

Tuesday, 31 October 2023

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will be held in Committee rooms 1 & 2, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 8 November 2023 at 5.30 pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors: Thomas Ashby, Hugo Ashton, Andrew Beaney, David Cooper, Julian Cooper, Rachel Crouch, Jane Doughty, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Natalie King, Nick Leverton, Andrew Lyon, Charlie Maynard, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Mathew Parkinson, Rizvana Poole, Sandra Simpson, Ruth Smith, Harry St John, Alistair Wray, Liam Walker, Mark Walker and Alex Wilson

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

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

AGENDA

1. **Election of Chair**

Purpose:

Election of the Chair for Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Civic Year 2023/24. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must be an opposition member.

Recommendation:

That the Committee elects a Chair for the remainder of the Civic Year 2023/24.

2. **Election of Vice-Chair**

Purpose:

Election of the Vice-Chair for Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Civic Year 2023/24. The Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can be from any political group or none.

Recommendation:

That the Committee elects the Vice-Chair for the remainder of the Civic Year 2023/24.

3. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**

To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments

4. **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations from Members of the Committee on any items to be considered at the meeting.

5. **Minutes of Previous Meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees (Pages 5 - 22)**

To approve the following sets of minutes:

- Climate and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 July 2023;
- Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 September 2023;
- Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 October 2023.

6. **Participation of the Public**

To receive any submissions from members of the public, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, anyone who lives in the district or who pays council tax or business rates to the Council is eligible to read a statement or express an opinion at this meeting. You can register to speak by sending your written submission of no more than 750 words to democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk, by no later than 10.00am on the working day before the meeting.

7. **Treasury Management Mid-Term Report (Pages 23 - 36)**

Purpose:

To provide Members with an update on Treasury Management activity, the performance of internal and external funds and prudential indicators for the period 1st April 2023 – 30th Sept 2023.

Recommendation:

That the Committee scrutinises the Treasury Management Mid-Term Report.

Invited:

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance
Madhu Richards, Director of Finance
Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant

8. **Q2 Finance Report - Nov 23 (Pages 37 - 52)**

Purpose:

To detail the Council's financial performance for Quarter Two 2023-2024.

Recommendation:

That the Committee scrutinises the Financial Performance for Quarter Two 2023-2024

Invited:

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance
Madhu Richards, Director of Finance
Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant

9. **Committee Work Programme (Pages 53 - 64)**

Purpose:

For the Committee to formulate a work plan for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year.

Recommendation:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves to:

1. Agree that when considering the Executive Forward Plan the Committee will agree a priority order of reports for pre-decision scrutiny at the next meeting.
2. Agree to use the 10 January 2024 meeting as a "Spotlight" session to scrutinise the Draft Budget 2024/25.
3. Agree to schedule an additional "spotlight" meeting on a date to be agreed by the Director of Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to scrutinise the Publica Review.
4. Request that all members of Council send any suggestions for items to be included on the work plan to the Democratic Services Business Manager by Friday 24 November.
5. Agree that the "long list" of suggested work plan items will be ranked by officers using the TOPIC Scoring Criteria (Annex B) and presented to the Committee on 6 December, in order to inform the Committee's adoption of a work plan.

Invited:

Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager

10. **Executive Work Programme (Pages 65 - 74)**

Purpose:

To give the Committee the opportunity to review the Executive Work Programme.

Recommendation:

That the Committee considers whether any items on the Executive Work Programme should be subject to pre-decision scrutiny.

(END)

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Climate & Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Held in Committee Room 1 at 2.00 pm on **Monday, 3 July 2023**

PRESENT

Councillors: Martin McBride (Chair), Adrian Walsh (Vice-Chair), Andy Goodwin, Natalie King, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Hugo Ashton, Phil Godfrey, Rosie Pearson, Ruth Smith, Tim Sumner, Mark Walker, Alistair Wray and Michael Brooker.

Officers: Bill Oddy (Assistant Director - Commercial Development), Andy Barge (Assistant Director - Strategic Support), Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager), Laurence King (Shared Lead Flood Risk Management Officer), Phil Martin (Assistant Director - Business Support), Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Support Officer), Anne Learmonth (Strategic Support Officer), Astrid Harvey (Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer) and Barry Clack (Communications Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Lidia Arciszewska and Andrew Prosser

1 Election of the Chair

Bill Oddy, the Assistant Director for Commercial Development opened the meeting, welcoming Members and Offices to the Climate and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Assistant Director referred Members to the first item on the Agenda, Election of the Chair, and asked the Committee for nominations to the positions of Chair of the Climate and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf proposed that Councillor Martin McBride be appointed to the position of Chair of Climate and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024. This was seconded by Councillor Adrian Walsh, was put to a vote. The vote was carried.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Appoint Councillor Martin McBride to the position of Chair of the Climate and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024.

2 Election of the Vice-Chair

Councillor Martin McBride proposed that Councillor Adrian Walsh be appointed to the position of Vice-Chair of Climate and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024. This was seconded by Councillor Natalie King, was put to a vote and was carried.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Appoint Councillor Adrian Walsh to the position of Vice-Chair of the Climate and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Colin Dingwall and Andrew Coles, Councillor Michael Brooker substituted for Councillor Andrew Coles.

Councillor David Cooper was absent.

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4 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

5 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6 **Participation of the Public**

There were no participation of the public.

7 **Response from recommendations to Executive**

The Chair brought Members' attention to the Executive responses to the two recommendations that the Committee referred to the Executive, from 23 March 2023 meeting.

The Assistant Director for Commercial Development explained to the Committee the background to the recommendations, which arose from Council motions, and the responses as there were newly appointed Councillors in attendance.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Executive responses.

8 **Flood Management Update**

Laurence King, the Shared Lead Flood Risk Management Officer, and Phil Martin, the

Assistant Director for Business Services, informed the Committee that since the last meeting, the following progress had been made on the Monitoring Gauges:

- Monitoring Gauges - WODC will be working closely with Witney Flood Mitigation Group (WFMG), to try and get the gauges installed before the flood season begins in September/October;
- Live data will be collated from the Monitoring Gauges;
- Oxford County Council (OCC) as the lead local flood authority had offered to fund the Monitoring Gauges;
- WFMG proposal was for the installation of ten Monitoring Gauges, three of these will be backup Gauges.

The Assistant Director stated that Witney Town Council weren't one of the key stakeholders, and the Shared Lead Flood Risk Management Officer confirmed that meetings have occurred and they were aware. Although the Town Council were not obliged to have an emergency plan they were keen on assisting communities to have flood plans. Councillor Smith confirmed that Witney Gardens had a Community Flood Plan, and asked for OCC and WODC to assist in identifying the land owners when ditches or gullies need clearing.

The Assistant Director informed the Committee that the Pilot Flood Warden scheme was up and running, and OCC were actively recruiting Flood Wardens.

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The Shared Lead Flood Risk Management Officer confirmed that since the last time the Committee met, the Flood Management Agreement between OCC and WODC has been signed. There had also been regular meetings with Thames Water over the past 6 months, with the most recent one being on the 12th June. At the meetings Cllrs and Officers discuss capacity and failings at treatment works, how calculations had been put together, concerns re sewage treatment works, and future investment programmes. Smart metering installations were slow in our area and Thames Water had adopted a phased approach to rolling them out across the region. Thames Water, when asked about the recent media reports, had also issued reassurance in the short term, for business as usual.

The Chair thanked the Officers in attendance for the positive progress that had been made.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Note the Flood Management Update.

9

Overview of new Grant Scheme

Andy Barge, the Assistant Director for Communities, introduced the new Grant Scheme, presenting the new approach to grant funding, which was better aligned to the outcomes intended from Council Plan and aimed to foster greater community engagement and involvement.

The new grant scheme introduces a new approach to revenue grant funding from 2024/25 aligned to four lots and supported by three year service level agreements.

Four lots being:

1. Improving our natural environment and the access to it, so that we enable physical and mental wellbeing and cohesive, connected communities;
2. Taking action towards the climate and ecological emergencies, so that we reduce carbon footprints and encourage nature recovery;
3. Increasing community resilience and amplifying the voice of the seldom heard, so that we take action on issues most important to our residents and their needs, such as access to food, supporting young people and cultural provision;
4. Providing residents with high quality, independent housing advice, welfare and debt advice services, so that they are empowered to tackle their problems and we support those who are unable to deal with difficult circumstances on their own.

Civic crowdfunding will be introduced as an alternative to community facilities grants and the Council will make up to £120,000 per annum available to pledge against proposed projects.

The Council has appointed Spacehive as its civic crowdfunding platform provider on a three year contract.

Delegated authority will be given to the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Leader and Executive Members for Stronger Healthy Communities, Planning and Sustainable Development, Environment, and Climate Change to agree the type of projects to be supported and the pledge criteria for crowdfunding.

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The final change noted as an outcome of the review was the creation of a part-time Community Funding Officer post, to ensure the success of the new schemes and to secure external funding to support service delivery, where possible. Members were also assured the total budget directed at the various grant funding schemes has been maintained at the same level,

Members discussed with the Assistant Director the following topics:

- Verification checks on behalf of the Council;
- Hive commission;
- Culture provision;
- Guidance on applications;
- Case Study;
- Stakeholder map.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for the overview.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the new Grant Scheme.

10 Overview of Local Plan

Chris Hargraves, the Planning Policy Manager, introduced the review of the Local Plan, and explained to the Committee that they were currently at the initial plan preparation stage. The Local Plan would follow four stages:

- **Plan preparation** – informal engagement on the scope of the plan, different options and alternatives explored to identify a preferred approach.
- **Publication** – the formal stage when the Council produces what it considers to be a ‘sound’ plan.
- **Submission** – when the Council submits its plan for examination.
- **Adoption** – subject to the outcome of the examination, the Council formally adopts the plan.

The Planning Policy Manager summarised the consultation undertaken to date and explained that a range of supporting technical evidence was in the process of being commissioned. He explained that a further focused consultation was planned for the summer, feedback from which would then be used to inform a set of preferred policy approaches later in the year.

The Committee then discussed the following items:

- Chipping Norton development;
- Historic England input;

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- Hanborough development;
- Digital and face to face events;
- Broader plan v detailed plan;
- S106 and CIL (community infrastructure levy).

The Planning Policy Manager summarised the current timeline for taking the Local Plan forward:

- Consultation on preferred policy options/approaches winter 2023
- Publication of draft Local Plan summer 2024
- Submission for examination autumn 2024
- Adoption mid 2025

The Chair thanked the Planning Policy Manager for the overview.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Note the overview of the Local Plan from the Planning Policy Manager.

II Service Performance Report 2022-23 Quarter Four

The Chair introduced the Quarter 4 Service Performance Report.

The Assistant Director for Commercial Development directed the Committee's focus on 3.4 Waste and Environment, which reflects changing habits since COVID has been slow. 3.5 Service Dashboard, reflects fixed penalties for fly tipping for quarter 4 had increased, therefore a further analysis should be done to try and find out what could have caused the increase.

Committee reflected on the performance report and discussed the following items:

- Missed bins actual percentage;
- Missed bins collections thereafter;
- UBICO contract extension and its current KPI's (Key Performance Indicators);
- In cab technology;
- Contamination of waste data record of 18 – 20%;
- Replacement bins data;
- Fly Tipping data.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Invite the Fly Tipping Officer to the next Committee meeting for performance data analysis;
2. Note the Quarter 4 Service Performance Report.

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12 Committee Work Programme

The Chair reviewed the Committee Work Programme with the Assistant Director for Commercial Development and Members present.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Invite the Climate Change Manager to the Committee meeting on 8 November to provide a briefing on the Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Action Plan;
2. Remove items 2 and 4 from future work programme and put back once government legislation is introduced;
3. Invite the Service Leader, Philip Measures, to the 7 February Committee meeting for an annual briefing on Air Quality;
4. Add Climate Change Strategy and Carbon Action Plan to Committee Work Programme;
5. Note the Committee Work Programme Report.

13 Executive Work Programme

The Chair reviewed the Executive Work Programme with the Assistant Director for Commercial Development and Members present.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Ask the Executive if the following items could be delayed until after 8 November:
 - Carbon Action Plan;
 - Climate change Strategy.
2. Note the Executive Work Programme Report.

The Meeting closed at 3.58 pm

CHAIR

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Held in Committee Room 1 at 2.00pm on **Wednesday, 6 September 2023**

PRESENT

Councillors: Alaa Al-Yousuf (Chair), Charlie Maynard (Vice-Chair), Hugo Ashton, Michael Brooker, Jane Doughty, Mark Johnson, Andrew Lyon, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Rosie Pearson, Elizabeth Poskitt and Alex Wilson.

Officers: Phil Martin (Assistant Director for Business Support) and Michelle Clifford (Business Manager - Customer Services), James Howse (Interim Chief Finance and Section 151 Officer), Andrew Brown (Business Manager Democratic Services), Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Support Officer) and Anne Learmonth (Strategic Support Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Dan Levy Executive Member for Finance.

68 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Julian Cooper and Ruth Smith.
Councillor Phil Godfrey was absent.

69 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

70 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

71 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation.

72 Telephone Channel Access

The Chair informed the Committee he was changing the order of the agenda, and that the Telephone Channel Access item would be heard first, the rest of the agenda order remained unchanged.

Michelle Clifford, the Business Manager Customer Services, introduced the Telephone Channel Access Report.

The Business Manager Customer Services summarised the report, highlighting the following points:

- There has been an increase in digital use of services;
- There had been a decline in telephone call volumes received after 2pm, especially on Wednesdays;
- Staffing capacity to be increased over lunchtime to meet demand;
- Trial to begin late October (subject to approval), reducing telephone opening hours by closing lines at 2pm;
- Communications to the public to be managed by the Communications Department;

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- Trial to last between 3-6 months;
- Some staff to operate from 2pm in other services;
- Some staff have asked to reduce their hours, if the trial is successful;
- Staff will get opportunities to learn new skills in other areas of the business after 2pm;
- Trial will be monitored and reviewed;
- Face to Face Service to remain at 9am to 5pm at the Welsh Way office in Witney;

The Business Manager for Customer Services concluded that Homelessness, Dangerous Structures and Election callers would receive a redirection message.

The Chair thanked the Business Manager for Customer Services and asked Members if they had any questions on the trial proposed.

Members of the Committee explored the following issues:

- Redeployment of staff from 2pm to back offices;
- Back office backlogs, which would be reduced through the redeployment of staff;
- Data to backup the decrease in incoming calls;
- Risk areas were identified as being Homelessness, Dangerous Structures and Elections (during the run up to electoral events);
- Out of hours monitoring;
- Staff numbers affected – 7.9 full time equivalent posts;
- There would be a weekly review of the trial;
- The trial period would last 3-6 months;
- Monitoring of emails and complaints;
- Councillors' feedback;
- The need for clear communications;
- Savings and reinvestment.

Following the debate, the Chair Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf, introduced the Interim Chief Finance and Section 151 Officer, James Howse, to the Committee.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer informed the Committee that innovations like the Telephone Access trial was crucial for generating savings.

Councillors were keen to see the data evidence to back up the fall in telephone demand after 2pm.

The Business Manager for Customer Services confirmed that following the meeting, Councillors would be sent the full data via email and be regularly contacted for feedback during the trial period.

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The Chair reminded the Committee of the recommendation within the report, which were for Cabinet to agree.

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

Councillor Michael Brooker proposed to support the recommendations within the report.

Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt seconded the proposal, which was duly put to the vote and was carried.

Councillor Michele Mead voted against the proposal.

The Committee **Resolved** to support the recommendations to Cabinet in the report, which were to:

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

73 Treasury Management Out-Turn Report 2022/23

James Howse, Interim Chief Finance Director, introduced the Treasury Management Out-Turn Report 2022/23.

The Interim Chief Finance Director summarised key points within the report:

- Page 12 – Interest received was £1.3m over the year against a budget of £1.1m but the Capital Value had decreased;
- Page 13 – The Council had complied with all Prudential Indicators;
- Page 16 – Interest rates were high which had a positive impact on the Council’s “in house” investments.
- Page 18 – Section 6.3 emphasised the need to ensure an optimal balance between liquidity, security and yield. This was kept under review and the Council took professional advice in relation to this.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer advised that Arlingclose had been chosen as the West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) Treasury Advisor, after a competitive tender process had occurred. The new contract included an enhanced package of advisory support.

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Councillors asked if the Externally Managed funds at 3.7 within the report were actively or passively managed. The Interim Chief Finance Officer agreed to get back to Councillors with the answer via email, and added that the Council worked closely with Arlingclose in relation to pooled funds. It was added that hopefully in the future years the Council would be able to forecast cash flow more effectively.

Councillors also asked if there were any ethical constraints, the Interim Chief Finance Officer agreed to confirm whether this was built into the Treasury Management Strategy.

The Chair explained that there had been a Treasury working group, but this was during Covid and had been difficult to manage, and was disbanded. The group had commented on the need to review the mandate of Arlingclose and had considered ethical issues, which were complex.

The Executive Member for Finance, Councillor Dan Levy agreed that the Council should ensure ethical management of funds.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Treasury Management and the performance of internal and external funds for 2022/23.

74 Finance Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter One

James Howse, the Interim Chief Finance Officer introduced the Financial Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter One.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer summarised the report as largely relating to pressures on income:

- Green waste;
- Building control and Land charges;
- Council Tax and Business Rates arrears;
- Investment property voids.

Councillors reviewed the report and discussed the following topics:

- There was unlikely to be a financial case for introducing a 6 month green waste license.
- The need to review income and expenditure in areas such as Building Control during the budget setting process;
- Commercial property void rates and the need to closely monitor the market and buy in appropriate advice;
- It would be useful for reports to show comparisons to last year and forecasts;
- Some of the larger items in the capital programme needed clearer descriptions.

The Executive Member for Finance agreed that there were challenges that needed monitoring and cost management to be continually reviewed.

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The Interim Chief Finance Officer wanted to see increased marketing of space availability to reduce voids, and also confirmed that the Council Tax and Business Rates arrears, 98% budget target was on track.

The Chair concluded that Finance needs to be on balance and stay on target, and that the Property Performance Report should be reviewed when ready.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Finance Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter One.

75 Service Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter One

Phil Martin, Assistant Director for Business Services, introduced the Service Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter One.

The Assistant Director for Business Services highlighted the following points from the report:

- Customers were increasingly using the Open Portal for Self Service and this was being further encouraged;
- Investigation into automated systems and technical solutions;
- Trade waste was billed twice a year so spikes in the report reflect billing arrangements;
- Historic debt was actively being looked at;
- The GLL contract billed at 100% but 60% had been returned;
- Faster solutions for processing were being looked at.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Business Services and asked the Committee for any questions or feedback.

Councillors asked if the team had changed, and how was the Town Centre Shop being used.

The Assistant Director for Business Services confirmed that the team was stable and that they had received positive feedback.

Councillors queried the table data on page 45, and asked if the system recorded the longest time that customers had to wait for a connection to a call, and could another matrix be added for a peak response time.

Councillor Mead also enquired about the percentage increase in customers who had signed up to the on-line portal.

The Chair asked if the Committee could see the positive feedback reflected within the report and recommendations.

The Assistant Director for Business Services agreed to take these additional matrix recommendations back to the team, and to reflect in future reporting.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Service Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter One.

76 Enhancement Suggestions for the Effectiveness of Scrutiny

Andrew Brown the Business Manager for Democratic Services, informed Members that the Constitution Working Group was sending a report to Full Council in September. The Constitution Working Group was unanimously recommending that the three existing overview and scrutiny committees be replaced by a single Overview Scrutiny Committee which would meet regularly for the rest of the Civic Year. The proposal will suggest that this change takes effect on 5 October 2023, meaning that this Committee meeting would be the last Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The planned Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny meeting will still go ahead on 4 October 2023, this will be followed by the first new combined Scrutiny Committee, the week before the Executive meeting planned in November.

The new Overview and Scrutiny Committee was suggested to meet at 5:30pm on a Wednesday evening, with a membership of 24 Councillors. There will also be task and finish group opportunities. Group leaders will nominate the membership, which will be politically balanced.

Regular Councillor briefings were also being planned to take place virtually, where all Councillors would have the opportunity to receive briefings from officers and ask questions. Topics of the briefings would include:

- Health;
- Housing;
- Flood update;
- Waste update.

The Budget was likely to be considered at one Overview and Scrutiny Committee, where it was potentially the only item on the Agenda.

Members could if they wished to arrange substitutes, at any Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Committee was invited to give the Chair or the Business Manager for Democratic Services any specific recommendation ideas on how to improve the scrutiny within the Council.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the update from the Business Manager for Democratic Services.

77 Executive Work Programme

The Chair asked the Committee if there were any comments Members wished to make regarding the Executive Work Programme, of which none were received.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Executive Work Programme.

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78 Committee Work Programme

The Chair asked the Committee if there were any comments Members wished to make regarding the Committee Work Programme, of which none were received.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Committee Work Programme.

The Meeting closed at 3.57pm

CHAIR

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Held in Committee Room 1 at 5.30pm on **Wednesday, 4 October 2023**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Rizvana Poole (Vice-Chair), Julian Cooper, Rachel Crouch, Phil Godfrey, Natalie King, Nick Leverton, Andrew Lyon, Sandra Simpson, Harry St John, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray

Officers: Jon Dearing (Assistant Director for Resident Services), Phil Martin (Assistant Director for Business Support), Andrew Brown (Business Manager Democratic Services), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), and Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Support Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Joy Aitman, the Executive member for Stronger Healthy Communities.

15 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Thomas Ashby, and Liam Walker.

Councillor Natalie King sent apologies to say she may not be at the meeting, however arrived at the meeting 17:40.

Councillor Charlie Maynard was absent and arrived after the meeting had finished.

16 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

17 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

18 Participation of the Public

There were no participation of the public.

19 Asylum Report

Phil Martin, Assistant Director of Business Services introduced the Asylum Report, and gave the Committee a high level overview and summary of the report.

Councillors were interested in discussing the numbers, the support residents of the hotel were receiving from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC), and support received from local community support groups.

Jon Dearing, Assistant Director for Resident Services, was also present at the meeting, so between Mr Martin and Mr Dearing they were able to answer members queries from their discussion points as follows:

- Asylum seekers that resided within a hotel in West Oxfordshire were placed and supported by the Home Office;
- The hotel owners had a direct contract with the Home Office;

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- The Council would inform the Home Office of the possible change in the hotel ownership so that they were forewarned;
- If the hotel changed ownership, it would be the Home Office's responsibility to ensure that the Asylum Seekers either remained in the Hotel or were relocated;
- The Afghan Resettlement Scheme is government funded, and the Council is utilising this to support six families;
- The Council was awaiting year three funding for hosts for Ukrainian visitors, originally 300, now down to 159 who were embedded into the community successfully;
- Some Ukrainian families had visited Ukraine but had not returned to the district and therefore numbers had fluctuated;
- Syrian numbers remained unchanged, families were settled;
- Ducklington school and the local churches in and around Witney have been very active with assisting the people living in the hotel.
- The Council were working closely with Volunteer Link Up, who were mapping all the local community support groups and what is currently being provided to the people in the hotel as well as identifying opportunities for them to give something back to the community.
- Regular monthly meeting with multi agency partners were taking place;
- Government funds of £147,000.00 had been received to support Asylum seekers. The Council will be facilitating a grant scheme for local community support groups to apply for;
- West Oxfordshire residents, community support groups, churches, local schools and health organisations had all offered goodwill and assistance, it was hoped that the grant scheme would help this to continue;
- Owners of empty private homes were contacted regularly by Council officers to remind them of the options they had and the assistance the Council could offer. However as these were privately owned properties the Council could only offer advice.

Councillor Joy Aitman, the Executive member for Stronger Healthy Communities was pleased to hear that the Council was working with all local agencies and wanted officers to know that they appreciated all the hard work that officers and agencies were doing to assist all the asylum seekers.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Note the report.
2. Request that officers inform the Home Office of the possible change of ownership of the local hotel.

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Service Performance Report 2023/24 - Quarter One

Jon Dearing, Assistant Director for Resident Services, introduced the Performance reports, and called members attention to an error in the number of appeals reported on page 19 of the report.

The Assistant Director highlighted the following points:

- Generally there had been a massive improvement and 96% of minor planning applications were completed on time.

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- On the 5 October the Council would be completing 23 new homes, which would assist housing needs of residents.
- A homelessness report was due to go to the next Executive meeting requesting additional resources, and to make all temporary staff permanent as there continued to be huge challenges within the housing department.

Councillors asked if the staff that were expected to be made permanent would incur additional costs to the Council. The Assistant Director was able to confirm that most temporary staff had been employed by Publica for up to five years, and therefore costs were already equal to permanent staff levels and therefore would not incur additional costs.

Councillor Cooper enquired on one particular case, which the Assistant Director was not able to clarify at the meeting, and took an action away to enquire and get back to Councillor Cooper with the latest update.

Councillor St John enquired about the leaking roof at the old Court House, the Assistant Director confirmed that Council Officers were going to be investigating the original purchase process to see why the roof defects were not picked up.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note and scrutinise the report.

21 Committee Work Programme

The Chair, Councillor Andrew Beaney introduced the Committee Work Programme and reminded members that the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be creating a new work programme so that as this was the last Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee all they could do was to suggest any additional items to add to the new committees draft Work Programme.

Councillor Cooper enquired about Cherwell Local Plan, Andrew Brown the Democratic Services Business Manager confirmed that the Officer in charge of the Local Plan was not available to attend this Committee, however there was to be an all councillor briefing on the Local Plan on 26 October where this item could be raised.

Councillor St John enquired about Oxford airport and RAF Brize Norton airport re. airspace new requests. Through the Chair Councillor Leverton was able to advise that the Council would not have influence over the Oxford airspace that would be a Oxford County Council matter, and that Ministry of Defence at Whitehall would be the official airspace applicant, not RAF Brize Norton. All applications would go through the Civil Aviation Authority.

The Chair Councillor Andrew Beaney advised members that to support the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme there were to be topical briefings that were to be held virtually and recorded to give all councillors opportunity to attend. The initial briefings would be on Housing and Flood Management Update.

Councillor Wilson enquired if Crime and Disorder would feature on the new committees Work Programme as it stipulated within the constitution. The Democratic Services Business Manager confirmed that Crime and Disorder would be on the new Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and be an item on the agenda at least once a year.

04/October2023

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the report.

22 Executive Work Programme

The Chair, Councillor Andrew Beaney introduced the Executive Work Programme.

As there was an Executive meeting scheduled to take place the next week the Chair enquired what would happen if a decision had a call in, how would the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee be managed. Andrew Brown advised that a special Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be called and managed to deal with the call in decision.


Councillor Cooper thanked the Chair for the management of the Committee, this was seconded by Councillor Leverton and supported by all members. The Chair thanked members for their contributions to the committee and wished everyone luck at the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the report.

The Meeting closed at 6.12pm

CHAIR

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8 NOVEMBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>2023/24 HALF YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2023</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Alaric Smith Cabinet Member for Finance Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Madhu Richards, Director of Finance Email: madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Sian Hannam, Treasury Accountant Email: sian.hannam@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To provide Members with an update on Treasury Management activity, the performance of internal and external funds and prudential indicators for the period 1st April 2023 – 30th Sept 2023</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Executive Resolves to:</p> <p>a) Note the contents of the report</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>Working Together for West Oxfordshire</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>

1. BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

- 1.1** The overall performance of investments in the 6 months to 30th September 2023 was mixed, returning interest of £539,169 or 5.04% against an annual revenue budget of £821,741, but also generating an unrealised capital loss of 1.93% or £238,628 in the year to date.
- 1.2** The capital value of pooled funds continues to be affected by prevailing economic conditions in the world markets. Pooled funds are intended to be long term investments where short term fluctuations in the capital value are expected. These funds are being monitored closely by the Council's Treasury Management adviser (Arlingclose) and they continue to forecast that the capital values will recover over the next 2-5 years as gilts and bond revenue rates start to decline again.
- 1.3** The Council has benefitted from higher revenue returns due to regular increases in the Bank of England Bank Rate to combat high levels of inflation. The Bank has raised interest rates to try and reduce inflation and bring it closer to the Bank's target of 2%.
- 1.4** This report includes the new requirement in the 2021 Prudential Code (published by CIPFA), mandatory from 1st April 2023, of quarterly reporting of the treasury management prudential indicators.
- 1.5** The Council complied with the majority of the Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 as set out in the budget approved by full Council in February 2023. Further details can be found in section 8 of this report.

2. ECONOMIC & FINANCIAL MARKETS BACKGROUND

- 2.1** UK inflation (based on the Consumer Prices Index) reduced from 7.9% in June 2023 to 6.7% in August. The reduction in inflation was larger than most market forecasts although it remains high when compared to the US and the Eurozone. The largest downward contribution came from food prices.
- 2.2** The fall in inflation has increased the possibility that the Bank of England Bank Rate may now have peaked (markets previously priced for a peak of between 5.5% and 6%). In September, the Bank Rate was kept on hold at 5.25% following a long period of regular increases. Arlingclose, the Council's treasury adviser, modestly revised its interest forecast to reflect the central view that 5.25% will now be the peak in UK Bank Rate.
- 2.3** Economic growth in the UK remained relatively weak over the period compared to benchmark performance for an advanced economy of 2% to 3% per annum. The 0.5% growth in GDP achieved in June 2023 was eliminated by a 0.5% fall in July. This is the largest fall to date in 2023 and could be an indication that bank rate increases are starting to cause stagnating or recessionary economic conditions.
- 2.4** UK unemployment increased to 4.3% (3mth/year) while the employment rate rose to 75.5%. Pay growth remained high at 8.5% for total pay (including bonuses). Adjusting for inflation, pay growth in real terms was positive at 1.2%.

- 2.5** The delayed impact of increases in the UK Bank Rate together with staggered fixed term mortgage maturities over the next 12 to 24 months means the full impact of this is still yet to be felt by households. Although, consumer confidence (based on the measure published by GfK) has improved over the period, it is forecast to reverse in the short to medium term. Higher interest rates are already affecting the business sector with UK manufacturing and services confidence (based on the S&P/CIPS survey) both contracting during the quarter.
- 2.6 The US and Eurozone** - The US Federal Reserve increased its key interest rate to 5.25%-5.50% over the period, pausing in September following a 0.25% rise the month before. The Federal Reserve indicated that further interest rate increases may be necessary to further reduce inflation.
- 2.7** Having fallen throughout 2023, annual US inflation started to increase again in July 2023, rising from 3% in June to 3.7% in August. Rising oil prices were the main cause of the increase. US economic growth was 2.1% annualised in the second calendar quarter of 2023 representing a strong performance compared to the UK and the Eurozone.
- 2.8** The European Central Bank (ECB) increased its key deposit, main refinancing, and marginal lending interest rates to 4.00%, 4.50% and 4.75% respectively in September, and hinted these levels may represent the peak. However, the ECB suggested rates would stay high for as long as required to reduce inflation.
- 2.9** Eurozone inflation has declined steadily but remains higher than the ECB's target of 2%. Inflation (measured by CPI) fell to 5.2% in August while annual core inflation reduced to 5.3% having remained at 5.5% for the previous two months. GDP growth remains weak with recent data showing the region expanded by only 0.1% in the three months to June 2023.
- 2.10 Credit Review** - Having completed a review of its credit advice on unsecured deposits at UK and non-UK banks following concerns of a wider financial crisis after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, purchase of Credit Suisse by UBS, as well as other banking sector issues, Arlingclose reduced the advised maximum duration limit for all banks on its recommended counterparty list to 35 days. This stance continued to be maintained at the end of the period.
- 2.11** Heightened market volatility is expected to remain a feature, at least in the near term and, as ever, the institutions and durations on the Council's counterparty list recommended by Arlingclose remains under constant review.

3. LOCAL CONTEXT

- 3.1** On 31st March 2023, the Council had net investments of £37.374m arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while balance sheet resources are the underlying resources available for investment. These items are summarised in Table I below.

Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary

	31.3.23 Actual £m	31.3.24 Forecast £m
General Fund CFR	28.38	31.30
External borrowing	- 5.01	-
Internal borrowing	23.37	31.30
Less: Balance sheet resources	- 39.28	- 38.27
Net Balance	(15.91)	(6.97)

- 3.2 The treasury management position at 30th September and the change over the six months is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Treasury Management Summary

	31.3.23 Balance £m	Movement £m	30.9.23 Balance £m	30.9.23 Rate %
Short-term borrowing	5.013	(5.013)	0	N/A
Total borrowing	5.013	(5.013)	0	
Long-term investments	13.375	(0.248)	13.127	4.83
Short-term investments	0.064	4.936	5.000	5.27
Cash and cash equivalents	8.159	(0.686)	7.473	4.73
Total investments	21.598	4.002	25.60	5.04
Net investments	16.585	9.015	25.60	

4. BORROWING STRATEGY AND ACTIVITY

- 4.1 As outlined in the Treasury Management Strategy, the Council's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike a low-risk balance between securing lower interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required. Flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change being a secondary objective. The Council's borrowing strategy thus far has maintained borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, known as internal borrowing.
- 4.2 CIPFA's 2021 Prudential Code is clear that local authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return and that it is not prudent for local authorities to make any investment or spending decisions that will increase the capital financing requirement and so may lead to new borrowing, unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the

Council. PWLB loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield unless these loans are for refinancing purposes.

- 4.3 At 30th September, the Council had no loans outstanding, a decrease of £5m to 31st March 2023, The Council’s borrowing position at 30th September is summarised in Table 3A below.

Table 3A: Borrowing Position

	31.3.23 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	30.9.23 Balance £m
Local authorities (short-term)	5.013	-5.013	0
Total borrowing	5.013	-5.013	0

5. TREASURY INVESTMENT ACTIVITY

- 5.1 A counterparty list recommended and reviewed by the Council’s treasury management advisors, Arlingclose is received monthly and the treasury team use this to evaluate investment options. At the end of the period the majority of counterparties remained on a 35 day limit maintaining precautions bought about by uncertainty in the market. The treasury team continues to hold the majority of in-house balances in the liquid Money Market Funds and Call Accounts and making short term deposits with the UK Debt Management Office (DMO). This enables continued cash support for the services the Council provides to the public and provides funding for the Council’s capital programme, without the need to borrow.
- 5.2 The Council holds significant invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. The investment position is shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Treasury Investment Position

	31.3.23 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	30.9.23 Balance £m	30.9.23 Income Return %
Banks & building societies (unsecured)	3.843	(1.873)	1.970	5.14
Bank of England DMADF		5.000	5.000	5.25
Money Market Funds	4.316	1.1873	5.503	4.73
Other Pooled Funds				
- <i>Equity & Multi Asset income funds</i>	8.884	(0.222)	8.662	4.83
- Bond income funds	3.555	(0.080)	3.475	4.83
- <i>Real Estate Investment Trusts</i>	1.000	(0.010)	0.990	2.85
Total investments	21.598	4.002	25.600	5.04

- 5.3** Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance require the Council to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.
- 5.4** As demonstrated by the liability benchmark in this report, the Council expects to be a long-term borrower and new treasury investments are therefore primarily made to manage day-to-day cash flows using short-term low risk instruments. The existing portfolio of strategic pooled funds will be maintained to diversify risk into different asset classes and boost investment income.
- 5.5** Bank Rate increased by 1%, from 4.25% at the beginning of April to 5.25% by the end of September. Short-dated cash rates rose commensurately, with 3-month rates rising to around 5.25% and 12-month rates to nearly 6%. The rates on DMADF deposits also rose, ranging between 4.8% and 5.4% by the end of September and Money Market Rates between 4.16% and 5.29%
- 5.6** The progression of risk and return metrics are shown in the Arlingclose quarterly investment benchmarking report; the results of which are summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Investment Benchmarking – Treasury investments managed in-house.

	Credit Score	Credit Rating	Bail-in Exposure	Weighted Average Maturity (days)	Rate of Return %
31.03.2023	3.92	AA-	61%	4	-1.07
30.09.2023	4.32	AA-	60%	7	6.39
Similar LAs	4.43	AA-	56%	63	3.47
All LAs	4.47	AA-	59%	13	3.65

5.7 Externally Managed Pooled Funds: £14m of the Council’s investments are invested in externally managed strategic pooled bond, equity, and multi-asset funds where short-term security and liquidity are lesser considerations, and the objectives instead are regular revenue income and long-term price stability. These funds generated an income return of £265,301 which is used to support services in year, and £238,628 unrealised capital loss. The current Pooled Fund position can be seen in table 6 below

Table 6 Current Pooled Funds

Fund Manager	Original Investment	Value 31st March 2023	Value 30th September	6 Month Dividend 2023/24	2023/24 Capital Gain/(Loss)	Capital Gain/(Loss) vs Original Investment
	£	£	£	£	£	£
UBS (B/E)	2,000,000	1,466,810	1,395,316	51,460	- 71,494	- 604,684
M&G Strategic (B)	2,000,000	1,752,651	1,699,474	20,622	- 53,177	- 300,526
Royal London (L)	2,000,000	1,784,670	1,775,548	35,683	- 9,122	- 224,452
Schroders €	1,000,000	886,450	863,297	23,082	- 23,153	- 136,703
Threadneedle UK €	1,000,000	1,053,841	1,059,274	17,384	5,433	59,274
CCLA Diversified Fund (B/E)	3,000,000	2,771,963	2,729,341	30,318	- 42,622	- 270,659
Aegon/Kames (L)	3,000,000	2,659,023	2,614,530	86,751	- 44,493	- 385,470
Total - Current funds	14,000,000	12,375,408	12,136,780	265,301	- 238,628	-1,863,220

(L = Liquidity; B= Bond; E= Equity)

- 5.8** Financial market conditions were volatile during the six-month period. Global bond yields rose and remained elevated as it became apparent that policymakers were looking to keep rates high for some time amid persistently higher core inflation and tight labour markets.
- 5.9** For existing longer-term investors in fixed income securities, the prospect of a higher-for-longer rate environment weighed on sentiment. Yields rose in Q2 2023 on the expectation that central banks would continue increasing rates but fell in August as investors grew confident that policy rates were close to their peak, then rose again in September as oil prices climbed above \$90/barrel. There was also some effect from quantitative tightening by the Bank of England. This affected capital values of the Council's longer-dated bond funds during the six-month period and, to a lesser extent, the multi-asset funds where there was some offset from equity performance.
- 5.10** The combination of the above had a marginal effect on the combined value of the Council's strategic funds since March 2023. Income from the Council's short bond funds has improved as maturing securities are replaced by higher yielding ones in these funds.
- 5.11** The change in the Council's funds' capital values and income return over the 6-month period is shown in Table 6.
- 5.12** In April 2023 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published the full outcome of the consultation on the extension of the statutory override on accounting for gains and losses on pooled investment funds. The override has been extended for two years until 31st March 2025, but no other changes have been made; whether the override will be extended beyond the new date is unknown but commentary to the consultation outcome suggests not. The Council will discuss with Arlingclose the implications for the investment strategy and what action may need to be taken.

6. TREASURY PERFORMANCE

- 6.1** The Council measures the financial performance of its treasury management activities both in terms of its impact on the revenue budget and its relationship to benchmark interest rates, as shown in table 7 below.

Table 7: Performance

	Q2 Actual £m	2023/24 Budget £m	Over/ under	Actual %	LA's Average Benchmark %	Over/ under
Short-term investments	0.038	0	0.038	5.27	4.92	0.35
MMF & Call Accounts	0.222	0.162	0.060	5.27	4.92	0.35
Strategic Funds	0.265	0.629	(0.364)	4.83	4.35	0.48
REIT	0.014	0.031	(0.017)	2.85	n/a	n/a
Total treasury investments	0.539	0.822	(0.283)	5.04	4.79	0.25

7. COMPLIANCE

- 7.1 The Director of Finance reports that all treasury management activities undertaken during the quarter complied with the principles in the Treasury Management Code and the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy. Compliance with specific investment limits is demonstrated in table 8 below.

Table 8: Investment Limits

	2023/24 Maximum £m	30.09.23 Actual £m	2023/24 Limit £m	Complied? Yes/No
Any single organisation, except the UK Government	3	0	5	YES
Any group of organisations under the same ownership	3	0	5	YES
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	0	0	5	YES
Limit per non-UK country	0	0	1	YES
Registered providers and registered social landlords	9.8	9.8	10	YES
Unsecured investments with banks	3	2	10	YES
Money Market Funds	15	5.503	25	YES
Strategic pooled funds	14	14	25	YES
Real Estate Investment Trusts	1	1	5	YES

- 7.2 Compliance with the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt is demonstrated in table 9 below.

Table 9: Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

	Q2 2023/24 Maximum	30.09.23 Actual	2023/24 Operational Boundary	2023/24 Authorised Limit	Complied? Yes/No
	£m	£m	£m	£m	
Borrowing	0	0	50.06	55.06	YES
Total debt	0	0	50.06	55.06	

- 7.3 Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if the operational boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure.

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

8.1 As required by the 2021 CIPFA Treasury Management Code, the Council monitors and measures the following treasury management prudential indicators.

8.2 **Liability Benchmark** - This new indicator compares the Council's actual existing borrowing against a liability benchmark that has been calculated to show the lowest risk level of borrowing. The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. It represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level of £4m required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

	31.3.23 Actual	31.3.24 Forecast	31.3.25 Forecast	31.3.26 Forecast
Loans CFR	28.38	31.30	40.23	43.02
Less: Balance sheet resources	(39.28)	(38.27)	(37.00)	(34.13)
Net loans requirement	(10.90)	(6.97)	3.23	9.34
Plus: Liquidity allowance	14.00	14.00	14.00	14.00
Liability benchmark	3.10	7.03	17.23	23.34
Existing borrowing	5.01	0.00	5.00	10.00

8.3 **Long-term Treasury Management Investments:** The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The prudential limits on the long-term treasury management limits are:

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	No fixed date
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£20m	£20m	£20m	£20m
Actual principal invested beyond year end	0	n/a	n/a	£15m
Complied?	YES	YES	YES	YES

8.4 Long-term investments with no fixed maturity date include strategic pooled funds, real estate investment trusts and directly held equity but exclude money market funds and bank accounts with no fixed maturity date as these are considered short-term.

8.5 **Security:** The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the

arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

	2023/24 Target	30.9.23	Complied?
Portfolio average credit rating	A-	AA-	YES

8.6 Interest Rate Exposures: This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. Bank Rate rose by 1.25% from 4.25% on 1st April to 5.25% by 30th September.

Interest rate risk indicator	2023/24 Target	30.9.23 Actual	Complied?
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	(135,000)	(330,249)	No
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	135,000	330,249	No

Due to the lack of capital expenditure and £3m received in advance from the Ministry of Defence for their annual Council Tax liability, the weighted average on variable rate investments (MMFs) has been higher than originally forecast. The 1% increase was therefore higher than the target and we have generated more interest income.

Non Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

The Authority measures and manages its capital expenditure, borrowing and service investments with references to the following indicators.

It is now a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code that these are reported on a quarterly basis.

Capital Expenditure: The Authority has undertaken and is planning capital expenditure as summarised below

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget
General Fund services	15.29	9.44	7.01	3.89

The main capital projects to date have included the purchase of Marriotts Close shopping centre for £9.54m, to regenerate Witney town centre, and £1.8m on the provision of affordable housing in partnership with Cottsway Housing Association & Heylo. The Capital Strategy approved in February 2023 anticipated higher levels of capital expenditure of £30m in 2022/23 and £12m in each of 2023/24 & 2024/25. These estimates have been reduced based on the lack of available Investment Recovery strategy projects given that interest rates are high and it is more difficult to return 2% above the cost of capital as per the strategy. The capital, treasury management and investment strategies will be updated as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

Capital Financing Requirement: The Authority’s cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP / loans fund repayments and capital receipts used to replace debt.

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget
General Fund services	28.38	31.30	40.23	43.02
TOTAL CFR	28.38	31.30	40.23	43.02

Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement: Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short term. The Authority has complied and expects to continue to comply with this requirement in the medium term as is shown below.

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget	Debt at 30.9.2023
Debt (incl. PFI & leases)	5.013	0	5.00	10.00	0
Capital Financing Requirement	28.38	31.30	40.23	43.02	

Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary: The Authority is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the Authorised Limit for external debt) each year. In line with statutory guidance, a lower “operational boundary” is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

	Maximum debt H1 2023/24	Debt at 30.9.23	2023/24 Authorised Limit	2023/24 Operational Boundary	Complied? Yes/No
Borrowing	5.013m	0	55.06m	50.06m	Yes
Total debt	5.013m	0	0	0	Yes

Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if the boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure.

Net Income from Commercial and Service Investments to Net Revenue Stream: The Authority's income from commercial and service investments as a proportion of its net revenue stream has been and is expected to be as indicated below.


	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget
Total net income from service and commercial investments	3.92m	5.20m	5.50m	5.50m
Proportion of net revenue stream	25.9%	37.4%	38.8%	42.4%

Proportion of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream: Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP / loans fund repayments are charged to revenue.

The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants.

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget
Financing costs (£m)	0.433m	0.546m	0.808m	1.070m
Proportion of net revenue stream	2.87%	3.93%	5.69%	8.25%

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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 15 NOVEMBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24 QUARTER TWO</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance. Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Madhu Richards – Director of Finance. Email: madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Madhu Richards – Director of Finance. Email: madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Detailed Revenue Budget Comparison Annex B – Capital Spend Against Budget</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To detail the Council’s financial performance for Quarter Two 2023-2024.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p><i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i> <i>1. Note the Council’s Financial Performance for Quarter Two 2023-2024</i></p>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - Budget Monitoring

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 - Quarter 2, 1st April to 30th September 2023

Quarter 2				
Original Budget 2023/24	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End
£	£	£	£	£

Service Area

Democratic and Committee Services	1,194,664	695,474	682,408	(13,066)	(14,501)
Environmental & Regulatory Services	594,312	255,591	301,936	46,345	101,657
Environmental Services	8,041,444	3,322,730	3,515,172	192,442	305,390
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	1,035,476	1,233,976	1,228,749	(5,227)	5,537
ICT, Change & Customer Services	2,210,013	1,525,756	1,529,308	3,552	18,518
Land, Legal & Property	1,147,227	555,798	582,876	27,078	106,467
Leisure & Communities	1,282,513	172,505	(105,915)	(278,420)	(551,886)
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,174,379	568,625	632,127	63,502	56,129
Revenues & Housing Support	1,406,799	730,132	635,632	(94,500)	9,591
Investment Property and Retained Services	(3,125,286)	(599,640)	(168,273)	431,367	846,268
Total cost of services	14,961,541	8,460,948	8,834,020	373,072	883,170

Plus:

Investment income receipts	(1,102,228)	(638,614)	(688,000)	(49,386)	(100,000)
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Cost of services before financing:	13,859,313	7,822,334	8,146,020	323,686	783,170
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The 2023/24 budget was approved by full Council in February 2023 and set an overall annual revenue budget of £350,129 deficit to be funded from General Fund balances. This report sets out the revenue budget position as at Quarter 2 and a forecast position for the year end.

It should be noted that the inclusion of a forecast outturn position is a new development. It is anticipated that this will be an ongoing feature of Financial Performance Reports, and that the processes underpinning it will continue to be refined and modified.

As at Q2, there is an overall overspend compared to the profiled budget, of £323,686.

The position at year end is forecast to be £783,170. This would require an additional contribution from the General Fund of £433,041.

The key factors driving this position relate to the waste and leisure contracts and to underperformance of income budgets (primarily relating to investment properties).

The 2024/25 budgeting process is well underway along with an update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Investment, Treasury Management and Capital Strategies. A first draft of the budget will be going forward to Scrutiny Committee and Executive at the beginning of December focussing on revenue (cost of service) changes and pressures. The Local Government finance settlement will be announced just before Christmas and will confirm the level of central government funding in terms of New Homes Bonus, Revenue Support Grants (RSG), Funding

Guarantee Grants etc and this will be incorporated into a second draft of the budget to go forward to Scrutiny Committee and Executive in January, followed by a final update for Council Tax and Retained Business Rates in February.

SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES

A full list of variances by cost centre is included in Annex A. The most significant variances, listed by Service Area (as set out in the table above), are as follows:

Environmental Services - £192,442 overspent at Q2

1.1 Recycling

At the end of Q2 the Suez contract is £135,000 overspent. This is forecast to rise to £265,000 overspend at year end. This is due to a significant rise in tonnages of recycling collected which have increased handling costs. With the contract coming to an end in 2024 the Waste team are currently exploring alternative service delivery models to bring this spend down to achieve sustainable ongoing savings for the Council. There is an additional overspend of £40,000 on recycling bins so far this year, representative of the additional number of homes built in the district in recent years and resident's desire to recycle their waste rather than send it to landfill.

1.2 Green Waste

Income is £51,000 below budget and the service is forecast to be £55,000 overspent at year end. The Waste team have begun a modelling exercise with Ubico, to analyse the capacity for additional collections with the current vehicle fleet and a potential fee increase for 2024/25. Proposals will be put forward to the Executive as part of the budget setting process where a realistic income budget will need to be agreed.

1.3 Trade Waste

Trade Waste is invoiced in April & September therefore the full income for the year has already been raised. Income has exceeded target by £20,000 and tipping charges to the County Council are £10,000 underspent. This overall underspend of £30,000 is not expected to change significantly by the end of the year.

1.4 Household Waste

So far this year there has been no expenditure on bins, producing an underspend of £20,000 at Q2 with a forecast of a £40,000 underspend for the year. This lack of expenditure offsets the overspend on boxes in the recycling service and shows the cyclical nature of box replacement for the different areas of the waste service.

Environmental & Regulatory Services - £46,345 overspent at Q2

1.5 Building Control

Income is £54,000 below budget, a decline of 16% compared to the same period last year. Current economic conditions are impacting the service more than anticipated, with the forecast for the under achievement of income rising from £90,000 to £100,000 at Q4. Discussions are ongoing with Officers responsible for this service to finalise a plan to mitigate the impact of changing market conditions

and general economic factors. A re-assessment of the income budget will be carried out as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25.

Land, Legal & Property - £27,078 overspent at Q2

1.6 Land Charges

Similar to Building Control, Land Charges struggles against competition from the private sector. In Q1 income was £17,000 below target increasing to £39,000 below target in Q2 and forecasted to be £100,000 at year end. Direct competition from the Personal Search companies has significantly impacted our Land Charges income over the last 3 years taking 70% market share, aided by the requirement that we provide access to our data free of charge to Personal search companies and any individual who requests it.

Leisure and Communities - £278,420 underspent at Q2

1.7 The inclusion of an income contingency in the 2023/24 budget was due to significant uncertainty, at the time of setting the budget in February 2023, about the level of income achievable from the leisure contract. Invoices are being raised for the contractual amount which is producing a significant underspend, as shown in Annex A, of £247,833. Officers are working with GLL to improve the outcomes of this contract for both parties.

Planning & Strategic Housing - £63,502 overspent at Q2

1.8 Development Management

Income from Planning applications is difficult to forecast as it is not consistent throughout the year and there is no discernible pattern when looked at over the longer term. Last year income was significantly below target until two major applications were received in Q4 which turned the outturn position into a surplus from the deficit that had been reported in the first 3 quarters of the year.

Major applications often have an extended timeline and it is very difficult to predict when exactly they will be submitted. General economic conditions like interest rates and inflation which although still high are stabilising, which may have a positive impact on planning application volumes as both individuals and developers are able to more confidently estimate their costs.

1.9 Development Management Appeals

Whilst this cost centre is not currently overspent, it should be noted that external legal spend has increased dramatically since 2020. A significant proportion of this expenditure relates to Planning Appeals & Inquiries. Spend to date sits at £104,000 across the Council compared to £168,000 of expenditure in the whole of 2022/23. A single Planning Inquiry can cost the Council up to £55,000 for significant sites and an average of £20,000-£30,000 for more standard sites as well as the requirement to pay the opponent's court costs for certain matters.

Investment Property and Retained Services - £431,367 overspent at Q2

1.10 Bank Charges

There is currently an overspend of £67,000 relating to the costs incurred to process debit & credit card payments to the Council. Procurement is finalising an agreement through the relevant framework to take up a new contract for our card processing which will save the Council £80,000 a year based on current volumes and cost per transaction. It is hoped that the new acquirer contract

will be in place by Q4 which should reduce the overspend at year end to £62,000. The new contract is expected to bring Bank Charges back within the existing budget so no additional growth will be required in 2024/25.

1.11 Non Distributed Costs

There are two elements to the pension contribution the Council makes for its employees. Firstly there is the amount paid monthly through payroll which is balanced by a secondary cash element paid direct to the LGPS that keeps the payroll contribution at a steady rate. The employer rate has been 17.6% for the last 5 years and the cash element moves year on year. The cash contribution this year is higher than the budget and will be £141,000 overspent by the end of the year. As part of the budget setting process the Actuaries for the LGPS will advise on an increased cash contribution required for next year versus a potential change in employers contribution. The budget will account for the most advantageous combination of the two elements.

1.12 Investment Property

An analysis and reconciliation of all investment property income and expenditure has been undertaken for Q2 reporting. The Q2 position is an overspend of £292,176, due to the void units and rent free periods as expressed in Q1. The forecast for year end is an overspend of £599,970, driven mainly by Marriotts, Des Roches and the delay in renting out Elmfield.

A number of these void units have now been let and positive negotiations are ongoing with a number of possible tenants for the remaining void units, with reports coming forward to Executive for approval as these negotiations are finalised.

The 24/25 budget setting process is currently revisiting this income figure and the underlying assumptions for investment property income.

It should be noted that, although income budgets are currently not being met, rent from investment properties of circa £4.6m will be achieved in 23/24, which directly funds the provision of core services.

Revenues & Housing Support, £94,500 underspent at Q2

1.13 Homelessness

It was reported in Q1 that the Government had provided an additional £220,541 of funding to relieve the pressure placed on the Homelessness service from the Afghan & Ukrainian Refugee schemes. Homelessness is currently £91,000 underspent and this represents a timing difference between the grant and the expenditure against it. All grant monies must be spent by 31st March 2024 so the expectation is that Homelessness will be very close to budget at the end of the year.

Council Tax & Business Rates Update

1.14 In recognition of previously identified Covid related arrears issues, this report includes an update on the Council Tax and Business Rates position.

The tables show the arrears specific to 2020/21 to 2022/23, which have been most effected by the Pandemic and Cost of Living Crisis and compares the Q2 position to that at 31st March 2023.

Council Tax Arrears	20/21	21/22	22/23	Total
	£	£	£	£
31.03.2023	1,282,456	2,209,117	2,993,806	6,485,379
Collected in Q1 & Q2	-190,451	-368,148	-711,067	-1,269,666
Credited/Refunded	-114,455	-72,631	-222,615	-409,701
Balance 30.09.23	977,550	1,768,338	2,060,124	4,806,012

Business Rates Arrears	20/21	21/22	22/23	Total
	£	£	£	£
31.03.2023	400,670	749,187	1,319,753	2,469,610
Collected in Q1 & Q2	-114,842	-251,133	-746,250	-1,112,225
Credited/Refunded	-57,411	-193,507	112,773	-138,145
Balance 30.09.23	228,417	304,547	686,276	1,219,240

The above tables show that in the first 2 quarters of the year £2,381,891 (£1,269,666 council tax + £1,112,225 business rates) has been collected in relation to 2020/21, 2021/22 & 2022/23 arrears.

Over and above amounts recovered through direct payments to the Council there are also amounts of refunds and credits for reliefs that have been applied for in the current financial year and backdated where appropriate.

Annex A - Comparison of Q2 Budget Monitoring

	Q2 position			
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End (under)/Over spend
	£	£	£	£
Democratic Services				
DRM001-Democratic Representation and Mgmt	99,230	99,482	252	505
DRM002-Support to Elected Bodies	228,998	231,570	2,572	5,144
ELE001-Registration of Electors	62,706	64,048	1,341	2,683
ELE002-District Elections	72,700	69,859	(2,841)	(2,841)
HLD309 - Newspapers	0	22	22	0
SUP001-Administration	231,839	211,848	(19,992)	(19,992)
Total - Democratic Services	695,474	682,408	(13,066)	(14,501)

SUP001- £18k underspend from vacant Director of Governance post until filled at the end of Q1

	Q2 position			
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End (under)/over spend
	£	£	£	£
Environmental & Regulatory Services				
BUC001-Building Control - Fee Earning Work	(33,600)	10,430	44,030	85,000
BUC002-Building Control - Non Fee Earning Work	1,683	1,673	(10)	0
EMP001-Emergency Planning	6,999	7,245	246	492
ESM001-Environment - Service Mgmt & Supp Serv	51,411	56,093	4,682	5,000
PSH002-Private Sector Housing-Condition of Dwellings	1,500	0	(1,500)	(3,000)
REG001-Environmental Health General	0	(3,803)	(3,803)	(3,803)
REG002-Licensing	(30,386)	(34,724)	(4,338)	(2,500)
REG009-Environmental Protection	122,093	120,930	(1,163)	(1,163)
REG011-Authorised Process	(6,000)	(9,957)	(3,957)	(2,000)
REG013-Pollution Control	63,570	69,579	6,009	6,009
REG016-Food Safety	72,021	71,592	(429)	(429)
REG021-Statutory Burials	2,500	1,387	(1,113)	3,000
STC011 - Abandoned Vehicles	0	(329)	(329)	(329)
TAC309-Other Trading Services - Markets	3,800	11,489	7,689	15,378
Total - Environmental & Regulatory Services	255,591	301,607	46,016	101,657

BUC001 - Fee income is £54k below target and is forecast to be £100k below target at year end. Income losses are partially offset by an underspend of £8k for IT licences which is expected to be £15k at year end. Fee income budgets are being reviewed as part of 24/25 budget setting and are likely to be set at an achievable level subject to Member approval.

TAC309 - Market income is £10k below target. Discussions about the future of the market offering are underway; a paper will be brought to Executive in December

Q2 position			
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End (under)/over spend
£	£	£	£

Finance, Human Resources & Procurement

SUP003-Human Resources	98,123	93,153	(4,971)	(2,300)
HLD319 - New Initiatives	0	458	458	0
SUP009-Accountancy	199,550	201,343	1,792	3,584
SUP010-Internal Audit	63,585	66,520	2,935	5,869
SUP011-Creditors	21,720	18,827	(2,893)	(2,893)
SUP012-Debtors	30,234	26,360	(3,874)	(2,000)
SUP013-Payroll	29,175	26,808	(2,367)	0
SUP019-Health & Safety	17,212	17,236	24	0
SUP020-Training & Development	39,323	41,113	1,790	3,581
SUP033-Central Purchasing	19,583	19,461	(121)	(242)
SUP035-Insurances	5,022	4,991	(31)	(62)
Total - Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	1,233,976	1,228,749	(5,227)	5,537

Q2 position			
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End (under)/over spend
£	£	£	£

ICT, Change & Customer Services

SUP002-Consultation, Policy & Research	81,744	83,754	2,010	1,000
SUP005-ICT	1,133,764	1,142,820	9,056	18,112
SUP006-Telephones	(2,500)	(2,815)	(315)	(630)
SUP008-Reception/Customer Services	303,329	300,736	(2,592)	(1,000)
SUP014-Cashiers	0	57	57	114
SUP041-Business Solutions	6,057	6,019	(37)	(75)
TMR001-Street Naming & Numbering	0	(695)	(695)	(1,390)
TMR002-Street Furniture & Equipment	(8,051)	(4,357)	3,694	7,387
TOU002-Tourist/Visitor Information Centre	11,413	3,790	(7,624)	(5,000)

Total - ICT, Change & Customer Services

1,525,756	1,529,308	3,553	18,518
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Q2 position			
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End (under)/over spend
£	£	£	£

Land, Legal & Property

ADB301-3 Welch Way (Town Centre Shop)	32,782	25,083	(7,699)	(10,000)
ADB302-Guildhall	11,577	(2,843)	(14,420)	(13,500)
ADB303-Woodgreen	169,602	171,258	1,656	5,000
ADB304-Elmfield	106,950	144,914	37,963	75,000
ADB305-Corporate Buildings	267,822	259,946	(7,876)	2,000
ADB306-Depot	(57,984)	(66,165)	(8,181)	5,000
LLC001-Local Land Charges	(79,627)	(42,398)	37,229	65,000
SUP004-Legal	134,813	126,297	(8,517)	(17,033)
TAC303-Swain Court & Newman Court Ind Est Witney	(30,138)	(33,216)	(3,078)	(5,000)

Total - Land, Legal & Property

555,798	582,876	27,078	106,467
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ADB302- £8k invoiced to Chipping Norton Town Council for Service Charges & Utilities for prior years plus £4k underspend in Business Rates

ADB304 - timeline for renting out Elmfield has slipped, currently £37k behind target for rental income

LLC001- a £39k shortfall in income continues the trend that we have seen over the last 3 years and is forecast to be £65k at year end. The fee income budget will be reviewed as part of 24/25 budget setting and is likely to be set at an achievable level, subject to Member approval.

Q2 position			
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End (under)/over spend
£	£	£	£

Leisure & Communities

CCR001-Community Safety (Crime Reduction)	49,560	22,988	(26,573)	(45,000)
CCR002-Building Safer Communities	19,719	11,186	(8,533)	(13,700)
CCR301 - Communities Revenue Grant	133,410	132,491	(919)	(1,838)
CCT001-CCTV	(739)	7,854	8,593	8,593
CSM001-Cultural Strategy	44,195	41,802	(2,392)	(2,392)
CUL001-Arts Development	28,649	20,471	(8,177)	(3,000)
ECD001-Economic Development	64,563	68,923	4,361	5,400
ECD010 – SPF Community and Place	0	(3,596)	(3,596)	0
REC001-Sports Development	31,439	35,183	3,745	3,745
REC002-Recreational Facilities Development	27,987	46,394	18,407	18,407
REC003-Play	41,205	32,672	(8,533)	(25,000)
REC301-Village Halls	7,449	7,403	(46)	(92)
REC302-Contract Management	(419,943)	(667,776)	(247,833)	(495,665)
SUP016-Finance - Performance Review	55,700	55,355	(344)	(344)
TOU001-Tourism Strategy and Promotion	89,313	82,733	(6,580)	(1,000)

Total - Leisure & Communities

172,505 (105,915) (278,420) (551,886)

CCR001- £24k underspend in Professional Fees, a similar position to 22/23. The budget is being reviewed for 24/25 with an estimated saving of £45k

REC002- £18k repairs to Chipping Norton Leisure Centre roof & repairs at Windrush Leisure Centre

REC003- An additional £50k budget was provided in 22/23 and 23/24 as a short term measure to undertake repair & maintenance work to Playgrounds that are to be transferred to Witney Town Council. This will be removed in 24/25 leaving a residual base budget of £11,000 for playground repairs.

REC302 - a prudent income contingency is included in the 23/24 budget which represents the uncertainty, in February 2023, of the level of achievable income from the leisure contract.

Q2 position			
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End (under)/over spend
£	£	£	£

Environmental Services

CCC001-Climate Change	129,476	121,201	(8,274)	(16,000)
COR301-Policy Initiatives - Shopmobility	8,240	8,189	(51)	(102)
CPK001-Car Parks - Off Street	211,143	220,656	9,513	17,000
ENI002-Grounds Maintenance	245,169	239,285	(5,883)	(11,767)
ENI303-Landscape Maintenance	59,244	63,556	4,312	8,623
FLD001-Flood Defence and Land Drainage	82,956	99,449	16,492	17,400
REG004-Dog Warden	30,546	43,925	13,379	26,758
REG005-Public Health Sewerage	(14)	(13)	0	0
REG018-Pest Control	7,480	137	(7,343)	(14,960)
REG019-Public Conveniences	65,674	68,689	3,016	6,031
REG023-Environmental Strategy	40,987	40,634	(353)	(707)
RYC001-Recycling	1,857,528	2,032,562	175,035	305,000
RYC002-Green Waste	(959,434)	(903,671)	55,763	55,763
STC001-Street Cleansing	19,155	19,041	(114)	(229)
STC004-Environmental Cleansing	553,291	545,364	(7,927)	(15,854)
TRW001-Trade Waste	(85,524)	(115,679)	(30,155)	(30,155)
TRW002-Clinical Waste	(250)	(208)	42	84
WST001-Household Waste	1,012,192	989,301	(22,891)	(40,000)
WST004-Bulky Household Waste	16,973	17,264	292	584
WST301-Env. Services Depot, Downs Rd, Witney	27,901	25,821	(2,080)	(2,080)

Total - Environmental Services

3,322,730	3,515,500	192,770	305,390
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CCC001- DEFRA - Biodiversity Net Gain grant has been received and will offset against Publica costs for 1 FTE providing an estimated underspend of £16k at year end

CPK001 – there has been £9k of expenditure for an online survey and report & mystery shopper exercise to inform the report for Executive on the future parking strategy.

FLD001- An invoice for £17k was received in Q2 for ditch clearance works related to 22/23 and will cause an overspend for the rest of the year.

REG004 – the overspend is due to no income being received for the statutory responsibility of collecting stray dog. This budget will be reviewed for 24/25.

REG018 – the pest control service stopped at the beginning of the year. The net budget is £14,960 so this will be the underspend at year end

RYC001 - £135k overspend on Suez contract, forecast to be £265k overspent by the end of the year. Boxes & bins overspend likely to be £ 40,000 this financial year.

RYC002 - Fee income is £51k below budget. The cost of a green waste licence will be discussed as part of the fees & charges budget setting exercise for 24/25.

TRW001-income is £20,000 above budget & there is a £10,000 underspend on disposal costs paid to OCC. The current position is not expected to change by the end of the year

WST001- So far this year there has been no expenditure on bins resulting in a £23k underspend, the forecast is for a £40k underspend at year end which will offset against the overspend in recycling bins & boxes

Q2 position			
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End (under)/over spend
£	£	£	£

Planning & Strategic Housing

DEV001-Development Control - Applications	(162,005)	(106,671)	55,335	0
DEV002-Development Control - Appeals	87,758	82,938	(4,820)	40,000
DEV003-Development Control - Enforcement	87,077	86,889	(188)	(376)
ENA001-Housing Enabling	54,861	58,522	3,661	3,661
ENI301-Landscape Initiatives	29,266	32,211	2,945	4,000
HLD315-Growth Board Project (Planning)	80,997	80,997	(0)	0
PLP001-Planning Policy	268,454	273,848	5,394	6,500
PLP003-Implementation	(516)	(512)	3	0
PLP004-Conservation	54,213	55,046	834	1,668
PSM001-Planning Service Mgmt & Support Serv	68,521	68,859	339	677

Total - Planning & Strategic Housing

568,625	632,127	63,502	56,129
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DEV001 - fee income is £64k below budget but is £34k better than the same period last year and is partially offset by Pre Application advice performing £11k better than budget. In 22/23 fee income was below budget until Q4 due to the timing differences of major applications coming in, 23/24 is following the same pattern and it is expected that by year end the current deficit position will be reversed.

Q2 position			
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End (under)/over spend
£	£	£	£

Retained Services

COR002-Chief Executive	185,894	180,096	(5,798)	(4,000)
COR003-Corporate Policy Making	37,236	36,623	(613)	(1,226)
COR004-Public Relations	3,825	6,516	2,691	5,382
COR005-Corporate Finance	279,800	262,508	(17,291)	(15,000)
COR006-Treasury Management	13,350	6,605	(6,745)	(13,490)
COR007-External Audit Fees	28,500	30,230	1,730	20,000
COR008-Bank Charges	39,250	107,074	67,824	62,000
COR302-Publica Group	60,000	62,897	2,897	0
FIE341-Town Centre Properties	(177,328)	(171,843)	5,485	10,970
FIE342-Miscellaneous Properties	(418,460)	(379,355)	39,105	86,000
FIE343-Talisman	(311,887)	(294,382)	17,505	70,000
FIE344-Des Roches Square	(160,503)	(106,146)	54,356	120,000
FIE345-Gables at Elmfield	(76,683)	(30,609)	46,073	75,000
FIE346 - Marriotts	(85,272)	44,380	129,652	238,000
NDC001-Non Distributed Costs	324,550	395,394	70,844	141,688
TAC304-Witney Industrial Estate	(83,960)	(82,351)	1,609	3,218
TAC305-Carterton Industrial Estate	(251,888)	(223,913)	27,974	47,350
TAC306-Greystones Industrial Estate	(4,628)	(11,997)	(7,369)	(2,500)
TAC308-Other Trading Services - Fairs	(1,438)	0	1,438	2,876

Total - Retained Services

(599,640)	(168,273)	431,367	846,268
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COR005 - £7k underspend in employee costs due to S151 post being vacant between August & October. Interim costs are charged to professional fees which are £10k underspent. A budget of £50k for professional fees is not required ongoing and will be adjusted in the 24/25 budget to provide a saving of £30k

COR008 - Procurement are finalising a new contract for our Merchant Card acquirer through the relevant framework. This should bring expenditure on card processing charges back within the budget envelope from 24/25 ongoing and will reduce our annual expenditure by £80k. Some positive effects will be seen in Q4 once the contract is in place.

NDC001 - Non Distributed costs are the cash element the Council pays to the LGPS pension scheme to enable us to stabilise the employer contribution paid for each employee. This cash element changes year to year and is higher than the budget for this year. A discussion will be held with the Actuaries for the LGPS pension scheme to advise on the rates for 24/25 as part of the budget setting process.

TAC305 - the base budget is overstated by £47,350 which will be adjusted for the 24/25 budget.

Q2 position			
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast Year End (under)/over spend
£	£	£	£

Revenues & Housing Support

HBP001-Rent Allowances	299,426	299,621	195	195
HBP003-Local Housing Allowance	0	51	51	0
HBP005-Benefit Fraud Investigation	2,944	2,981	37	0
HOM001-Homelessness	216,838	125,478	(91,360)	(5,000)
HOM004-Refugees	400	400	0	0
HOM005-Homelessness Hostel Accomodation	0	(11,070)	(11,070)	(20,000)
HOM006 - The Old Court	0	(4,523)	(4,523)	(9,046)
HOM007-Afghan Resettlement Programme	(119,946)	(119,946)	(0)	0
HOM008-Homes for Ukraine	76,869	76,869	(0)	0
LTC001-Council Tax Collection	197,300	191,882	(5,418)	20,000
LTC002-Council Tax Support Administration	3,567	3,717	150	150
LTC011-NNDR Collection	57,688	65,370	7,682	10,000
PSH001-Private Sector Housing Grants	25,502	25,294	(207)	(207)
PSH004-Home Improvement Service	(30,456)	(20,491)	9,965	13,500

Total - Revenues & Housing Support

730,132	635,632	(94,500)	9,591
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HOM001 - £225k of top up Homelessness Prevention Grant received in Q1 which must be spent by the end of the year is causing an underspend due to the timing difference between receipt and expenditure of the grant.

Annex B

Capital Programme 2023/24

Scheme	2023/24 Original Budget	Funded By	Actual Expenditure Q2
Agile Working	2,150,000.00	Borrowing	30,814 a
Replacement dog and litter bins	25,000	Borrowing	
Chipping Norton Roof Replacement	1,000,000	Borrowing	b
Ubico Fleet - Replace Vehicle Hire Costs	2,000,000	Borrowing	373,526 c
Update to Planning System (Idox)	150,000	Borrowing	
Update to Finance System (ABW)	25,000	Borrowing	
Electric vehicle charging points	200,000	Borrowing	
Investment Strategy for Recovery	5,000,000	Borrowing	
CCTV - Upgrading	255,635	Capital Receipts	
Shop Mobility - Replacement stock	10,000	Capital Receipts	
Affordable Housing in Witney (Heylo)	212,125	S106	253,500 d
Improvement Grants (DFG)	800,000	Grant	329,171
Carterton Leisure Centre PSDS Project	1,300,000	Grant	e
Carterton Leisure Centre Phase 2	0	Earmarked Reserves	88,606
IT Provision - Systems & Strategy	100,000	Revenue contribution	88,261
Council Buildings Maintenance Programme	200,000	Revenue contribution	
IT Equipment - PCs, Copiers etc	40,000	Revenue contribution	
Community Grants Fund	200,000	Revenue contribution	48,835
Windrush Public Art		S106	15,525
Weavers Fold	378,000	S106	
Play Parks	100,000	S106	
EVCP Woolgate	167,000	S106	
Chipping Norton Creative	8,297	S106	
Carterton Connects Creative (Swinbrook s106)	44,500	S106	
Raleigh Crescent Play Area (s. 106)	75,000	S106	
Developer Capital Contributions		S106	600,726
	14,440,557		1,828,964

Annex B

- a. The refurbishment of the ground floor at Woodgreen commences on 29th August to include the relocation of Main Reception and upgrading of the Committee Rooms. Agile working related expenditure will therefore be coming through in the remaining quarters of the year.
- b. A tender pack for immediate repairs in the order of £80,000 has gone out to contractors for costing, with the work taking place as soon as the tender process is complete
- c. Work is being undertaken in conjunction with Ubico to assess the ongoing capital requirement for the replacement of the waste fleet. Due to the extended lead times for new vehicle delivery, alternative options are being investigated and will be brought forward for approval before the end of the year.
- d. This is the final contract payment for the housing scheme delivered last financial year
- e. An Investment Grade Proposal is being prepared for the decarbonisation of Carterton Leisure Centre and will be completed by 31st October 2023 at a cost of £243,000.

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 8 NOVEMBER 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>FORMULATION OF COMMITTEE WORK PLAN</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>For the committee to formulate a work plan for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Initial Committee Work Plan Annex B – TOPIC Scoring Criteria</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree that when considering the Executive Forward Plan the Committee will agree a priority order of reports for pre-decision scrutiny at the next meeting. 2. Agree to use the 10 January 2024 meeting as a “Spotlight” session to scrutinise the Draft Budget 2024/25. 3. Agree to schedule an additional “spotlight” meeting on a date to be agreed by the Director of Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to scrutinise the Publica Review. 4. Request that all members of Council send any suggestions for items to be included on the work plan to the Democratic Services Business Manager by Friday 24 November. 5. Agree that the “long list” of suggested work plan items will be ranked by officers using the TOPIC Scoring Criteria (Annex B) and presented to the Committee on 6 December, in order to

	inform the Committee's adoption of a work plan.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Chief Executive, Director of Governance and Director of Finance

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Council on 27 September 2023 agreed to replace the Council's three overview and scrutiny committees with a new, single, Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Overview and Scrutiny works within a work plan which is normally agreed annually and kept under review at each meeting. This report invites the Committee to agree arrangements for the formulation of the Committee's work plan for the remainder of the current Council year.

2. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF EXECUTIVE REPORTS

- 2.1 Part of the rationale for Council agreeing to establish a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to ensure that the approach of pre-decision scrutiny could be properly embedded as part of the Council's executive decision-making process.
- 2.2 Forthcoming Executive decisions are notified on the Council's Forward Plan for a minimum of 28 days (subject to urgency rules). The Forward Plan will be a standing item on Overview and Scrutiny Committee agendas to enable the Committee to select which reports it wishes to scrutinise at future meetings, before those reports are presented to the Executive. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will typically meet on the Wednesday before each Executive meeting and will have the opportunity to discuss the reports with the Executive Member and lead officer, and to submit recommendations to the Executive meeting. Any such recommendations will be drafted by Democratic Services and the wording approved by the Chair and Vice Chair after the meeting. The Executive is obliged to respond to recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny in writing and any such responses will be reported back to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 2.3 As a rule, the Committee is advised to normally scrutinise no more than two Executive reports at any meeting. This is to ensure that there is space on Overview and Scrutiny Committee agendas for scrutiny of other topics that are prioritised by members. However, Executive reports are subject to a robust clearance process during which they may be delayed to a later Executive meeting or removed from the Forward Plan altogether. For this reason, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is advised to select 3 or 4 Executive reports for scrutiny at its next meeting in priority order, in case some of those reports do not come forward for decision on the expected timescales.

3. "SPOTLIGHT" MEETINGS

- 3.1 The Committee will have the ability to schedule "spotlight" meetings to enable scrutiny of particular issues affecting the district or Executive decisions in more depth than would be possible at a normal Committee meeting with multiple agenda items. This approach is considered to be good scrutiny practice.
- 3.2 The Committee is recommended to agree to use the 10 January 2024 meeting as a spotlight session for scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2024/25. The Committee is further recommended to agree that a spotlight meeting will be scheduled to enable focused scrutiny on the Publica Review; a proposal that a number of services currently delivered by Publica Group will be repatriated to the Council.
- 3.3 The dates of the spotlight session on the Publica Review will be fixed by the Director of Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and

notified to Committee members. These spotlight sessions will be normal meetings of the full Committee, with substitutions allowed in the normal way.

4. WORK PLANNING

- 4.1 An initial work plan for the first couple of meetings of the Committee has been suggested by officers, which the Committee is recommended to agree. This initial work plan largely contains selected Executive decisions for pre-decision scrutiny, plus an update on Fly Tipping Enforcement which was previously on the work plan for the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Several other items from the work plan of the previous committees are now being taken forward in the form of all-member briefing sessions (e.g., flood management, health, housing associations).
- 4.2 In addition to Executive decision for pre-decision scrutiny, the work plan shall contain other topics or issues that affect the district or its people. The Committee is recommended to request that all members of Council can suggest issues for inclusion on the work plan. To enable the Committee to agree a work plan at its next meeting it is suggested that a deadline for suggestions is set as Friday 24 November 2023.
- 4.3 It is further recommended that the TOPIC scoring criteria attached as Annex B is used as a method for ranking the suggested issues based on: timeliness, organisational priority, public interest, the ability to influence, and cost. Items that score highly against these criteria would rank as a higher priority for inclusion in the Committee's work plan than items with lower scores. This system simply provides a method of prioritisation, it will be for the Committee to decide which items to include in its work plan. The Committee is recommended to agree that the work plan items suggested by members will be scored against the TOPIC criteria, with the outcomes of that exercise reported to the next scheduled meeting of the Committee, on 6 December.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1 An alternative to holding spotlight meetings would be to deal with the Budget and the Publica Review at scheduled committee meetings. This option is not recommended as there would be insufficient time available for effective scrutiny.
- 5.2 A second alternative would be to establish "task and finish" groups specifically to perform scrutiny of these items. This is a reasonable alternative approach but is not recommended on the basis that task and finish groups with a relatively small membership would provide fewer opportunities for members to participate in scrutiny of these important matters.
- 5.3 An alternative to applying the TOPIC scoring criteria to suggested work plan items would be for the Committee to receive the long list and consider what to do with each item in turn. This approach is likely to be less efficient than receiving the long list with scoring and discussing whether or not items should be included in the work plan on an exception basis.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The additional meetings can be supported by officers within existing resources.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has powers under the Local Government Act 2000 which include the power to review and scrutinise decisions and actions taken in connection with the discharge of executive (and non-executive) responsibilities, and to make recommendations. The Committee is also empowered to make reports or recommendations on matters which affect the district or the inhabitants of the district. There is no legal requirement for the Committee to agree a work plan but this is considered to be good practice.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 There is a risk that if the Committee did not take an effective approach to planning and prioritising its workload then important decisions and issues might not be subjected to appropriate democratic oversight and scrutiny.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 There are no equality impacts arising from this report.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no climate and ecological emergencies implications arising from this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
8 NOVEMBER 2023 – 30 NOVEMBER 2023

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Council currently operates the Strong Leader and Executive form of governance. The Council has appointed one Overview and Scrutiny Committee which has the power to investigate Executive decisions and any other matters relevant to the district and its people, making recommendations to the Council, Executive or any other Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council. Overview and Scrutiny has an important role in holding the Executive to account and in contributing to policy development.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee operates a work plan which is agreed annually but provides for flexibility to enable the Committee to respond to emerging issues or priorities. The work plan will include a mix of Executive reports that have been selected for pre-decision scrutiny, and reports on other Council services, topics or issues which have been specifically requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In setting and reviewing its work plan, the Committee will be mindful of the constraints of the organisation and may prioritise based on the following considerations (TOPIC criteria):

Timeliness: Is it timely to consider this issue?

Organisational priority: Is it a Council priority?

Public Interest: Is it of significant public interest?

Influence: Can Scrutiny have meaningful influence?

Cost: Does it involve a high level of expenditure, income or savings?

Call in

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider any “call-in” of an executive decision that has been made but not yet implemented. This enables the Committee to consider whether the decision made is appropriate given all relevant information (but not because it would have made a different decision). It may recommend that the Executive, an Executive Member or the Council should reconsider the decision.

Item	Executive Member	Lead Officer
8 November 2023		
Financial Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter Two	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Treasury Management Mid-Term Report	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@publicagroup.uk
6 December 2023		
Fly Tipping Enforcement Update	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Jack Graham, Environment Support Officer Jack.Graham@publicagroup.uk
Review of Weekly Markets	Deputy Leader - Economic Development - Cllr Duncan Enright	Will Barton, Business Development Officer william.barton@westoxon.gov.uk
Annual Monitoring Report (2021 – 2023)	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Carl Rylett	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Performance Reporting	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk
Q2 Service Performance Report	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
TBC "Spotlight" Session on Publica Review		

Publica Review	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
10 January 2024 - "Spotlight" Session on the Draft Budget		
Draft Budget 2024/25	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
7 February 2024		
Community Safety Partnership	Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities - Cllr Joy Aitman	Emmylou Brossard, Safer Communities Officer Emmylou.Brossard@publicagroup.uk
Safer Streets	Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare - Cllr Geoff Saul	Emmylou Brossard, Safer Communities Officer Emmylou.Brossard@publicagroup.uk
Carbon Action Plan	Executive Member for Climate Change - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
Biodiversity Action Plan	Executive Member for Climate Change - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
29 February 2024		
Approval of Upgrade to WODC Public Space CCTV Provision and Monitoring Arrangements	Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare	Astrid Harvey, Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer Astrid.Harvey@westoxon.gov.uk

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'TOPIC' Scoring Criteria for Scrutiny Work Plan Items

Criteria	Description	Scoring
T imely	Work plan prioritisation should take account of work in other areas, and avoid duplication. Key questions to ask include: Is now the best time to consider this issue? Are legislative or policy changes afoot? Is the issue due for inspection or auditing?	Is it timely to consider this issue? No - 0 Somewhat - 1 Yes - 2
O rganisational Priority	Work plans should take account of the Council's overall vision for the area. Committee should ensure that a good proportion of their work relates to the Council's plan and priorities. This is key in demonstrating how Scrutiny can add value to the Council.	Is it a council priority? No - 0 Somewhat - 2 Yes - 3
P ublic Interest	Councillors' representative roles are an essential feature of Scrutiny. They are the eyes and ears of the public, ensuring that services meet local needs. The interests of local people should therefore influence and guide the issues chosen for scrutiny.	Is it of significant public interest? No - 0 Somewhat - 2 Yes - 3
I nfluence	Scrutiny Committees have varying levels of influence, depending on the issues they review. They are better placed to influence council services than external agencies. Will your input drive outcomes and change, or be unwelcome and lack impact?	Can we have meaningful influence? No - 0 Somewhat - 1 Yes - 2
C ost	Services or decisions which incur a high level of income, expenditure or savings should be prioritised. Effective scrutiny of financial matters is a cornerstone of good scrutiny, and significant spending plans should not go unscrutinised.	Is the issue costly? No - 0 Somewhat - 1 Yes - 2

The TOPIC scoring system has been developed to assist the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in prioritising work plan items. Criteria led work planning has been advocated by national governance experts and organisations alike, premised on the objective prioritisation of items against pre-set criteria. TOPIC can be used as a reference guide for councillors in selecting items, or it can be rigidly applied as a scoring system. How strictly the criteria is applied will depend of the number of items suggested and the resources available.

Whilst the scoring system aspires to be objective, it cannot necessarily take account of the nuances and complexities of all issues, and Committees should use their best judgement in agreeing which items to take forward.

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME
INCORPORATING NOTICE OF DECISIONS PROPOSED TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE SESSION AND
NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MAKE A KEY DECISION
1 NOVEMBER 2023 – 29 FEBRUARY 2024

By virtue of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, local authorities are required to publish a notice setting out the key executive decisions that will be taken at least 28 days before such decisions are to be taken. The Regulations also require notice to be given of any matter where it is proposed that the public will be excluded during consideration of the matter.

This Forward Plan incorporates both of these requirements. In the interests of transparency, it also aims to include details of those items to be debated by the Executive that relate to either policy/budget formulation, matters which will be subject to a recommendation to the Council, and other matters due to be considered by the Executive. This programme covers a period of four months, and will be updated on a monthly basis. The timings of items may be subject to change.

It should be noted that although a date not less than 28 clear days after the date of this notice is given in each case, it is possible that matters may be rescheduled to a date which is different from that given provided, in the cases of key decisions and matters to be considered in private, that the 28 day notice has been given. In this regard, please note that agendas and reports for meetings of the Executive are made available on the Council's website at www.westoxon.gov.uk/meetings five working days in advance of the meeting in question. Please also note that the agendas for meetings of the Executive will also incorporate a necessary further notice which is required to be given in relation to matters likely to be considered with the public excluded.

There are circumstances where a key decision can be taken, or a matter may be considered in private, even though the 28 clear days' notice has not been given. If that happens, notice of the matter and the reasons will be published on the council's website, and available from the Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon, OX28 1NB.

Key Decisions

The Regulations define a key decision as an executive decision which is likely –

- (a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or*
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the authority'.*

The Council has decided that a cost or saving of an amount greater than £150,000 is necessary to constitute expenditure or savings which are significant for the purposes of this definition.

Please note that if a matter is approved by the Council following a recommendation from the Executive, that decision will not be a key decision.

Matters To Be Considered in Private

The great majority of matters considered by the Council's Executive are considered in 'open session' when the public have the right to attend.

However, some matters are considered with the public excluded. The public may only be excluded if a resolution is passed to exclude them. The grounds for exclusion are limited to situations where confidential or exempt information may be disclosed to the public if present and, in most cases involving exempt information, where in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. The definitions of these are set out in the Council's Constitution.

Documents and Queries

Copies of, or extracts from, documents listed in the programme and any which subsequently become available are (subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure), obtainable from the following, and this contact information may also be used for any queries.

Democratic Services - Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk Tel: 01993 861000.

West Oxfordshire District Council: Executive Members 2023/24

Name of Councillor	Title and Areas of Responsibility
Andy Graham (Leader)	Leader of the Council: Policy Framework; Town and Parish Council engagement, Council Plan; Strategic Partnerships including Pan regional Partnership, Future Oxfordshire, South East Councils and OXLEP; Oxfordshire Leaders; Publica and partnership authorities and Ubico, Democratic Services; Communications; Legal Services; Counter Fraud; Emergency Planning; and Customer Services
Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader)	Economic Development: Business Development; Visitor Economy; Town and Village regeneration; and Customer Services.
Alaric Smith	Finance: Finance & Management; Council Tax and Benefits; Asset Management, South West Audit Partnership; Performance management; Capital Investment strategy; Strategic Housing Investment; and Customer Services
Carl Rylett	Planning and Sustainable Development: Local Plan; Government planning policies and guidance; Conservation and Historic Environment; Landscape and Biodiversity; Development Management; and Ensuring planning policies meet 2030 requirement; and Customer Services
Tim Sumner	Leisure and Major Projects: Leisure provision including swimming pools; Culture and Heritage; Public Art; Agile Working, Car Parking and Customer Services
Joy Aitman	Stronger Healthy Communities: Voluntary sector engagement; Health and Safety; Community and Public Health; Refugee Resettlement Programme; Young People; Equality and diversity; and Customer Services
Geoff Saul	Housing and Social Welfare: Housing Allocations; Homelessness; Provision of affordable homes; Sheltered Housing Accommodation; Safeguarding – Community Safety Partnership; Crime and Disorder; Neighbourhood Policing; Scrutiny of Police and Crime Commissioner; and Assets of Community Value.
Lidia Arciszewska	Environment: Flood alleviation and sewage; Environmental Partnerships – WASP and Evenlode, North East Cotswold Cluster; Waste collection and recycling; Street Scene (cleansing, litter and grounds maintenance); Air Quality; and Land, food, farming and Customer Services Delivery
Andrew Prosser	Climate Change: Energy Advice; Renewable energy and retrofit investment; Biodiversity across the District; Carbon neutral by 2030; Fossil fuel dependence reduction; Local, national and county wide liaison on climate; EV Charging Rollout. and Customer Service

For further information about the above and all members of the Council please see www.westoxon.gov.uk/councillors

Item for Decision	Key Decision (Yes / No)	Open or Exempt	Decision – Maker	Date of Decision	Executive Member	Lead Officer
Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Penalty and Prosecution Policy	No	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Head of Service, Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit – Emma Cathcart.
Fixed Penalty Notice Level Increases for Fly Tipping and Waste Crime Offences	No	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Service Lead, ERS – Philip Measures.
Review of Weekly Markets	Yes	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Deputy Leader - Economic Development - Cllr Duncan Enright	Market Towns Officer – Emma Phillips.
Oxfordshire Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (OxLEVI) Programme	Yes	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Executive Member for Climate Change - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Climate Change Manager – Hannah Kenyon.
Financial Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter Two	Yes	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Director of Finance – Madhu Richards.
UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund	No	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Deputy Leader - Economic Development - Cllr Duncan Enright	Business Development Manager – Will Barton.
Proactive Delivery of Affordable Housing	No	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare - Cllr Geoff Saul	Assistant Director, Planning and Sustainable Development – Charlie Jackson.
Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2022/23	No	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Carl Rylett	Planning Policy Manager – Chris Hargraves.

Lease of Council Offices (Elmfield)	No	Fully exempt	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Assets Manager – Jasmine McWilliams.
Disposal and Development of Land at Walterbush Road, Chipping Norton for Custom Build Zero Carbon Homes	Yes	Fully exempt	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare - Cllr Geoff Saul	Business Manager, Assets and Council Priorities – Andrew Turner.
Publica Review	No	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Chief Executive – Giles Hughes.
Update on Improvement Work with Thames Water	No	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment	Assistant Director, Business Services – Phil Martin.
Review of Legal Services	No	Open	Executive	15 Nov 2023	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Director of Governance – Andrea McCaskie.
Q2 Service Performance Report	Yes	Open	Executive	13 Dec 2023	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Assistant Director, Resident Services – Jon Dearing.
Annual Monitoring Report 21 - 23	No	Open	Executive	13 Dec 2023	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Carl Rylett	Planning Policy Manager – Chris Hargraves.
Draft Budget 2024/25	Yes	Open	Executive	13 Dec 2023	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Director of Finance – Madhu Richards.

Carbon Action Plan	Yes	Open	Executive	13 Dec 2023	Executive Member for Climate Change - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Climate Change Manager – Hannah Kenyon.
Climate Change Strategy	Yes	Open	Executive	13 Dec 2023	Executive Member for Climate Change - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Climate Change Manager – Hannah Kenyon.
Council Tax Support Scheme 2024-2025	Yes	Open	Executive Council	13 Dec 2023 31 Jan 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Director of Finance – Madhu Richards.
Annual Monitoring Report (2021 – 2023)	No	Open	Executive	13 Dec 2023	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Carl Rylett	Planning Policy Manager – Chris Hargraves.
Employment Policies	No	Open	Executive	17 Jan 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Assistant Director, Organisational Effectiveness – Zoe Campbell.
Biodiversity Action Plan	Yes	Open	Executive	14 Feb 2024	Executive Member for Climate Change - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Climate Change Manager – Hannah Kenyon.
Budget 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Strategy	Yes	Open	Executive	14 Feb 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Director of Finance – Madhu Richards.
Business Case in to Acquiring Emergency Accommodation	No	Open	Executive	14 Feb 2024	Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare - Cllr Geoff Saul	Assets Manager – Jasmine McWilliams.
Approval of Upgrade to WODC Public Space CCTV Provision and Monitoring Arrangements	Yes	Open	Executive	6 Mar 2024	Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare	Assistant Director, Communities – Andy Barge.

Endorsement of the Oxfordshire Town and Parish Charter	No	Open	Executive	6 Mar 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Chief Executive – Giles Hughes.
Key Decisions Delegated to Officers						
Allocate Funding from the Project Contingency Earmarked Reserve	Yes	Open	Finance Director - Madhu Richards	Before 31 Dec 2023	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Director of Finance – Madhu Richards.
Standing Delegation: Settlement of Legal Claims	Yes	Open	Interim Head of Legal Services - Helen Blundell	Before 31 Dec 2023	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham, Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Interim Head of Legal Services – Helen Blundell.
Allocation of New Initiatives Funding	Yes	Open	Chief Executive & Head of Paid Service - Giles Hughes	Before 31 Dec 2023	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	TBC.
Other business for Council meetings						
South Leigh and High Cogges	No	Open	Council	29 Nov 2023	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Chief Executive – Giles Hughes.
Recommendations from the Constitution Working Group	No	Open	Council	29 Nov 2023	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Business Manager, Democratic Services – Andrew Brown.

Appointment of Independent Persons	No	Open	Council	29 Nov 2023	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Business Manager, Democratic Services – Andrew Brown.
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