services assessing it against an external provider. Following that assessment, Cotswold District Council's Cabinet, on 4 July 2022, decided that legal services should continue to be provided by the shared legal team. This decision was endorsed by this Council at its Cabinet on 13 July 2022, resolving; "a) Note the decision of Cotswold District Council on their commissioning review of legal services; and b) Agree, subject to Cotswold District Council agreeing to remain party to the shared Cotswold/Forest of Dean/West Oxfordshire legal service, to support the formalisation of the shared service under a Collaboration Agreement and Section 101 agreements, and a review of the shared service for economy, efficiency and effectiveness.". This was also supported by the Forest of Dean's District Council Cabinet in September 2022.

1.3 A review of the shared service was commissioned by the Chief Executives of the three partner councils, and Cadence Innova Limited were engaged to undertake a review of the shared service to ensure its "economy, efficiency and effectiveness" recommending a programme of transformation.

1.4 This report is advising the Executive of the conclusion of that review, Cadence Innova Limited's recommendations and seeking agreement to invest in the service. Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils have already agreed additional investment.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1 It is important that West Oxfordshire District Council has access to an effective legal service. The Council provides a wide range of services in a complex legal environment. While the current shared team has provided a cost-effective service for the Council with a team of skilled lawyers, a programme of transformation is required to ensure the shared service is fit for the future and can meet the Council's ambitions.

2.2 Cadence Innova, who have worked with other local authority legal teams, were engaged to review the operations of the legal service shared by the three councils. Specifically, to:

- Discover and understand what the current service looks like – the 'As Is' Operating Model
- Provide recommendations of what the service should look like to meet the demands of the three councils and Publica – the 'To Be' known as the Target Operating Model (TOM)

- Identify the changes that need to happen to reach the Target Operating Model (TOM)
- Provide a Roadmap – a set of priority activities and recommendations to embed success.

2.3 Throughout the review, Cadence Innova Limited focussed on the five core components that form the foundation of every high-functioning team or organisation - Strategy, Governance, People, Process and Technology.

2.4 The review contained a number of approaches to gather information to assess the "as is" position, including engaging with 24 stakeholders from across the councils, Publica, clients and Legal Services which contributed to the identification of current pain points, underlying causes, and challenges that both users of the service and the lawyers experience.

2.5 To build the 'To be' target operating model (TOM), Cadence Innova ran four face to face group workshops with senior leaders and Legal Services to collect information to build and co-design the TOM.

2.6 To develop a roadmap and suite of recommendations, Cadence Innova used their knowledge and experience to map out the high-level activities that are required to achieve the TOM and identify the priority activities and timings to embed success.

2.7 The "as is" position identified a number of pain points and underlying challenges and causes, including:

- Current service is reactive;
- No agreed service specification;
- Absence of a formal contractual agreement between the councils;
- Limited financial oversight or assessment of whether the service is providing value for money;
- Insufficient capacity within the team, with qualified, experienced lawyers spending 20% of their time on general admin, and, work that could be handled internally being sent to external law firms to provide capacity;
- Limited opportunities for professional growth or "grow your own" trainee or apprenticeship roles.
- Limited technology – no legal case management or document management system.

2.8 The assessment of the "as is" position, when aligned with the current and future model activities identified a number of operating components that should be undertaken to reach the future goals and strategic objectives of Legal Services, including:

- Strategy – decision to operate a target operating model; produce a service delivery document and change or transformation plan;
- Governance – governance agreement and governance board or joint management committee across the three partner councils;
- People – team structure and skills mix, recruitment and apprenticeship scheme.

- Processes – single "pipeline" of work, work allocation and standardised templates.
- Technology – data capture and management information, case management software and resource management.

2.9 Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils have already approved further investment in the service and a Legal Services Change Manager was appointed in September 2023, together with additional permanent resource in the team. The Legal Services Change Manager has already made considerable progress in progressing Cadence Innova's recommendations, including:

- Created a programme plan;
- Progressing the formal contractual agreement, known as the "collaboration agreement" between the three partner councils (due to be in place for April 2024);
- Gathered requirements and is running a procurement exercise to select appropriate software;
- Developing a governance model;
- Implemented a web page as a "single door" for engagement with Legal Services;
- Researching an appropriate apprenticeship scheme to grow lawyers of the future.

It is recommended that an update report is brought to this Executive in six months' time with a more detailed breakdown of the team's progress.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 The recommendations of the service review undertaken by Cadence Innova do not have to be implemented. This is not recommended as the current challenges outlined in paragraph 2.7 will not be addressed and mitigated.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Cadence Innova have assessed efficiency savings across the partnership of three councils of £159,750 pa calculated using the estimated time qualified lawyers spend performing (1) General administration and (2) low risk, low complexity for legal casework. In addition, they identified further cashable savings (not currently quantifiable) will be realised by:

- Legal Service lawyers delivering work currently outsourced to external lawyers
- Prioritising cases efficiently and providing quicker legal advice will mitigate risks, saving time and cost
- Engage a temporary Change Manager to deliver transition activities rather than lawyers managing change alongside legal work
- Collecting and using data for performance management and allocation of costs.

4.2 However, the review identifies that investment is required into Legal Services both in terms of short-term resource to implement a change programme, and on an ongoing basis with higher level administrative or para-legal resource and implementing appropriate technology.

4.3 Executive are asked to approve revenue investment of:

Item of expenditure	Costs across the partnership	Cost for West Oxon Council	Notes
Legal Services Change Manager	£78,000	£26,000	One-off 12-month contract to be apportioned across the three partner councils (1/3)
Legal Support Officer (part-time)		£30,000	Permanent role, based at WODC.
Trainee Solicitor	£30,000	£10,000	Permanent role to work across the partnership.
Legal Case Management Software (total spend for four-year period)	£135,000	£45,000	Total cost for four years including predicted inflation and team expansion

4.4 External legal costs are in addition to the above, include court fees and external legal advice commissioned. There has been significant spend on external legal advice by all three councils over the last four years, particularly to support each council's ambitious agendas. This is an area where there is potential to make savings, but it must be borne in mind that specialist advice will be necessary in some cases and that any shared legal service will not hold specialist expertise in every field. Nevertheless, there is scope for savings with more appropriate use of the skills mix within Legal Services. Additionally, the service is reviewing options for maximising income.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The legal documents to underpin the shared service, such as a Collaboration Agreement and formal arrangements under S.101 of the Local Government Act 1972 should be completed as a priority to place the shared service on a sound footing. The agreements will cover the financial contributions, to ensure that the amounts paid by the Councils are fair, proportionate and appropriate for the legal services received, along with the governance and review arrangements. This work is underway with an implementation planned for the new financial year - April 2024.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

6.1 No negative effect on different service users, customers or staff is expected from the implementation of the recommendations in Cadence Innova service review.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None arising from this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 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:

- Cabinet report, "Review of Legal Services, Interim Monitoring Officer Arrangements and Retained Officer Structures" 13.07.2023.
- Legal Services Review Presentation - Target Operating Model, Key Activities and Roadmap (February 2023), undertaken by Cadence Innova Ltd.

8.2 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)

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Annex A – Legal Services Organisation Chart

December 2023

Head of Legal Services (Interim)
Helen Blundell
(1.0 FTE)

Change Programme Manager
Debbie Smart
(1.0 FTE)

Lawyer
Gina Homewood
(0.6 FTE)

Lawyer
Anne Marriott
(1.0 FTE)

Lawyer
Marie Barnes
(1.0 FTE)

Principal Lawyer
James Felton
(0.7 FTE)

Proposed
Support Officer
Vacancy
(0.7 FTE)

Support Officer
Vacancy
(0.7 FTE)

Support Officer
Jane Dyer
(0.7 FTE)

Lawyer
Alexander Kirk
(1.0 FTE)

Trainee Lawyer
Faye Cross
(0.6 FTE)

Lawyer
Geetanjali Wahi
(1.0 FTE)

Lawyer
Sara Anthony
(1.0 FTE)

Proposed Trainee Lawyer
(1.0 FTE)

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and Date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 13 DECEMBER 2023**
Subject	**UPDATE ON IMPROVEMENT WORKS WITH THAMES WATER**
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Lidia Arciszewska – Executive Member for the Environment. Email: Lidia.arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Phil Martin – Assistant Director, Business Support Services. Email: Phil.martin@publicagroup.uk
Report Author	Phil Martin – Assistant Director, Business Support Services. Email: Phil.martin@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the improvements as a result of closely working with Thames Water over the past 12 months.
Annexes	Nil.
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive Resolves to: 1. Note the content of the report.
Corporate priorities	• A Good Quality of Life for All • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Executive Member with Responsibility for Environment; Chief Executive; S151 Officer, Head of Legal Services and Director of Governance

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The level and volume of raw and untreated sewage being released into our rivers and local water courses is on the increase and the current legislative framework provides the District Council with no powers to directly enforce against this or demand improvements.

1.2 In order to improve this situation and build a better understanding of the key issues and facts, the Council adopted a different approach, which involved a small team of Councillors and Officers, lead by the Executive lead responsible for the Environment directly engaging with representatives from Thames Water.

1.3 Regular meetings began in July 2022 that focused on building a working relationship based around trust and gaining detailed knowledge of key operations to enable an informed discussion and effective challenge have been established. To assist with this Thames Water bring in experts from across their organisation and share relevant information and data.

1.4 Since the meetings started the team have made significant progress in a number of areas, these include;

Sewage Treatment Works

i. The team developed a working knowledge of the components and data used by Thames Water to calculate the capacity of its Sewage Treatment Works (STWs). This work initially focused on the 9 largest STWs across the district and enabled them to identify, with the technical support of Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP), where there isn't enough treatment capacity to meet the current needs and press for their inclusion in Thames Water's investment programmes as this will significantly reduce the level of discharges. The team have also used this knowledge to analyse Thames Waters investment programme both in terms of growth and compliance to ensure that investment meets current and future demands.

ii. As part of this work the team discovered that the data set used by Thames Water was not reflective of the Council's Local Plans so that areas where housing was set to grow was not being fed into their plans for upgrading the capacity of their SWTs. The communication gap was quickly addressed and now the relevant officers from both the Council and Thames Water share information on an ongoing basis.

iii. Another key outcome from this work is that a major component of the calculation, which traditionally has been set by the EA and acts as a multiplier has now been standardised and a higher figure is now being used for all new investment schemes, thus ensuring that adequate 'head room' is included when capacity levels are calculated.

Infiltration and Pipe Network

iv. The team's work focused on hot spots across the district, which identified that nearly half of flow capacity through STWs was derived from infiltration, which can be because of cracked and damaged pipes as well as water entering the system through manhole covers.

v. Thames Water provided the team with data as well as brought along their network experts who were able to explain the challenges they were facing and how they were increasingly using technology to identify where blockages and pipe failures had occurred. Whilst it was good to hear that Thames Water were adopting more of a pro-active approach, the team were able to persuade them to install more flow monitors into their network to identify where severe ingress of the network was occurring and then to use this data to plan the appropriate works.

vi. The Council have successfully been able to get Thames Water to prioritise its attention on a number of sites across the district as a result of the closer working relationship that has been developed. This has led to an acceleration in the delivery of the works planned in Eynsham, Clanfield and Crawley.

Planning Process

vii. The adoption of the Validation Checklist which now means that all development applications must state at the outset whether there is sufficient capacity at the relevant sewage treatment works and sewer infrastructure.

viii. Where there is insufficient STW capacity, network capacity or both the team have been working very closely with Thames Water to develop a matrix, which sets out a number of Grampian conditions that will be applied stating that the new homes may not be occupied until additional capacity has been installed and is operational.

ix. Thames Water has now made a commitment to responding to all planning applications in locations where there is insufficient treatment capacity rather than just the larger ones. This will include undertaking an assessment of the likely impact proposed developments will have on the existing network during normal operations.

Communication and Reporting

x. Whilst the Council cannot take full credit for the introduction of the interactive map that identifies real time discharges in rivers and water courses that is available on Thames Water's website - https://www.thameswater.co.uk/edm-map, it was involved in the early development as it recognises the importance of making people aware of areas affected and giving them the information to lobby for improvements.

xi. The team also worked closely with Thames Water on the development of a web-based "Fix My Sewer" interface where sewerage problems can be reported online. This will potentially save residents many, many hours of time sitting on the phone to report the same problems as they have previously done. And also provides transparency.

xii. As the team have built a good working knowledge of Thames Water's SWT operations, a tool kit has been developed which identifies key pieces of data that will help other Councils challenge Thames Water in an informed way. This has been shared with the responsible Cabinet member at Cotswold District Council and it will be used to support their sewage summit event.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Council could change its approach to how it works with Thames Water in the future, requesting that they present information on their plans and performance on a regular basis. This is akin to what used to happen and without the knowledge and trust built up during the regular meetings this will be counterproductive going forward as the Council has no powers to demand change.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are currently no direct financial implications for the Council associated with the work the team are undertaking with Thames Water, if this situation changes then a report outlining any costs will be brought back to the Executive for consideration.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications resulting for the closer working relationship with Thames Water as the Council does not have any specific powers under the Land Drainage Act to enforce improvements.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not use its position to influence changes in the way that Thames Water operates across the district in terms of actively being involved in the planning process and how it processes wastewater.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

Nil.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

As Thames Water is responsible for providing both clean drinking water as well as processing foul water and effluent across the district their actions have a massive impact not only on the lives of the residents but also on the ecology and wider environment of the district. We have not only seen an increase in storm surge discharges into the rivers and waterways across the district but also a worrying trend in ‘dry season’ discharges. The work of the small team on behalf of the Council has focused on identifying the areas most affected and through a better understanding of the way Thames Water calculate the capacity of its sewage treatment works has pushed for investment in these areas so they are able to process the increased volumes coupled with improvements in the overall network to reduce the amount of water ingress and infiltration that is contributing to the problem.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

(END)

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and Date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 13 DECEMBER 2023**
Subject	**DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25**
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance. Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Madhu Richards – Director of Finance. Email: madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Madhu Richards – Director of Finance. Email: madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To provide an update on the developing budget for 2024/25.
Annexes	Annex A – Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Annex B – MTFS Graphs Annex C – Draft Capital Programme
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive Resolves to: 1. Note the update on the developing budget for 2024/2025.
Corporate priorities	• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Meetings with Assistant Directors, Business Managers, Interim S151 and Chief Accountant. Officers also met with key stakeholders from GLL and Ubico.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Council is required to set the budget for 2024/25 by 11th March 2024. This first draft of the revenue budget 2024/25 has been compiled in advance of the announcement of the government funding settlement in December and therefore is subject to change.

1.2 This report provides details of the assumptions made for both the revenue budget and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including the current drivers of growth.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1 This first draft of the budget has assumed that there will be no reduction in government funding in 2024/25, with the official settlement announcement expected on 19th December 2023. The focussed work has been done on the revenue part of the budget i.e. the cost of providing services, with the funding element left as is for now. The MTFS has a range of funding assumptions, over a number of years, which can be seen in Annex B.

2.2 In year reporting is forecasting an overspend this financial year of £433,041 over and above the approved deficit budget of £350,129, mainly driven by Investment Property, the Waste contract and some fee generating services. The draft budget for next year being balanced, at this initial stage, is encouraging, but the picture from 2025/26 onwards is less optimistic with an increasing reliance on the use of reserves to fund front line services.

2.3 While the reserves position for the Council is currently relatively healthy, there remains a financial gap which unless resolved could exhaust reserves over the life of this MTFS.

2.4 Single year settlements have exacerbated the financial strain on the Council, restricting our ability to confidently plan for more than one year in advance. Added to the long running uncertainty over the timing of the Business Rates reset, which has been delayed since 2020, and the phasing out of New Homes Bonus, this makes our funding assumptions speculative.

2.5 Unavoidable budget pressures, such as general and wage inflation, waste & recycling costs put additional strain on our financial position which we will struggle to offset with ongoing savings or additional income generation.

2.6 The Publica review has added a significant element of uncertainty around the financial impact of returning the majority of services back to the Council in terms of both one off and ongoing costs. Initially one off costs will be funded from earmarked reserves and ongoing costs will be included in the 2025/26 base budget.

2.7 The use of reserves to manage short term fluctuations in the Council's financial position is necessary but cannot be sustained over the longer term where the significant budget gap, over a number of years, will exhaust these reserves.

3. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

3.1 The Local Government Association (LGA), in their letter to Jeremy Hunt on 13th October 2023 referred to the "intense financial pressure" that councils are under and the "ongoing inflationary and pay pressures alongside spiking demand and market challenges ……….. This is happening at a time of low financial resilience across the sector following a 27.0 per cent real-terms reduction in core spending power since 2010/11."

3.2 This view of the financial challenges facing councils is reflected in the number of recent s114 notices which have been issued, not all of which can be attributed to decisions made by the management in these Councils. The latest being Nottingham City Council on 29th November 2023.

3.3 The last decade has seen a reduction in core funding for Councils. Single year settlements and uncertainty about the timing and impact of the proposed local government finance reforms creates an ever more challenging financial environment. The prospect of a general election in 2024 may further delay these reforms.

3.4 Interest rates and inflation have been higher than budgeted in the current year. Uncertainty about these continues and assumptions have been made about these for the 2024/25 budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

3.5 The Autumn Statement provided little detail with regards to local government funding for 2024-25 and beyond, including council tax referendum principles, grant funding and total increase in spending power. The Local Government Finance Settlement is anticipated in mid-December.

4. 2024/2025 BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS

4.1 The 2024/25 budget setting process has been informed by the financial performance in the current year and the key drivers of variances to budget to date.

4.2 The table below shows the key changes to the budget and expected funding that have changed the £350,129 deficit in 2023/24 to a balanced budget in 2024/25. In the income and expenditure sections of the budget a negative figure represents a saving and a positive figure additional expenditure. In the funding section, a negative figure represents an increase in funding and vice versa.

2023/24 budget deficit		350,129
Budget Movements	**£**	**£**
__Changes in Expenditure__		
Reversal of one off items from 23/24	(1,116,591)	
Publica Review estimate of ongoing pension costs	75,000	
Publica Review one off costs	200,000	
Retained Staff	90,650	
Closure of Elmfield as an operational building	(97,625)	
External Audit fees	132,375	

Marriotts service charges	34,910	
Secondary pension contribution	96,900	
Budget Manager Review	(38,305)	
Publica contract growth	647,452	
Ubico contract growth	826,014	
Additional Legal fees for Planning Appeals/Inquiries	90,000	
		940,780
Changes in Income		
Between Towns Road development opportunity	452,037	
Additional Planning Application income	(181,800)	
Investment Property voids	323,850	
Land Charges, Building Control and Stray Dogs fees	176,072	
Green Waste licences - subject to Porfolio holder approval	(165,000)	
Investment Property rent free periods	351,608	
Homelessness Hostels	(43,240)	
Reduction in loss of HB subsidy for temp accommodation	(140,846)	
GLL contract income	(449,171)	
		323,510
Changes in Funding		
Minimum Revenue Provision movement	(186,775)	
Earmarked reserves funding posts & Publica review one off costs	(807,996)	
Reverse Investment Recovery projected income in 23/24 base	175,000	
Reduction in external borrowing costs	(432,950)	
Council Tax reduction in surplus	75,000	
Treasury Management income	(54,000)	
Council Tax	(330,194)	
Provisional government funding assumptions	(52,504)	
		(1,614,419)
2024/25 DRAFT BUDGET		**(0)**

4.3 The key changes to the budget from 2023/24 to 2024/25 are as follows:

- The reversal of one-off growth items in 2023/24 which includes the contingency against leisure contract income and the budgeted movement to and from earmarked reserves. Earmarked reserve movements are recalculated every year and are used to fund posts that have been agreed by the Executive in advance.

- Estimated one off costs of £200,000 associated with the Publica Review have been included to cover external consultancy in the areas of HR, TUPE, Project Management, Legal and Finance, with an additional £75,000 for the ongoing additional pension costs estimated in the Human Engine Report, based on an estimated phase one completion in Q3 of 2024/25.
- Publica contract growth is included in the budget at 5% pay inflation, agreed across the Publica partnership Councils, as an indicative figure in advance of a more developed transition plan becoming available. When more information is available around the timing and structure of phase one of the TUPE of staff back to the Council, these costs will transfer from the Publica contract to the Council's retained staff budget line.
- Extensive work has been undertaken with Ubico on how to most efficiently, effectively and sustainably deliver the Waste Service over the next decade. The growth included in the 2024/25 budget represents wage inflation and the revenue impact of a proposed phased capital fleet replacement programme which will go forward to Members for approval in January 2024.
- The revenue costs of the Ubico contract will fall by an estimated £350,000 in 2025/26 as hire vehicles are replaced and we transition over time from Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) vehicles to electric or hydrogen alternatives, depending on how the technology advances in the next 3 to 4 years. The switch of our waste fleet from diesel to HVO by the start of the 2024/25 financial year will reduce our carbon emissions by 1.3m tonnes per annum, an 89% reduction from current diesel fuel.
- Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) is tasked with appointing external auditors, consulting on and setting the external audit scale fee that is charged to Public Bodies. The PSAA have recognised the increased volume of work required to provide assurance in Local Government audits and has increased the scale fee by 151%.
- Between Towns Road is now empty but discussions have started with a potential partner to investigate the redevelopment of the site to provide temporary emergency accommodation. Whilst these discussions are underway and until development plans are finalised it is expected that the property will remain void throughout 2024/25 with a loss of rental income of £350,000 and additional costs associated with Business Rates liability and making sure the building remains secure.
- An Investment Property portfolio has a natural cycle of voids and rent free periods as tenants move in and out of properties. It is now commonplace that tenants negotiate an initial rent free period at the start of their lease term. A six month rent free period will reduce our income over the course of a 15 year lease by less than 4%.
  The revenue budget includes the income foregone for all existing rent free periods in effect into 2024/25 and the expected voids. Rather than calculate voids on a percentage basis over the entire portfolio, it is analysed on a per property basis.
  These figures will change year on year, with overall income increasing year on year as more voids are tenanted over the next couple of years with either 10 or 15 leases.

- It is proposed that the annual Green Waste licence charge be increased by £5 to £50. A benchmarking exercise on 10 neighbouring Councils shows an average green waste licence cost in 2023/24 of £54.09.
- Fees & charges are reviewed each year on a cost recovery basis and also assessed on whether the income budget is achievable. Land Charges and Building Control have been consistently below their income budget for some years and therefore have been reduced to an achievable level.

  The reasons for the fall in income in both areas has been consistently reported in the quarterly budget monitoring reports over the last three years. Unfortunately, remedial action to recover market share has not been successful.
- The budget has been updated to include the full contractual income from the leisure contract net of a contingency of 10%. Discussions are ongoing with our leisure provider to maximise the benefits of the contract for both parties and to ensure the viability of this contract in the future.
- The prohibitive cost of capital has brought the Investment Recovery strategy to a halt for now due to the lack of available opportunities which meet the Council's agreed criteria. The one potential project currently being investigated is the redevelopment of Between Towns Road. The 2023/24 budget assumed a level of Investment Recovery activity that will no longer be achieved with the resultant reduction in both MRP and external borrowing costs in 2024/25.
- The approval by the Executive in October to recruit an additional finance officer in the Homelessness team is expected to reduce our loss of Housing Benefit subsidy on temporary accommodation by £140,000 a year.
- The government announced that there will be a 35% rise in planning fees for major applications and a 25% rise for all other applications from 6th December 2023.
- It is proposed that Council Tax increases by the maximum amount of £5 on a Band D property.

5. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY ASSUMPTIONS

5.1 Consensus seems to be that central government is unlikely to significantly increase funding to local government. Any reallocation of funding is likely to benefit councils with responsibilities for Adult Social Care and Children Services rather than district councils. Three different funding scenarios are included in the MTFS (Annex B) showing a cash flat settlement, a 10% reduction in funding and a 20% reduction in funding. It is inevitable that the actual settlement will fall somewhere in between.

5.2 The timing and impact of local government reforms makes the development of an MTFS a challenging exercise with single year funding settlements announced after the completion of the first draft of the budget.

5.3 The MTFS (Appendix A) assumes that New Homes Bonus will be paid for the last time in 2024/25 with an assumption that some kind of replacement funding will be rolled into the Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) in 2025/26.

5.4 The business rates reset, delayed since 2020, is forecast to take place in 2026/27 with a possible 30% reduction in business rates income as a result as retained business rates are reduced to the baseline funding level.

5.5 The MTFS assumes a general inflationary increase of between 4% and 2% will apply to cost of services from 2025/26 onwards, excluding contracts where the actual inflationary increase is known i.e. Ubico contract, salary inflation, Publica contract and some software licence agreements.

5.6 Salary inflation over the last 3 years has been higher than we have historically estimated. For 2024/25 there is an assumed 5% increase but this is expected to fall back over the life of the MTFS.

5.7 A Transformation Group has been established to help steer the Council's response to the challenging financial environment, guide the preparation of a sustainable MTFS consistent with the Council Plan, and oversee the delivery of the Council's work programme in terms of service transformation, investment and revenue generation.

5.8 This Council, like all local authorities, is facing external budget pressures that will impact the MTFS. Energy prices, inflation and interest rates have all had a significant impact on the financial performance in the current year and will continue to do so in the coming years.

5.9 The MTFS is based on the most reasonable forecasts of income and expenditure that can be inferred at this point in time.

6. CAPITAL PROGRAMME

6.1 The outturn report for 2023/24 will identify any capital slippage which is requested to go forward into 2024/25. So far this year, there has been significantly lower capital expenditure than was anticipated, due to a lack of viable investment projects given the increase in interest rates.

6.2 A detailed review of the capital programme has been carried out during the 2024/25 budget process. The draft Capital Programme is attached in Appendix C.

6.3 The main programmes are the proposed Ubico vehicle replacement strategy, decarbonisation of Council buildings and solar PV schemes.

6.4 A Strategic Housing Development & Enabling Manager is included in the revenue budget for 2024/25 and this post will inform a strategic housing capital programme in 2025/26 and beyond.

6.5 Similarly, the Transformation Group is reviewing the council's Asset Management Strategy and this work will identify areas of capital spend in future years.

6.6 As always, inclusion in the Capital Programme at this stage does not mean that the expenditure is authorised. Identifying the possible spend, and including it in the Capital Programme, ensures that potential borrowing requirements are identified. In most cases, a business case would still need to be prepared and brought forward for review.

7. STATUTORY OVERRIDE PROVISION

7.1 The statutory override for pooled funds, which requires fair value gains and losses to be taken to an unusable reserve unless the fund in sold, is set to end in 2025/26. The ending of the override would require any gains and losses to be recognised in revenue accounts thus having an impact on our revenue budget. Unrealised losses would reduce available resource to fund core services, while unrealised gains would not represent genuine resource increases that could be utilised.

7.2 Our Pooled funds currently have a capital value below their purchase price because of rising interest rates and high inflation. This "loss" would have to be moved to the General Fund in 2025/26 if the statutory override is not extended.

7.3 It is therefore advised, by our Treasury advisors Arlingclose, that it would be prudent to set aside an earmarked reserve to smooth out the impact of any such unrealised gains or losses that will have to be accounted for through the General Fund.

8. BUDGET CONSULTATION

8.1 The Council's budget consultation, via the online engagement platform CitizenLab, will run from 13th November to 18th December 2023.

8.2 The Council has used a wide range of communication channels to promote the consultation including media engagement, social media, website, stakeholders and newsletters.

8.3 Feedback from the consultation will be presented to the Executive in January 2024.

9. BUDGET REVIEW TIMETABLE

9.1 A next draft of the budget, including the Local Government Finance Settlement will be taken to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10th January 2024.

9.2 A final budget will be presented to the Executive on 14th February 2024.

9.3 It will be debated at Council on 28th February.

10. CONCLUSIONS

10.1 There are significant pressures on the Council's current 2023/24 budget which may mean that the general fund balances will be called upon in the current financial year to bridge the gap.

10.2 There are continued uncertainties and cost pressures, as detailed in this report, that will have an impact on the 2024/25 budget and the medium-term strategy.

10.3 This report contains the first draft of the 2024/25 budget. The Local Government Finance Settlement expected in December, the feedback from committee meetings and the budget consultation process will provide inputs into the final budget,

10.4 The Council will need to set realistic budgets, balancing current need and future financial stability, to ensure that adequate reserves are maintained over the medium term.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no financial implications arising from this paper as it outlines the approach and context of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Apart from the statutory duties and obligations set out in this report, with regards to budget setting process, there are no further implications.

13. RISK ASSESSMENT

13.1 None required as a result of the content of this report.

14. EQUALITIES IMPACT

14.1 No direct equalities impact with regards to the content of this report.

15. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

15.1 None.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Budget Papers – February 2023

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Medium Term Financial Strategy Updated December 2023

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Inflation		5%	3%	3%	2%	2%
Taxbase	1.0196	1.018	1.016	1.020	1.020	1.020
Base	13,055,622	15,105,712	16,183,024	16,568,255	17,004,055	17,301,443
Inflationary uplift			485,491	414,206	340,081	346,029
Inflation - Publica & Retained Staff	517,120	738,102	650,000			
Publica Review		275,000				
Inflation - Electricity & Gas	253,171					
Inflation - Ubico	754,099	826,014	(470,000)			
Leisure contract	558,613	(449,171)				
MRP movement	358,489	(186,775)	84,478			(76,431)
Interest on External Borrowing	419,518	(432,950)	130,263	21,593	(42,693)	(42,693)
One-off growth - reversal of prior year	(772,000)	(858,843)				
Recurring growth	270,081	(43,240)				
Investment Property Voids/Rent Free Periods		1,127,495	(280,000)			
Business Manager Review		252,409	(55,000)			
Budget growth items pending approval	745,894					
Fees & Charges		(170,728)	(160,000)			
Investment Strategy income	(1,054,896)					
Target Budget (NOE)	**15,105,712**	**16,183,024**	**16,568,255**	**17,004,055**	**17,301,443**	**17,528,348**
Financed by:						
Revenue Support Grant	215,801	230,000	227,279	293,083	248,466	199,387
Business Rates Share & Renewables	5,149,327	5,149,327	5,149,327	272,090	272,090	272,090
Baseline Funding Level post 2022				3,105,000	3,322,350	3,538,303
New Homes Bonus	1,579,635	1,579,635				
Funding Guarantee Grant	910,864	963,864	1,933,000	1,701,000	1,532,000	1,388,000
Rural Services Delivery & Services grants	235,695	221,000	221,000	149,000	149,000	149,000
Investment Income - Pooled Funds	1,102,228	1,156,228	1,133,103	1,110,441	1,088,233	1,066,468
Use of earmarked reserves	(257,748)	807,996	925,592	700,000	600,000	500,000
Collection Fund	199,508	124,508	120,000	110,000	105,000	100,000
Council Tax	5,620,273	5,950,467	6,282,517	6,629,715	6,996,730	7,374,560
Use of GF reserves	**350,129**	**(0)**	**576,437**	**2,933,726**	**2,987,575**	**2,940,541**
TaxBase	47,078	47,925	48,692	49,666	50,659	51,672
Band D	119.38	124.38	129.38	134.38	139.38	144.38
Tax increase	**4.37%**	**4.19%**	**4.02%**	**3.86%**	**3.72%**	**3.59%**
General fund balance	11,357,177	11,357,176	10,780,739	7,847,014	4,859,439	1,918,899

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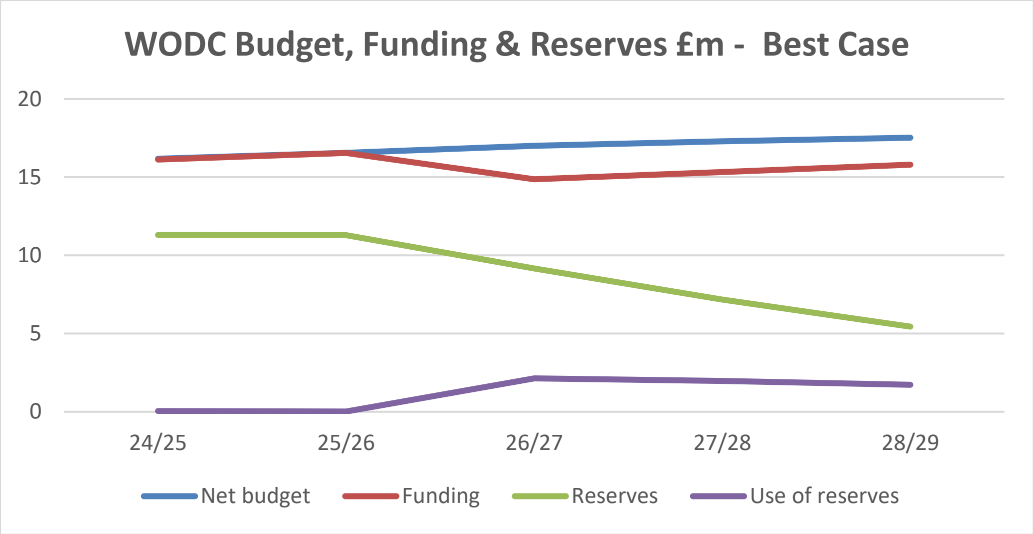
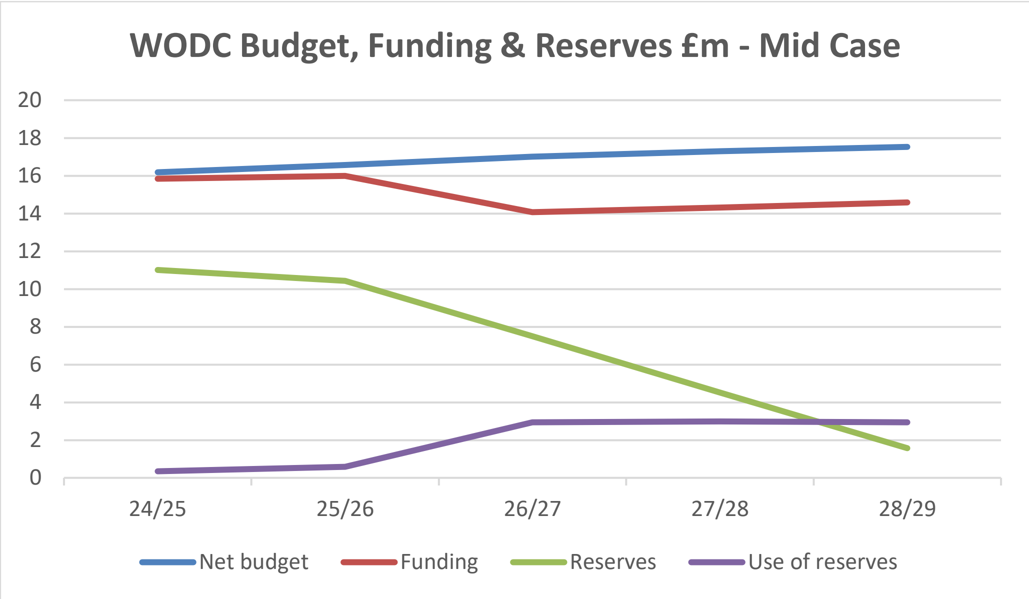
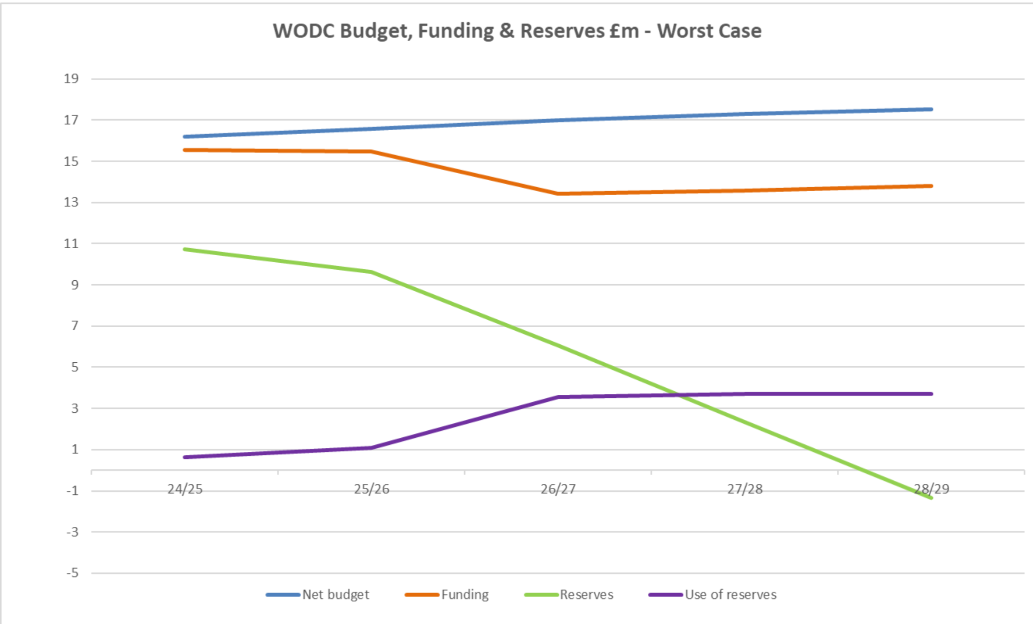


WODC Budget, Funding & Reserves £m - Best Case
20
15
10
5
0
24/25
25/26
26/27
27/28
28/29
Net budget
Funding
Reserves
Use of reserves



WODC Budget, Funding & Reserves £m - Mid Case
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
24/25
25/26
26/27
27/28
28/29
Net budget
Funding
Reserves
Use of reserves



WODC Budget, Funding & Reserves £m - Worst Case
19
17
15
13
11
9
7
5
3
1
-1
-3
-5
24/25
25/26
26/27
27/28
28/29
Net budget
Funding
Reserves
Use of reserves

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Draft Capital programme December 2023 **Annex C**

Scheme	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	Total £
IT Provision - Systems & Strategy	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	900,000
Solar PV on Council Buildings		276,345								276,345
Update Financial Management System (Agresso)	25,000									25,000
Idox System Upgrade (Planning)	150,000									150,000
Play Parks	100,000									100,000
Weavers Fold	378,000									378,000
Council Buildings Maintenance Programme	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	1,800,000
IT Equipment - PCs, Copiers etc	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	360,000
Improvement Grants/Disabled Facilities Grants	800,000	880,000	880,000	880,000	880,000	880,000	880,000	880,000	880,000	7,840,000
Community Grants Fund	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	1,800,000
EVCP Woolgate	167,000									167,000
Affordable Housing	212,125									212,125
Electric vehicle recharging points	200,000									200,000
Replacement dog and litter bins	25,000			12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	97,000
Weighbridge at Bulking Station		25,000					25,000			50,000
Replacement Street Sweepers				200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000	200,000		1,000,000
Ubico Fleet - Replace Vehicle Hire Costs										0
In-cab technology		90,000								90,000
Shop Mobility - Replacement stock	10,000			10,000				10,000		30,000
CCTV upgrading	255,635									255,635
Carterton Swinbrook Public Art (S106)	44,500									44,500
Chipping Norton Creative Project	8,297									8,297
Raleigh Crescent Play Area (s. 106)	75,000									75,000
Agile Working	2,150,000									2,150,000
Chipping Norton LC roof replacement	1,000,000									1,000,000
Madley Park Playing Field project										0
Cottsway - Lavendar Place Affordable Housing										0
Cottsway - Blenheim Court Growth Deal										0
Carterton Leisure Centre Upgrade PSDS	1,300,000									1,300,000
Witney PSDS		1,874,000								1,874,000
Replacement waste and recycling fleet	2,000,000	3,500,000	2,000,000							7,500,000
Town Centre Shop building renovation project										0
Investment Strategy for Recovery	5,000,000									5,000,000
	14,440,557	**7,185,345**	**3,420,000**	**1,642,000**	**1,632,000**	**1,632,000**	**1,657,000**	**1,642,000**	**1,432,000**	**34,682,902**

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