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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Council.

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB,
Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB, at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday 31 January 2024.**

PRESENT

Councillors: Elizabeth Poskitt (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Lidia Arciszewska, Thomas Ashby, Hugo Ashton, Andrew Beaney, Michael Brooker, David Cooper, Julian Cooper, Rachel Crouch, Colin Dingwall, Jane Doughty, Duncan Enright, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, David Jackson, Edward James, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Charlie Maynard, Martin McBride, Michele Mead, Lysette Nicholls, Mathew Parkinson, Rosie Pearson, Rizvana Poole, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Sandra Simpson, Alaric Smith, Ruth Smith, Harry St John, Tim Sumner, Dean Temple, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Phil Martin (Assistant Director for Business Support), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Georgina Dyer (Chief Accountant), Mandy Fathers (Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service), Mark Pritchard (Business Manager for Communications and Marketing) and Phil Shaw (Business Manager - Development Management), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer), Sharon Ellison (Electoral Services Manager) and Andrew Thomson (Planning Policy Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Nil.

CL.124 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from the following Members:

Councillors Andrew Coles, Mark Johnson and David Melvin.

Councillor Ed James arrived late to the meeting at 2.06pm.

CL.125 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Dingwall made a declaration in relation to the Council Tax Support Scheme 2024 – 2025 during consideration of that item (see minute CL132).

CL.126 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 29 November 2023, be agreed by Council as a true and accurate record, and signed by the Chair.

This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright and was put to a vote. There were 43 votes for, 0 votes against and 3 abstentions. The vote was carried.

Council **Resolved** to:

- I. Agree the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 29 November 2023, as a true and accurate record.

CL.127 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, Vice-Chair of the Council, stated that they had attended a number of events in the absence of the Chair of the Council, which were enjoyable

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experiences. The Vice-Chair stated that the 'Oxfordshire Together' event was of significant personal enjoyment.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, rose to thank the Agile Working Project Team, including Carl Jones (Corporate Project Manager), Phil Martin (Assistant Director for Business Services), and Paul Webb (Facilities Manager) for their hard work and commitment to providing the Council with a fully refurbished Council Chamber and also modern technology and working practises, allowing Council to be more engaging with the public and the wider community.

The Leader also paid tribute to the work of the Council's Senior Democratic Services Officer, Max Thompson, for his hard work and commitment in ensuring that the new webcasting technology was fully operational and in working order ahead of the meeting. The Leader also stated his continued thanks to the wider Democratic Services team for their continued efforts in the round.

The Leader also advised Members and Officers of the appointments that had been made in relation to the Publica Transition. Frank Wilson had recently taken up the position of Interim Managing Director, and Dr. Christine Gore had taken up post as Chair of the Publica Board. The Leader also welcomed Andrew Pollard to his role at Programme Director, overseeing the Publica Review process.

The Leader also updated Council regarding the closure of Welch Way in Witney, owing to structural building damage caused by recent inclement weather. The Leader stated that the Council's Town Centre 'Shop' in the centre of Witney had closed as a result of the damage, with staff relocated to the Council's Woodgreen Offices until it was deemed safe for the offices to re-open.

The Leader made reference to the inconvenience this had caused to the wider community. The Council had worked closely with other local authorities in the area, and the emergency services. The Leader ensured that work would continue to ensure the safe opening of the road and area as soon as possible.

CL.128 Committee Appointments Made under Delegated Authority

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which allowed Council to ratify and note the appointments made to committees under delegated authority, following the a recent meeting of Council on 27 September 2023, where political proportionalities on committees were reviewed, and where changes to the structure of overview and scrutiny committees were agreed.

The Leader stated the following changes from the Liberal Democrats group:

- Councillor David Melvin had been nominated to the Constitution Working Group;
- Councillor Julian Cooper had been nominated to the Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee.

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Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Opposition, advised Council that Councillor Thomas Ashby had been appointed to replace Councillor Dean Temple on the Council's Constitution Working Group.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Council agree the recommendations as listed on the report, with the nominations and Member appointments noted. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Ratify and note the appointments to committees made by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the wishes of political groups.
2. Appoint one Liberal Democrat member (Councillor David Melvin) to the Constitution Working Group, increasing the size of the working group to 7 members;
3. Note that Councillor Julian Cooper was nominated to the vacant seat on the Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee (for later appointment by the Licensing Committee).

CL.129 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation at the meeting.

CL.130 Questions by Members

Questions by Members, as listed on the agenda, and the responses to those questions, which were circulated in advance, were taken as read.

The Chair invited the questioners to ask a supplementary question if they wished and then invited the relevant Executive Members to respond.

The Written Questions, Written Answers, Verbal Supplementary Questions and Verbal Supplementary Answers are detailed in a separate document appended to the Minutes of the Meeting.

CL.131 Recommendations from the Executive

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the report, which sought to agree recommendations made to Council by the Executive, from its meetings since 29 November 2023, and approve of the Council Tax Base for 2024/2025, as recommended by the Executive on 17 January 2024.

The Executive Member advised Council of an anomaly within the recommendations listed on the report, where there was a £ sign in front of the number 47,851.

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

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Council **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the Council Tax Base shown in Annex F of the original Executive report, calculated as 47,841 for the year 2024/25;
2. Authorise the Director of Finance to submit the National Non-Domestic Rates Return 1 (NNDRI) to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by the submission date of 31 January 2024.

CL.132 Council Tax Support Scheme 2024-2025

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the report, which presented the results of the public consultation on proposals for revising the current Council Tax Support scheme, with effect from 1 April 2024.

The Chair advised Council of some clerical errors contained within the recommendations listed on the report, and clarified that the agreed resolutions would reflect the correct paragraph numbers referenced in the report.

In debate, Members queried the meaning of 'Income Bands' which related to information contained within the report. The Executive Member stated that the information related to weekly income per household. Members also suggested that information relating to uptakes in Hardship Funding be made more accessible by organisations aiding the most vulnerable.

Councillor Colin Dingwall made a declaration of interest relating to this agenda item, stating that he would abstain from the vote.

Councillor Alaric Smith proposed that Council agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham and was put to the vote. There were 45 votes in favour, 0 votes against and 1 abstention (Councillor Colin Dingwall).

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Agree to increase Council Tax Support, as detailed in paragraph 2.5 from 1 April 2024;
2. Agree that any surplus in the Support Fund is transferred over to 2024/2025 for reasons detailed in paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8;
3. Approve the amendment to the Council Tax Support Policy as recommended in paragraph 2.9.

CL.133 Recommendations from the Constitution Working Group

Councillor Michele Mead, Vice-Chair of the Constitution Working Group, introduced the report, which presented a recommendation to Council, from the Constitution Working Group, which related to the adoption of a Communications Protocol into the Council's constitution.

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In debate, it was clarified that if Members had any questions or comments they wished to raise regarding future Council communications, best practise was to contact the Business Manager for Communications and Marketing, who would be in the best position to provide clarity on such matters.

Councillor Michele Mead proposed that Council agree the recommendation as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Joy Aitman, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the adoption of a Communications Protocol into the Council's Constitution.

CL.134 West Oxfordshire District Council Programme of Meetings 2024 – 2025

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which sought to approve a programme of Council and Committee meetings for the municipal year 2024–2025.

A revised report had come to Council, as a report previously considered by Council in November 2023 contained clerical errors.

In debate, Members praised the work of officers for bringing a concise report to Council for adoption, thanking them for their consideration in providing a balance for Members against professional commitments. It was also highlighted that by varying meeting start times, public attendance at meetings could also be enhanced.

Members also made reference to the upgrade and refurbishment works in the Council Chamber, meaning that meetings were able to be viewed live on the Council's website, adding greater transparency to the work of the Council.

Hybrid functionality was discussed for public participation, however officers confirmed that bandwidth constraints would be a limiting factor in the successful operation of hybrid meetings.

Members were also assured that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny process would be embedded within the Executive clearance system.

Members were also given assurance that consideration was being given to the use of electronic devices for meeting agendas, minutes and other appropriate documentation.

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

Council **Resolved** to:

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1. Approve the Programme of Meetings for June 2024 to May 2025, as detailed at Annex A and Annex B;
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme of meetings, in the event that there is any future decision of the Council to change the committee structure, frequencies of committees or sub-committees, or committee remits that impacts the programme of meetings;
3. Delegate authority to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set meeting dates for committees and sub-committees that meet on an ad-hoc basis (Performance and Appointments Committee, Development Control Committee, Licensing Committee, Licensing Panel, Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee, Standards Sub-Committee), member training, member briefing sessions, and any further working groups established by the Council.

CL.135 Motion A: Thames Water Sewage 'Task Force' - Proposed by Councillor Lysette Nicholls, Seconded by Councillor Thomas Ashby.

Councillor Lysette Nicholls introduced the motion, which sought to highlight concerns from Members of the Council, and Members of Public regarding the continued dumping of sewage into local rivers by Thames Water. The motion also requested that Council set up and establish a cross party task force to work with campaigners in helping to hold Thames Water to account.

Councillor Alaric Smith rose to propose and introduce an amendment to the motion, which had been circulated in advance. The amendment sought to note concerns from Members of the Council, and Members of Public about the continued dumping of sewage into local rivers by Thames Water. The proposed amendment would also note that Council regretted a lack of action by Central Government to ensure proper regulatory oversight and control of the sector.

Councillor Alaric Smith thanked Councillor Nicholls for proposing the original Motion to Council, and for their work in bringing attention to the subject matter. Councillor Alaric Smith further highlighted that the Council supported the work so far of the administration to do what it can to put right this wrong and to hold Thames Water to account.

In the debate of the amended motion, Members highlighted a lack of action by Government in maintaining oversight of ongoing problems related to the dumping of sewage into local rivers. Members said that opportunities to address the matter had, in the round, been missed. Members referred to a Petition presented to Council in 2020, and said that in the ensuing period since the presentation, work to address issues had subsided and the overall problem had become worse.

Members made reference to meetings that had already taken place with Thames Water, and with the "Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP)" action group, which had focused on the treatment of sewage, and the infrastructure in place to deal with the treatment works. Reference was also made to "Waterways Day" events held in the West Oxfordshire District in 2022 and 2023 which highlighted the subject matter, and the Executive Member for the Environment thanked Members who had engaged with the events.

Opposition group members expressed their disappointment regarding the amended motion, stating that it would potentially discourage cross-party efforts to make significant progress in

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holding Thames Water to account, and sought clarity from the administration as to when tangible progress on reducing the sewage discharge would be recognised.

Members highlighted that work between central government, both previous and current, and the regulators had significantly attributed to the problems that were faced regarding the subject matter, and that the amended motion would seek to strengthen the resolve of efforts to curtail the discharge of sewage into the mainstream water network. Attention was also drawn to problems experienced at local 'hotspots' and sewage treatment works, which Members stated drew more attention to the overall subject matter. Members further highlighted that sewage discharge posed significant health and biodiversity risks to the wider population of the district and beyond, and that inaction to tackle the problems in the round, gave the wrong impression to residents that Members represented.

Attention was also drawn by members to historical problems surrounding privatisation of water companies, with aged debt and a lack of governance being a contributing factor to a continuation of failure to stop the discharge of raw sewage into the water networks. Members drew attention the wider environmental impacts of the subject matter, and said that the situation would not improve unless significant action were to be taken in addressing the problems faced.

Members praised work that had previously been undertaken by the Council in addressing the subject matter, and highlighted that more needed to be done, both on a local and national scale, regarding engagement and seeking meaningful solutions to solve the problems experienced. Members stated that the amended motion would help to assist the Council to make more robust decisions on planning applications, particularly on the imposition of Grampian conditions, and using Thames Water as a statutory consultee for Planning applications.

Members of the opposition group highlighted that the original motion would bring about a cross-party consensus to tackle problems regarding the subject matter, rather than bringing a political divisiveness to the debate. Members agreed that more work could be undertaken to address the issues faced by the discharge of sewage into rivers, and that it was imperative to work together, rather than seek political gain.

Several Members also drew attention to a lack of action by the Member of Parliament for Witney and West Oxfordshire in addressing the issues faced regarding sewage discharge and called for more meaningful action in the future. Members encouraged each other to make representations to the Member of Parliament for Witney and West Oxfordshire so that more robust, cross-party engagement could take place.

In seconding the amended motion, Councillor Duncan Enright highlighted that many members had made significant contributions to the wider debate on the subject matter, and stated that whilst some contributions were politically charged, it showed the strength of feeling surrounding the issues of sewage discharge both locally and nationally. Councillor Enright acknowledged a clear desire to work together but highlighted that it should be done in the right way. Councillor Enright also paid tribute to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment, for her work in helping to address the issue.

Councillor Nicholls in exercising a right of reply stated that the original motion was not designed to seek political division, and sought to bring Council together to make meaningful representations to Thames Water and provide strong, stable solutions to tackling the problems faced by discharging sewage into local rivers. Councillor Nicholls also described and drew Council's attention problems faced by residents as a result of inaction of preventing

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sewage blockages and discharges into mainstream water networks. Councillor Nicholls reiterated the desire to create a Task Force to work on a cross-party basis to address the issues at hand and hold Thames Water to account, stating that the amended motion would hamper the opportunity to do so.

In summing up the debate on the amended motion, Councillor Alaric Smith thanked Members for their contributions to the debate on the amended motion and highlighted a clear need for more meaningful action to address the issues being faced. Councillor Smith stated that residents were paying the price for mismanagement and indebtedness of the water industry in the round since the late 1980s, and that it was imperative of elected representatives to help address such issues. Councillor Smith highlighted an intention by the original motion to seek political divide, adding that it was not the time to seek division, but it was the right time to come together and enhance work currently ongoing.

Having been proposed, seconded and debated, and the amendment was put to a vote. There were 29 votes in favour, and 15 votes against, and 2 abstentions. The amendment was carried.

In debating the original motion as amended, Members highlighted that there was a clear need to have an inclusive work ethic to help address problems pertaining to sewage discharge, and that consistent, constructive engagement was in the best interest of residents.

The substantive motion was put to a vote. There were 45 votes in favour, no votes against and 1 abstention. The vote was carried.

Council **Resolved** to pass the following Motion:

Council notes the concerns from members of this Council, and members of public in the continued dumping of sewage into our local rivers by Thames Water. This Council regrets the lack of action on the part of the Government to ensure proper regulatory oversight and control of the sector.

The Council supports the work so far of the administration to do what it can to put right this wrong and to hold Thames Water to account. Given the continued concerns from residents across West Oxfordshire, this Council Resolves to request the Leader to:

1. Continue with the regular Executive-led meetings, supported by Officers, with Thames Water to ensure appropriate investment is made in the system in West Oxfordshire;
2. Ensure the meetings take place at least once every quarter;
3. Ensure the Executive Member for Environment reports back to Overview & Scrutiny and to full Council on a regular basis.

The Meeting closed at 3.33 pm.

CHAIR

Questions by Members – Council – 31 January 2024

<u>Written Question</u>	<u>Written Answer</u>	<u>Verbal Supplementary Question</u>	<u>Verbal Supplementary Answer</u>								
Q1. Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment:											
<p>Can the Executive Member for the Environment, let us know how many Garden Waste Licences were sold in the following years: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 & 2023?</p>	<p>The table below shows garden waste subscription numbers for 2019-2022 to 2023-2024 inclusive. As can be seen from the table garden waste subscription demand has remained largely stable following incremental prices increases over the years. Subscriptions grew to their peak in 2020-2021 during lockdown as customers had greater disposable income and time to maintain their green spaces. Subscriptions have slightly declined in recent years due to the cost-of-living pressure among other factors although remain above 2019-20 levels.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="663 1121 1104 1372"> <thead> <tr> <th>Period (Financial year)</th> <th>Total Number</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2019-2020</td> <td>32859</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-2021</td> <td>34662</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-2022</td> <td>33984</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Period (Financial year)	Total Number	2019-2020	32859	2020-2021	34662	2021-2022	33984	<p>The answer says that the table below shows garden waste subscription numbers for 2019-2022 to 2023-2024 inclusive, but what it doesn't actually show is the numbers for 2023 to 2024 inclusive. Could we have those please?</p>	<p>I am unsure as to why this was removed, but I do have the 2023-2024 figure, and it is 33,183.</p>
Period (Financial year)	Total Number										
2019-2020	32859										
2020-2021	34662										
2021-2022	33984										

	2022-2023	33426		
Q2. Councillor Harry St. John to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:				
<p>In the light of the possible changes to Publica, and employment of staff directly by WODC recently circulated, can the cost implications in relation to Pension contributions be highlighted at an early stage if such employees (new or existing) will become members of the LGA /OCC pension scheme?</p> <p>This is so that Members can compare the current position with the new scenario. There is a mention of £1m pa extra contributions made in a recent report – How much might it cost WODC?</p>	<p>This issue was covered in the Publica Review Report, presented to the Executive on 15 November 2023. This report identified the risk of potentially significant one-off staffing costs, including possible redundancy and pension costs. The precise value of this cannot yet be established at present, but an assumption of £75,000 for ongoing pension costs was included in the budget reported to Executive in January.</p> <p>In line with the decisions of Executive, a business case for a new operating mode and an associated transition plan will be prepared in partnership with the other Publica Council's and with Publica. This work will help the Council understand the potential costs and inform future decisions.</p>	<p>When we will get a realistic estimate of what that figure might be?</p>	<p>The best thing that we can do, is when we do have that, we will actually communicate it.</p>	
Q3. Councillor Harry St. John to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:				
<p>I notice the Executive approved the process of Trade Union recognition of WODC staff – Has any Union previously been recognised by WODC?</p>	<p>WODC historically has not recognised a Trade Union. Publica currently recognises both Unison and GMB and discussions are taking place with the Executive and HR</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	

<p>Are there any cost implications for WODC and how many Members, if any, of the Executive are themselves Union members, particularly members of GMB or Unison, which are likely to be the main Unions involved?</p>	<p>regarding the process to recognise a trade union. To be recognised a Trade Union must confirm that it has at least 10% Union membership within the proposed bargaining unit that will be created by recognition. There are no cost implications to the Council. Membership of a trade union is a confidential matter between the union and the employee. As for Members of the Executive, any membership would be detailed on their Register of Interests as appropriate.</p>		
<p>Q4. Councillor Harry St. John to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:</p>			
<p>Last year, at the March Council, you replied to a member of the public's question regarding the Blenheim Solar Power Station, and I quote: -</p> <p>"We wish to make a fully informed judgement as to whether the harms of the proposal outweigh the benefits.</p> <p>"We will carry out any assessment as considered necessary to inform our response to the Planning Inspectorate."</p> <p>Our Planning Officers are about to report to the Development Control</p>	<p>The statement I made last March, is one that I stand behind. If we are to influence this development, we need to engage in the process set out by Government, and use the limited powers that are given to us by the process wisely and at the appropriate time.</p> <p>In that regard, short term political grandstanding is unlikely to result in the best solution for WODC and its residents, and a more nuanced and considered approach is needed. I am satisfied, having been kept abreast of this</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>Committee being held on Monday 5 February 2024.</p> <p>Can you confirm why, despite being Leader of this Council, and County Councillor for Woodstock, which Division includes a number of parishes that are currently blighted by the scheme, and in light of our Council organising a bus tour of the whole site (to better inform every member of what is involved) plus a number of walkabouts at key view points within the site, you decided not to join the 11 members (on a 40 seater bus hired, one assumes at some public expense) who did come on the tour; neither did you encourage your Executive colleagues (or indeed all Members) to all come along too.</p> <p>Given the sheer scale of this proposal - roughly 2500 acres stretching over 7 miles long in our District and Cherwell, let alone more in the Vale of White Horse, this absence does seem an oversight – would you agree?</p> <p>Do you think your constituents will be happy that you missed the opportunity to view the whole site and hear what your officers were</p>	<p>development in some detail by Officers, that we are on the correct course to have the most influence.</p> <p>I would certainly have loved to have been on the site visit, but I am afraid that I could not attend due to two significant meetings – one of which was with leaders of other Councils on matters of equally significant importance to this Council.</p> <p>As advised above however, I am fully aware of the extent of the scheme and the concerns being raised such that I know the importance of this development to our local residents – as I am sure is the case for all those who will be looking into this matter at the upcoming Development Control Committee.</p> <p>This is why I want to ensure we do this right. Sometimes doing it right means that it does not give best political advantage, but that is in my view what real leadership is about.</p>		
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<p>saying on site? Isn't that what Leadership is about?, taking the lead on a key issue? (I fully realise that the final decision on this proposal is not going to be ours, but our initial response will carry a lot of weight hopefully – given most of the site is in our domain!).</p> <p>Do you agree that you and some of your/our colleagues could well be at a disadvantage when this matter comes to be debated at WODC's Development Control Committee, having not made your/themselves available for the tour?</p> <p>As they say, I think we should be told and welcome your response.</p>			
<p>Q5. Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:</p>			
<p>Does he feel it's appropriate for his Deputy Leader to be now working for a communications company that is involved in work between this Council and developers given his role in the Council?</p>	<p>The Deputy Leader refers to his role as an associate with the Community Communications Partnership in his register of interests, and mentions that the CCP is communications company providing a link between the community and a range of service providers. The Deputy Leader is clear in his statement that in his role with the CCP he is not involved in any way, nor is he privy to any information, regarding</p>	<p>Thank you for your response. Will Councillor Enright be removing himself from any Local Plan discussions, given that the company he works for represents a large majority of building companies that work within West Oxfordshire?</p>	<p>I'm not aware of that, and I will provide you with a written response.</p>

	developments within or impacting Oxfordshire or West Oxfordshire. Therefore, there is no conflict of interest with his role as Deputy Leader and Executive Member.		
Q6. Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance:			
How much is the new interim programme director costing, and is this cost coming from the £200,000 set aside for the Publica transition?	The Interim Programme Director has been appointed on a day rate of £1287. This cost will be shared equally between West Oxfordshire District Council, Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council. The West Oxfordshire component of the cost will be funded from funding set aside for the transition and preparatory work.	Thank you very much for your response. So can you tell me what percentage West Oxfordshire is paying towards this? Is it split equally in thirds? Or is it split differently?	Yes, I am advised it is shared equally.
Q7. Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance:			
While presenting the Draft Budget, Councillor Smith alluded to the cost of vehicle hire for waste lorries due to the ageing fleet. Can he tell us how much it has cost this council this year?	The forecast hire costs for 2023/24 are £694,000. The hire of waste vehicles is part of the Ubico contract sum, the annual growth or saving for which is highlighted in the MTFS. In 2024/25 growth in the Ubico contract is £826,000 which includes employee costs, diesel, inflation, service & maintenance and vehicle hire.	N/A	N/A

	<p>The hire of vehicles provides service reliability and reduces the repair costs to maintain the ageing fleet as vehicles at the end of economic life are not used for daily rounds. Hire vehicles will be necessary until there is an agreed fleet replacement strategy, work for which has already started with a report to Executive planned for June 2024.</p> <p>Savings in the Ubico contract have been included in the MTFS in 2025/26 in anticipation of the reduction in hire costs and repair costs as new vehicles are purchased, initially 4 before the end of this financial year, but other costs and savings in 2025/26 related to other contract items cannot be estimated at this stage.</p>		
Q8. Councillor Liam Walker to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment:			
Can the Executive Member confirm when the A4095 between Witney and North Leigh will have a visit from the street cleaning team to collect rubbish?	Ubico are currently litter picking the A40. The A4095 cleanse will start on 31 January, however this will be the low-speed sections of the road, or the sections of the road that can safely be cleansed without a lane closure. The high-speed sections of the road that require a lane closure are	N/A	N/A

	<p>scheduled to be completed in March.</p> <p>Ubico litter picks all A roads twice a year, this frequency is built into the contract. There will be occasion where Ubico are required to complete a third cleanse in a year which is typically as a result of a third party having cut the grass without Ubico's knowledge which then exposes litter which needs to be cleansed.</p> <p>The A4095 was litter picked throughout 2023 in stages as following a pre-pick survey it was deemed that a full litter pick across the whole length wouldn't have been an efficient use of staff time, this approach is industry practice and allows targeted attention to key areas. However, a full litter cleanse of A4095 was completed in August / September 2022.</p> <p>Officers will provide a 12-month schedule for litter picking around West Oxfordshire to give members an indication of when the litter picks may occur, this will</p>		
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	be available in March. However, it should be noted that these times are only indicative as litter picking events can move as they are dependent on a number of factors including other urgent works which may be required across the district.		
Q9. Councillor Liam Walker to Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development:			
Can the Executive Member confirm what funding was used for the purchase of the Marriott's Walk shopping centre?	The purchase price of Marriott's Walk Shopping Centre was £9.4m, and this was financed from cash reserves available at the time (this is known as internal borrowing). These reserves are a combination of Council Tax, Business Rates, Grants and Section 106 monies. As the capital programme was significantly curtailed last year due to a lack of suitable investments opportunities, this method of internal financing from cash reserves was available for this purchase, without the need for external borrowing.	N/A	N/A
Q10. Councillor Liam Walker to Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects:			
Can the Executive member update Council as to what progress has been made to secure sites in or around Witney for new 3G pitches?	Over the last year, Officers have been working hard with Woodgreen School in Witney, about potentially developing the 3G pitch on the school playing	Thank you for the answer. I just wonder is there is scope to look at other sites outside of Witney for 4G pitches, or does it have to be within the Witney boundary?	I think I would have to refer you to officers and a write up of the findings. I would prefer to wait for their reply and their findings to give an accurate answer.

	<p>fields, parallel to the existing sand based artificial turf pitch. In order to support their proposals, the Council tasked the school with developing a business case to include the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic need for 3G pitch at the site;• Research and consultation;• Management and operational structure;• Potential usage and community use;• Sustainability (including sinking fund);• Marketing; and• Environmental consideration. <p>Despite numerous meetings and email exchanges, the Council is still yet to receive a comprehensive business case from the school. Therefore, have highlighted to the school that we are going to start looking at other locations. Officers are very aware of the details and expiry clause on the Section 106 agreement</p>		
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	<p>(16/01450/OUT), which specifies that the contribution has to be spend on grassroots football in Witney by 2029.</p> <p>Officers from the Leisure team have also been in discussions with colleagues in planning, around alternative locations, as sports lighting is a requirement and total amount of land required for just the fenced 3G area is 7,420m2. Officers have started looking previously identified sites and met with Sport England, Oxfordshire Football Association, Oxfordshire Cricket Board, Rugby Football Union, and England Hockey on 26th January 2024 to discuss the pros and cons of these sites from a national governing body of sport perspective and also to determine any sites that are viable to take forward. Officers now plan to write up a summary of the findings.</p>		
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