

Tuesday 4 June 2024

Tel: 01993 861000

email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Executive, which will be held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 1NB on **Wednesday 12 June 2024 at 2.00pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Executive

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Lidia Arciszewska, Rizvana Poole, Geoff Saul, Alaric Smith and Tim Sumner.

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

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

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive any Apologies for Absence from Members of the Executive.
The quorum for the Executive is 3 Members.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any Declarations of Interest from Members of the Executive on any items to be considered at the meeting.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 – 10)**
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 17 April 2024.
4. **Receipt of Announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council, Members of the Executive or the Chief Executive.
5. **Participation of the Public**
Any member of the public, who is a registered elector in the District, is eligible to ask one question at the meeting, for up to three minutes, of the Leader of the Council, or any Member of the Executive on any issue that affects the district or its people.

Notice, together with a written copy of the question, must be provided to Democratic Services, either by email to:

democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

or by post to:

Democratic Services, West Oxfordshire District Council, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB.

Questions are to be received no later than 2.00pm two clear working days before the meeting (e.g. for a Wednesday meeting, the deadline would be 2.00pm on the Friday before).

A response may be provided at the meeting, or within three clear working days of the meeting. If the topic of the question is not within the remit of the Council, advice will be provided on where best to direct the question.

The appropriate Executive Member will either respond verbally at the meeting or provide a written response which will be included in the minutes of the meeting.
6. **Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 11 – 12)**
To consider any reports or recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which meets on 5 June 2024.
7. **Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee**
There has been no meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee since the last meeting of the Executive.

8. **Changes to Customer Telephone Access Times (Pages 13 – 28)**

Purpose:

The purpose of this report, in light of a continuous decline in customer demand, is to propose that the trial becomes a permanent arrangement following the data gathered. The trial of reduced telephone access hours from 9am – 2pm, to the public has proved the concept and customers are continuing to shift to digital channels.

Recommendation:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Agree to adopt the reduced telephone access arrangements on a permanent basis.

9. **Approval For Upgrading Public Space CCTV Provision and New Monitoring Arrangements (Pages 29 – 42)**

Purpose:

This report recommends upgrading the public open space CCTV cameras covering areas of Carterton and Witney to high definition digital, together with the installation of five new cameras in Chipping Norton. It further recommends the Council joins the Thames Valley CCTV partnership, with an associated transfer of CCTV assets and operational responsibility to Thames Valley Police under a 'single owner' model; and moving monitoring arrangements to a shared Oxfordshire hub.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Endorse the continued need for public open space CCTV in Carterton and Witney and approve extending the scheme to Chipping Norton;
2. Approve use of the £255,635 in the draft capital programme Council resolved to approve in February 2024 for upgrading CCTV;
3. Note the potential funding shortfall of up to a further £55,000 and the opportunities for meeting this cost;
4. Approve joining the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership, with an associated transfer of all CCTV assets and ongoing operational responsibility to Thames Valley Police under a 'single owner' model; and a shared Oxfordshire hub, based in Abingdon, as the new monitoring control room;
5. Delegate authority to the Interim Head of Legal Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to execute the formal agreements needed to join the Thames Valley Police CCTV Partnership;
6. Approve the funding formula for the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership and delegate authority to the Assistant Director – Communities, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, to agree a new funding formula with Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney town councils, and Marriott's Walk and Woolgate shopping centres.

10. **Endorsement of The Oxfordshire Councils Charter (Pages 43 – 78)**

Purpose:

To endorse the Oxfordshire Councils Charter.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Note the contents of the Oxfordshire Councils Charter;
2. Endorse the Oxfordshire Councils Charter;
3. Agree to be a signatory to the Oxfordshire Councils Charter.

11. **Annual Report of the Director of Public Health (Pages 79 – 152)**
Purpose:
To highlight the main points from Oxfordshire County Council's Director of Public Health Annual Report on climate change and health 2023/24, together with a call for action to ensure that collectively we accelerate and facilitate more positive health benefits by taking action to address our changing climate.
- Recommendation:
That the Executive resolves to:
1. Note the contents of the report.
12. **Service Performance Report 2023-24 Quarter Four (Pages 153 – 212)**
Purpose:
To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2023-24 Quarter Four (Q4).
- Recommendation:
That the Executive resolves to:
1. Note the 2023/24 Q4 Service Performance Report.
13. **Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP) (Pages 213 – 252)**
Purpose:
To provide an update on the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP).
- Recommendation:
That the Executive resolves to:
1. Note the contents of the report.
14. **West Oxfordshire District Council Productivity Plan 2024 (Pages 253 – 260)**
Purpose:
To outline the proposed approach to adopting the Council's Productivity Plan 2024.
- Recommendations:
That the Executive resolves to:
1. Note the requirement from the Government, outlined in the letter from the Local Government Minister at Annex A, for the Council to adopt a Productivity Plan;
2. Agree to delegate the decision to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to adopt the Productivity Plan and submit it to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by the 19 July 2024 deadline.
15. **Exclusion of Press and Public**
If the Executive wishes to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for the Executive to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of the Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities ((Executive Arrangements) Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

16. **Letting of Unit at Marriott's Walk (Pages 261 – 304)**

Purpose:

To request approval of the lease terms proposed for Unit 6 Marriott's Walk and request that Council approves the allocation of capital funding for Landlord's works.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Approve the terms of the lease for Unit 6 Marriott's Walk;
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and the Executive Member for Finance to approve any changes to the final terms of the lease;
3. Recommend to Council to approve the addition of the capital programme for the landlord's fitout works.

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the

Executive.

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB
at 2.00pm on **Wednesday 17 April 2024.**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Charlie Maynard, Andrew Prosser, Alaric Smith, Geoff Saul, Tim Sumner and Lidia Arciszewska.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Frank Wilson (Managing Director, Publica), Bill Oddy (Assistant Director, Commercial Development), Phil Martin (Assistant Director, Business Services), Claire Locke (Assistant Director, Property and Regeneration), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Christine Elsasser (Democratic Services Officer), Murry Bennett (Strategic Housing & Development Officer), Chris Urwin (Finance Director, Ubico) and Beth Boughton (Managing Director, Ubico).

Other Councillors in Attendance: Michele Mead, Liam Walker and Julian Cooper.

172 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor Joy Aitman.

173 Declarations of Interest

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

174 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 6 March 2024, be agreed by the Executive as a true and accurate record, and signed by the Leader.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

- I. Agree the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 6 March 2024, as a true and accurate record.

175 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting of the Executive. The Leader stated that West Oxfordshire District Council had been shortlisted for a National MJ Award, within the Innovation in Partnership category. The Leader thanked the work of those involved in achieving the accolade, including the work of Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP). The Leader advised that the final award announcement was anticipated to be in June 2024.

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, advised the Executive that Michael David had been appointed as the Council's Housing Programme Delivery Manager and that they had started their employment with the Council the day prior to the meeting. The Executive Member gave a short overview of Michael David's experience within local government and the private sector, adding that Michael David would take the lead of developing a programme of affordable homes across the district.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, advised the Executive that the second tranche of the Small Business Grant Scheme had recently opened for applications. The Deputy Leader highlighted that a first tranche of funding had awarded £5,000 to 34 local businesses, and that subject to due diligence and checks from applicants, there were 43 grants available in the second tranche of funding. The funding opportunities had been publicised in the 'Business Matters' publications, and that applications were greatly anticipated.

176 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation at the meeting.

177 Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

No matters had been raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Leader gave the Executive an overview of the discussions from a recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including a summary of feedback received from Members regarding a presentation made to the Committee by Mobile UK regarding mobile network coverage in the district.

178 Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee

No matters had been raised by the Audit and Governance Committee.

179 Ubico Business Plan 24/25

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report which considered the Ubico Business Plan 2024-25. The report had been produced by Ubico, in consultation with the Directors and Shareholders. The report also recommended that the Leader (as Shareholder Representative) approve the plan.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the 2024/25 Ubico Business Plan;
2. Note that the Leader of the Council, as shareholder representative, would sign the written resolution to approve the Ubico Business Plan 2024-2025 in due course.

The meeting was temporarily adjourned at 2.12pm owing to sound and technical issues being experienced with the live webcasting of the meeting. After the technical difficulties had been rectified, the meeting resumed at 2.21pm.

180 Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 Application

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, introduced the report, which determined whether to support a third-round application to the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) and sign the associated Memorandum of Understanding ('MoU').

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillor Julian Cooper queried the rationale behind the Council utilising Soha Housing to fulfil the requirements of the LAHF on behalf of the Council in respect of the delivery of a further 4 additional affordable homes. It was confirmed by Officers that Soha Housing were ready and willing to carry out the work on behalf of the Council, and that other providers did not have the desired capacity to carry out the requested works.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding ('MoU') with government in respect of round three of the Local Authority Housing Fund ('LAHF');
2. Agree to accept a proposal from Soha Housing to fulfil the requirements of the LAHF on behalf of the Council in respect of the delivery of a further 4 additional affordable homes;
3. Agree to passport the funding received by the Council to Soha Housing underpinned by a funding agreement setting out the relevant grant terms;
4. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to agree to provide funding (if necessary) from relevant refugee budget to fit out properties to an appropriate standard for affordable provision as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report.

181 Funding Request for Asset Management Strategy

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the report, which presented the benefits of an Asset Management Strategy and Condition surveys and secure funding for their delivery.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree to commission an Asset Management Strategy and allocate funding of £50,000 from the Property Budget 2024/2025;
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, to award the contract for Conditions surveys following an Open Procurement;
3. Agree to allocate funding of £30,000/year from future revenue budgets for a rolling programme of building and carpark condition surveys.

182 Funding for Decarbonisation Scheme – Carterton Leisure Centre

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change, introduced the report, which presented the business case for the decarbonisation of Carterton Leisure Centre and agree a strategy for funding the scheme.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillor Michele Mead queried the amount of money that had been spent on the project to date, and whether current finances could be redistributed to other project parts. It was confirmed by officers that circa £400,000 had already been spent on the project, and that a statement of finances was to be prepared showing what monies had been spent in relation to the project. Officers also confirmed that the total amount did not include any wasted works, and that all funding had been received through grant funding and eligible funding that did not need to be repaid.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

- I. Agree to pause the current project to decarbonise Carterton Leisure Centre, informing Salix that there will be no further expenditure of PSDS 3b funding, and to reapply for more PSDS funding in Autumn 2024 to enable the scheme to proceed.

The Leader drew the meeting to a close by highlighting that the meeting was the last in the current cycle of Executive meetings. The Leader put on record his thanks to both Executive colleagues and Officers for their continued hard work and dedication in support of both the Executive and wider Council during the civic year.


The Meeting Closed at 2.40pm.

CHAIR

Executive response to recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 June 2024

Item	Recommendation	Agree (Y / N)	Comment	Responsible Executive Member	Lead Officer
Approval for upgrading public space CCTV provision and new monitoring arrangements	That the priority order of the steps that will be taken to address the funding shortfall of up to £55,000 (paragraph 4.7) are adjusted so that steps c) and d) are moved up to become the new a) and b).	Yes	Given the outcome of the bid to the Safer Streets Fund for £25,000 is unlikely to be known until November 2024, and it's our desire to implement the upgrade to HD digital cameras, we accept the priority order can be adjusted. We maintain that value engineering should remain as the first priority, as all other options to meet the shortfall are reliant on public money. Pending the outcome of the bid to the Safer Streets Fund, which is to support the proposed new cameras in Chipping Norton, we should progress the upgrades to existing cameras in Witney and Carterton and seek a contribution from Thames Valley Police or the relevant town council where any new cameras are proposed.	Councillor Geoff Saul – Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare.	Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities

This page is intentionally left blank

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 12 JUNE 2024
Subject	CHANGES TO CUSTOMER TELEPHONE ACCESS TIMES
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance. Email: alaric.Smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Jon Dearing – Assistant Director, Resident Services and Interim Executive Director (Publica). Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk
Report Author	Michelle Clifford – Business Manager, Customer Experience Email: michelle.clifford@publicagroup.uk
Purpose	The purpose of this report, in light of a continuous decline in customer demand, is to propose that the trial becomes a permanent arrangement following the data gathered. The trial of reduced telephone access hours from 9am – 2pm, to the public has proved the concept and customers are continuing to shift to digital channels.
Annexes	Annex A – Data Graphs Numbers 1 to 4. Annex B – Equalities Impact Assessment
Recommendation	That the Executive resolves to: I. Agree to adopt the reduced telephone access arrangements on a permanent basis.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting Residents First.
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	All Internal Departments who were previously consulted ahead of the six-month trial period (Housing, Building Control, the Elections Teams, Members and the Customer Services Teams) and the Executive Member for Finance.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** Over the last few years, the Council has been introducing new digital channels and improving those that already existed. This activity coincided with the Covid pandemic, where people accepted the use of alternative service access channels as a result of national restrictions. This resulted in a significant percentage of service requests coming through digital channels, which presented an opportunity for the Council to trial a reduction in the hours of opening for the customer contact centre. The trial has been successful as detailed in this report.
- 1.2** This report outlines the data, customer reaction and outcomes from the trial period. The assumption made prior to this, was that customers would change their routes to contact us and throughout the trial period this has been confirmed. The uptake in digital channels has helped to produce a further reduction in telephone calls and, over the last three year, an increase of 350% in the use of digital channels (see Annex A – Chart 1).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** In 2021 Resident Services restructured at the Business Manager level. One of the objectives of this change was to allow for a Business Manager dedicated to improving the customer experience. The resultant post of Business Manager for Customer Experience is responsible for leading the Customer Service Teams, improving digital access, redesigning processes to make them customer focussed and supporting Service Managers to performance manage.
- 2.2** This has led to the formation of a multi-skilled 'Channel Choice Team' and the team has continued to work on implementing and improving access to digital services throughout the trial. The Team has created and improved digital access around many processes, particularly in high volume contact areas such as Revenues and Benefits, Waste and Planning, with very high take up rates and this has continued to rise during the trial period of reduction in telephone opening hours. The Council now has more than 20% of households signed up to the Revenues and Benefits 'Open Portal' and this figure continues to increase.
- 2.3** Over the last three years the provision of more and improved digital customer access to services, the impact of the pandemic and the advancement of technology, has led to customers changing their service access habits. During the last three years (2021-2023) the volume of calls (WODC and CDC combined) has reduced by just over 37% (from 230,570 in 2021 to 144,063 in 2023). In the same period (again WODC and CDC combined) the use of digital forms has increased by 350% (from 32,842 in 2021 to 115,255 in 2023). The data from the trial has shown that the assumptions around channel shift were accurate. We are continuing to introduce new and improve upon existing digital offerings and take up continues to increase.
- 2.4** There are obviously variations in call volumes between WODC and CDC throughout the year, and as local initiatives/service changes are implemented; however (on average) the resource needs are almost identical.
- 2.5** It is important to note that if the trial period is to become a permanent arrangement that due to system configuration, any permanent changes to telephone access hours would need

to be mirror across the two Councils (West Oxfordshire District Council and Cotswold District Council).

3. MAIN POINTS

3.1 As a result of the changing customer needs and the resultant shift from telephone contact to digital contact, the Customer Services Management Team have undertaken extensive analysis of the telephone data. As well as the significant call volume reductions, the data shows:

- a) A large reduction in calls per week (see Annex A – Charts 2 and 2 (a)),
- b) Average Wait Times have decreased, as a result of the additional capacity during the busy lunchtime period (see Annex A – Chart 3),
- c) Abandonment rate reduced to single figures (see Annex A- Chart 4),
- d) Customer Satisfaction has improved. The Council has featured in the national top ten for telephone service customer satisfaction in almost every month of the trial and in March 2024 (by far the busiest month of the trial period) was in the top three.
- e) The Council has received only two formal complaints in relation to this service change. The complaints were not specific to the experience of the individuals; they were both contending that the change discriminates against the Council's elderly residents. The complaints were not upheld on the basis that the telephone service has not been removed, just reduced.

In addition, surveys show that staff morale has been positively affected and officers have stated that “we have more time to help customers who require more assistance”, that “we are improving the customer experience by answering the calls quicker”. The Customer Service Managers have commented that the shorter telephone access arrangements have provided them with more time to plan, train and interact with ‘back office’ teams more regularly.

3.2 Should the Council decide to adopt the changed telephone access arrangements on a permanent basis, this should lead to more success in recruitment as we can offer part time hours for those officers who want it as well as offering opportunities around childcare and school hours where appropriate.

3.3 The Out of Hours Service after 5pm remains unchanged externally and in-house provision is in place to take calls between 2pm and 5pm for:

- Reporting dangerous structures (and other life-threatening events). These are very rare, but will always require cover,
- Assisting those who are presenting as homeless or are under the threat of homelessness, and
- Support for residents in the lead-up to an election.

During the trial period, there has been an average of 3 calls per day after 2pm and 87% of these have been in relation to homelessness.

With regards to elections, this will be addressed by a separate (temporary) telephone line that will only be available and resourced in the lead-up to an election (precise timings to be agreed with the Returning Officer and Elections Services Manager).

When customers call after 2pm, they are advised of the new opening hours and given information on how to access services on-line and what to do in an emergency. For non-emergency matters all other channels such as face to face (9am to 5pm every week day), email and the wide range of digital services will be available as normal.

- 3.4** The implementation of these permanent changes will allow most future recruitments to be on a 9am to 2pm basis, creating ongoing efficiency savings. The commitment to effect this change without any mandatory redundancies remains in place. During the trial period the excess hours within the Customer Service Team has been used to help other Services reduce their outstanding workloads; in particular Revenues and Benefits and the Housing Service where demand is high as a result of the Cost-of-Living Crisis. The improvement in performance in those Services means that the need for customers to make repeat calls has reduced; therefore further reducing telephone call volumes and improving the broader Customer Experience.
- 3.5** During the trial the challenging time for the team was March and April 2024 due to the impact of Garden Waste renewals, Benefit Up-rating and Annual Billing all creating customer contact at the same time. During this period the waiting times and abandoned rates were compromised (see Annex A – Chart 4). Council Tax Annual Billing and Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Up-rating are statutory services and therefore governed by statutory timeframes. However, proposals will shortly be brought forward to mitigate the impact of Green Waste renewals at this busy time of the year; to take effect from 2025. It is worth noting that the number of Green Waste calls, during our busiest week (w/c 18th March 2024) exceeded the number of abandoned calls in that week; and that week included a four-hour period with no payments system (due to nationwide issues with the provider) which created additional calls. Taking these two factors into account, the Business Manager for Customer Experience is confident that the Service can cope with reduced telephone access times during the Annual Billing/Benefit Up-rating period in the future.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** In the original report proposing the trial period, excluding the Managers and Officers required for the Face to Face visits at the Welch Way Office, each of the 30 Customer Service Officers across WODC and CDC (24.93 fte) will have a reduction in hours of 0.32 fte. This reduction across the 30 Officers equates to a total reduction of 7.98 fte. This makes the total efficiency saving £238,100 to be shared equally between WODC and CDC, but we are on track to achieve £250,000. So, the total **saving for each council will be £125,000 per annum.**
- 4.2** The first £50,000 per annum (per Council) was projected for delivery in 2023/24 and has been achieved subject to the approval of this recommendation. The remaining £75,000 per annum (per Council) will be delivered in 2024/25. However, it should be noted that more than £50,000 (per Council) has already been identified. It should be noted that these savings have already been taken account of within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

- 4.3** As there will be no redundancies, the cost of implementation will be supporting service resources and will therefore fall within existing budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** There are no Legal implications associated with these recommendations.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1** There is a risk in not agreeing the recommendations, in that the Council would miss an opportunity to make services more efficient and we would have to recruit to the current vacant posts rather than offer them as an efficiency saving.
- 6.2** The data shows that the reduction in telephone access opening hours appears not to have affected the Council's reputation. However, feedback and complaints processes will continue to be monitored.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1** No services or service access channels have been taken away, so the impact has been minimal. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and shared with the Council's Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer as per Annexe B.
- 7.2** Encouraging even further shifts to digital and self-serve channels will create even more capacity for Teams to provide support to those customers in the greatest need.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The recommendation does not have any climate change implications.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 9.1** The Council could decide not to make the arrangement permanent, however, this would fail to recognise the customer shift to digital access channels and would miss an opportunity to evolve to reflect changing patterns of behaviour as well as generate any savings.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1** None.

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

Annex A

Chart I

Combined (CDC & WODC) CRM Data showing shift from phones to digital

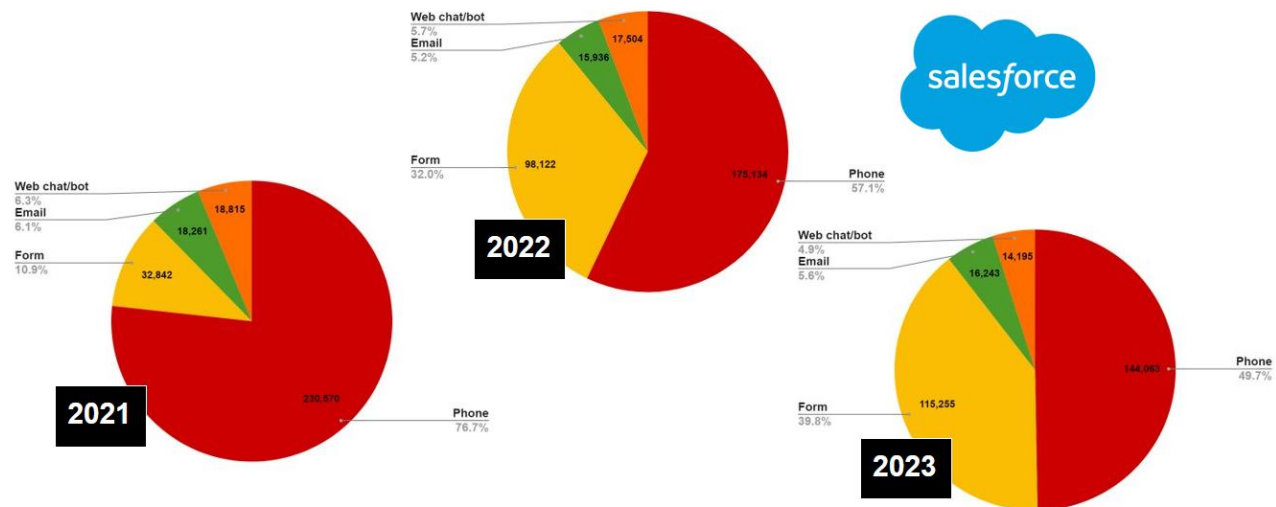


Chart 2

Showing drop in volumes between 2022/23 and 2023/24

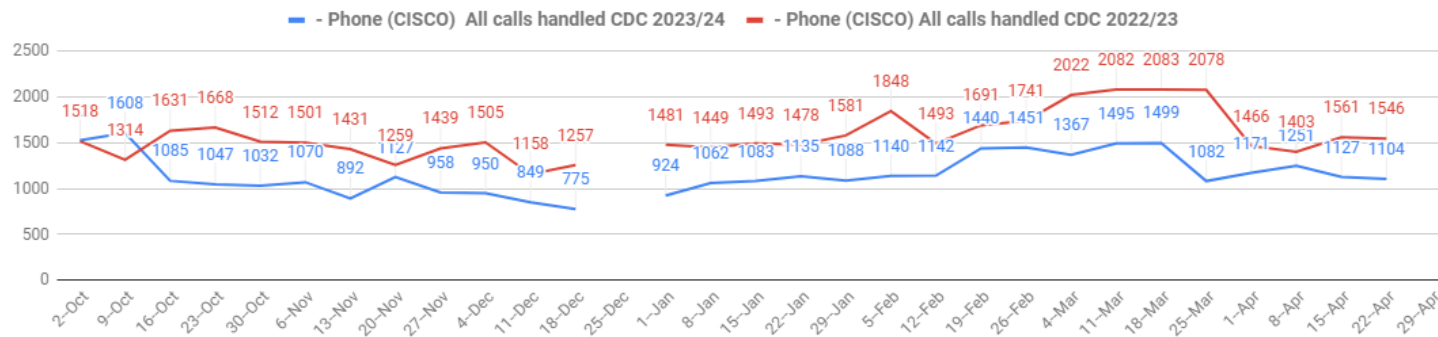


Chart 2(a)

Showing year on year drop in calls

Cotswold Year on Year - Calls Presented

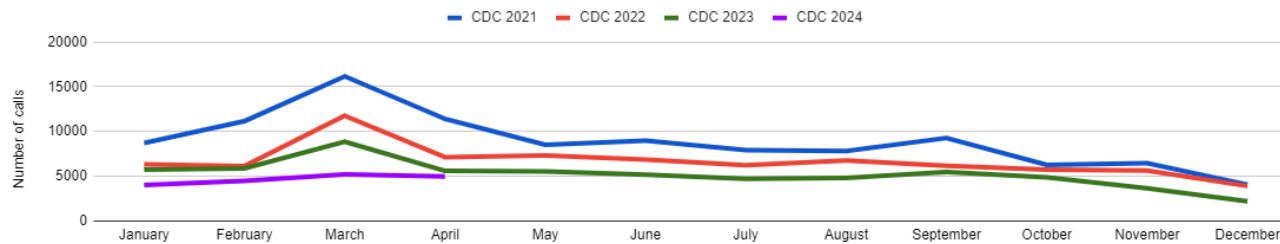


Chart 3

Showing waiting times significantly decreasing and spiking due to garden waste and year end

Cotswold - Calls abandoned (Main line)

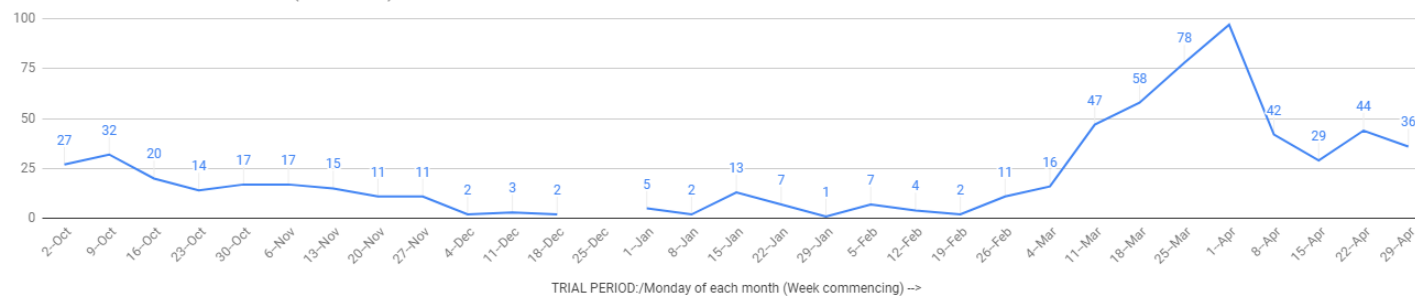
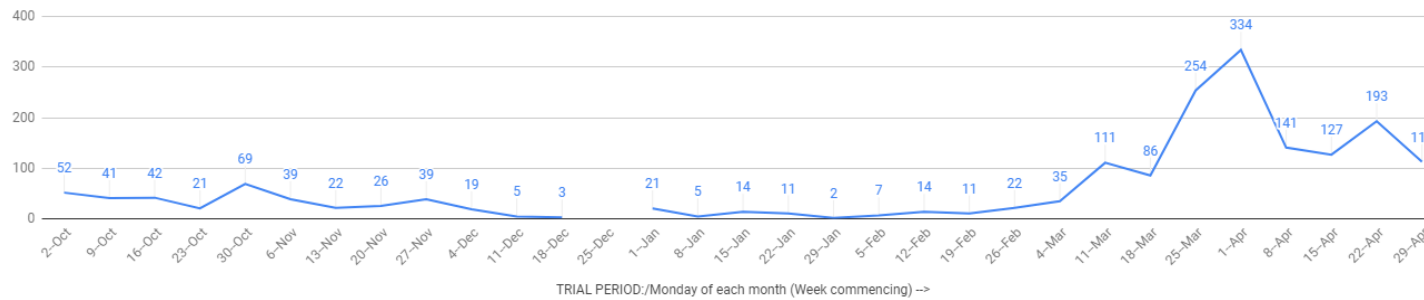


Chart 4

Showing call abandoned rate dropping to single figures and increasing due to increased call volumes due to garden waste and year end

Cotswold - Average speed to answer (Main line)



Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form

ANNEXE B

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

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

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

Once completed a copy should be emailed to the Council’s Monitoring Officer.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Michelle Clifford

Date of assessment: 9th May 2024

Telephone: 01993 861272

Email: Michelle.Clifford@publicagroup.uk

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

Telephone Access Hours

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

To reduce telephone access for customers to 9am-2pm every working day, on a permanent basis. This is following a trial period which started on the 16th October 2023. During the trial there was one complaint by an individual on behalf of elderly customers and this were not upheld as the Council has not stopped a telephone service, it is still available from 9am – 2pm. This change if agreed, will reflect the shift to digital access and make an efficiency saving.

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

None

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National comparisons with other LA's and Private Sector organisations
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Call volume/pattern data

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

Not applicable

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

No..

If NO please outline any planned activities

Trial period (October 2023 to April 2024) was used to prove the concept.

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

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

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

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

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

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to young people.	
Age – Old People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all ages.	
Disability			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people with disabilities.	
Sex – Male			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups.	
Sex – Female			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups.	
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all races.	
Religion or Belief			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all religions.	

Sexual Orientation			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all types of sexual orientation.	
Gender Reassignment			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups.	
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people who are pregnant and/or on maternity.	
Geographical impacts on one area			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the District.	
Other Groups			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all other groups that are not mentioned.	
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the District.	

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)


Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
Make arrangements permanent	Michelle Clifford		June 2024

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


n/a

Declaration

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

Completed By:	Michelle Clifford	Date:	9 th May 2024
Line Manager:		Date:	9 th May 2024
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:		Date:	

This page is intentionally left blank

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JUNE 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>APPROVAL FOR UPGRADING PUBLIC SPACE CCTV PROVISION AND NEW MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>Carterton North East, Carterton North West, Carterton South, Witney Central, Witney South, and Chipping Norton.</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Geoff Saul – Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare. Email: geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities. Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities. Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary</p>	<p>This report recommends upgrading the public open space CCTV cameras covering areas of Carterton and Witney to high definition digital, together with the installation of five new cameras in Chipping Norton. It further recommends the Council joins the Thames Valley CCTV partnership, with an associated transfer of CCTV assets and operational responsibility to Thames Valley Police under a ‘single owner’ model; and moving monitoring arrangements to a shared Oxfordshire hub.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Crime Data</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Endorse the continued need for public open space CCTV in Carterton and Witney and approve extending the scheme to Chipping Norton; 2. Approve use of the £255,635 in the draft capital programme Council resolved to approve in February 2024 for upgrading CCTV; 3. Note the potential funding shortfall of up to a further £55,000 and the opportunities for meeting this cost; 4. Approve joining the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership, with an associated transfer of all CCTV assets and ongoing operational responsibility to Thames Valley Police under a ‘single owner’ model; and a shared Oxfordshire hub, based in Abingdon, as the new monitoring control room;

	<p>5. Delegate authority to the Interim Head of Legal Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to the execute the formal agreements needed to join the Thames Valley Police CCTV Partnership;</p> <p>6. Approve the funding formula for the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership and delegate authority to the Assistant Director – Communities, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, to agree a new funding formula with Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney town councils, and Marriotts Walk and Woolgate shopping centres.</p>
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultation	Engagement with Thames Valley Police, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the other Oxfordshire districts. Further consultation will take place with Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney town councils, along with Marriotts Walk and Woolgate shopping centres.

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1.** West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) owns and operates a public open space Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) system in the district, consisting of 63 cameras – 23 covering Witney town centre, 25 in Marriotts Walk shopping centre, 11 at Woolgate shopping centre and four in Carterton.
- I.2.** The town centre public space CCTV scheme was introduced in Witney town centre in 2002 after the council successfully obtained a Home Office grant. The scheme was expanded to cover Carterton town centre in 2008; and the scheme was upgraded (digitised) and expanded to include Marriotts Walk in 2009.
- I.3.** Monitoring of West Oxfordshire's cameras takes place at Witney Police station, with the staff employed by Thames Valley Police (TVP) and a service level agreement in place with the Council. Within Oxfordshire, monitoring control rooms are also located in Oxford City, Banbury and Abingdon.
- I.4.** In late autumn 2018, WODC commissioned CDC Technical Services to undertake an independent review of the public space CCTV systems in Witney and Carterton town centres. This review concluded that, in general the WODC CCTV scheme provides good coverage of the areas being monitored; but the system was in the main, obsolete and there is a significant amount of repeated camera maintenance issues to be addressed. The review went on to suggest the implementation of a digital transmission network, providing the monitoring control room technologies are compatible.
- I.5.** In setting the 2019/20 budget, Council approved £300,000 capital for investment in CCTV, subject to business case, to upgrade the cameras and replace the monitoring control room equipment.
- I.6.** In March 2020, Cabinet approved a CCTV compliance policy, ensuring we meet the Surveillance Camera Commissioner Code of Practice.

2. IS THERE A CONTINUED NEED FOR CCTV?

- 2.1.** Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on local authorities to do all they reasonably can to prevent:
 - a. Crime and disorder in their areas, including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment
 - b. The misuse of drugs, alcohol or other substances
 - c. Reoffending in their areas
- 2.2.** The use of a CCTV system to help meet this duty includes detection; deterrence; self-discipline – by potential victims and potential offenders; and acting as a capable guardian. Routine activity theory, which looks at crime from an offender's point of view, suggests that for a crime to be committed there must be a motivated offender, a suitable target and the absence of a capable guardian. Any act that prevents the convergence of these elements reduces the likelihood of crime.
- 2.3.** The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 introduced the regulation of public space surveillance cameras in England and Wales. As a result, the Secretary of State, under Section 30 of the Act, issued the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. The code of practice details that a CCTV system must always be for a specified purpose which is in pursuit of a legitimate aim and necessary to meet an identified pressing need, which might include:

- a. national security
- b. public safety
- c. the economic well-being of the country
- d. the prevention of disorder or crime
- e. the protection of health or morals
- f. the protection of the rights and freedoms of others

- 2.4. The [Strategic Intelligence Assessment \(SIA\)](#) for Oxfordshire shows that West Oxfordshire has the lowest total recorded crime in the county, but the greatest increase has been for stalking and public order offences. An overview of crime data is shown at Annex A.
- 2.5. At its October 2021 meeting, after considering a notice of motion on violence against women, Council resolved to do everything in its power to build a District free from harassment and violence against women and girls. Continued provision of public open space CCTV supports this.
- 2.6. Crime density maps, together with local knowledge, and when considered alongside the legitimate aims in the commissioner's code and our duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, provide the evidence base to support the continuation of a CCTV system. They further suggest an extension of the system to include Chipping Norton, as well as covering Carterton and Witney, could be beneficial – a view supported by Thames Valley Police.

3. CAMERA OPTIMISATION

- 3.1. Before starting a camera replacement programme and in line with the commissioner's code and our local policy, a review of all existing camera locations has taken place, for five reasons:
- a. To make sure the legitimate aim is still relevant and take account of any effect on individuals through privacy impact assessments
 - b. In addition to considering crime density maps, we can overlay reported crimes with existing camera locations and these 'heat maps' can help inform future camera placement
 - c. Technology and subsequent image quality has advanced significantly, meaning we may need fewer cameras to achieve the same, or better, coverage. This could reduce the ongoing costs, without compromising public safety
 - d. Changes in public realm and infrastructure may suggest alternative locations
 - e. A few deployable wireless CCTV cameras may be beneficial for addressing shorter-term needs.
- 3.2. This exercise was undertaken by an industry expert and provides a map of where and why (legitimate aim) for each proposed camera location, using the reasons listed below:
- To detect and prevent crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour
 - To deter theft and criminal damage
 - To help people feel safe and support the nighttime economy
 - To assist with vehicle recognition involved in crime

3.3. Details captured in the review's report include:

- a. An assessment of each of the existing camera locations within the current public open space CCTV scheme, along with recommendations for each location
- b. The mapping of existing and new camera locations in accordance with available crime statistics
- c. Recommendations for improvement of coverage – including the use of additional locations, the removal of locations and/or the relocation of camera locations
- d. Existing and future technology considerations, including:
 - i. the re-use of existing camera technology
 - ii. the requirements for upgrade of the existing transmission network
 - iii. the requirements for control room systems upgrade
 - iv. the different types of ANPR camera technology
 - v. the use of deployable cameras and considerations for using them
 - vi. the use of video analytics and the potential use of data gathered by cameras

3.4. All cameras have been mapped using the online mapping tool, Scribble Maps. This tool has allowed the field of view for each of the existing cameras to be mapped to allow for easy observation of the total coverage. An example is shown below:



3.5. The resultant recommendations of this coverage mapping suggest two cameras can be removed, six relocated and three new locations added in Witney.

3.6. The scope of the review also included investigating the requirements for the installation of public open space CCTV in Chipping Norton, with the general operational requirement to provide coverage to the main pedestrian and parking areas of the town as well as provide coverage of the main roads through the town.

3.7. A survey of the town was undertaken, supported by a TVP local police sergeant and identified five potential positions for new cameras that would achieve the main coverage requirements:

- Outside the front of the Town Hall at the A44 junction of New St,
- Outside the rear of the Town Hall at the junction with High St (Top Row),
- On High St (Top Row) outside WH Smith,
- On High St/A44 outside Crown & Cushion Hotel,
- On Market St (Bottom Row) outside 19 Market St

4. UPGRADING TO HIGH-DEFINITION DIGITAL CAMERAS

- 4.1.** A comprehensive proposal has been obtained from the Council's appointed CCTV maintenance contractor for upgrading all existing cameras to high definition (HD) digital, with an upgraded transmission network, where necessary, and using wireless technology where possible. The hybrid solution makes use of some of the existing cameras, which already have HD technology and has been fully designed and costed.
- 4.2.** It allows for three additional cameras in Witney, five new cameras for Chipping Norton and the relocations in Carterton, as identified in the camera optimisation exercise. The hardware specified includes a mix of static, multi-sensor and pan, tilt, zoom cameras and all are latest generation featuring full artificial intelligence capability.
- 4.3.** All the cameras specified are fully compatible with the existing monitoring control room technology, which was upgraded to Genetec digital in October 2022 following a critical failure of the obsolete analogue equipment.
- 4.4.** The headline cost summary for the proposed full upgrade to HD digital cameras is £287,969. Of this required capital expenditure, £229,549 would allow for all existing cameras to be upgraded and £58,420 would be needed for the proposed new cameras.
- 4.5.** The Chipping Norton proposal makes no allowance for any civil works required, such as heavy-duty lighting columns for mounting some cameras, or a cabinet-based CCTV column. It is therefore suggested a contingency of around 10% be added to the total cost, bringing the budget required to upgrade to HD digital to £310,635.
- 4.6.** Of the original £300,000 approved by Council in 2019/20 for capital investment in CCTV, £255,635 remains, after upgrading the control room in 2022. Executive is asked to approve the use of this balance, which formed part of the draft capital programme Council resolved to approve in February 2024.
- 4.7.** Executive is further asked to note the potential funding shortfall of up to £55,000 and the steps that will be taken, in priority order, to address this:
- a. Undertake a value engineering exercise to reduce the capital expenditure needed
 - b. Await the outcome of a bid to the Safer Streets Fund for £25,000, as part of a continuation of a project to reduce violence against women and girls. The outcome of this bid is unlikely to be known until November 2024.
 - c. Seek a contribution from Thames Valley Police given the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner's vision for CCTV described at section 5.1.
 - d. Seek contributions from the town councils where new cameras are proposed

- e. Offset some of the additional cost against the ongoing revenue savings that should be achieved by joining the Thames Valley Police CCTV partnership

4.8. Given the 'single owner' model described in the following section, combined with the complexities of a procurement in a niche, technological area, it is recommended the available budget required to implement the upgrade to HD digital is passed to Thames Valley Police, on a phased basis as the required works are completed.

5. SHARED MONITORING CONTROL HUB AND SINGLE OWNER MODEL

- 5.1. Under the current operating model, this Council retains direct responsibility for the public open space CCTV system and its ongoing maintenance. In early April 2022, Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner tabled a report to the Police and Crime Panel outlining a new vision for CCTV. This vision recognised that CCTV exists primarily for the benefit of policing and the wider interests of community safety. Therefore, it is right that policing shoulders the lion share of the responsibility for providing the capability, under a 'single owner' model. This single owner model will help to consolidate technology, drive savings through economies of scale, improve integration with police systems and provide increased resilience.
- 5.2. Since 2016, there has been a collective desire between the five Oxfordshire districts and Thames Valley Police (TVP) for a shared Oxfordshire hub control room. Sharing will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the monitoring – with more 'real time' monitoring, no lone working, capital investment from TVP and resilience from fail over to another hub with the same monitoring equipment elsewhere within the Thames Valley Police geographic area.
- 5.3. The disadvantages of a shared hub are potential losses of local knowledge and local employment. Any loss of local knowledge at an operator level can be overcome by local viewing capability in Witney police station and in the first instance Witney based staff (already employed by TVP) should have the opportunity to transfer to Abingdon and be able to impart their knowledge on others.
- 5.4. Progress towards a shared hub has been hampered by numerous reasons, but since an Oxfordshire CCTV partnership board was established in 2022 and TVP has employed a CCTV Operations Manager to gain greater traction, the point has now been reached whereby an Oxfordshire monitoring control room, located in Abingdon, is proposed.
- 5.5. This would form part of a Thames Valley Police CCTV partnership, the first phase of which saw the transfer of ownership of CCTV from Milton Keynes City Council and Slough Borough Council to Thames Valley Police. The Abingdon CCTV command suite will be the second phase of the partnership and will bring all current cameras from the Banbury, Witney, and St Aldates control rooms into Abingdon. The suite would be open 7 days a week, with extended opening hours where appropriate e.g. Thursday to Sunday.
- 5.6. In terms of governance, a Board will be put in place to govern the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership, chaired by the Police Crime Commissioner and with attendance from both Thames Valley Police and local authorities.
- 5.7. Joining this partnership arrangement will require ongoing contributions from all partners and based on a partnership funding formula, with 50% of the total partnership costs being met by TVP and the other 50% met by the local authorities (LAs). Of the 50% met by LAs, relative

contributions will be arrived at by considering the percentage of the total cameras between each LA and the Community Safety Partnership Funding Formula between each LA.

Formula Percentages		
Location	% of Cameras	CSP %
Slough	29%	16%
Milton Keynes	13%	27%
Oxford City	12%	15%
South Oxfordshire	12%	10%
Vale of The White Horse	6%	11%
Cherwell	16%	13%
West Oxfordshire	12%	8%
Total	100%	100%

- 5.8. Under this 'single owner' model we will transfer all our CCTV assets to Thames Valley Police, and they will assume full operational responsibility for maintaining the assets and associated costs, such as:
- Staffing the shared monitoring hub
 - Maintenance contract for cameras and control room equipment
 - Hardware repairs and replacement – cameras, network infrastructure, control room equipment
 - Software licensing and updates to the video management system
- 5.9. Joining the Thames Valley Police CCTV partnership is contingent on transferring in high quality assets; hence this Council could not join if the cameras were not upgraded to HD digital.
- 5.10. By its nature, public space CCTV cameras are used to solve public space issues, which provide safety and reassurance to the public. Therefore, any partner can request an increase in public space CCTV cameras. This would require agreement at the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership Board in which local feedback and crime statistics would be considered. The requestor of the CCTV camera will bear the capital cost of camera and installation and then be included within the LA's overall total number of cameras, with an associated uplift in LA contribution as per the funding formula described at 5.6.
- 5.11. This Council would retain responsibility for columns and assets on which the cameras are mounted, electricity to the cameras and any existing rented fibre costs – noting that the upgrade to HD digital will reduce these costs by using wireless transmission, where possible.

- 5.12. The high-level timeline suggests the shared monitoring hub at Abingdon would go live in Q4 2024/25. It is therefore suggested the revenue impact is built into the base budget from 2025-26. Based on figures supplied by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley and our own historical spend the new funding arrangements for this Council are projected as:

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
TVP CCTV partnership contribution	51,585	53,050	54,450
Electricity	3,500	3,700	4,000
Rented fibre	4,700	4,900	5,100
Repairs and maintenance	5,000	5,000	5,000
Total projected expenditure on CCTV	64,785	66,650	68,550

6. A NEW LOCAL FUNDING FORMULA

- 6.1. At a local level, the current total cost of public space CCTV and its associated monitoring is currently approaching £139,000. Financial contributions from Carterton and Witney town councils, and from Marriotts Walk and Woolgate shopping centres reduce this total and the 2024-25 revenue budget for net expenditure on CCTV to £98,700.
- 6.2. This welcomed support recognises the benefit CCTV brings to the towns and shopping centres, such as detecting and preventing crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour; deterring theft and criminal damage; and helping people feel safe to support the nighttime economy. There has, however, been no parity between the level of financial support provided and the number of cameras in each location. As an example, Carterton town council has contributed £10,000 per annum, with four camera coverage and Witney town council has contributed the same, but with 23 camera coverage.
- 6.3. A step towards addressing this inequity was made when Carterton town council set its 2024-25 precept, however, with any addition of cameras to Chipping Norton and an associated contribution from Chipping Norton town council, it is suggested clear objectivity needs to be brought to relative contributions.
- 6.4. This could be achieved by largely mirroring the Thames Valley Police CCTV partnership funding formula, with 50% of the total cost for West Oxfordshire being met by this Council and the remaining 50% apportioned based on the number of cameras in each location.

Location	Number of cameras	% contribution
Carterton	4	2.9%
Chipping Norton	5	3.6%
Marriotts Walk	25	18.1%
Witney	24	17.4%
Woolgate	11	8.0%
Totals	69	50%

6.5. Using the projected figures shown at 5.12 this translates as:

Contributor	% to pay	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
		61,785	63,650	65,550
West Oxfordshire District Council	50%	32,393	33,325	34,275
Carterton Town Council	2.9%	1,878	1,932	1,987
Chipping Norton Town Council	3.6%	2,347	2,415	2,484
Marriotts Walk Shopping Centre	18.1%	11,736	12,074	12,418
Witney Town Council	17.4%	11,267	11,591	11,922
Woolgate Shopping Centre	8.0%	5,164	5,313	5,464

6.6. Executive is asked to approve the principle of a new local funding formula as set out above and delegate authority to the Assistant Director – Communities, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, to agree new funding contributions with Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney town councils, and Marriotts Walk and Woolgate shopping centres.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1. Executive could choose to cease provision of this discretionary service, however the case for continued provision of public space CCTV is made at section 2 of this report.
- 7.2. Executive could choose to acknowledge the case for ongoing public space CCTV provision but negotiate a handing over of the service to town councils, with the costs of the new Thames Valley Police CCTV partnership model being met in full by local precepting.
- 7.3. Executive could choose to continue public space CCTV provision and meet in full the costs of the new Thames Valley Police CCTV partnership model.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The proposals in this report require £255,635 capital from the draft programme approved by Council in February 2024. In addition, a further amount up to £55,000 is required to undertake a full upgrade of all existing cameras to HD digital and to install three new cameras in Witney and five in Chipping Norton. The opportunities to address this shortfall are set out at section 4.7.
- 8.2. Accepting that joining the Thames Valley Police CCTV Partnership is subject to formal approval and signed agreements, the revenue expenditure for the single owner model, combined with a new local funding formula which is fair and transparent, suggests an annual revenue saving in the region of £60,000 could be achieved.
- 8.3. Joining the Thames Valley Police CCTV Partnership and achieving this revenue saving is contingent on transferring digital control room equipment and new HD digital cameras. The approved capital expenditure of £255,635 and any additional budget requirement therefore represents an invest to save initiative.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1.** Joining the Thames Valley Police CCTV Partnership, with the associated transfer of assets and future liabilities from this Council to Thames Valley Police will be executed through a formal agreement.

10. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 10.1.** Having no public open space CCTV means our duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 may not be met and could also lead to an increase in crime or fear of it.

11. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 11.1.** The report raises no specific implications for any particular group or individual. Any future changes to camera locations will be subject to the appropriate privacy impact assessments, compliant with the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice. The addition of cameras to Chipping Norton should bring a positive impact to public safety and a reduction in crime.

12. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1.** There are no specific implications arising directly from this report.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1.** No background papers have been identified.
(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

Oxfordshire SIA Crime Dashboard

Last updated
10/07/2023

Home



Sources



Types of crime

Change over time

Local overview

Explore local

Deprivation

This summarises the count, rate and change of crimes by local area (MSOA) in 2022.

The rate is crimes per 1,000 residents.

Choose which year to compare the 2022 rate to. Note small numbers can show large percentage change.

District West Oxfordshire

Count, rate or change
Count Compare year
2021

Crime type	Grand Total	Witney Central	Chipping Norton	Witney East	Carterton North	Eynsham & Stanton Harcourt	Woodstock, Stonesfield & Tackley	Witney West	Leafeld, Minster Lovell & Duckington	Carterton South	Bampton, Clanfield & Standlake	Kingham, Enstone & Middle Barton	Hanborough & Cassington	Burford & Brize Norton	Chadlington & Wychwoods	Charlbury & North Leigh
Grand Total	6,646	1,570	575	507	457	413	391	385	379	345	305	282	279	271	263	224
Violence and sexual offences	2,716	467	247	226	211	172	159	198	170	176	150	106	135	107	95	97
Public order	664	172	73	41	46	47	42	33	44	32	23	12	32	19	24	24
Anti-social behaviour	658	158	52	101	43	46	31	52	39	28	17	11	20	26	24	10
Other theft	650	235	29	17	36	48	36	23	35	18	35	35	29	25	24	25
Criminal damage and arson	561	133	52	36	41	37	41	26	33	30	27	27	16	17	28	17
Vehicle crime	349	25	45	22	13	30	32	8	15	9	13	50	19	29	18	21
Burglary	290	55	16	14	11	12	18	13	20	7	22	26	13	22	28	13
Shoplifting	282	177	27	11	13	5	7	1	4	24	0	1	1	0	5	6
Drugs	133	47	4	14	11	4	3	7	7	11	4	3	0	9	7	2
Other crime	133	19	5	11	19	6	13	14	7	5	7	7	4	7	4	5
Theft from the person	94	30	14	4	4	2	6	5	1	2	4	2	5	6	6	3
Bicycle theft	64	35	1	7	4	3	1	3	2	1	1	1	4	1	0	0
Possession of weapons	30	8	4	2	4	0	1	2	2	1	2	1	0	2	0	1
Robbery	22	9	6	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0

Oxfordshire SIA Crime Dashboard

Home

Sources

Types of crime

Change over time

Local overview

Explore local

Deprivation

District

☐ Cherwell

☐ Oxford

☐ South Oxfordshire

☐ Vale of White Horse

☒ West Oxfordshire

Count, rate or change

Change

Compare year

2021

Show heatmap

Yes

Line chart over time or seasonality

Over time

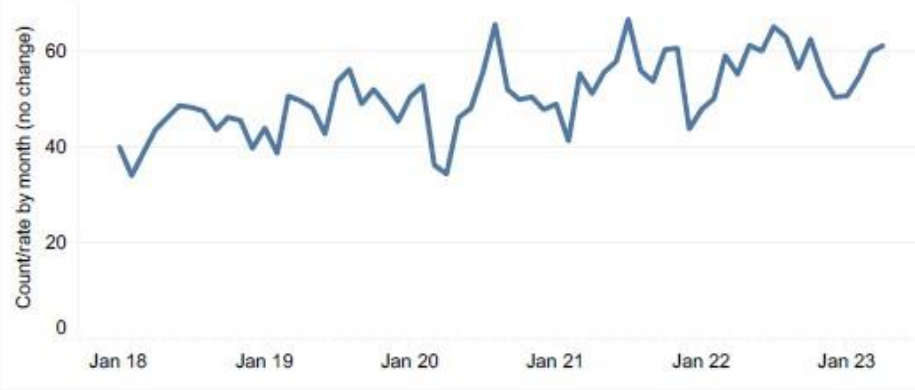
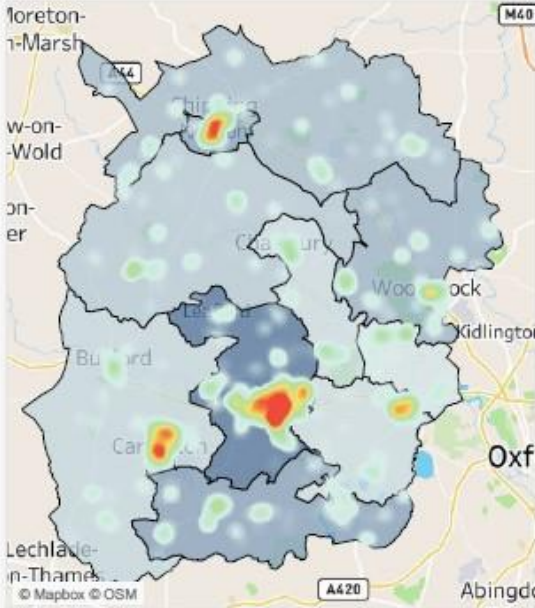
Explore local 2022

This allows you to explore the areas of crime for counts, rates and change. Toggle on the heatmap to see more detailed locations.

Click on an area on the map or the bar chart to filter the other visuals to a location. Click the crime bars to filter to a crime type. Click the filter again or refresh the page to exit.


The rate is crimes per 1,000 residents per year.

The line charts contain added data for Q1 2023.



Area	Offences	Rate	Change	
Witney Central	1,570	145.0	+41.1%	
Leaffield, Minster Lo..	379	57.0	+22.1%	
Carterton South	345	60.9	+9.5%	
Chipping Norton	575	79.1	+6.8%	
Bampton, Clanfield ..	305	40.5	+6.7%	
Woodstock, Stonesf..	391	42.9	+2.1%	
Kingham, Enstone ..	282	44.7	-0.3%	
Carterton North	457	45.1	-4.0%	
Chadlington & Wyc..	263	41.1	-4.9%	
Witney East	507	43.1	-5.3%	
Witney West	385	50.1	-9.9%	
Burford & Brize Nort..	271	35.9	-10.0%	
Charlbury & North L..	224	37.4	-12.3%	
Eynsham & Stanton..	413	69.4	-12.3%	
Hanborough & Cass..	279	38.7	-16.0%	

Crime type	Offences	Rate	Change	
Robbery	22	1.4	+39.3%	
Shoplifting	282	5.7	+38.6%	
Theft from the person	94	2.3	+31.7%	
Other theft	650	6.3	+28.3%	
Other crime	133	2.4	+21.1%	
Vehicle crime	349	4.1	+8.6%	
Bicycle theft	64	2.4	+8.0%	
Violence and sexual offenc..	2,716	23.4	+6.2%	
Burglary	290	3.4	-0.5%	
Criminal damage and arson	561	5.3	-3.3%	
Anti-social behaviour	658	7.1	-7.5%	
Drugs	133	2.5	-7.8%	
Public order	664	6.4	-8.2%	
Possession of weapons	30	1.3	-17.3%	

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JUNE 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>ENDORSEMENT OF THE OXFORDSHIRE COUNCILS CHARTER</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Astrid Harvey – Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer. Email: astrid.harvey@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To endorse the Oxfordshire Councils Charter.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – The Oxfordshire Councils Charter; Annex B – The Oxfordshire Councils Charter Engagement Report.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the contents of the Oxfordshire Councils Charter; 2. Endorse the Oxfordshire Councils Charter; 3. Agree to be a signatory to the Oxfordshire Councils Charter.
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees Consultation</p>	<p>The Oxfordshire Councils Charter Engagement Report (Annex B) sets out the wide-ranging consultation for development of the Charter, including a Roundtable Event for all Town and Parish Councils, Surveys, Consultation on the draft Charter and regular communications with Town and Parish Councils during its development and through Oxfordshire Leader and Chief Executive Groups.</p>

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** West Oxfordshire District Council has been working in partnership with the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, Vale of White Horse, Cherwell, South and Vale District Councils and town and parish councils and parish meetings to strengthen partnership working across all tiers of local government in Oxfordshire.
- 1.2** Through a multi-organisational working group, we have worked collaboratively to develop an Oxfordshire Councils Charter which sets out our principles and commitments to achieve two aims: stronger partnership working and enhanced local democracy.
- 1.3** The Charter has been developed through an extensive three-stage engagement process which is set out in Annex B, the Oxfordshire Councils Charter Engagement Report, in which 32 of West Oxfordshire local councils participated.
- 1.4** A number of clear themes emerged from the engagement which were translated into the aims of stronger partnership working and enhanced local democracy presented in the Oxfordshire Councils Charter and this will be considered for endorsement by the City, County and District Councils through May and June 2024.
- 1.5** It is intended to launch the Oxfordshire Councils Charter at the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils Annual General Meeting on 1 July 2024.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHARTER

- 2.1** Oxfordshire has 235 parish councils, 15 town councils and 68 parish meetings, of which 48 parish councils, 6 town councils and 27 parish meetings sit within West Oxfordshire. Recent engagement (see Annex B) has demonstrated some dissatisfaction with the working relationships between the tiers of local government and a genuine desire to improve these, the effectiveness of partnership working and an enhancement of local democracy.
- 2.2** A multi-organisational working group of Officers from the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (a membership organisation that represents 97% of Oxfordshire's local councils), West, South, Vale of White Horse and Cherwell District Councils, Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council undertook the development of the Oxfordshire Councils Charter. The Oxfordshire Chief Executive Officers and Council Leaders have also provided oversight of the Charter's development.
- 2.3** On 26 October 2023 a roundtable event was held at County Hall attended by 100 people representing 88 local councils from across Oxfordshire. West Oxfordshire was represented by the following local councils: Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney, Black Bourton, Hailey, North Leigh, Witney, Bladon, Brize Norton, Carterton, Charlbury, Crawley, Leafield, Minster Lovell, Shipton under Wychwood, Swinbrook and Widford, and Filkins and Broughton Poggs.
- 2.4** Following the roundtable event, a survey was launched to enable all local councils an opportunity to input into the development of the Charter. 20 local councils from West Oxfordshire responded to the survey, out of a total of 85 from across Oxfordshire.

- 2.5 Five key themes for improvement were identified through this research: relationships, communications, communities, consultation and engagement, and resources.
- 2.6 A draft Charter was developed based on the findings and themes from the first phase of engagement. All town and parish councils and parish meetings were invited to feedback on the draft Charter via a consultation on the County Council's digital consultation platform 'Let's Talk Oxfordshire' over a six-week period during January and February 2024. District, City and County Councillors were also invited to respond to the consultation.
- 2.7 96 consultation responses were received, 18 of which were from West Oxfordshire. Overall, a supportive response of the aims, principles and commitments in the draft Charter was received.
- 2.8 A West Oxfordshire Town and Parish Forum was held during the consultation on 6th February 2024 so that local councils could receive a presentation on the draft Charter and participate in a workshop to explore the themes further and input into the consultation. The West Oxfordshire District Council Executive were also present to participate in the workshop and explore opportunities for further strengthening the working relationship between the District Council and town and parish councils and parish meetings.
- 2.9 The Charter working group analysed the qualitative feedback from the consultation and identified areas for further consideration and redrafting. The contents of the Charter remained broadly the same, but some points were edited to provide greater clarity, remove duplication, and ensure that the wording captured and communicated the ambitions of those who inputted to the Charter.
- 2.10 The responses from the consultation indicate that the early engagement activities effectively captured the needs, ambition, and concerns of Oxfordshire Councils. These have been translated into a flexible framework for better partnership working and enhanced local democracy.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 The Oxfordshire Councils Charter will remain a 'living document', a flexible framework that enables each council to work to the principles and commitments in a way that aligns with their own ways of working, resources and priorities.
- 3.2 The Charter will be taken through the individual democratic processes in the Oxfordshire County, City and District Councils through May and June 2024.
- 3.3 The Charter will be launched at the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils Annual General Meeting on 1 July 2024, and local councils will be invited to endorse and become a signatory to the Charter.
- 3.4 Each Council will be responsible for their own implementation of the Charter and how they wish to deliver against it. It is anticipated that the working group will continue to meet to share best practice and maintain open communication channels in line with the ethos of the Charter.

- 3.5 West Oxfordshire District Council will continue to proactively engage with local councils on parish specific issues as well as more strategically, the next focus being the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation on a series of Preferred Policy approaches in the summer of 2024.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no immediate financial implications resulting from the Oxfordshire Councils Charter.
- 4.2 It is possible that future actions to implement the principles of the Charter may have budgetary implications. If this is the case, any future project or programme proposals to support the delivery of the Charter that require funding will be developed by the lead service and subject to the relevant sign off process.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from the Oxfordshire Councils Charter. The Charter is not a legal agreement and is not designed to override any legal agreements between partners or any codes of conduct of individual councils.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 There are no risks anticipated in endorsing the Oxfordshire Councils Charter.
- 6.2 There are potential reputational risks associated with not taking action to improve partnership working between Oxfordshire Councils.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1 Equalities have been considered at every stage of the process of producing the Oxfordshire Councils Charter, including in making the survey and consultation as accessible as possible. The Charter aims to improve local democracy, which includes making local democracy more accessible to underrepresented groups and increasing diversity in participation of local democracy, such as for young people, parents and ethnically diverse groups.
- 7.2 Many local councils in Oxfordshire are in rural areas so there is an anticipated positive impact on rural communities.
- 7.3 No negative impacts resulting from the Charter are anticipated towards protected groups.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no anticipated climate implications from this report.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 9.1 Whilst not recommended, Executive could decide not to endorse the Oxfordshire Councils Charter. This would be out of sync with the other Oxfordshire authorities who have endorsed the Charter, demonstrating their commitment to stronger partnership working between Oxfordshire councils and enhancing local democracy.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

This page is intentionally left blank

Oxfordshire Councils Charter



Foreword by Cllr Leffman

– Leader, Oxfordshire County Council

Our county of Oxfordshire is a rich tapestry of diverse communities, from our thriving market towns and picturesque rural villages to our urban centres of learning, innovation and business – all represented by over 300 local councils.

Our vision is that this charter enhances partnership working across councils to empower a vibrant democracy across Oxfordshire. Working in partnership with our local councils is essential for responding to the needs of our residents, understanding our diverse communities, and providing effective services.

This charter recognises the importance of Oxfordshire’s town councils, parish councils and parish meetings in representing and delivering for the residents of Oxfordshire. We have developed the charter in consultation with town and parish councils from across the county together with the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) and our district and city council partners. We have listened carefully to the many councillors and clerks, who have helped identify the opportunities we can explore through the commitments in this charter and we are very grateful for their contributions.

I am excited about the ambitions of this charter and the changes that are already underway to improve how we work and communicate with our local councils. I invite all Oxfordshire councils to become signatories to the charter to demonstrate our mutual ambition to working better together through shared principles and commitments. I hope you will want to join us in this endeavour.

May 2024



Foreword by Lucy Dalby, County Officer, Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC)

As representatives of Oxfordshire's town and parish councils we are delighted to welcome this charter, which is a positive step to achieving better partnership working between Oxfordshire councils.

Since OALC instigated the idea of a charter, we have ensured local councils have been consulted directly and we have advocated for councils' needs and concerns throughout its development. We are proud to have created this charter in collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council and our city and district council partners.

It has been extremely positive to see so many councils engaging enthusiastically with this process and we want to thank every councillor, clerk and officer who has contributed.

This work does not end with the launching of the charter – we will remain involved as this work moves forward, and the real and impactful changes needed for partnership working to reach its full potential. Councils will also continue to have the opportunity to feed in to how the charter is implemented. We hope individual councils will want to become signatories too in demonstrating their commitment to better partnership working and enhancing local democracy for their communities.

Introduction

This charter has been developed by a cross-council working group in collaboration with Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC), to set out a framework for better partnership working in Oxfordshire. The contents of the charter have been shaped by feedback from town and parish councils across the county through a number of consultation and engagement activities.

The intention for the charter is that it is a voluntary framework that will help shape how Oxfordshire councils can work together in partnership to support better service delivery and outcomes, and to work together to ensure thriving local democracy across the county. This charter is not designed to replace or override existing frameworks, such as codes of conduct or councils' individual ways of working, but to enhance them, with a particular focus on cross-council working and recognising the role of local councils in supporting a thriving local democracy.

Strategic aims for the charter

These aims represent our shared long-term goals as signatories to the charter. The charter's performance will be measured against these aims over time.

1. Stronger partnership working between Oxfordshire councils.

Taking a cooperative, collaborative and collective approach when working together for the wellbeing of our diverse communities, improving service delivery and supporting the needs of our residents.

Success looks like:

- Councils share best practice with each other, consistently working to improve how services are delivered and experienced by residents.
- Councils can identify opportunities where there is value in working collaboratively in partnership to deliver better outcomes for residents and communities.
- Councils are breaking down barriers to better partnership working.

2. Enhancing local democracy.

Working to empower resident and community participation in local democracy at all levels, recognizing that local democracy goes wider than the election cycle.

Success looks like:

- Councils use the tools and resources at their disposal to advocate for their communities and residents.
- Councils can identify barriers to resident and community participation in local democratic processes and take steps to break down those barriers.
- Councils can identify and build on opportunities to engage with their communities, particularly with underrepresented groups.



Our shared principles

Our shared principles are the ‘golden thread’ of values that underpin how we aim to meet the charter’s commitments and achieve the charter’s strategic aims. These principles guide how we implement and integrate the charter, how we work together and how we treat each other as partners.

Mutual respect

- We recognise and acknowledge what unites us – representing and delivering for our communities and residents.
- We treat each other with respect, civility, and dignity, abiding by our respective codes of conduct.
- We understand that different types of council operate differently – we respect our differences and act on good faith.

Relationship building

- We foster constructive and collaborative relationships and connections between councils, councillors, clerks, officers, partners, and communities.
- We remove barriers to building effective relationships.

Transparency and accountability

- We share information and communicate transparently.
- We are transparent with processes and how councils make decisions.
- We signpost appropriately.



Our shared commitments

These are our shared commitments that will help to achieve our strategic aims: stronger partnership working and enhance local democracy. The commitments are purposely kept at a high-level to enable each council to apply them to their own priorities and ways of working, providing a framework for councils to shape how they work together.

Communication

Councils will:

- Enhance how we listen and respond to one another. Availability and accessibility will be central to how we interact.
- Communicate with respect and civility, maintaining an open dialogue.
- Communicate openly and transparently, explaining processes and decision-making.

Consultation and engagement

Councils will:

- Engage with one another at the earliest opportunity, recognizing the diverse perspectives and challenges faced by various stakeholders and communities.
- Ensure that consultation and engagement processes are as accessible as possible.
- Actively follow-up on consultations and feedback in an appropriate manner.

Resources

Councils will:

- Share relevant and appropriate information to empower each other to best support our residents and communities.
- Optimise access and signposting to resources and practical support.
- Identify opportunities where resources and support can be effectively shared between councils to improve outcomes for residents.

Local democracy

Councils will:

- Empower our residents and communities to participate in local democracy, including young people and underrepresented groups.
- Put residents and communities at the heart of what we do.
- Respect the democratic mandate of all councillors.

Implementation

All Oxfordshire councils will be invited to be a signatory of the charter. The intention is that this charter remains a 'living' document, with the charter being the beginning and not the end of this work to improve partnership working.

Once the charter has been agreed by councils, each council will be responsible for their own implementation of the charter's principles and commitments. The working group will support councils to capture the progress and successes of the charter to enable sharing best practice and positive communications (e.g 'you said, we did' pieces).

This page is intentionally left blank

Oxfordshire Councils Charter

Engagement report

April 2024

Contents

	Page Numbers
1 Introduction	3
2 Response rate and demographics	4
3 Methodology and Findings:	7
Roundtable Event, October 2023	8
Survey, October – December 2023	10
Consultation, January – February 2024	20
4. Conclusion	22
5. Annexes	23

Introduction

1. Oxfordshire County Council has been working in partnership with the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC), district and city councils, town and parish councils, and parish meetings to strengthen partnership working across local councils in Oxfordshire. The Oxfordshire Councils Charter aims to be a mutually agreed set of aims, principles and commitments for all Oxfordshire councils, which underpin how we work together and deliver outcomes for residents.
2. This report accompanies the Cabinet Report for the Oxfordshire Councils Charter, and outlines the findings from the three-stage engagement process to develop a charter for Oxfordshire's councils. The findings from stages one and two informed the themes and development of the draft charter, which then went out for consultation in January 2024 for six weeks.
3. A cross-council working group was set up in summer 2023 with officers from county, district and city councils, as well as representatives from Oxfordshire Association of Locals Councils (OALC), who represent 97 per cent of Oxfordshire's town and parish councils. The working group designed a three-stage engagement process to develop the charter:
 - 1) Oxfordshire Town and Parish Council Charter Roundtable Event 26 October 2023
 - 2) A six week online survey for those who could not attend the roundtable from 27 October 2023.
 - 3) A six week online consultation on the draft charter, from 3 January 2024.
4. Town and parish councils were invited to participate in all engagement activities across a number of channels, as well as district, city and county councillors.
5. Following the engagement activity, the charter working group analysed the feedback on specific sections of the draft charter and identified areas for consideration and redrafting. The contents of the final charter remain broadly the same as the draft, but elements have been reworded to provide greater clarity, avoid duplication and ensure that the charter wording captures and communicates the original intention of the charter.

Response rate and demographics

6. Overall 135 Oxfordshire councils engaged with the charter development activities, including 11 town councils, 7 parish meetings and 117 parish councils. This figure does not include town and parish councils who engaged with the charter through district parish liaison meetings.

Total Engagement (across all three engagement activities) by District:

	Total No. of town and parish councils engaged (excl unknowns)	No. of Town Councils	No. of Parish Councils	No. of Parish Meetings	Total T&P Councils in the District	% Engagement
Cherwell	28	1	27	0	74	38%
Oxford City	4	0	4	0	4	100%
South Oxfordshire	45	3	39	3	85	53%
Vale of White Horse	25	1	22	2	68	37%
West Oxfordshire	32	6	24	2	80	40%
Total	134	11	116	7	318	42%

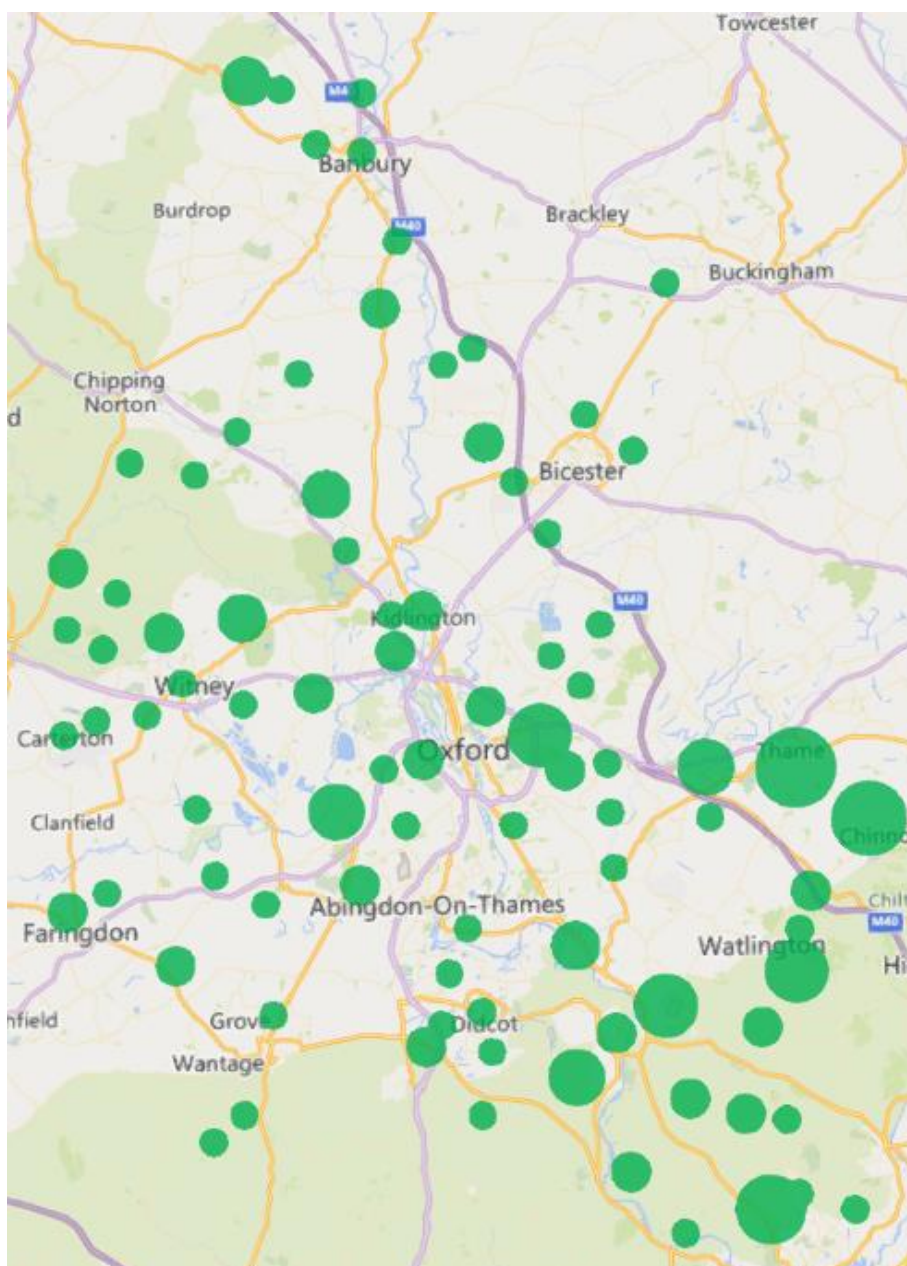
Town and Parish Council Charter Roundtable

7. Over 100 attendees attended the roundtable event on 26 October 2023, representing 78 local councils:
- 28 of the attendees were council clerks. The remaining attendees were town or parish councillors.
 - Eight town councils attended, along with one parish meeting and 69 parish councils.

Survey October – December 2023

8. 164 responses to the survey representing 90+ local councils:
- Six responses did not indicate which council they represent.
 - 42 responses were from clerks (26 per cent) and 116 responses came from councillors (73 per cent). Seven respondents did not indicate their role.
 - We had one response from Oxfordshire Neighbourhood Plans Alliance (ONPA)

9. Geographic spread of survey responses – bigger spots indicate multiple responses from that location.



10. Survey responses by type of council that the respondent represents:

Type of council	District	Town	Parish Council or Parish Meeting	County
No. of respondents	1	17	139	7

11. Survey responses by district:

	No. of Individual Responses	No. of councils (all-levels) Represented
Cherwell	25	19
Oxford City	9	3
South Oxfordshire	71	30
Vale of White Horse	26	18
West Oxfordshire	27	20
Unknown	6	Unknown

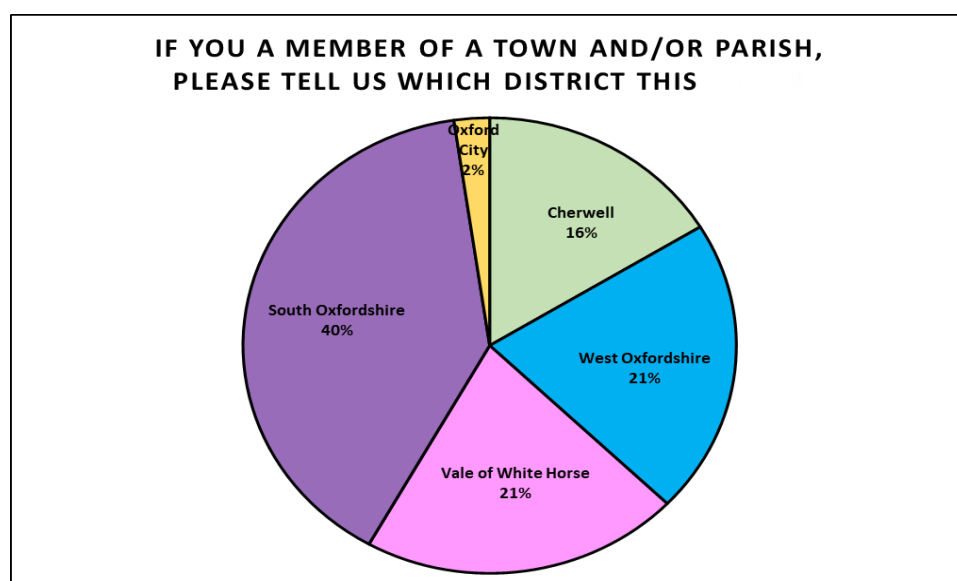
Consultation on the Draft Charter, January-February 2024

12. There were 96 responses to the consultation on the draft charter, representing at least 58 local councils.
- 12 respondents did not indicate which council they represent.
 - 88 respondents let us know if they were responding as a councillor (56.8 per cent) or clerk (43.2 per cent). Eight respondents skipped this question.

13. Respondents by type of council (eight respondents skipped this question)

Type of council	District	Town	Parish	Parish Meeting	County
No. of respondents	4	10	74	2	0
% of respondents	4.5%	11.4%	84.1%	2.3%	0%

14. 86 respondents were from a town or parish council, or parish meeting, and indicated which district their council is based in:



Methodology and Findings

Oxfordshire Town and Parish Charter Roundtable Findings

15. Attendees were split into groups, with clerks in a separate group of their own.

Attendees were given two questions to discuss:

- a. What does better partnership working look like?
- b. How can we enhance local democracy in our communities?

16. Q1: What does better partnership working look like?

- a. 242 comments were captured in relation to this question.
 - i. *'Need to get the culture right - more human, a bit less 'them and us''*
 - ii. *'Partnership - everyone needs to turn up to that - responsibility of leaders'*
 - iii. *'Partnership working will be stronger if all the partners are focused on our local communities'*
 - iv. *'Need to build sense of working together'*
 - v. *'Improving how we share best practice'*
 - vi. *'Can't meet community's needs without better engagement'*
 - vii. *'Would like to see OCC (Oxfordshire County Council) and DCs (District Councils) sharing their plans e.g at biannual meetings'*
 - viii. *'Approach us for conversations about projects that will affect our areas'*
 - ix. *'Respect for us as elected representatives'*
- b. 74 were in relation to **relationships**.
 - i. *'Email updates don't build relationships'*
 - ii. *'Knowing who the officers are, not just councillors is important'*
 - iii. *'Proactive not reactive'*
 - iv. *'Greater clarification between County and District council'*
 - v. *'Doesn't feel like a two-way relationship'*
 - vi. *'OCC (Oxfordshire County Council) needs to invest time to building relationships'*
- c. 57 were in relation to **communication**.
 - i. *'Would like single point of contact'*
 - ii. *'Face to face communication is always best'*
 - iii. *'More listening'*
 - iv. *'Constant communication - recognise parishes as knowledge of their community'*
 - v. *'Dialogue not monologue'*
- d. 40 were in relation to **transparency and accountability**.
 - i. *'Local plan is really inaccessible - 600 pages of closely typed, very legal and wide-reaching paper - less is more - hard to find relevant sections'*
 - ii. *'Inclusion of towns and parishes in big strategic decisions'*
 - iii. *'Understanding role in strategic decisions'*
 - iv. *'Better shared understanding of the planning process'*

- e. 32 were in relation to **resources**.
 - i. *'Help with grant funding with signposting to various grants available'*
 - ii. *'Directory of contacts for clerks'*
 - iii. *'Clarity about what can be used for s106 or CIL'*
 - iv. *'Support with ability to work in a more modern, digital way e.g google workspaces'*
 - v. *'Support for new councillors'*
- f. 30 were in relation to **consultation and engagement**.
 - i. *'Engage stakeholders at earliest point and explain the why behind decisions'*
 - ii. *'Consultations - too lengthy - make shorter and more relevant'*
 - iii. *'Discouraged from doing consultations as don't feel views are taken into account'*
 - iv. *'Consultations - too many 'tick box' exercises'*
- g. Clerks made more comments in relation to communication, resources, and relationships. Councillors commented more on consultation and engagement, relationships, and transparency.

17. Q2: How can we enhance local democracy in our communities?

- a. 206 comments were captured in relation to this question.
 - i. *'Put residents first, not political agendas'*
 - ii. *'Encourage people to represent their communities - and to do so without needing to be a party member'*
 - iii. *'Amplify our voice by working with neighbouring parishes'*
 - iv. *'Combatting misinformation together'*
 - v. *'Larger councils meeting with smaller councils to discuss how to generate candidates'*
 - vi. *'Elections are difficult - nomination forms - why can't it be emailed rather than printed and submitted?'*
 - vii. *'People often only engage when they're really upset - need more engagement and a better cascade to create broader engagement'*
- b. 55 were in relation to **relationships and politics**.
 - i. *'Parish work is very different - politics aren't appropriate'*
 - ii. *'Go beyond party politics'*
 - iii. *'Feel scared to speak up due to reactions on social media'*
 - iv. *'Collaborative creation of policy'*
 - v. *'Mistrust of councils by the public'*
 - vi. *'Councillors want to put something back into community - not get involved in politics'*
- c. 53 were in relation to **accessibility and participation** in local democracy.
 - i. *'Need to break barriers down and get people coming and interested'*
 - ii. *'Support and information for people to stand as independents at parish / town level'*
 - iii. *'Use clarity on language - avoid council speak, be clear and concise'*
 - iv. *'Having accessible meeting venues is vital'*
 - v. *'Hybrid increases inclusivity'*

- d. 45 were in relation to **community engagement**.
 - i. *'Work across areas - people might live in one area but shop in another'*
 - ii. *'Informal engagement - coffee cake and cuppa events for free'*
 - iii. *'Share what is being done and how we are listening to concerns'*
 - iv. *'Urban area issues often dominate over rural issues - more engagement with rural communities'*
- e. 27 were in relation to **resources and practical support**.
 - i. *'Parish councils have limited resources and need help'*
 - ii. *'Training for engaging communities / breaking down barriers'*
 - iii. *'FixMyStreet - needs better signposting between councils'*
 - iv. *'Access to mediation when groups are at odds'*
 - v. *'How can we reduce burdens on parish councillors and their time'*
- f. 20 were in relation to **young people**.
 - i. *'Go to young people, don't expect them to come to us'*
 - ii. *'Youth councils'*
 - iii. *'Improve education on how local government works and how to get involved'*
 - iv. *'Engaging with young people needs to be done differently - it's not enough just to invite them - structure doesn't work'*
 - v. *'How to attract young people when meetings are so dry with so many rules and regulations'*
- g. Clerks commented more in relation to accessibility and diversity, and community engagement. Councillors commented more in relation to community engagement, young people and relationships.

19. "In one or two words, what are your priorities?"

[illegible]

b. Responses when asked after roundtable discussions:



Survey Findings

20. The survey asked the same questions as the roundtable event on 26 October, as well as an additional question inviting any other comments on the proposed charter.

21. Initial analysis of the feedback from the roundtable and survey led to the identification of five key themes, which survey responses were then sorted into. Many responses come under multiple themes. (findings by theme further below).

- a. Relationships
- b. Resources
- c. Consultation and Engagement
- d. Communication
- e. Communities

22. **Q1: What does stronger partnership working between the Oxfordshire councils look like?**

- a. 56 respondents answered this question.
- b. The top two themes in response to this question, across all districts, were relationships and communication.

23. Responses by theme:

Theme	No. of responses in relation to theme.	% of responses in relation to theme.
Relationships	94	60.3%
Resources	27	17.3%
Consultation and Engagement	23	14.7%

Communication	93	59.6%
Communities	20	12.8%

24. Themes in order of priority for each district (in considering what stronger partnership working looks like):

District	Themes
Cherwell	1. Communication (56.5%)
	2. Relationships (52.2%)
	3. Resources and Communities (13%)
	4. Consultation and Engagement (8.7%)
Oxford City	1. Relationships (66.7%)
	2. Communication (55.6%)
	3. Communities and, Consultation and Engagement (11.1%)
South Oxfordshire	1. Relationships (63.8%)
	2. Communication (55.1%)
	3. Consultation and Engagement (17.4%)
	4. Resources and Communities (13%)
Vale of White Horse	1. Communication (72%)
	2. Relationships (52%)
	3. Resources (28%)
	4. Consultation and Engagement (20%)
	5. Communities (16%)
West Oxfordshire	1. Relationships (65.4%)
	2. Communication (61.5%)
	3. Resources (29.6%)
	4. Consultation and Engagement (11.5%)
	5. Communities (7.7%)

25. Q2: How can we enhance local democracy in our communities together?

- a. 145 respondents answered this question.
- b. The top themes in considering how we can enhance local democracy were more varied across districts:
 - i. Cherwell: Communities (47.8%) and Communication (34.8%)
 - ii. Oxford City: Communication (57.1%) and, Consultation and Engagement (57.1%)
 - iii. South Oxfordshire: Relationships (47.5%)
 - iv. Vale of White Horse: Relationships (52%) and Communication (52%)
 - v. West Oxfordshire: Communication (40.7%) and Relationships (37%)

26. Responses by theme across all districts:

Theme	No. of responses in relation to theme.	% of responses in relation to theme.
Relationships	60	41.4%
Resources	11	7.6%

Consultation and Engagement	41	28.3%
Communication	54	37.2%
Communities	42	29%

27. Themes in order of priority for each district (in considering how to enhance local democracy):

District	Themes
Cherwell	1. Communities (47.8%)
	2. Communication (34.8%)
	3. Relationships and Consultation and Engagement (26.1%)
	4. Resources (8.7%)
Oxford City	1. Communication (57.1%), and Consultation and Engagement (57.1%)
	2. Communities (14.3%) and Relationships (14.3%)
South Oxfordshire	5. Relationships (47.5%)
	6. Communication (28.8%)
	7. Communities and Consultation and Engagement (27.1%)
	8. Resources (10.2%)
Vale of White Horse	6. Relationships and Communication (52%)
	7. Communities and Consultation and Engagement (28%)
	8. Resources (4%)
West Oxfordshire	1. Communication (40.7%)
	2. Relationships (37%)
	3. Consultation and Engagement (25.9%)
	4. Communities (18.5%)
	5. Resources (7.4%)

28. **Q3: Is there anything else you would like to say to inform the development of the charter?**

- a. 107 respondents answered this question.
- b. Many responses to this question reiterated relationships and communication as key themes (47.5% and 30.8% respectively)
- c. 13.1% of responses were categorised as 'other' – with a number of responses in relation to how the charter should be formatted, implemented and its performance measured.
- d. A few responses cited being unsure of the benefits of a charter or its impact.
- e. There were also a number of positive and welcoming remarks on the news of the charter, with many calling for the charter to drive real action and change.
 - i. *'don't just write it, live it.'*
 - ii. *'I was very pleased to learn of this charter. PLEASE take away that PCs [parish councils] are there to enhance the experience for residents'*

- iii. *'Excited at possibility of joined up democracy so thank you.'*
- iv. *'Only that the charter must mean just that. The County must work with PCs [parish councils] not dictate to them.'*
- v. *'The Charter appears to set out some very good intentions of actions by County and District to communicate with towns and parishes. I need to be convinced that towns and parishes will find it easy to start conversations with relevant councillors and officers. The Charter must be a two-way process.'*
- vi. *'The whole thing would need to have a simple process, to support understanding and help those with time constraints.'*
- vii. *'The charter seems like a waste of time. What is the real reason this is being pursued? Is it to retain County Council dominance or head off new legislation?'*

29. Relationships

-
- A word cloud of terms related to community engagement. The most prominent words are 'communication', 'work', 'community', 'better', 'more', 'working', 'meetings', 'understanding', 'between', 'information', 'issues', 'time', 'Clerks', 'democracy', 'planning', 'Councillor', 'PCs', 'residents', 'very', 'being', 'contact', 'one', 't good', 'needs', 'respect', 'way', 'communities', 'clear', 'up', 'NEED', 'level', 'help', 'support', 'make', 'Officers', 'PC', 'together', 's', 'time', 'information', 'between', 'issues', 'time', 'Clerks', 'democracy', 'planning', 'Councillor', 'PCs', 'residents', 'very', 'being', 'contact', 'one', 't good', 'needs', 'respect', 'way', 'communities', 'clear', 'up', 'NEED', 'level', 'help', 'support', 'make', 'Officers'. The words are in various colors (blue, purple, orange, green, pink) and sizes, arranged in a dense, overlapping cluster.

- Page 69

- iii. *'The OCC councillor attending, or at least submitting reports to, Parish Council meetings.'*
- iv. *'cross fertilisation of initiatives across different domains,'*
- v. *'we would like to experience a stronger partnership ethos running through the whole County/District Council organisations.'*
- vi. *'Experience indicates that district and county councillors and officers can have limited understanding of how parishes work, and vice versa.'*
- d. 50% of clerks responded in relation to relationships.
 - i. *'there should be more collaboration between councils.'*
 - ii. *'appreciation for each other's roles and limitations'*
 - iii. *'Focus on partnership'*
 - iv. *'Respect and acknowledgement from the County Council towards parish councils regardless of the size.'*
 - v. *'Working together for shared goals and on community projects.'*
- e. In considering how we can enhance local democracy, 41.4 per cent of responses referenced relationships and working in partnership to solve challenges and deliver better outcomes for residents:
 - i. *'It is essential that OCC [Oxfordshire County Council] and district councils understand the importance of working with parish councils in order to deliver the best possible service and experience for residents.'*
 - ii. *'Individual OCC [Oxfordshire County Council] officers engage well with us, but engagement with strategic and political leaders in OCC [Oxfordshire County Council] is patchy. Solving this issue could improve local democracy significantly.'*
 - iii. *'Joint Parish and District Council Meetings on directly relevant local issues (roads, maintenance, schools, developments etc)'*
 - iv. *'Knowledge of local issues to the parish/ community in question can improve relationship with all tiers in the district and County Council.'*

31. Resources

- a. A word cloud of key words in responses in relation to resources shows the most frequent terms used



- b. In considering stronger partnership working, 27 responses (17.3%) to this question were in relation to resources and practical examples of the sorts of things that could better equip local councils.
- c. A bigger proportion of clerks (28.6%) referenced resources than councillors (13.2%)
- d. In considering how to enhance local democracy, resources were referenced by 7.6% of respondents.
- e. There are some clear themes and areas where better resource sharing, signposting and support between councils could support the aims of the charter. For example, access to Section 106 (s106) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds, information sharing, training, pooled resources between councils.
 - i. *'Shared resources, good use and distribution on monies whether small or big'*
 - ii. *'training at all levels and experience'*
 - iii. *'Clearer understanding of council's powers to spend'*
 - iv. *'More appropriate press releases and images'*
 - v. *'Sharing information'*
 - vi. *'shared solutions for common problems / economies of scale'*

32. Consultation and Engagement

- a. A word cloud of key words in responses related to consultation and engagement shows the most frequent terms used:



- b. Across all three questions, 87 comments were captured in relation to consultation and engagement (40.3%).
- c. More respondents referenced consultation and engagement in question two (41) than question one (23).
- d. Consultation and Engagement was a higher priority for councillors than clerks across both questions.

- e. Some respondents wanted more consultation and engagement opportunities, whereas others wanted less, with a focus on more relevant consultation and engagement opportunities.
- f. Many smaller councils had the perception that they are not listened to in county or district consultations. Some respondents also wanted more notice for consultations and for consultations to be simpler and shorter.
 - i. *'giving plenty of time for group consultation by the full Parish Council, rather than informing us at the 11th hour that there is yet another last minute consultation to respond to'*
 - ii. *'Comprehensive consultation processes to include an option to object to, or request amendments to, County or District Council proposals.'*
 - iii. *'Allow longer time to engage with community over consultations that specifically affect them. not all councils have a full time clerk.'*
 - iv. *'Consultations should be properly advertised and the outcomes taken seriously. Currently the views of Parish Councils and the residents are ignored.'*
 - v. *'OCC [Oxfordshire County Council] consultation documents are too long, filled with jargon, and have unrealistically short deadlines'*
 - vi. *'More outreach needed, online consultations only reach a few people who are particularly interested. most residents completely unaware of consultations and council decisions'*

33. Communication

- a. A word cloud of key words used in responses related to communication shows the most frequent terms used:



- b. Nearly two thirds of respondents mentioned communication in considering what stronger partnership working looks like (59.3%), and a third referenced communication in response to question two.

- c. Clerks were more likely to prioritise communication than councillors (81% of clerks), but it was a top priority for both councillors and clerks overall and came through as a strong theme.
- d. Communication was the most (Vale of White Horse and Cherwell) or second-most Oxford City, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire) frequent theme in all districts, indicating the value and importance of better communication between councils in stronger partnership working. This is particularly a priority for clerks who are often the conduit for local councils.
- e. Across both questions, Communication was overwhelmingly a priority for clerks (81% of responses), followed by 68.1% of councillor responses.
- f. Many respondents called for easier access to contact details (such as via a directory), more meaningful two-way communication, more telephone or face to face contact, and better response times from councillors and officers. Respondents also called for more open or transparent communication.
 - i. *'Being able to identify who to speak to easily, possibly by providing a telephone/email directory.'*
 - ii. *'Clear, open and honest communication.'*
 - iii. *'Simple and responsive communication between all parties.'*
 - iv. *'Knowing who's who, who does what and how to contact them'*
 - v. *'having a contact point especially for parish councils (Parish Liaison Officer)'*
 - vi. *'Having less but better communication.'*
 - vii. *'Listening and talking positively, constructively and openly to further the aims of their councils and residents.'*
 - viii. *'Use plain English and avoid trendy buzzwords and jargon.'*
 - ix. *'Listen to the Parish - we are close to our community'*

34. Communities

- a. A word cloud of key words used in responses related to communities shows the most frequent terms used:



- b. More respondents referenced communities and community engagement in question two when considering local democracy (30%) that in partnership working as part of question one (13%).
- c. Communities came up almost equally between clerks and councillors across both questions (31% of clerks and 33.6% of councillors)
- d. Key themes under communities include councils' engagement with community projects/initiatives, engaging with underrepresented groups, empowering participation in voting and elections and support for targeted communities (such as rural communities and young people).
 - i. *'Create more opportunities for citizens to take agency for outcomes, giving under-represented segments a voice or channel that suits them better than the current ways in which we currently work'*
 - ii. *'We should all work to support all parts of our community but especially those that do not have a voice eg children, elderly deprived'*
 - iii. *'Parish council members are too often returned uncontested.'*
 - iv. *'Encourage a wide range of candidates to stand for all levels of council, ensuring that there should always be sufficient candidates to require people to vote in an election.'*
 - v. *'I think a focus on the council giving power to our communities and our residents feeling like they have a voice that will be listened to and cared about, rather than the council being seen as having power over the community and making decisions without listening to the community'*
 - vi. *'Alignment to shared outcomes that benefit the local communities we serve, as steered by the communities themselves.'*
 - vii. *'It would be good if there was some sort of acknowledgement for community participation - perhaps an annual award night for volunteers or a scheme of acknowledgement of community activity online. We find it very hard to get the public involved with the PC [parish council] and to get them enthusiastic about engaging with local democracy and this leads to a difficulty in filling councillor vacancies.'*
 - viii. *'Working together with all local groups encouraging younger people to get interested in local politics'*

Other Notable Themes

35. A number of specific themes have been identified that indicate some of the issues that the charter can help to address with targeted actions.

36. County and district councillor engagement with local councils.

- a. Multiple local councils shared that they would like better engagement and communication from their county and/or district councillor – with attendance at town and parish meetings being a particular area for concern and dissatisfaction.
 - i. *'The current County Councillor has been lacking in attendance, communication and general respect for the Clerk and Council.'*
 - ii. *'our district councillor has not attended the last 3 meetings'*

- iii. *'have only been a councillor since May but in that time I am yet to read any report submitted by Councillor [Redacted] in that time. I would have thought liaison with his Parish Councils should be high on his list of priorities.'*
- iv. *'County Councillors should be more proactive with liaising with their Parish/Town Councils'*
- v. *'councillors just don't seem to take an interest at Parish level.'*
- vi. *'While our County Councillor is attends our PC [parish council] meetings and is visible to residents our District Councillor has only attended one meeting in the last two years. This has resulted in a lack of opportunity for residents to raise concerns with them.'*
- vii. *'Appoint a cabinet member as the council's lead for relationships with parish and town councils and as the champion of local councils.'*
- viii. *'Make sure councillors attend meetings and listen to the queries of parishes'*
- ix. *'we are fortunate that one of our ward's district councillors and our county councillor regularly attend our parish council meetings. When I attended the meeting in Oxford about the charter I was at a table with two or three parish council chairs who never ever saw their district and OCC [Oxfordshire Council Council] councillors nor received reports. I think that is shocking.'*

37. Young people

- a. A few respondents expressed a desire to better engage with young people and to get younger communities more engaged in local government more widely, but many lack the resources or manpower to do so effectively.
 - i. *'Better engagement with younger families within the area. Better signposting.'*
 - ii. *'Working together with all local groups encouraging younger people to get interested in local politics'*
 - iii. *'Parish councils are made up primarily of individuals who have the interest and time. This often excludes younger people with families and or work commitments who, though interested, do not have the time. I don't have an answer to this key issue.'*
 - iv. *'Interact with schools to encourage interest at a young stage.'*
 - v. *'Focus on engaging a younger audience - from our schools to young parents.'*
 - vi. *'Greater engagement between communities and councils that actively encourage participation of the community and all demographics of the community, particularly younger voices.'*

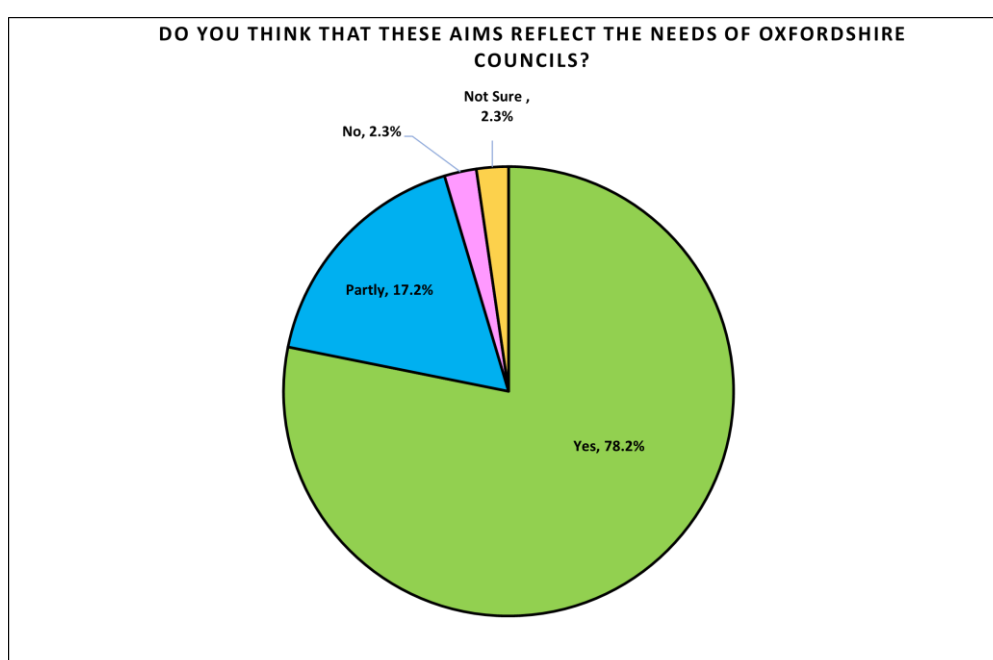
38. Single point of contact

- a. Many respondents called for a single point of contact for town and parish councils when contacting county or district councils – such as through a named liaison officer, locality officer or a dedicated telephone number or helpdesk.
 - i. *'One point of contact at CC/DC [county council/district councils] for parish and town councils. (This worked in Milton Keynes)'*

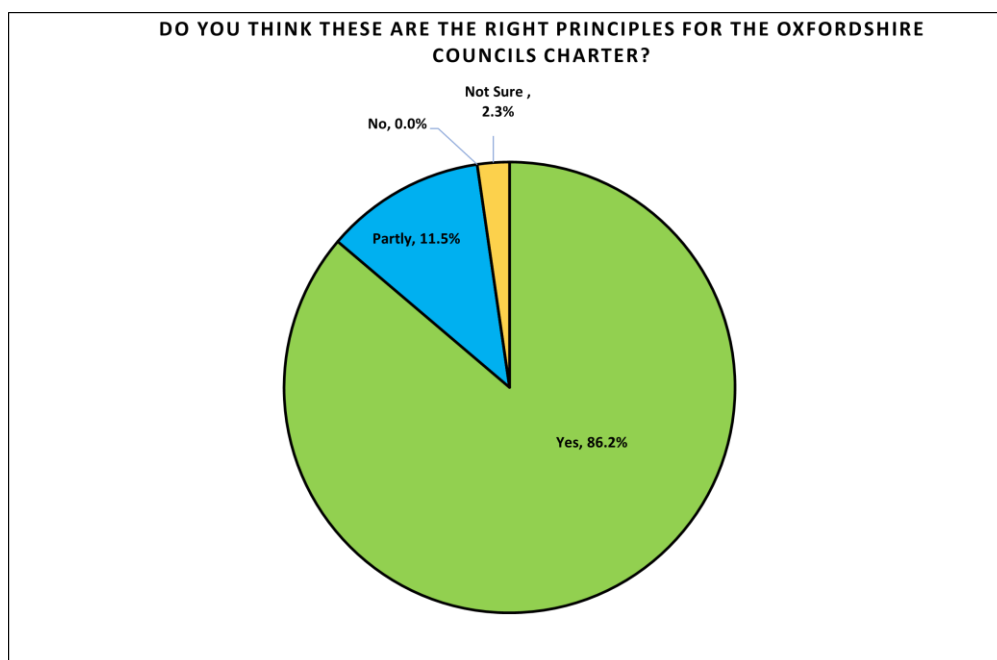
- ii. *'Help in identifying who to contact if we have a question, need expert advice or help with something. At the moment figuring out who to contact is difficult.'*
- iii. *'I'd like to be able to access contact details of teams at OCC [Oxfordshire County Council], not necessarily a public page on the website but a Clerks' page which we have to log into to enable us to get to the right team quickly.'*
- iv. *'having a contact point especially for parish councils (Parish Liaison Officer) or failing that a regularly updated list of names of who to contact in which department'*
- v. *'More communication with parishes and easier access to Officers, Clerks should have contacts rather than go the same route as the public'*
- vi. *'A single mapping for Parishes - as clerk I waste huge amounts of time working out which assets belong to which tier - trees, litter bins, responsibility for specific footways, paths, verges and green spaces etc. There are different and incomplete maps for different functions.'*
- vii. *'Having something like a contract manager to support Town and Parishes - a go to who we can talk to about any of the services provided by councils.'*
- viii. *'A dedicated access portal where a new contact and/or advice is being sought would be helpful.'*
- ix. *'a directory of relevant team/officer, or a point of contact.'*
- x. *'A PC [parish council] liaison officer - to be a contact point, to aid collaboration'*

Draft Charter Consultation Findings

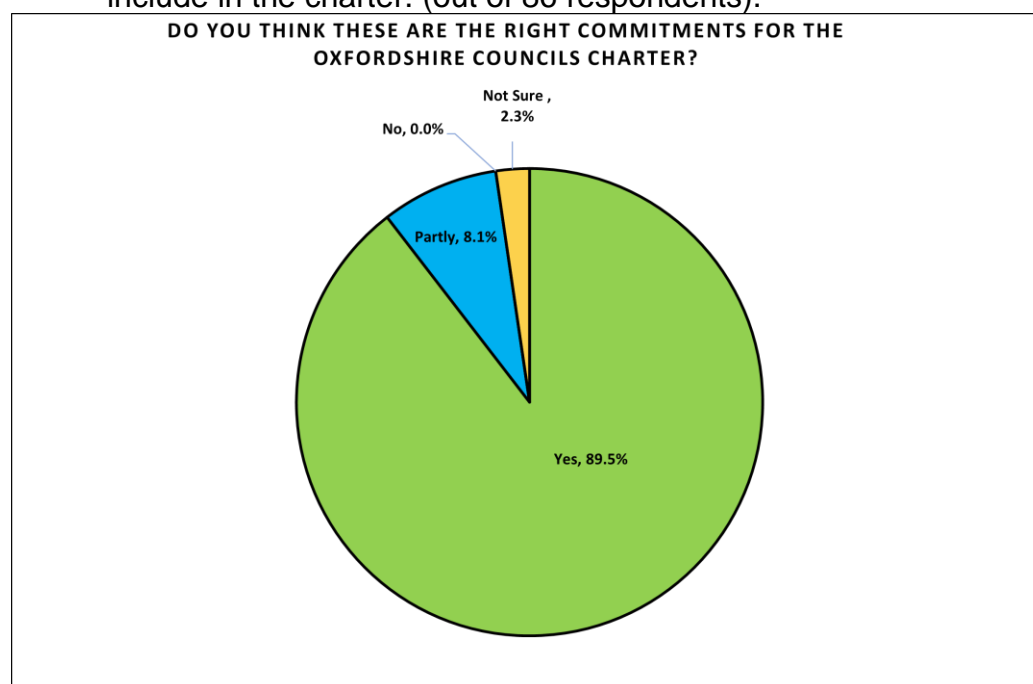
39. The consultation indicated strong support for the contents of the draft charter.
- a. 78% responded that they think the aims meet the needs of Oxfordshire councils (out of 87 respondents).



- b. 86% responded that they think the principles are the right principles for the charter (out of 87 respondents).



- c. 90% responded that they think the commitments are the right commitments to include in the charter. (out of 86 respondents).




40. Respondents were invited to comment on each specific aim, principle and commitment of the charter.

- 41. Most respondents supported the contents of the draft, with most comments in relation to clarity or the meaning of its contents, as well as comments in relation to implementation.
- 42. The results of the consultation demonstrate that the contents of the drafter charter were agreeable to respondents, and effectively captured the feedback and findings from the first two engagement activities.
- 43. As a result of the consultation, the contents of the charter remain broadly the same, but wording has been altered to ensure clarity and conciseness, whilst also removing any repetition and ensuring the intention of the charter is better communicated.

Conclusion

- 44. Overall, the engagement to develop an Oxfordshire Councils Charter was broadly positive from local councils. Over 135 of Oxfordshire's local councils inputted throughout the process.
- 45. Clear themes have emerged across all engagement activities, notably around communication and relationships between councils, indicating key areas where the charter can make meaningful change to improve partnership working across Oxfordshire.
- 46. The response and feedback to the draft charter indicate that the engagement activities throughout have effectively captured the needs and concerns of local councils, and that they have been effectively translated into a charter that Oxfordshire local councils support.
- 47. The engagement activities have also helped to identify specific examples of where the charter can tangibly make a difference and will help to shape the actions that come out of this work.

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JUNE 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities. Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Jacqueline Wright – Business Manager, Leisure and Wellbeing. Email: jacqueline.wright@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To highlight the main points from Oxfordshire County Council’s Director of Public Health Annual Report on climate change and health 2023/24, together with a call for action to ensure that collectively we accelerate and facilitate more positive health benefits by taking action to address our changing climate.</p>
<p>Annex</p>	<p>Annex A – Director of Public Health Annual Report on climate change and health 2023/24.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to: I. Note the contents of the report.</p>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Good Quality of Life for All • 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>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>N/A</p>

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Oxfordshire County Council's Director of Public Health is responsible for producing an annual report on the health of their local population - the Director of Public Health Annual Report.
- 1.2** The Annual Report is a statutory requirement and informs local people about the health of their communities and provides decision makers in local authorities and health services with information about current and future priorities, gaps and challenges and how these can be addressed.
- 1.3** The Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire is Ansaf Azhar. He uses his reports 'as a vehicle to shine the spotlight on a significant issue that is relevant to Oxfordshire partners and public, with a view to creating a strong call to action'.
- 1.4** Last year's report focussed on the increasing prevalence of excess weight and physical inactivity in Oxfordshire and that this issue cannot be addressed simply by looking at individual lifestyle factors but is very dependent on socioeconomic and environmental factors. This includes the important role of healthy-place shaping and highlights the importance of this work to continue in Oxfordshire so that places that promote healthy behaviours in the first place can be created.
- 1.5** This year's report focuses on the health impacts of climate change, and the health and wellbeing benefits of positive climate action on the local population. The next section will summarise the main points from the report.

2. SUMMARY AND MAIN POINTS FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT

- 2.1** It is evident there are immediate and positive health benefits that can be realised through climate action, yet health is not a focus in the climate emergency.
- 2.2** The report highlights the positive co-benefits of climate action and for everyone to see the individual benefits to their health and wellbeing. The wider determinants of health (Figure 1) describe the different factors that have an impact on our population's health and wellbeing. However, challenges to health and wellbeing are still often being addressed through siloed work.

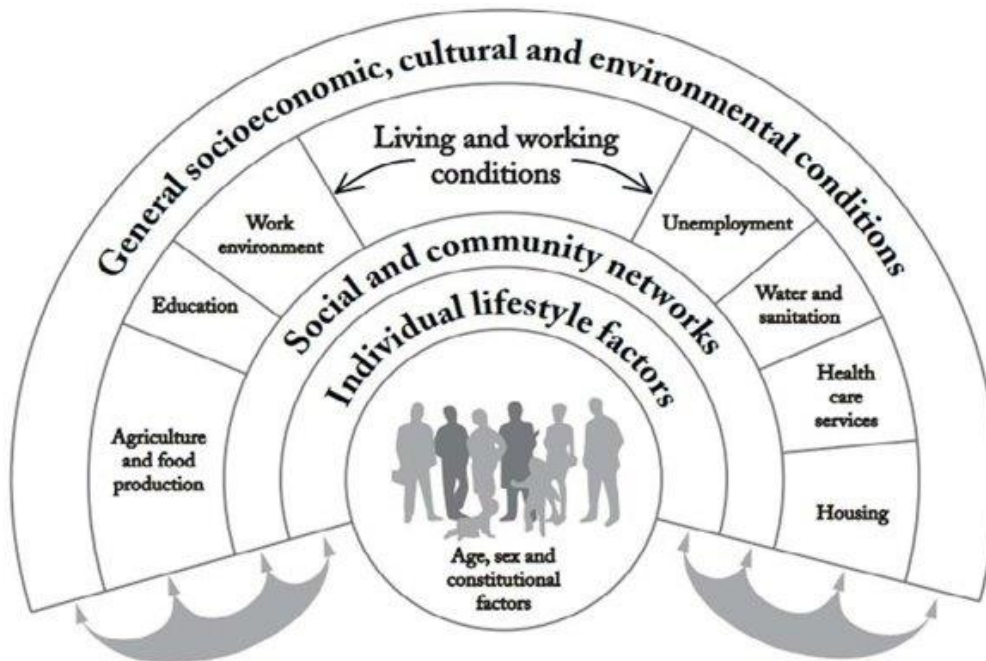


Figure 1: Wider Determinants of Health (Source: Dahlgren & Whitehead)

- 2.3 Individual workstreams to address the climate emergency, cost of living crisis and public health emergency have evidently positive impacts, but working in partnership, more effectively and holistically will likely lead to even greater results and a synergistic effect in the benefits to the populations health and wellbeing.
- 2.4 The recent flooding in Oxfordshire, which impacted people's livelihoods and consequently their physical and mental wellbeing brings the strong connection between climate change and health into focus.
- 2.5 At the same time, any actions and measures taken to mitigate climate change leads to immediate benefits to our health and wellbeing.
- 2.6 The increased frequency and severity of adverse weather events are having direct and harmful impacts on our health and wellbeing and will continue to lead to premature deaths and preventable suffering unless necessary climate action is taken.
- 2.7 The impact of climate change varies with the worst effects on disadvantaged and more vulnerable populations, which is widening health inequalities even further.
- 2.8 The report mentions five key areas of the climate emergency that impact our health and wellbeing the most:
 - Temperature
 - Direct effects of hot weather such as dehydration, heat cramps, heat exhaustion, dizziness and fainting, heat stroke and breathing difficulties.
 - In the summer of 2022 alone, there were 65 excess deaths during periods of higher temperature across Oxfordshire.
 - Air

- Health effects of air pollution a) short term: exacerbation of asthma, cough, wheezing & shortness of breath; and b) long term: stroke, lung cancer, respiratory conditions and cardiovascular disease leading to reduced life expectancy.
- Episodes of high air pollution increase respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions and mortality.
- Roadside air pollution in Oxford is estimated to stunt lung growth in children by 14.1 %
- Cutting air pollution in Oxford by a further 20 per cent may result in:
 - 77 fewer children with low lung function and 31 fewer children with a chest infection each year
 - 83 fewer cases of coronary heart disease
 - 28 fewer cases of lung cancer
 - 1 less baby born underweight.
- Water
 - severe weather events, such as storms and flooding, in the absence of necessary upgrades to the system, have the potential to overwhelm existing sewage systems and water treatment facilities. In turn, this can result in sewage overflow with contamination of water sources and water quality across Oxfordshire
 - In 2020, over ten sewage works across Oxfordshire reported over 100 overflow events each – with some works discharging raw sewage into rivers for over 2,000 hours through the year
 - 18 river locations in Oxfordshire, in and surrounding Oxford City were sampled over the period January – December 2021: only one of eight recreational sites had safe levels of bacteria to allow for swimming and bathing
 - Flooding is becoming more common across Oxfordshire and the UK. In Oxfordshire, there have been 18 significant flood events since 2007, which have caused serious disruption to people's homes, lives and livelihoods
 - The higher risk areas related to the health impacts of flooding include Witney Central, Witney South and Witney East.
- Food
 - Reducing food loss and waste can have a significant environmental benefit and may save the average family up to £700 per year.
 - Globally, food prices are projected to increase by 20 per cent on average by 2050 in the absence of necessary climate adaptation. This exacerbates food insecurity and malnutrition, especially among more deprived populations who may experience limited access to affordable and nutritious diets.

- Nature
 - Greener neighbourhoods and more exposure to green space correspond to:
 - better self-assessed general and mental health;
 - reduced all-cause and cardiovascular mortality;
 - reduced stress;
 - reduced incidence of low-birth weight;
 - maintaining a healthier weight.
 - When it comes to access to nature specific groups are consistently missing out incl. e people living in areas of high deprivation, those on low incomes or unemployed, older people, black and minority ethnic groups and people with a long-term health condition or disability. Many of these groups also experience significant health inequalities.
 - Currently land in Oxfordshire is predominantly used for intensive farming, with only 7.5 per cent for green space and gardens.

2.9 The strongest adverse health impacts are caused by heat and cold, flooding and vector-borne infectious diseases.

2.10 There are several actions that organisations and system partners across Oxfordshire including West Oxfordshire District Council, are already undertaking to address the changing climate, resulting in benefits to our health and wellbeing. This includes the following 5 main themes:

- Energy efficient healthy homes and buildings
- Sustainable travel and clean air
- Green health and social care
- Healthy and sustainable diets
- Accessible green spaces, clean water and nature

2.11 Our Council Plan 2023 – 2027 has responding to the climate and ecological emergencies as one of its five priorities; and the food action plan Executive approved in March this year and our support to the Windrush Bike Project through Westhive provide further examples of actions this Council is taking to address the climate change and improve our residents' health and wellbeing.

3. CALL FOR ACTION

3.1 The Director of Public Health's annual report makes a call for action to ensure that collectively we accelerate and facilitate more positive health benefits by taking action to address our changing climate.

3.2 It notes that every climate action, policy and strategy should identify and maximise the opportunity to improve our health and wellbeing. By the same token, every health action,

policy, and strategy should mitigate for and prevent the negative health impacts of our changing climate.

3.3 The six main priorities for action are:

- a. cleaner indoor and outdoor air by promoting active, sustainable travel and adopting low-carbon energy and supply chains
- b. Increase and improve access for all to safe, inclusive green spaces and clean waterways with positive impacts on wildlife, biodiversity and adaptation
- c. Adapt and upgrade buildings, estates and facilities to ensure high quality services can be delivered now and in the future as resources are made available
- d. Work with suppliers and the supply chain to reduce carbon emissions, ensure decisions consider carbon impacts, and encourage suppliers to develop more sustainable practices, including maximising social value and environmental standards for food and catering
- e. Ensure partnership working through existing forums and networks to accelerate action on climate mitigation and adaptation, whilst maximising benefits for health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on delivery of system wide action to address the risks of extreme weather events
- f. Build and continuously bolster community resilience by adapting infrastructure to meet the needs of our changing climate

3.4 It goes on to call on central government to support local authorities in delivering climate action with a joined-up approach by:

- a. investing in low carbon and climate resilient infrastructure including public transport, renewable energy and electric vehicle charging
- b. creating good, secure employment and reducing inequalities by supporting reskilling, retraining, remote working and research to accelerate the move to a net zero economy
- c. Improving our residents' health and wellbeing by upgrading our homes, healthcare facilities and schools to ensure they are fit for the future
- d. Boosting our physical and mental health by making it easy for people to walk, cycle, and use active, sustainable transport
- e. Improving our mental and physical health, capacity for natural cooling and air quality by ensuring access for all to green spaces and other green infrastructure

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The report calls for partnership work to enable structural changes, and system wide actions to mitigate and adapt to our changing climate and to improve health.

4.2 The Council should continue to support and deliver initiatives like 'Better Housing Better Health', the Oxfordshire Food Strategy, enhancing green spaces within the district and to encourage volunteering as part of its priority to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies.

4.3 The Director of Public Health Annual Report has clearly stated how climate action is impacting positively on health and wellbeing and how important a connected health, wellbeing and climate strategy is in Oxfordshire. The Council should therefore continue to be a proactive system partner. The Council should apply the principle of partnership working internally and seek to further break down silos by recognising that all initiatives and actions in the council plan will complement each other and lead to a synergistic effect in their benefits to the population.

4.4 The council should ensure that every climate action, policy and strategy should identify and maximise the opportunity to improve our health and wellbeing. By the same token, every health action, policy, and strategy should mitigate for and prevent the negative health impacts of our changing climate.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 N/A

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 There are no significant risks in noting the Director of Public Health's annual report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 In noting the Director of Public Health's annual report an equalities impact assessment is not required.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The actions we can take to mitigate climate change and the associated, immediate benefits to health and wellbeing are central to the Director of Public Health's annual report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 [Director of Public Health Annual Report on Climate Change and Health 2023/24](#)

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

Healthier, Cleaner, Faster:

Climate Action for Health in Oxfordshire

Director of Public Health
Annual Report on climate
change and health

2023/24



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**



Foreword from Ansaf Azhar

Every year I use my Director of Public Health Annual Report as a vehicle to shine the spotlight on a significant issue that is relevant to Oxfordshire partners and public, with a view to creating a strong call to action.

My report last year focused on what is arguably one of the biggest lifestyle public health risks at a population level for Oxfordshire residents, the increasing prevalence of excess weight and physical inactivity. We talked about how addressing this issue is not simply limited to individual choice but largely governed by socioeconomic and environmental factors. In doing so, we talked about the role of healthy place-shaping in creating a place that promotes healthy behaviours in the first place. We also know these same interventions and place-shaping initiatives create a sustainable environment that is good for our climate.

Today, as I reflect on the biggest public health challenges to our population's wellbeing, climate change stands out as one of the most significant threats to our population both at global and local level, with strong tangible links to other public health threats we have previously discussed. Therefore, I want to use this year's annual report to focus on the health impacts of climate change, and the health and wellbeing benefits of positive climate action.





For too long, we have tended to focus on major challenges to our wellbeing in their individual silos. Their positive impacts have been seen as individual benefits in terms of improving the environment or health or helping with the cost of living crisis or tackling health inequalities. This silo thinking has caused polarisation of the debate, when in reality all the initiatives to tackle the above challenges, executed effectively, will complement each other and lead to a synergistic effect in their benefits to the population.

This is particularly evident in the interaction between our health and the environment. The adverse impacts of our deteriorating climate on the health and wellbeing of our residents are immediate. This came into sharp focus during the recent flooding in Oxfordshire, where the loss of livelihood and the consequent impact on our mental health and overall wellbeing was unprecedented. These events are going to be more common going forward.

We also know what we do to mitigate climate change also has immediate benefits to our health and wellbeing and these benefits are felt by individuals and communities, creating healthy places where healthy behaviours will be the norm. This approach is both nationally and

internationally recognised, leading to the first declaration on climate and health at the COP 28.

This report seeks to help reframe the debate. To look through the lens of the positive co-benefits of climate action and enable our residents to see the individual benefits to their health and wellbeing. It celebrates the great work we have already done, but we urgently need to do more, and it recommends actions for all of us. We cannot do this alone, everyone and every organisation has an important role to play. It encourages individuals to make positive behaviour changes and system partners to prioritise actions that are good for wellbeing and the climate.

I believe it will bring our partners in Oxfordshire together under one key ambition to make Oxfordshire a healthier place for all of us. Our anchor institutions through our partnership network have a particularly important role in delivering this ambition. We must act now for the benefit of the health and wellbeing of our population.

I hope you enjoy this report, and it inspires you to join this exciting journey to make Oxfordshire a great place for all our residents.

Contents

Executive summary	2
Section 0: Introduction	5
Section 1: Why the focus on the impact of climate change on health now?	6
1.0 Introduction	6
1.1 Temperature	7
1.2 Air	20
1.3 Water	26
1.4 Food	34
1.5 Nature	39
Section 2: What are we doing now?	45
2.0 Introduction	45
2.1 Energy efficient healthy homes and buildings	47
2.2 Sustainable travel and clean air	49
2.3 Green health and social care	51
2.4 Healthy and sustainable diets	55
2.5 Accessible green spaces	57
Section 3: Call for action	59
3.1 System actions	60
3.2 National policy and funding	61
3.3 Individual actions	62
Appendix A: Profile of health and wellbeing in Oxfordshire	63



Acknowledgements

- Louisa Chenciner
- Rosie Rowe
- Margaret Melling
- Ariane Crampton
- Adam Briggs
- Ivana Thomas
- Members of the DPHAR steering group
- OCC Climate Action Team
- OCC Emergency Planning Team
- South Central Ambulance Service

Introduction

Health is the untold story in the climate emergency.¹ This is staggering given the immediate and positive health benefits for individuals, families and communities which can be delivered through climate action.

Climate action means better health for everyone – whether we are talking about newborn babies, children, teenagers, working age adults or older people. Amidst mounting pressure in our NHS, tackling the impacts of the changing climate across Oxfordshire will save lives and money and conserve resources for those most in need. It will also benefit the building blocks of our health: providing homes which can be heated and cooled affordably, infrastructure for people to walk and cycle to keep communities active, connected, and healthy, and green spaces to boost mental health and store carbon.

To date there has been progress toward ambitious goals to mitigate and adapt to the changing climate in Oxfordshire. We are a national leader on climate action, with a countywide strategy and action plan that has

already contributed to major reductions in emissions among residents, businesses and the transport sector.² Total emissions in the county fell by more than one third (34 per cent) between 2008 and 2021, whilst emissions per capita fell by 42 per cent.³ Over the same period, there were reductions in greenhouse emissions across all sectors with a 70 per cent reduction from businesses, 35 per cent reduction from residents and their homes and 16 per cent reduction from transport sources.³

Despite some progress to reduce fossil fuel use and polluting greenhouse gas emissions, climate change is happening now in Oxfordshire, posing a real and current threat to health and wellbeing.¹ We are all experiencing the effects of the climate emergency with increased frequency and severity of adverse weather events. Since 2007, there have been 18 severe flood events, 10 named storms, eight severe cold snaps, four major heatwaves and three periods of drought (see figure 1 on next page).⁴

These events are having direct and harmful impacts on our health and wellbeing and will continue to lead to premature deaths and

preventable suffering unless necessary climate action is taken. Of real concern, many infectious diseases are sensitive to the climate, and with warmer temperatures we can expect a greater risk of new and emerging infectious diseases on our doorstep.⁵ The impact of climate change on individuals will vary, with the worst effects on disadvantaged and more vulnerable populations, and without necessary action this will further widen health inequalities.⁵

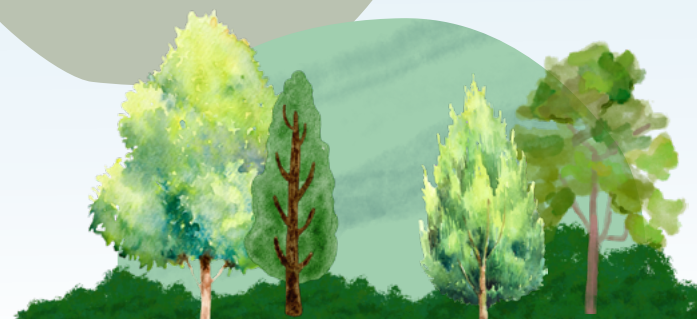
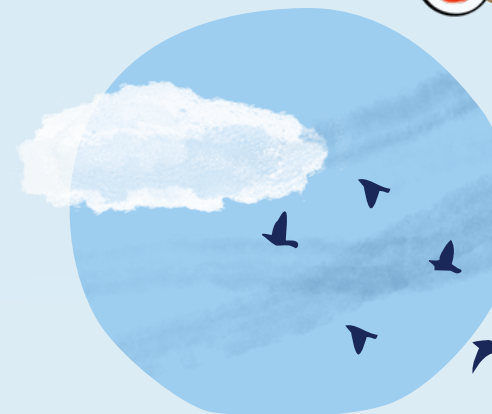
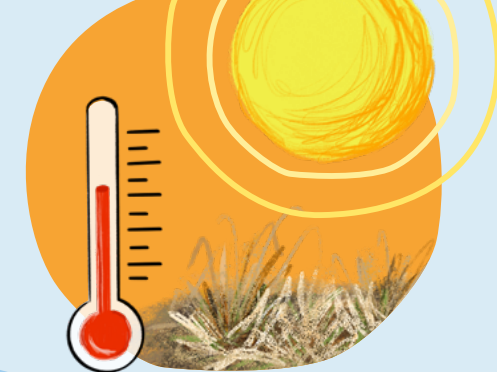
This report sets out just how important a connected health, wellbeing and climate strategy is in Oxfordshire. There is a clear link between healthier, happier communities and sustained climate action, and it is time we made the most of this opportunity. This report raises awareness of the immediate and longer-term health benefits of local climate action and aims to maximise these health benefits in every climate action, policy and strategy undertaken across the county.

Section 1:

Why the focus on the impact of climate change on health now?

1.0 Introduction

We all need to take urgent climate action in Oxfordshire to protect and improve our health. There are five key areas of the climate emergency with implications for our health: **temperature, air, water, food, and nature**. Current evidence describes the local health impacts of our changing climate across these five areas in Oxfordshire. The evidence is currently strongest for adverse impacts of climate on health due to heat and cold, flooding and vector-borne infectious diseases.⁵





1.1 Temperature

Temperatures are increasing in Oxfordshire, the UK and globally. Hotter weather has also been accompanied by increasing numbers of adverse weather events, such as storms, freezing conditions and snow.⁶ Hot weather and heatwaves now occur frequently in Oxfordshire, affecting the health, lives and livelihoods of people across the county.⁷ The summers are drier and the rain that does fall is more likely to occur in heavy rainfall events.⁵

Although hot weather has positive connotations for many, in the absence of necessary climate adaptation, higher temperatures increase the risk of heart attacks, stroke, lung disease and severe mental illness.⁵⁻⁶ Hot weather can also impact indirectly on health by increasing the transmission of food, vector and waterborne infectious diseases.⁵⁻⁶

There is robust evidence that as temperatures increase above a certain level the risk of death increases.⁶

In the summer of 2022 alone, there were 65 excess deaths during periods of higher temperature across Oxfordshire.⁷

The effects of hot weather

Direct effects:



dehydration



dizziness & fainting



heatstroke



heat exhaustion



heat cramps



heat rash



heart attacks



severe breathing difficulties

Indirect effects:



Increased demand on healthcare services



Power outages, affecting homes and healthcare services



Wildfires, and by association smoke inhalation

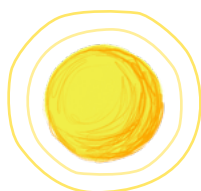
Increasing temperature in excess of 25°C are associated with severe illness and excess heat-related deaths in vulnerable people. Higher temperatures can affect your health in different ways.





Specific groups including babies and young children, older people, people experiencing homelessness, outdoor and manual workers and people with longer term medical conditions are especially at risk because they are more exposed to heat and/or less able to compensate under these conditions.⁶

For example, older adult social care users (living at home) are more likely to be living in deprived urban areas of Oxfordshire which are more likely to retain heat than surrounding rural areas during periods of hot weather, particularly at night.⁸



Average temperatures are increasing in Oxfordshire

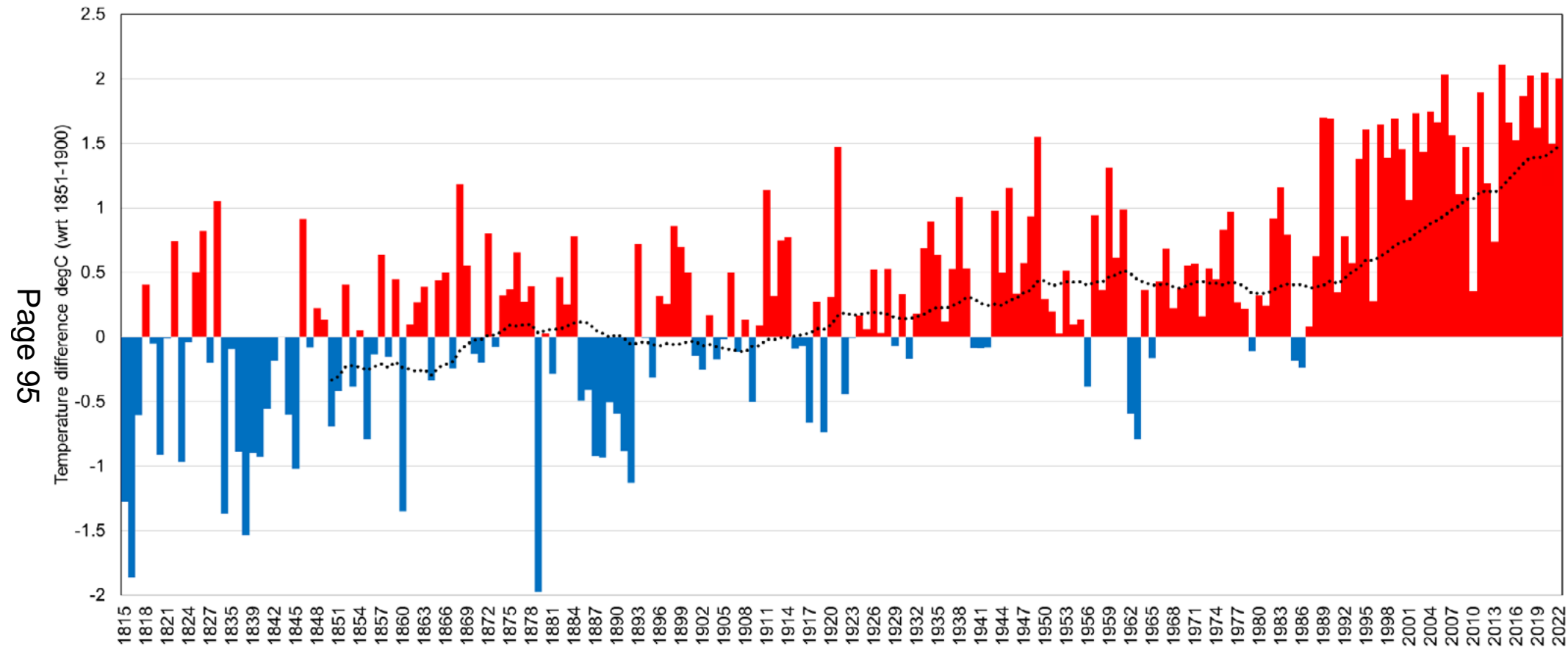
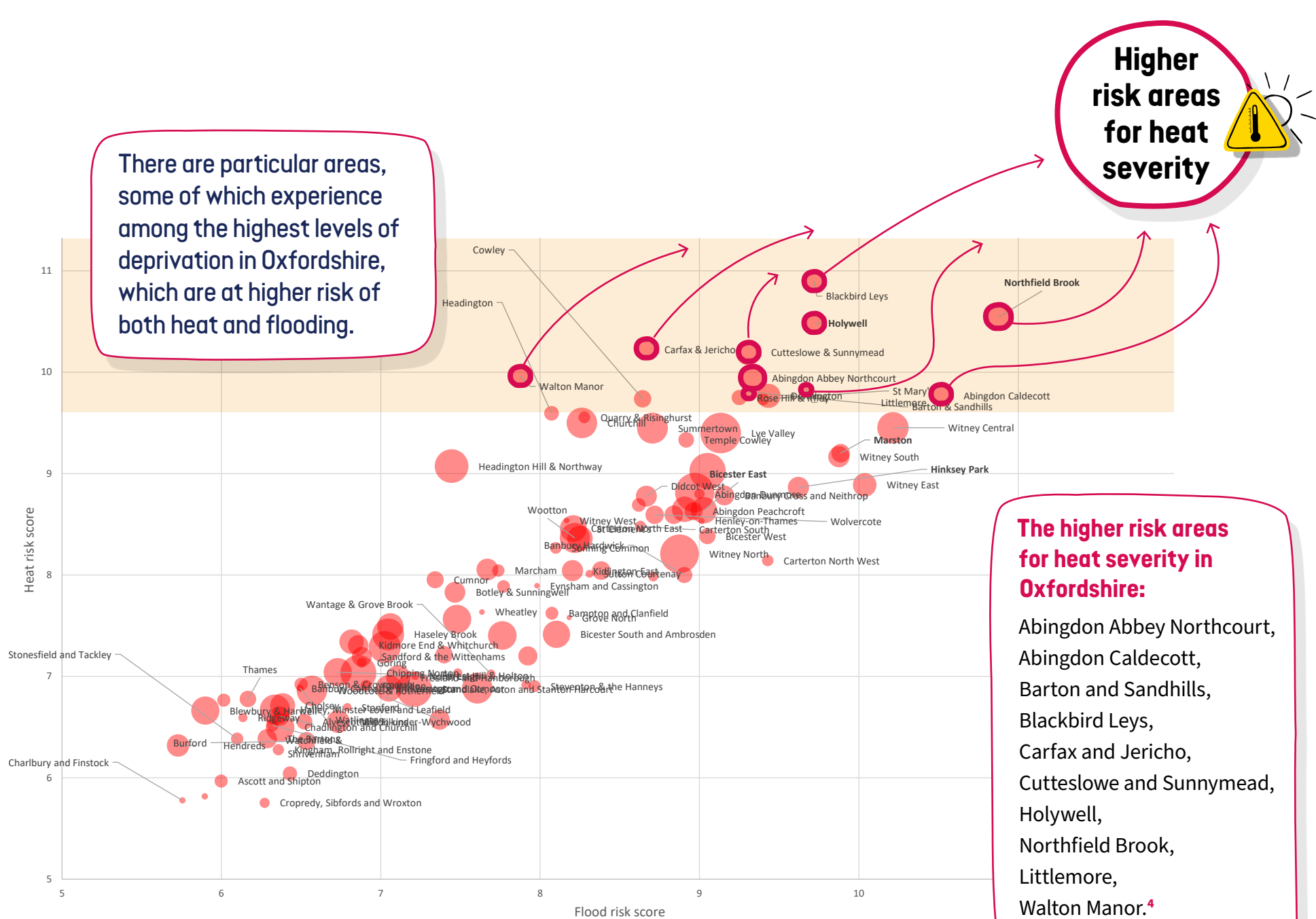


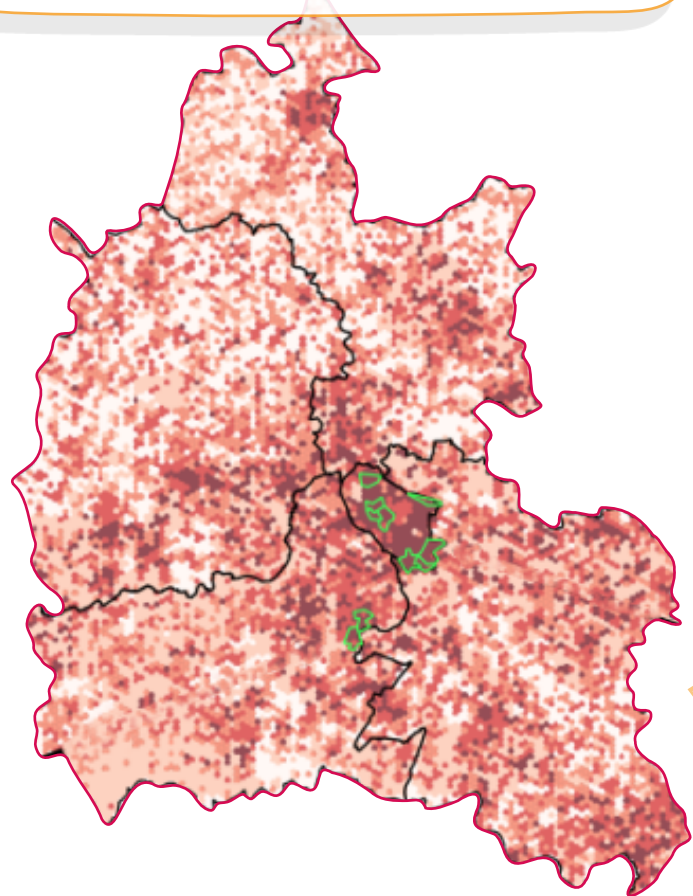
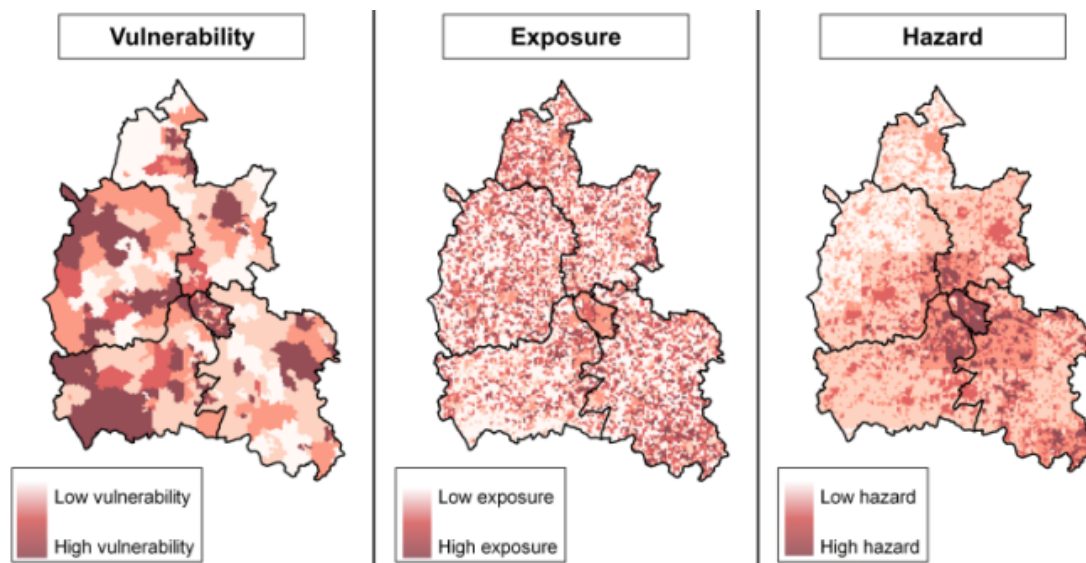
Figure 1 Average annual mean temperature anomalies for Oxford (top) and climate stripes (bottom) for Oxford and across Oxfordshire (OCC) relative to a pre-industrial 1851-1900 baseline (data from OUCE Radcliffe Observatory and Met Office HadUK).

Source: Oxford Weather and Climate since 1767 by Stephen Burt and Tim Burt, published by Oxford University Press, 2022.





There are particular areas, some of which experience among the highest levels of deprivation in Oxfordshire, which are at higher risk of adverse effects of heat.



The higher risk areas for heat severity in Oxfordshire:

Abingdon Abbey Northcourt,
Abingdon Caldecott,
Barton and Sandhills,
Blackbird Leys,
Carfax and Jericho,

Cotteslowe and Sunnymead,
Holywell,
Northfield Brook,
Littlemore,
Walton Manor.⁴

Figure 3 Current Heatwave risk in Oxfordshire and ten wards with the highest heatwave risk.

Source: Atkins Health Impact Assessment

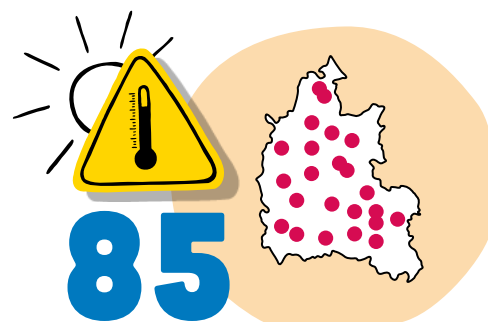
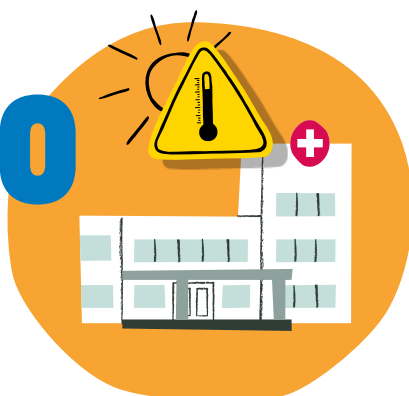


Hot weather also impacts on health and social care services, and the health care system's ability to respond and provide routine care. Nine in 10 UK hospitals, including hospitals in Oxfordshire, are currently susceptible to overheating due to their architectural design, poor ventilation, and lack of cooling systems. This has doubled in the past five years.⁹ Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust reported the highest burden of overheating events across the southeast region in 2022 and was ranked sixth in England with 85 events across four sites.⁹

Across England, total costs of heat-related deaths from climate change and related socioeconomic change has been estimated at £6.8 billion per year in the 2020s, rising to £14.7 billion per year in the 2050s.⁵

9 in 10

UK hospitals are susceptible to overheating



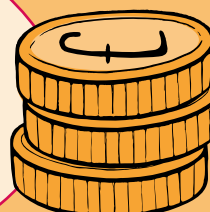
85
overheating occurrences in Oxfordshire in 2022



51
Oxfordshire care homes at risk of overheating

Cost of socioeconomic change due to heat related deaths across England

£6.8 billion



2020

£14.7 billion



2050





At least 51 care homes, four hospitals and 40 GP and healthcare facilities are located in areas of high current heat risk. In addition, at least 130 educational establishments are located in areas of high current heat risk.⁴

Figure 4 shows projected heat risks faced by care homes, GP practices and hospitals across Oxfordshire.⁹

-  Districts
-  Care homes
-  GP and healthcare facilities
-  Hospitals

Heatwave hazard

-  Low hazard
-  High hazard

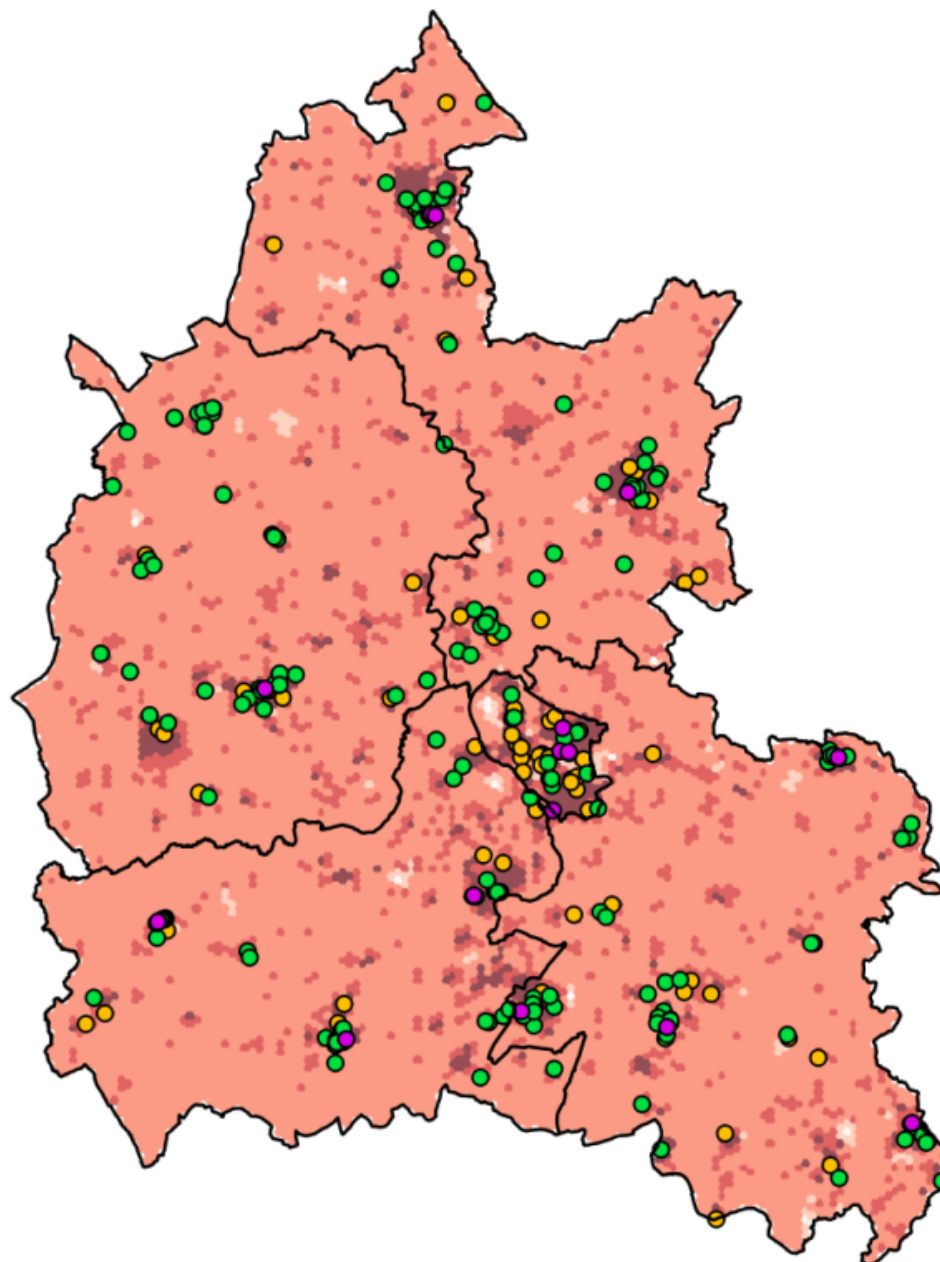


Figure 4 Healthcare facilities and future heatwave hazard.

Source: Atkins Health Impact Assessment



During the September 2023 heatwave, total ambulance demand across Oxfordshire increased by 8.6 per cent the week of the heatwave compared to the preceding 7 days – see figure 5.¹⁰

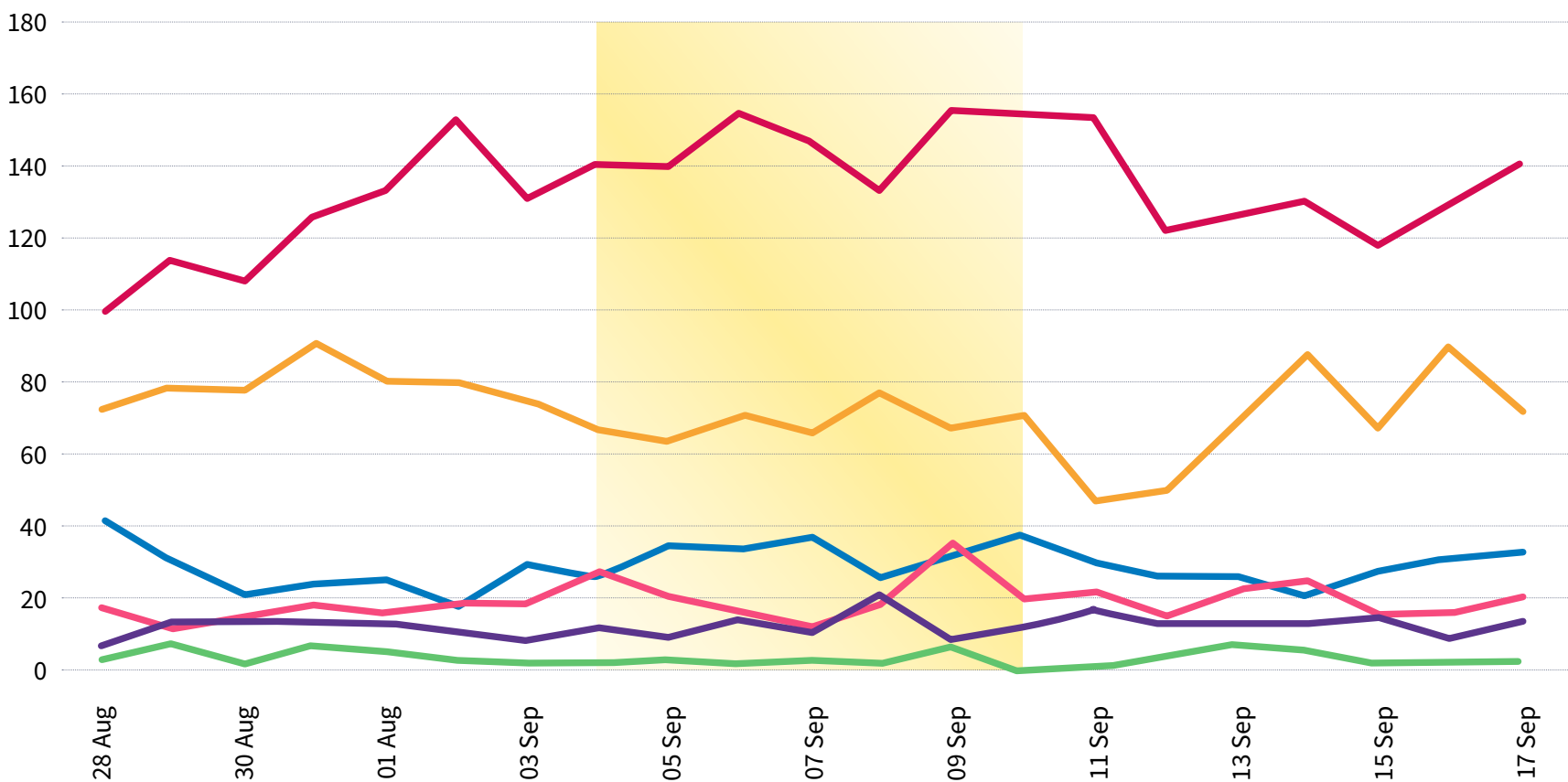
Patient acuity also increased with higher numbers of category 1 (life threatening) and 2 (emergency) calls, with a relative reduction in category 3 (urgent) calls.¹⁰

Figure 5
999 incidents demand by category of call during the September 2023 heatwave, Oxfordshire.

Source:
South-Central Ambulance Service

999 incidents demand - Oxfordshire CCG

Heatwave 4 - 10 September 2023



Category 1:
calls from people with life-threatening illnesses or injuries

Category 2:
emergency calls

Category 3:
urgent calls

Category 4:
less urgent calls

Category 5:
hear and treat

HCP:
healthcare professional ambulance response



During the unprecedented July 2022 heatwave, patient acuity also increased during the week of the heatwave, with higher numbers of category 1 and 2 calls – see figure 6.¹⁰

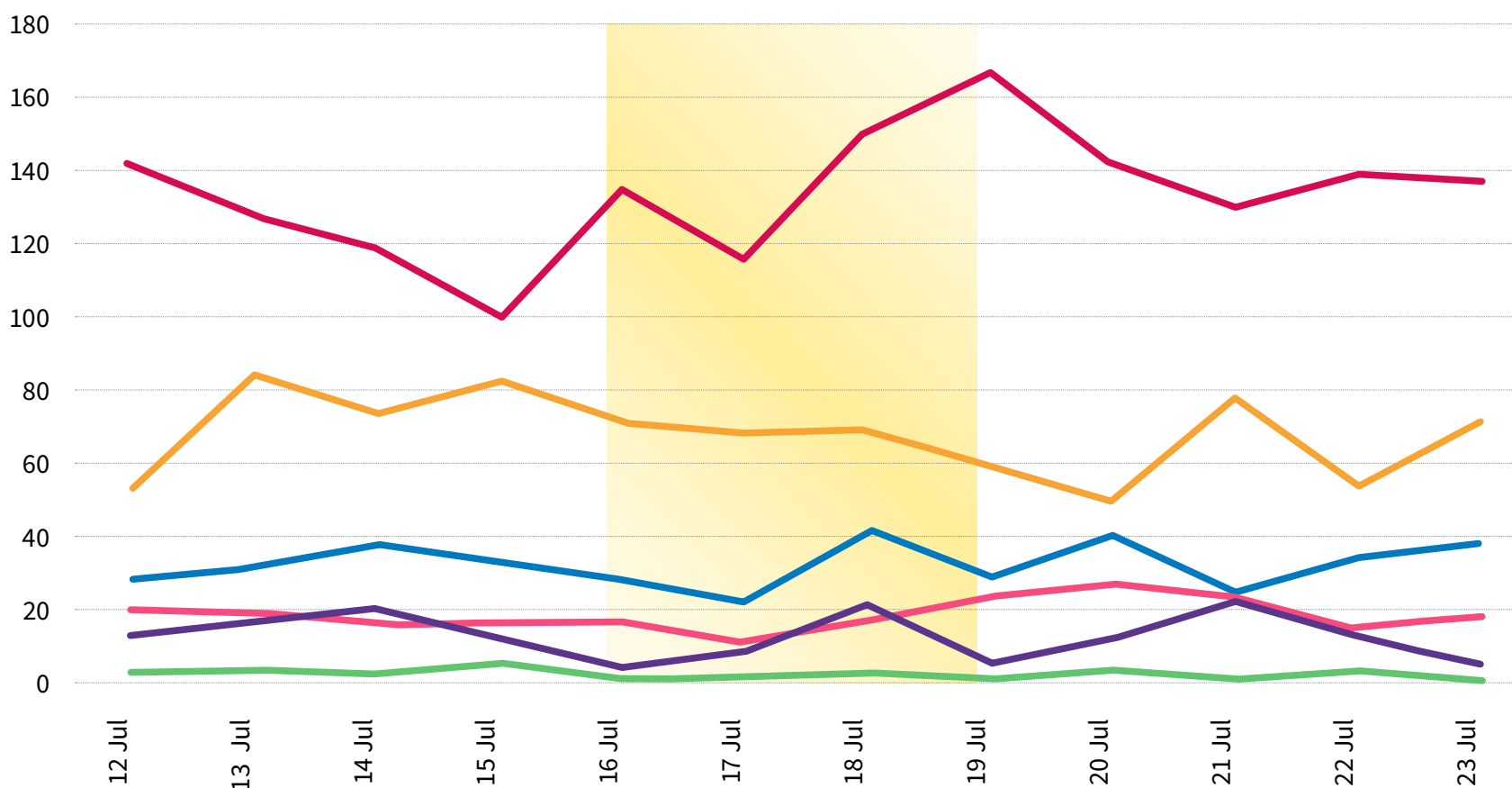
This pattern of more severe patient acuity persisted for one week following the heatwave.¹⁰

Figure 6
999 incidents demand by category of call during the July 2022 heatwave, Oxfordshire.

Source:
South-Central
Ambulance Service

999 incidents demand

Unprecedented heatwave 16 - 19 July 2022



Category 1:
calls from people with life-threatening illnesses or injuries

Category 2:
emergency calls

Category 3:
urgent calls

Category 4:
less urgent calls

Category 5:
hear and treat

HCP:
healthcare professional ambulance response

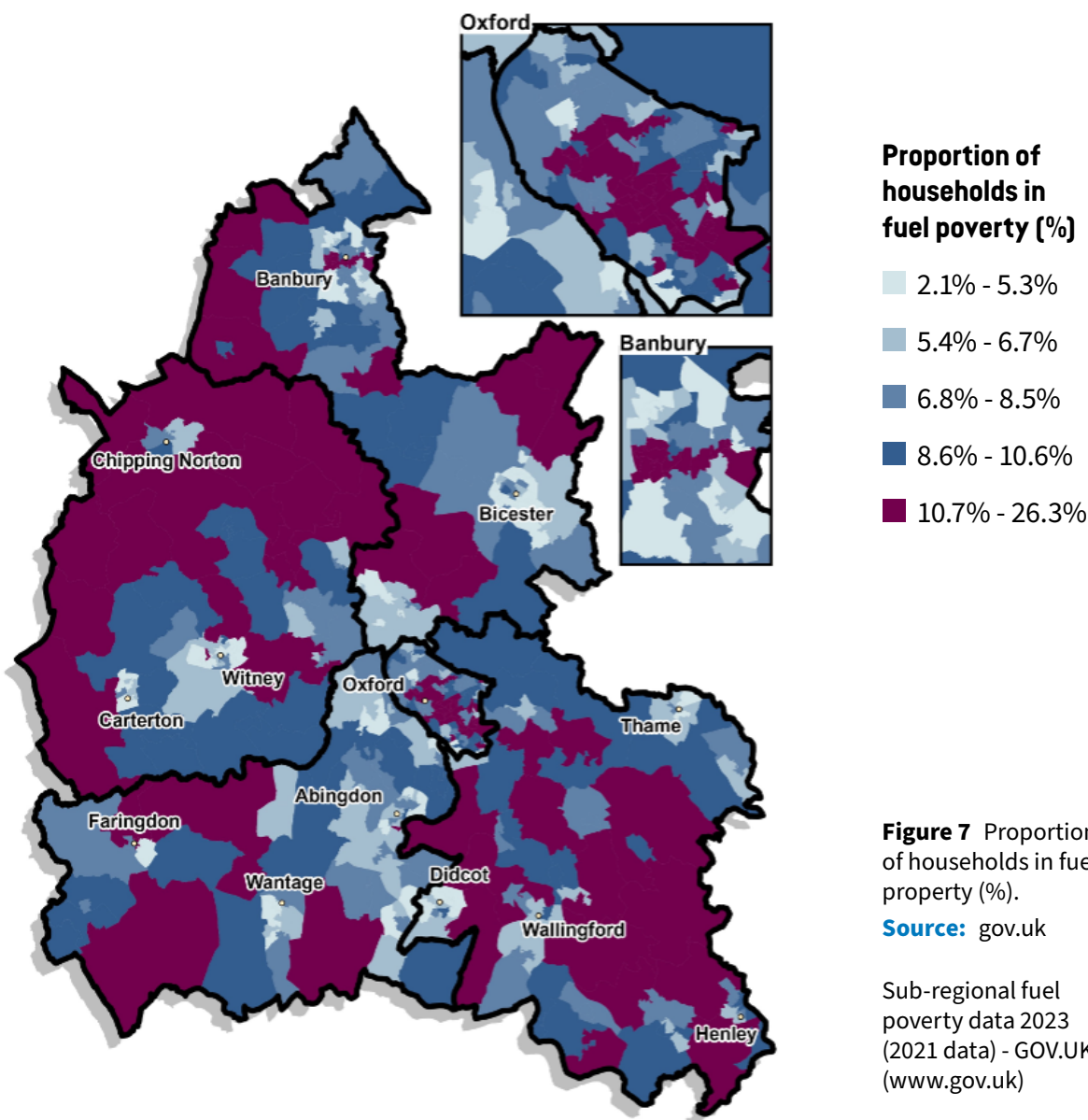


Despite the effects of climate change, cold-related ill-health and premature deaths are still significant (although these are expected to decrease over time).⁴⁻⁶ Cold-related deaths are currently linked in part to poor quality housing, fuel poverty, seasonal infections like flu and norovirus, physical hazards like snow and ice and underlying health inequalities.⁶ Fuel poverty particularly impacts the ability to stay warm, well and healthy through the seasons.

Oxford City experiences significantly worse levels of fuel poverty (10 per cent of households) than the regional average (8.4 per cent) and in 2023, there were estimated to be 23,197 households in Oxfordshire experiencing fuel poverty. See figure 7.⁸

This is likely to be due to a combination of factors including the quality of local housing and financial pressures of the cost-of-living crisis. Better quality housing not only helps keep housing warm in the winter and cool in the summer, improving health and wellbeing and reducing household bills, but overall means that less energy is needed in the first place to run households, therefore reducing emissions.⁵ **One study found that improved insulation may offer the greatest health benefit of all actions taken to reach net zero,** however in the absence of appropriate household ventilation this intervention could result in over 200,000 life-years lost by 2050 and over one million lost by 2100 due to indoor air pollution.¹¹

The proportion of households in fuel poverty varies across Oxfordshire





The direct effects of cold weather include heart attacks, stroke, lung disease, flu outbreaks, falls, injuries and hypothermia.⁵⁻⁶ The indirect effects of cold weather include disruption to local infrastructure and healthcare services by snow and ice, the impacts of cold homes and fuel poverty on mental health, reduced educational attainment and success at work and carbon monoxide poisoning from poorly maintained or ventilated boilers and/or heating appliances with a combustion source.⁶ People with dementia or cognitive impairment are more at risk, as they may not readily recognise that they are feeling cold.⁶ Increases in cold related deaths may be observed for up to four weeks following the cold snap.⁶

Testimony on housing:

"Especially last winter when it was getting really cold, it was - our front door, I could see light, so I knew that [cold air] was coming in, but it was gaps everywhere and so that proved to be an issue, both in the winter and in the summer. In the summer, I've got to put sheets up on my windows to keep the heat out."

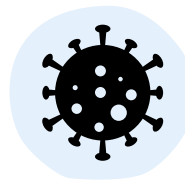
The direct and indirect health effects of winter weather

The human body responds in several different ways to exposure to cold weather, even at temperatures that might be considered relatively mild: **4 to 8°C**

Direct effects



heart attack



influenza



stroke



hypothermia



respiratory disease



falls & injuries

Indirect effects



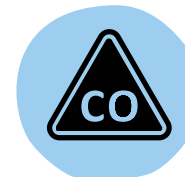
snow and ice may cause disruption to healthcare services



cold homes and fuel poverty are linked with poor mental health and social isolation



reduced education and employment success




carbon monoxide poisoning



Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service testimony:

“I’ve been in the service for twenty years. We are such an agricultural county, it is not uncommon to go to field fires, house fires, agricultural incidents – whether it’s people knocking over telegraph poles while they are combine harvesting, refracted light through glass bottles, careless fire handling in fields, or malicious arson. That’s not unusual for the fire service. Farmers understand a lot of this – they already do a lot to help themselves and keep things safe.



During the major heatwaves, we went to 8 wildfire incidents across the county – because they were out of control.

The danger with wildfires is they can travel unrestricted – we got close to that but managed to contain it.

I was sent down onto the M25 to deal with a grass fire. **We heard that there was a firefighter receiving an intravenous drip due to heat exhaustion. In field fires, you can experience heat exhaustion because you're chasing, you're running against the fire.** The effects of heat exhaustion and heat induced stroke really come to the forefront. You have all this kit on and you’re chasing long distances. You have to be physically fit. If you’re caught in the wrong wind direction, in a standing crop fire, it can have fatal consequences. It can be quite bad. Recently, there’s been a lot of work about classifying firefighting as a carcinogenic employment – you’re going from job to job because you want to be there, make a difference, help the general public – but suddenly you’re covered with ash and sweat – there’s a big knock-on effect on your health. That’s a big health consideration. We haven’t struck the balance right yet.



Every time there’s a fire, it has the potential to make or break people. People are losing their yield, their crops – whether it’s food or animals. And, if there are animals involved, that’s traumatic. If machinery is burnt, people could lose their farm, they could lose everything. If the fields are flooded in the spring and then there’s a large fire that takes multiple fields out – it might take years to recoup that money.



1.1.1 Fires

There were **477 total fires in 2023**, **726 total fires in 2022** and **436 total fires in 2021** (Source: Fire and safety live reporting platform).

Between 2022-23, **1451 emergency incidents** attended were related to fire. Fire accounted for 22% of the total incidents the fire and safety service responded to (an increase from 17.86% compared to the year before). The extreme summer temperatures saw more outdoor fires than normal between 2022/23.

During the unprecedented heatwaves of 2022, fire services surrounding Oxfordshire declared major incidents after multiple fires broke out, including classified wildfires.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service have made some further improvements with the introduction of GENFO firefighting backpacks which hold 18 litres of water. These can be carried by firefighters to extinguish and damp down small pockets of fire and hot embers, preventing further ignition and reducing the chance of fire spread. The packs have been issued to all front-line appliances and to 4x4 vehicles. Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service have increased the number of fogging systems on 4x4 off-road vehicles. They have also made available a high volume pump and water carrier if access to water supplies becomes a challenge in more remote areas.

Most recently drought and high temperatures have contributed to fires. Figure 16 shows major wildfire incidents in Oxfordshire between April 2022 and September 2023.

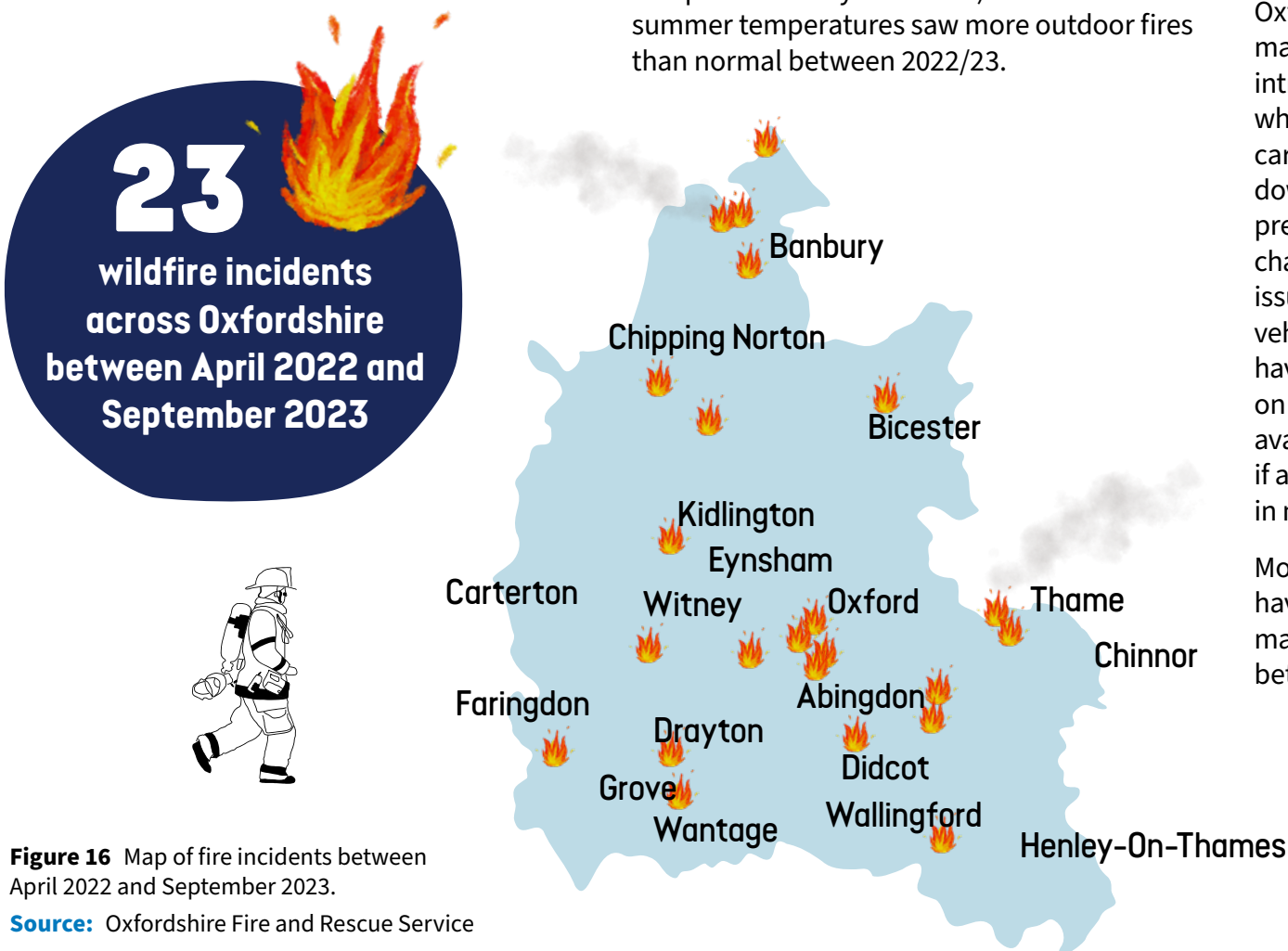


Figure 16 Map of fire incidents between April 2022 and September 2023.

Source: Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

1.2 Air

Poor indoor and outdoor air quality present a significant threat to public health in Oxfordshire, and the UK.¹² As well as human health, air pollution also threatens the natural environment and the economy.¹³ It poses the greatest health risks for children, people with existing heart or lung conditions, pregnant women and older adults. People who live and work in more urban – and often deprived – areas next to busy roads are at particularly high risk of being exposed to higher levels of air pollution.^{5-6,8,12}

Short term increases in air pollution can have immediate health impacts, including impaired lung function, exacerbation of asthma and increases in respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions and deaths.^{6,8,12}

Health effects of air pollution

Short-term effects

exacerbation of asthma

cough, wheezing & shortness of breath

Episodes of high air pollution increase respiratory and cardiovascular hospital admissions and mortality

Long-term effects

stroke

lung cancer

respiratory conditions

cardiovascular disease

reduced life expectancy

Air



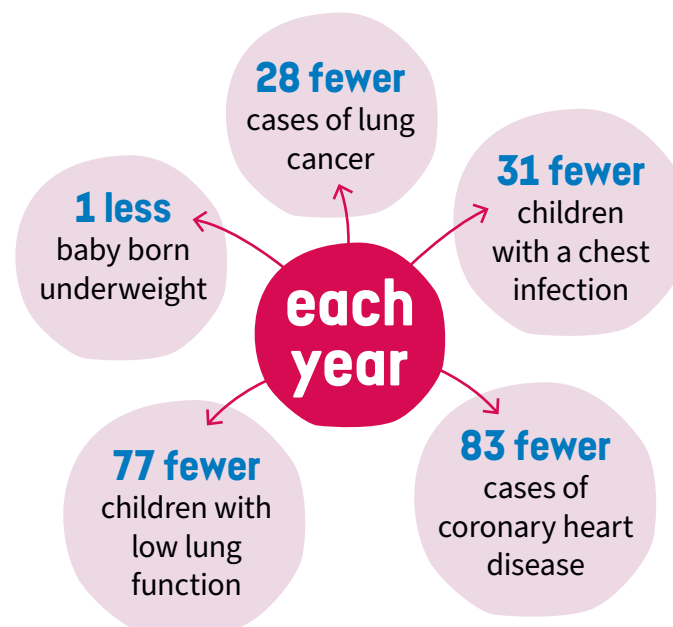
In Oxfordshire, there have been significant improvements in air quality over the past few decades, primarily due to reductions in coal burning which predate the COVID-19 pandemic – see figures 8-10 on page 22. However, indoor and outdoor air pollution remain dangerous to human health. It has been estimated that over 2,300 years of healthy life were lost due to ambient particulate matter (small toxic solid particles and liquid droplets which are not visible to the human eye which may be produced by burning fossil fuels, construction and waste products) in Oxford in 2019 alone.⁸

These premature deaths were mainly attributed to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, kidney disease and chronic respiratory disease.⁸ Each year on average, higher air pollution days in Oxford are responsible for:

- six more cardiac arrests outside hospital,
- five more people admitted to hospital for cardiovascular disease and
- four more people admitted to hospital with a stroke, compared to low air pollution days.¹⁴

Air pollution also has economic implications – sustained reductions in NO₂ in Oxford, consistent with those observed in the first COVID-19 lockdown, could have prevented 48 lost life years with a total economic benefit of £1.83 million as compared to the 2019 baseline.¹⁵

Cutting air pollution in Oxford by a further 20 per cent may result in:¹⁴



Roadside air pollution in Oxford is estimated to stunt lung growth in children by

14.1 %

Pregnancy

- low birth weight



Children

- asthma
- slower development of lung function
- development problems
- more wheezing and coughs
- start of atherosclerosis



Adults

- asthma
- stroke
- lung cancer
- diabetes
- coronary heart disease
- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (as chronic bronchitis)



Elderly

- asthma
- accelerated decline lung function
- lung cancer
- diabetes
- dementia
- heart attack, heart failure and strokes





Air quality testimony:

“Air quality was never good. When I first came back to Oxford, I suffered quite a lot from asthma that I didn’t suffer from before. I was on Ventolin and Beclometasone inhalers. I’d never had respiratory problems before. That wasn’t necessarily just to do with air pollution, but coming back to the Thames Valley where it’s such a bowl of damp air. Pollen has definitely got worse too – I never had hay fever in the past – but now I experience hay fever in the summer. I think that’s an indication of how loaded the air is.

Over the years, I really noticed the build-up of traffic where I used to live before. It was unbelievable, I couldn’t have the windows open at night – the traffic noise was terrible. It was made worse by the air direction. I really feel as though I have a haven where I am now. Even the windows are cleaner. It’s ironic that I’m in the city, but this is a good spot to be. **I am aware of noise all the time though – it is very difficult to go on a country walk in Oxfordshire and not hear noise.**

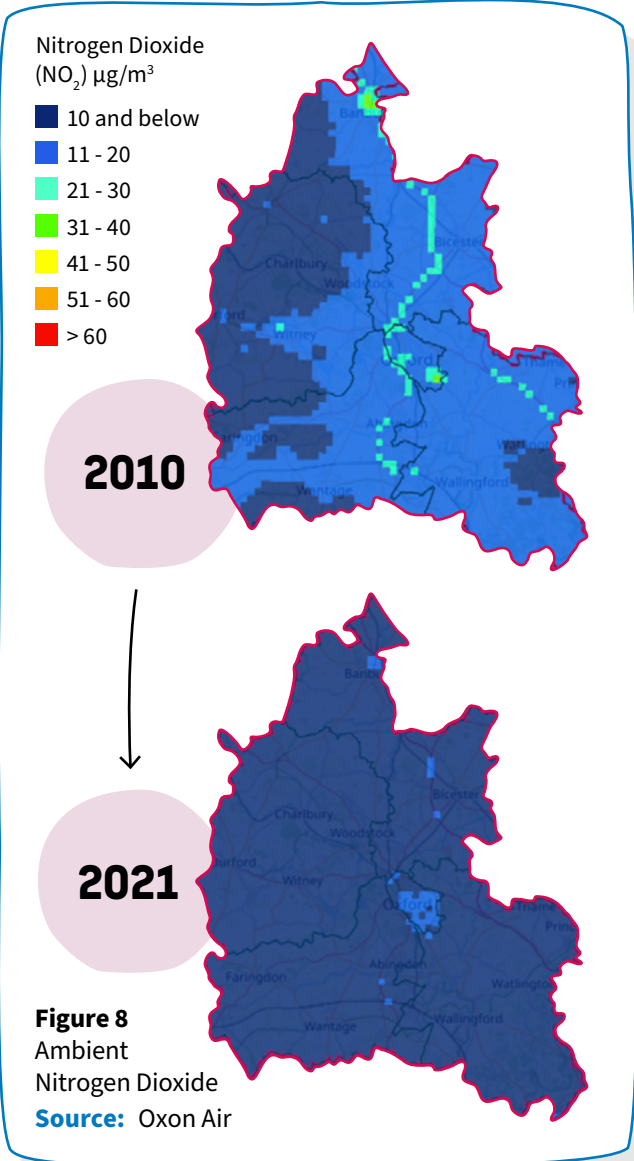
I was aware of it [air pollution] when I had young children. I suppose with the girls it was trying to weigh up where we could live – I needed to be near with amenities, and sadly to be near amenities you had to put up with pollution. When they were teenagers, it was great, there was that bus service and it used to run almost twenty four hours a day. I know of people now who have grandchildren who encourage them not to visit because of the air quality.

It can be quite daunting to look at the local air quality, and if I were to look online and to see how bad it is, that’s quite alarming. I really worry about it with Oxfordshire – I dream about Oxford becoming like various places in Europe which have made radical changes to manage motorised traffic to make them pleasant environments for the inhabitants and for visitors too – it’s an ancient city and it’s just not working. We need to take radical steps to change things. I wish there were more plans for a better public transport structure and for cycling and walking. I feel that Oxford is going to be choked.”

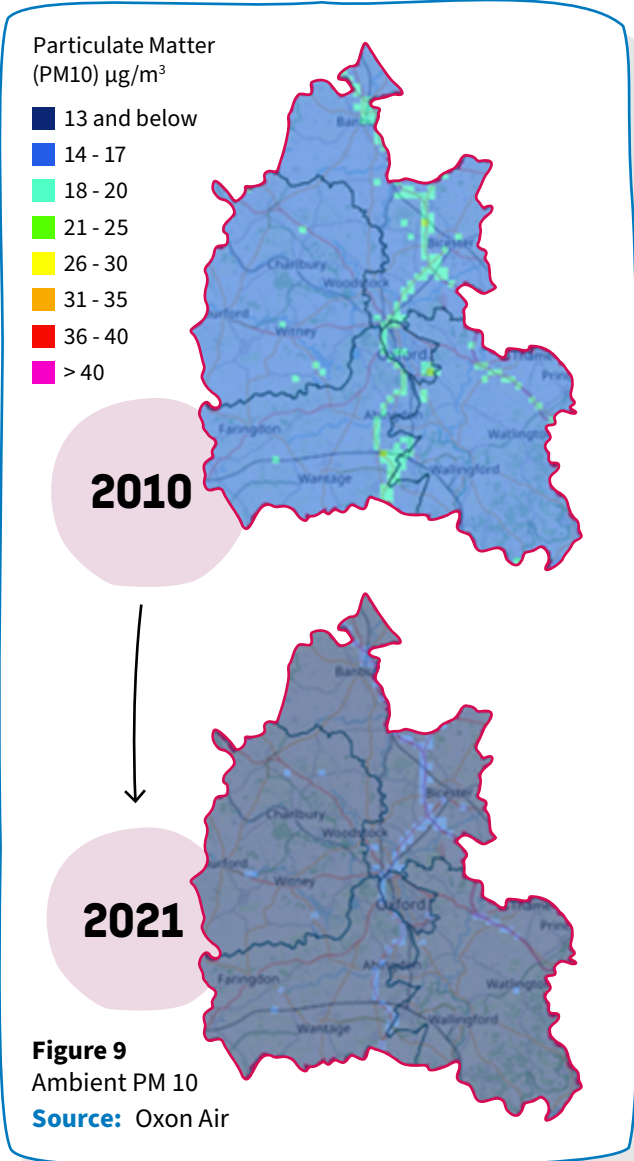
"I dream about Oxford becoming like various places in Europe which have made radical changes to manage motorised traffic to make them pleasant environments for the inhabitants and for visitors too – it's an ancient city and it's just not working. We need to take radical steps to change things."



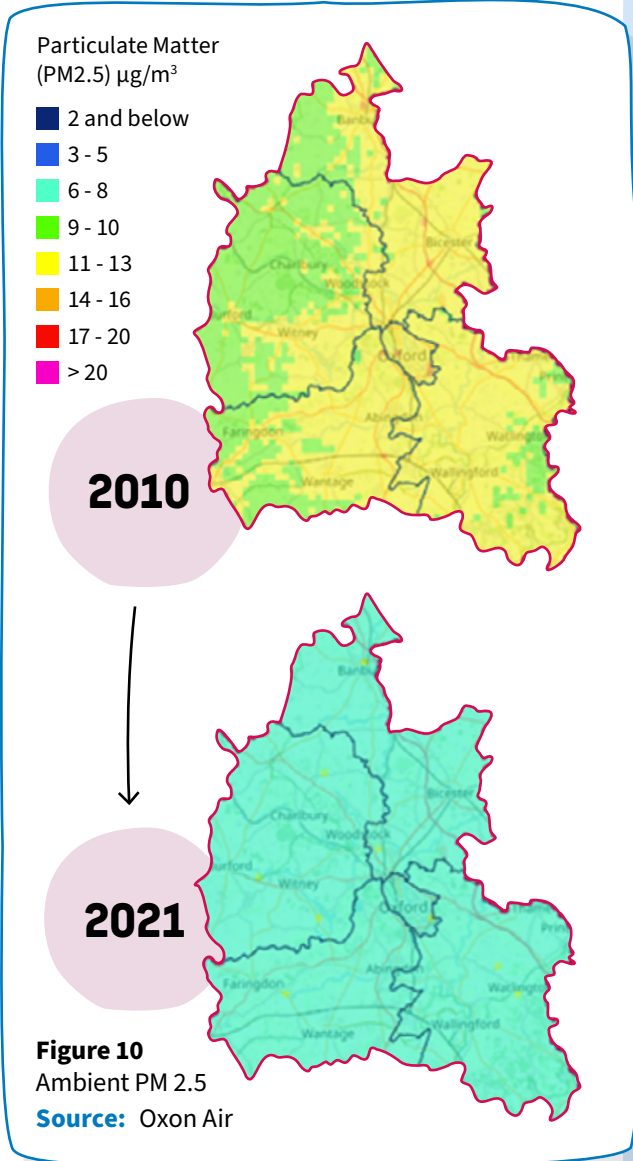
Relative overall reduction in ambient **nitrogen dioxide** across Oxfordshire, as measured between 2010 and 2021



Relative overall reductions in ambient **PM 10** across Oxfordshire, as measured between 2010 and 2021



Relative overall reductions in ambient **PM 2.5** across Oxfordshire, as measured between 2010 and 2021





Air

Increasing air temperature, alongside higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, may also impact on the severity of airborne allergens such as pollen.¹⁶

The health effects of higher pollen levels during summer months have already been seen in Oxfordshire.

Pollen may sound harmless, but it can be life threatening for people with underlying or undiagnosed respiratory conditions.¹⁶ When it is dry and hot, with little wind, pollen is not dispersed as readily and can cause dangerous irritation to the eyes, throat, and lungs.

In June 2023, the Met Office and UKHSA issued warnings regarding severely high pollen levels in the region, in association with higher temperatures (described as the 'Pollen Bomb').¹⁰



When it is dry and hot, with little wind, pollen is not dispersed as readily and can cause dangerous irritation to:



eyes



lungs



throat

Pollen Bomb:
severely high pollen levels in association with higher temperatures

31.7
per cent increase
in life-threatening ambulance calls in June 2023

In June 2023 at the time of the pollen bomb, there was an 31.7 per cent increase in category 1 (life-threatening) ambulance calls (from 41 to 54 calls) and 44.4 per cent increase in category 2 (emergency) ambulance calls (from 288 to 416 calls) – see figure 11.¹⁰ A higher proportion

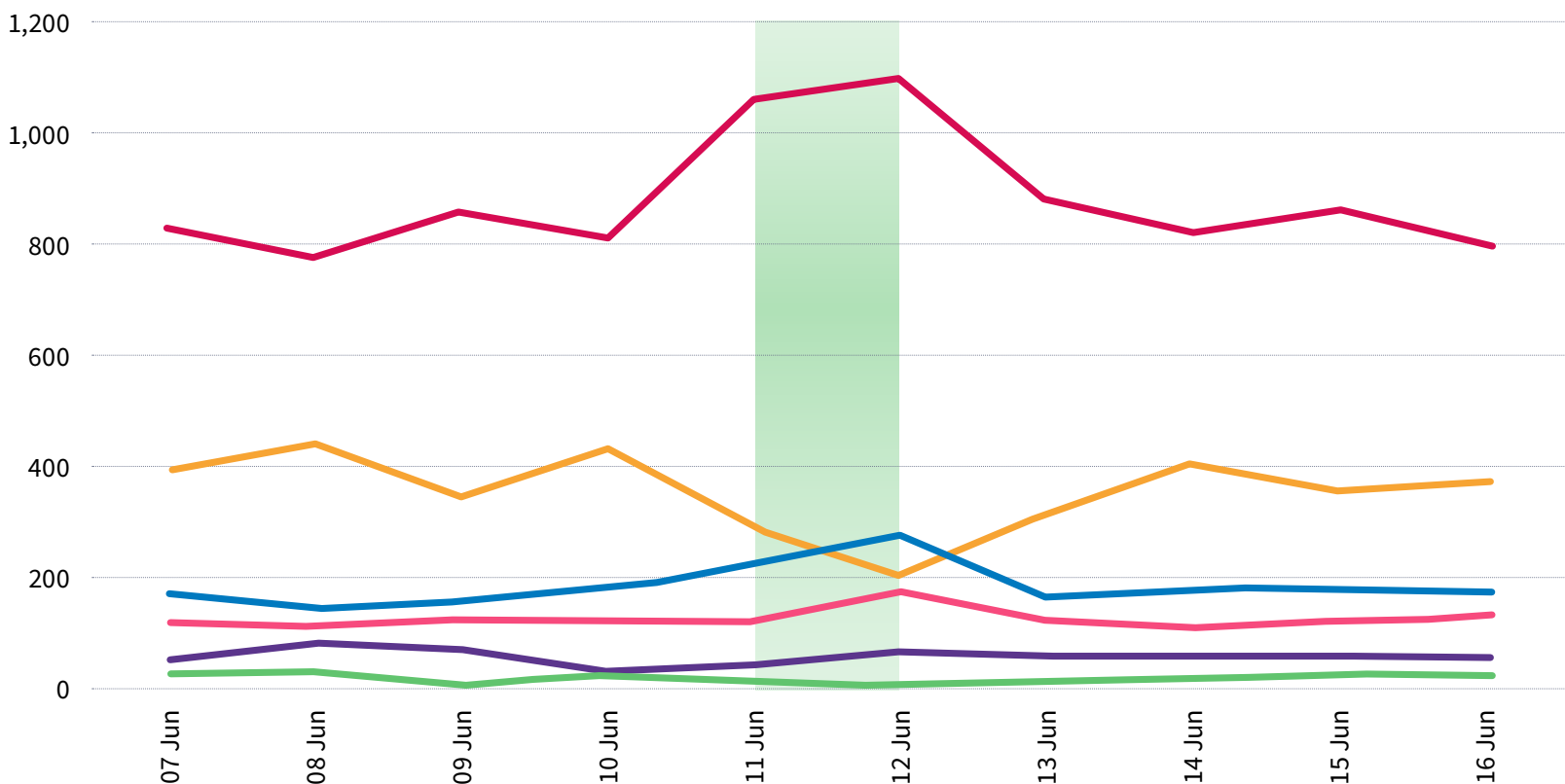
of these calls were due to respiratory distress than usual.¹⁰ This impacted on the local ambulance service's ability to respond in a timely way, in particular for category 2 and category 3 calls.¹⁰

Figure 11
999 incidents demand by category of call during the June 2023 Pollen Bomb, Oxfordshire.

Source: South-Central Ambulance Service

999 incidents demand – Oxfordshire CCG

Pollen Bomb 11 – 12 June 2023



Pollen bomb days

Cat 1

Cat 2

Cat 3

Cat 4

Cat 5 (H&T)

HCP

Category 1:
calls from people with life-threatening illnesses or injuries

Category 2:
emergency calls

Category 3:
urgent calls

Category 4:
less urgent calls

Category 5:
hear and treat

HCP:
healthcare professional ambulance response



1.3 Water

The changing climate in Oxfordshire has implications for our risk of flooding, in addition to the safety, quality and supply of local water.

1.3.1 Flooding

Flooding is becoming more common across Oxfordshire and the UK. In Oxfordshire, there have been 18 significant flood events since 2007, which have caused serious disruption to people's homes, lives and livelihoods.⁴ In January 2024, there has been major flooding across the county with 170 properties flooded during storm Henk. Areas of specific higher flooding risk include Abingdon, Witney and parts of Oxford due to their locations on the Thames, Ock and Stert in Abingdon, and River Windrush in Witney – although this list is not exhaustive – see figures 2 and 12.^{4,17-18}

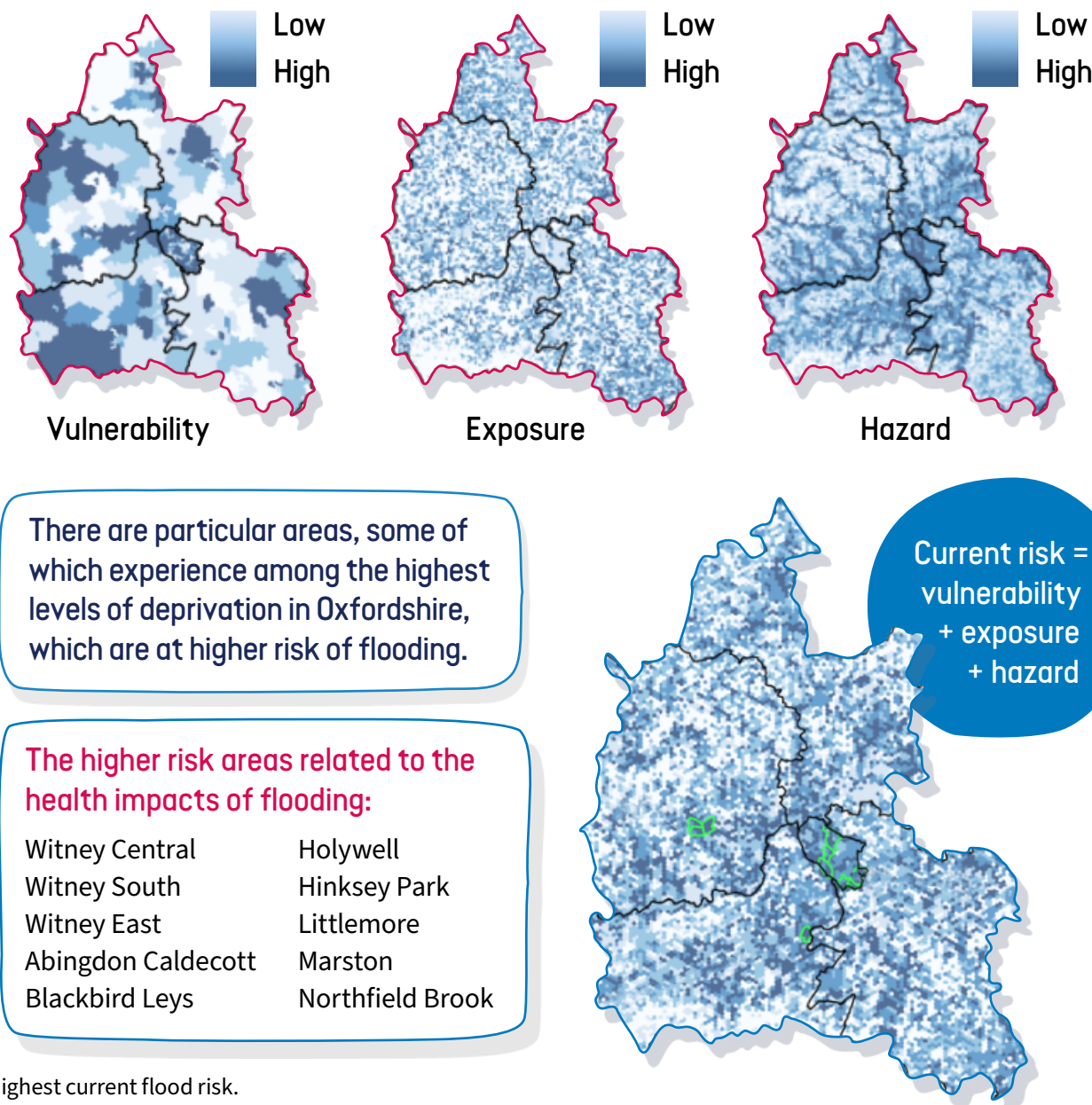


Figure 12 Current flood risk in Oxfordshire and ten wards with highest current flood risk.

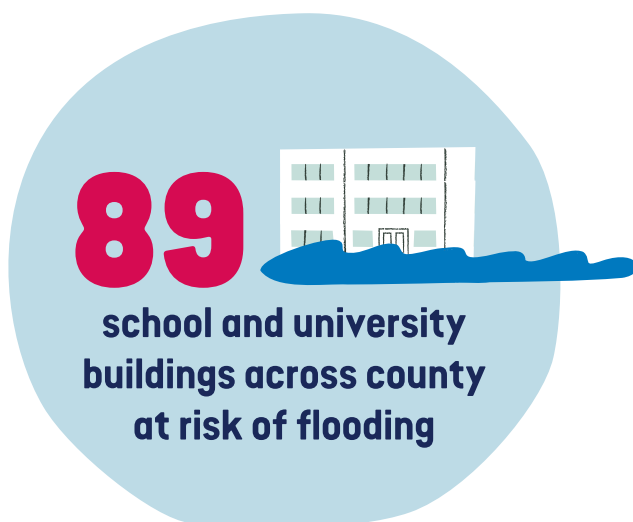
Source: Atkins Health Impact Assessment



In the short term, flooding can lead to injuries, acute infections, exposure to chemical hazards and disruption to local health and social care services.¹⁹ Longer term, flooding has significant impacts on mental health among those whose homes are flooded and the communities that surround them – see Figure 13.¹⁹

Evacuation and displacement, especially without warning, increase the risk of longer term anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁹

Recent estimates suggest that 19 per cent of the population are currently exposed to high flooding risks due to rivers and surface water.⁴ This includes 89 school and university buildings across the county.⁴



Impacts of flooding are large, prolonged and extend beyond just those whose homes are flooded

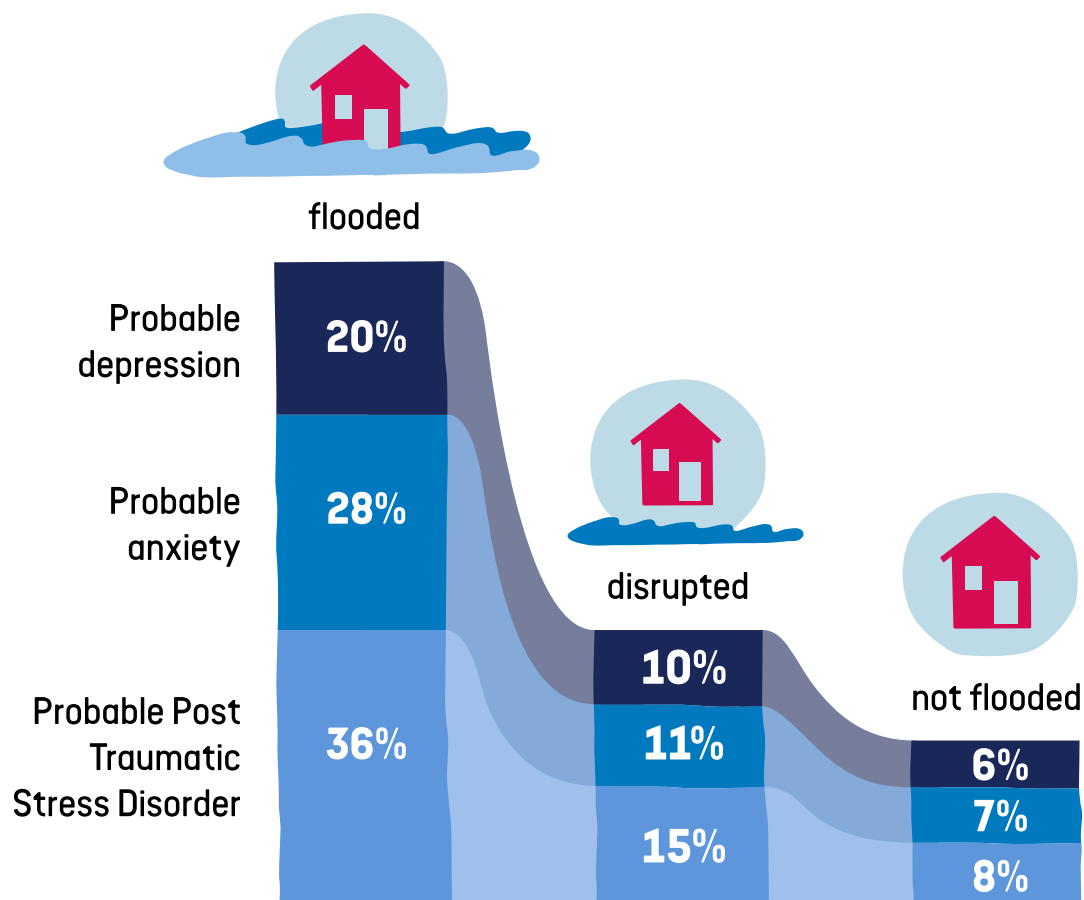


Figure 13a PHE Public Health Data Science Team, PHE Publications gateway number: 2016575





At least **63 care homes**, **seven hospitals** and **29 GP and healthcare facilities** are located in areas of higher current flood risk. In addition, **139 educational establishments** are located in areas of high current flood risk.

Figure 14 shows potential future flooding risks for care homes, GP practices and hospitals across the county. In July 2007, more than 50mm of rain fell in 24 hours leaving an estimated 1,600 homes flooded across the county with 200 families still unable to return home a year later.¹⁷ This resulted in a cost of £4.5 million in direct costs to Oxfordshire County Council, but the total direct and indirect costs of the flooding were likely far greater.⁴

-  Districts
-  Care home
-  GP and healthcare facilities
-  Hospitals

Flooding hazard

-  Low hazard
-  High hazard

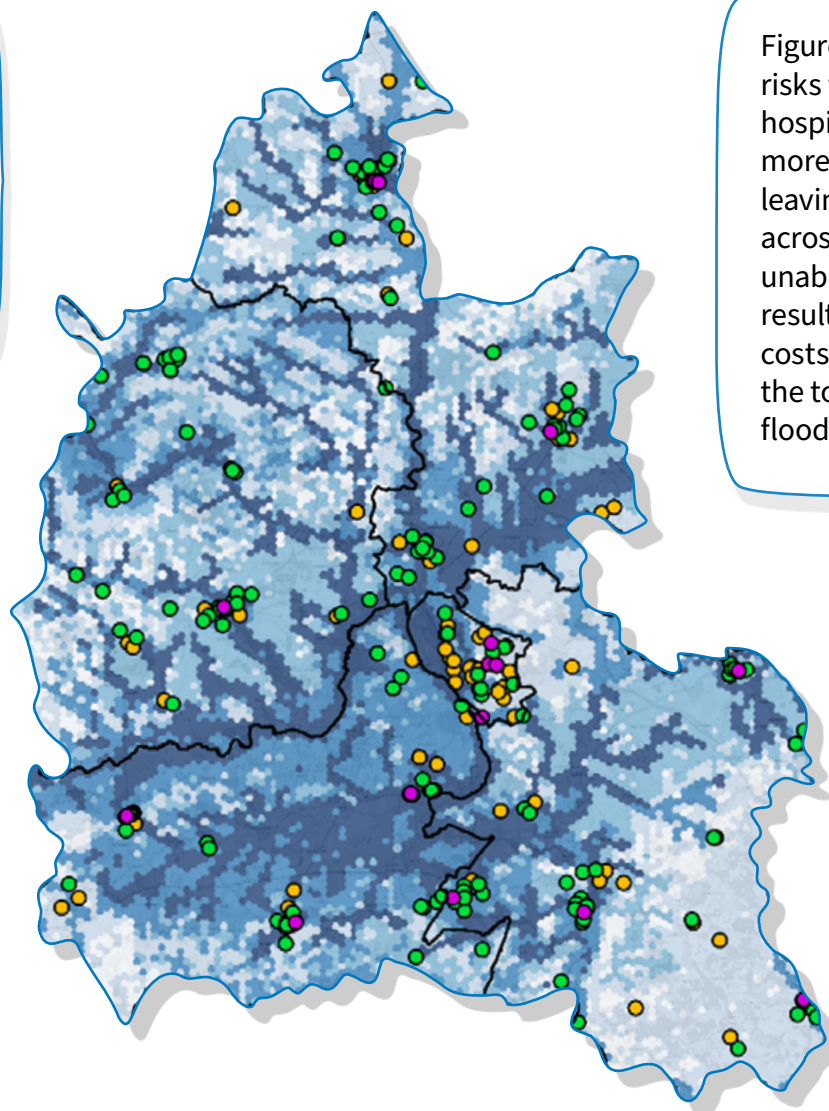


Figure 14 Healthcare facilities and future flood hazard.

Source: Atkins Health Impact Assessment



Flooding / contaminated water testimony #1:

"With the climate, we have seen a change. Last year, there was a heavy storm, and it caused several houses in our area to flood. The flooding in our house was exacerbated by having sewage in the house as well as dirty water. As a consequence, we will have been living in temporary accommodation for at least thirteen months. We're lucky we had good insurance and recently put flood prevention measures on the house to prevent a reoccurrence.

"The flooding in the house has certainly affected my mental health. At first, I felt absolutely helpless, and just didn't know where to start."

At first, I felt absolutely helpless, and just didn't know where to start. Then there's also the long-term effect. We want to continue to live in the house, but we worry that we'll never be able to sell it and from a health point of view whenever we get heavy rain, we're going to wonder whether that's going to happen again.

There's that anxiety that you don't know whether all those things we have done will protect the house and us if it were to rain again. In the aftermath of the flood, everyone was remarkably nice. Neighbours that we hardly knew before have been so nice and supportive. They've offered for us to use the washing machine. There's a sense of camaraderie among the families affected by the flooding. We've formed much closer bonds with them because of that, and that's a real positive.

I had to rip out all my vegetables from my vegetable patch, and that was quite heartbreaking really. But when it's been contaminated with sewage you don't really fancy eating that lettuce. I can't say that it's affected me hugely, or particularly badly, I haven't shed a tear. **I've been frustrated, bordering on anger occasionally. I desperately want to be back in the house.**



In the scheme of what other people have to go through, it's nothing though. I've been reflecting on it – we love the house, and it's our home and that's different to anything else. The thing that really matters is people, our family, our sons, their wives. So, if I find anything harder, it's that bit. We can't have them over easily. It's just being able to say just come over for Sunday dinner."



1.3.2 Water quality

Water quality, flooding and climate change are all interconnected.²⁰ More frequent and severe weather events, such as storms and flooding, in the absence of necessary upgrades to the system, have the potential to overwhelm existing sewage systems and water treatment facilities. In turn, this can result in sewage overflow with contamination of water sources and water quality across Oxfordshire.²¹

The bacteria in raw sewage and animal slurry can cause infectious disease outbreaks and sickness in humans, with negative impacts on wellbeing and mental health too. Traditionally, the rivers of Oxfordshire offered a popular recreational space for swimming, rowing, punting, kayaking and angling – but these activities are now often undertaken with apprehension or avoided altogether due to unsafe levels of water pollution.²²

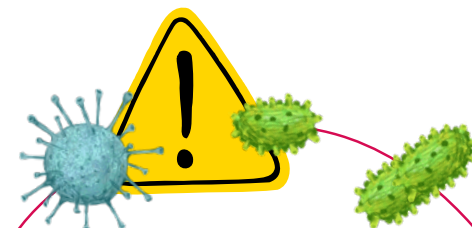
Past examples of climate change and harmful water pollution include an outbreak of the parasite cryptosporidium in Oxfordshire and Swindon. A combination of heavy rainfall, warmer weather, and increased local cattle grazing likely led to an unusually high level of the parasite entering the water treatment works in water originating from the Thames.²³

Local wildlife may also be damaged by water pollution – agricultural fertilisers can lead to dangerous algal blooms²⁴ and fish kills may be seen in these areas of higher water pollution, amidst hotter temperatures and heavy rainfall.⁴

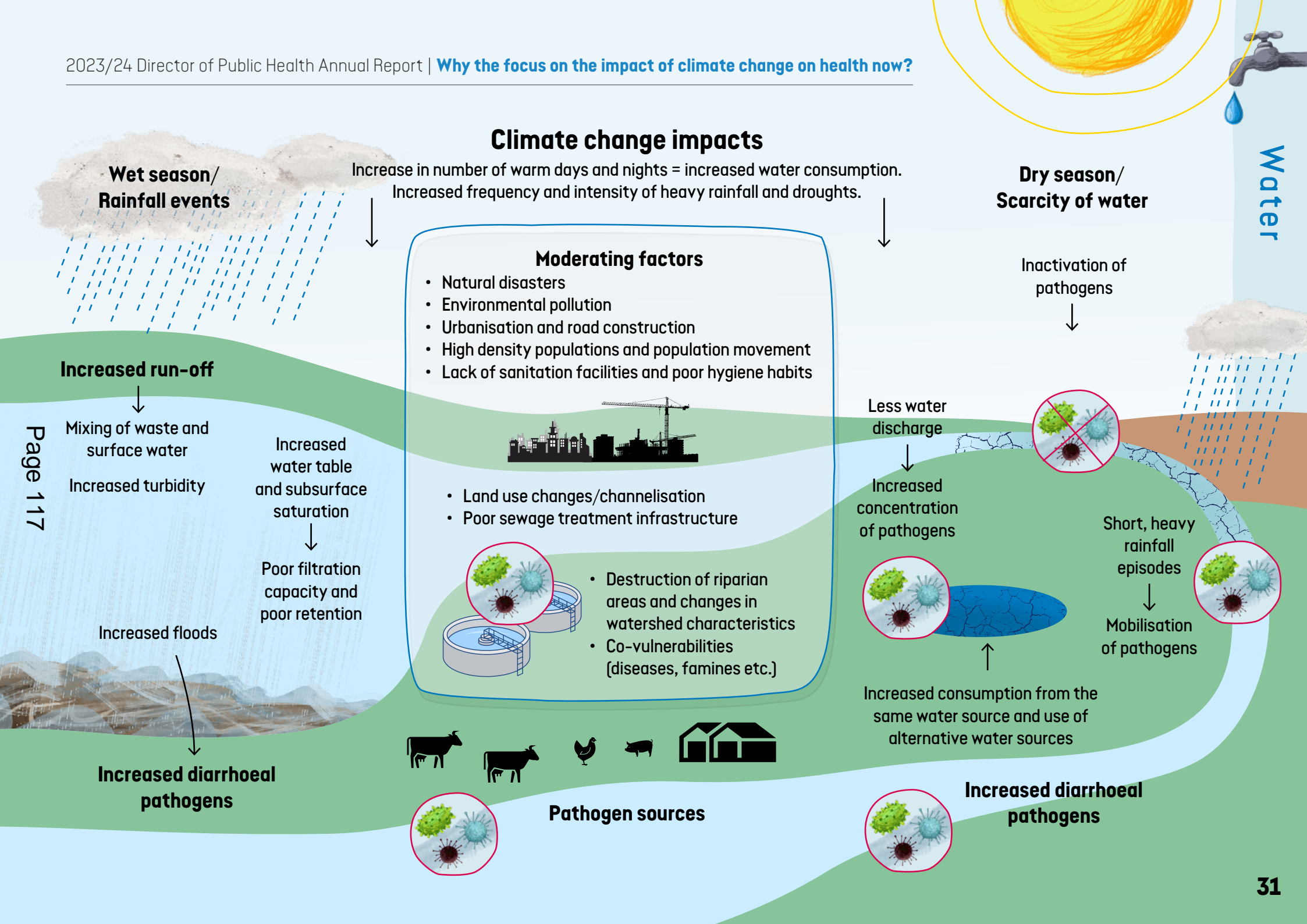
Pollution generated from sewage and contaminated water contributes to greenhouse gas emissions through the breakdown of faeces and other waste products, exacerbating global warming and climate change.²⁵

Agricultural slurry leaks and run off from chemicals and fertiliser spread on the land may also negatively impact on water quality. Contaminated water worsens the broader effects of climate change as it harms biodiversity and agriculture.

In 2021, 18 river locations in Oxfordshire were sampled by the Oxford Rivers Project.²² This assessment identified that only one of eight recreational sites had safe levels of bacteria to allow for swimming and bathing – see figure 15 for all sites surveyed.²² The sources of these bacteria were likely sewage inputs, although some sites such as The Windrush, Cherwell and upper Thames sites were likely impacted by agricultural and other diffuse inputs.²²



In 2020, over ten sewage works across Oxfordshire reported over 100 overflow events each – with some works discharging raw sewage into rivers for over 2,000 hours through the year.²⁶





18 river locations in Oxfordshire, in and surrounding Oxford City were sampled over the period January – December 2021.

This figure shows the locations of these sites. Eight of the sample sites were situated at popular recreational locations (e.g. for wild swimming, rowing, punting, kayaking and angling), primarily within Oxford's city boundaries. 10 sample sites were situated on upstream locations, including on Thames tributaries Windrush (two sites), Evenlode (two sites) and Cherwell (four sites), as well as two further sites on the main River Thames.

Samples were taken approximately once a month April–December from 14 sample sites. Four central recreational locations (labelled J, M, P and Q on maps) were sampled weekly January–April 2021, and then monthly until December 2021, resulting in 23 samples at each. This arrangement was due to restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Samples were tested in an independently accredited microbiology lab using a standard culturing method for bacteria species E Coli and intestinal enterococci ('faecal indicator organisms' or FIOs). The results obtained were compared to the standards for bathing waters set out in the Bathing Waters Directive (2013)

This assessment identified that **only one of eight** recreational sites had safe levels of bacteria to allow for swimming and bathing

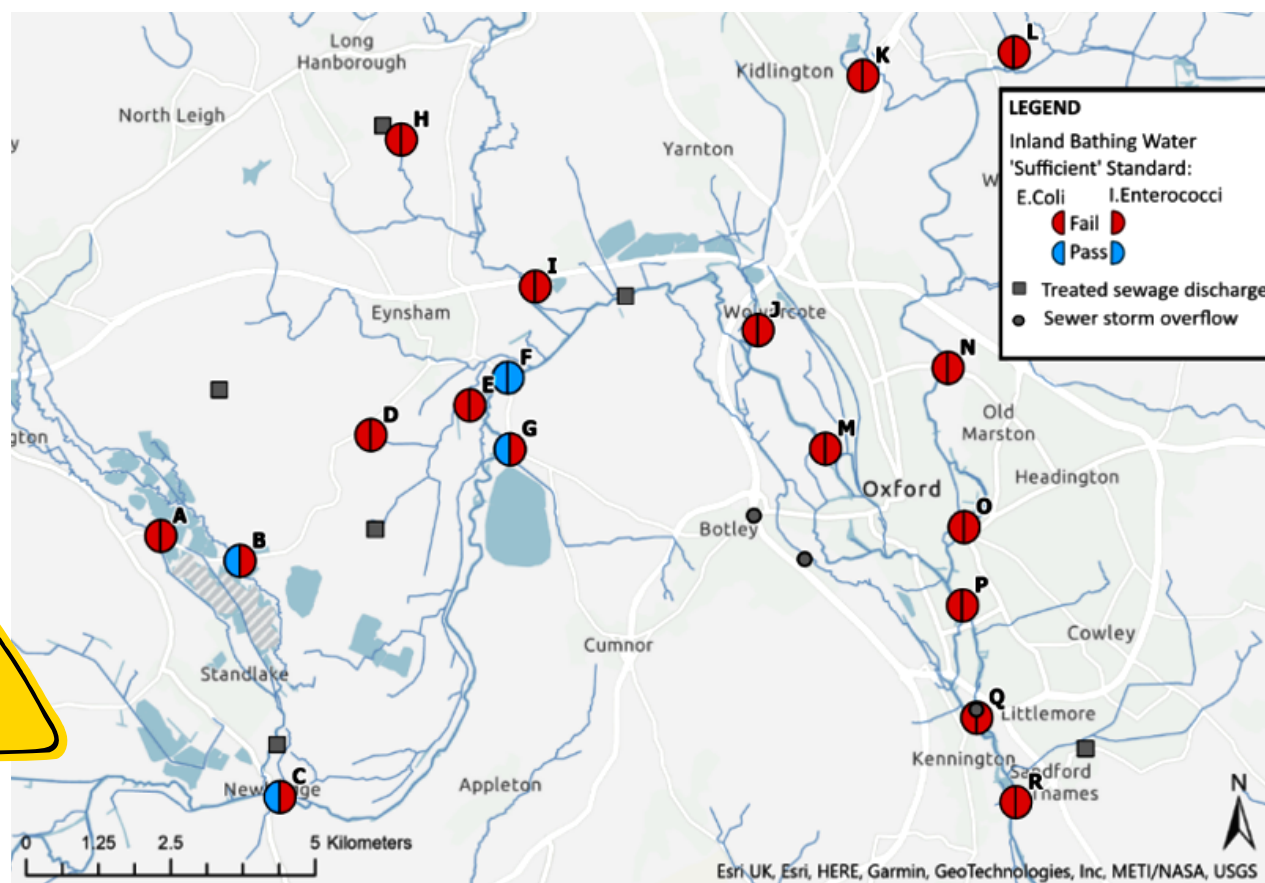


Figure 15
Sample sites map and bathing water quality assessment result in Jan-Dec 2021.

Source: Oxford Rivers Project



1.3.3 Water supply

In Oxfordshire, there have been three major periods of drought (2012, 2018, 2022) since 2012.⁴

These have had impacts on residents and the surrounding natural environment. Drought can occur when a prolonged period of drier weather leads to low groundwater levels, low soil moisture levels and reduced river flow. This results in a significant reduction in the water available locally for human use. Droughts usually develop over longer intervals of time, during which there may be signs of increasing risk.¹⁸ Droughts may also lead to wildfires which have complex physical and mental health impacts.

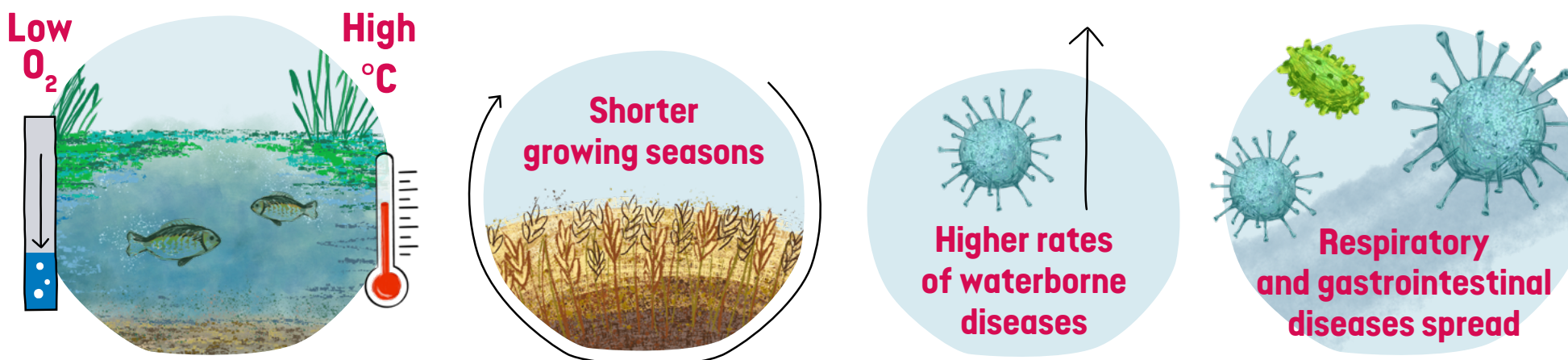
The South-East already faces significant challenges to water resources – most of the region already has insufficient water resources for local people's needs throughout the year.²⁷ Drought and hot weather may contribute to fires, including wildfire incidents. Droughts are dangerous for health – with impacts on nutrition, infectious disease outbreaks and mental health.²⁸

- Reduced river flows may increase the levels of pollutants in water and cause stagnation, with higher water temperatures in lakes and reservoirs impacting on water oxygen levels and water quality.²⁸
- Droughts can affect the length of the growing season for crops and lead to conditions

which favour pests and infectious diseases.²⁸ Livestock raised for food may also be adversely affected by drought.

- There may also be higher rates of waterborne diseases due to warmer water temperatures which encourage the growth of dangerous pathogens.²⁸
- Acute respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases may also spread more easily when handwashing is compromised by a perceived or real lack of clean water.²⁸

The indirect health impacts of drought are not necessarily easy to anticipate or track, but affect people's health and wellbeing profoundly in the longer term.²⁸





1.4 Food

In Oxfordshire, our food supply chains are complex and span continents – figure 17.

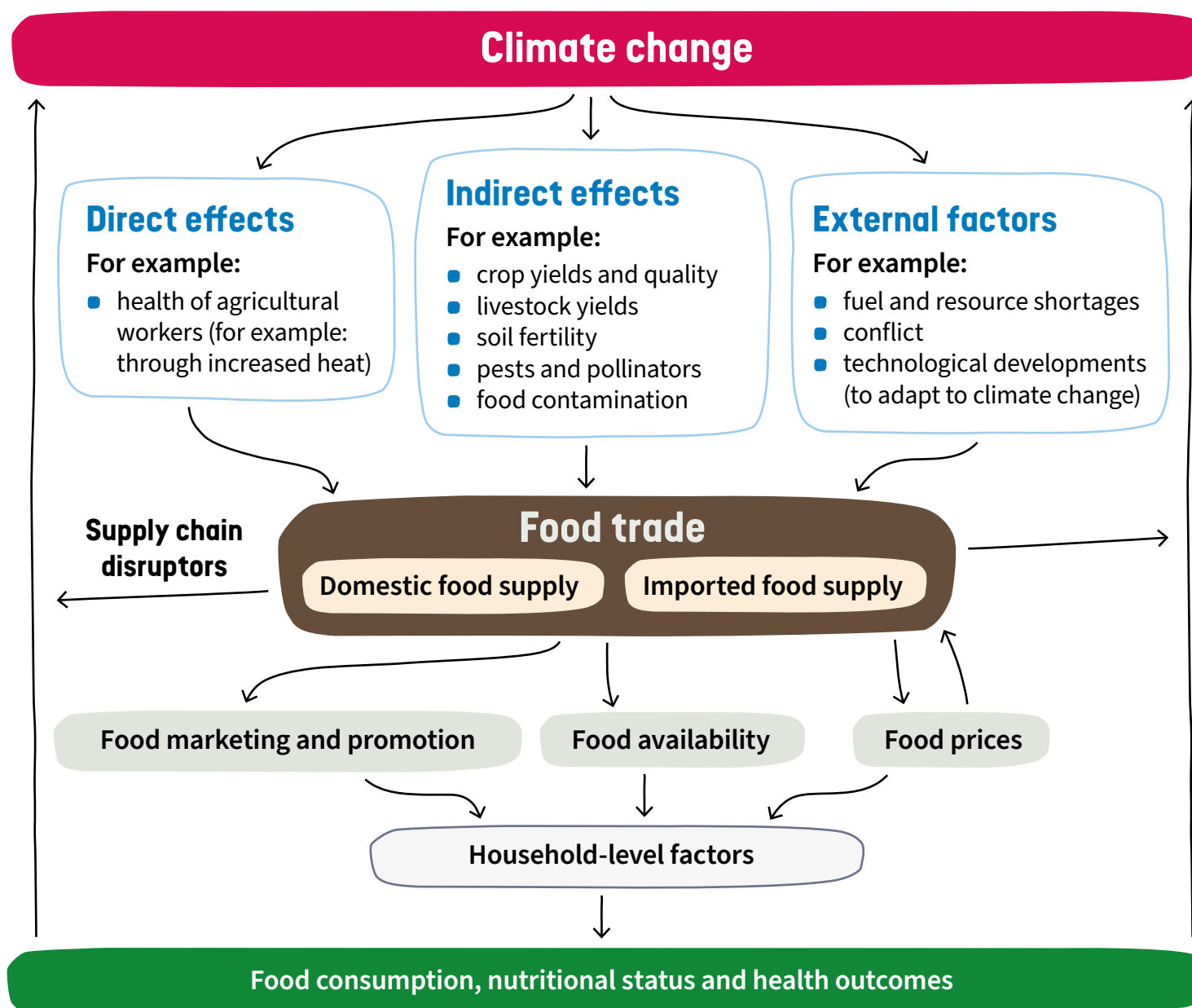
It has been recognised that climate change will make it more challenging to ensure the resilience of these food supply chains across the county. Adverse weather may destroy or damage crops, livestock, fish and farming infrastructure.²⁹ Farming equipment may also be damaged by adverse weather, impacting on productivity.²⁹ Lack of biodiversity will also harm the composition of soil which is needed to grow food.²⁹ Domestic food prices have the potential to become more volatile as a result.²⁹

Figure 17

Simplified framework of climate change impacts on the food system.

Source:

Redrawn from UKHSA Health Effects of Climate Change Report





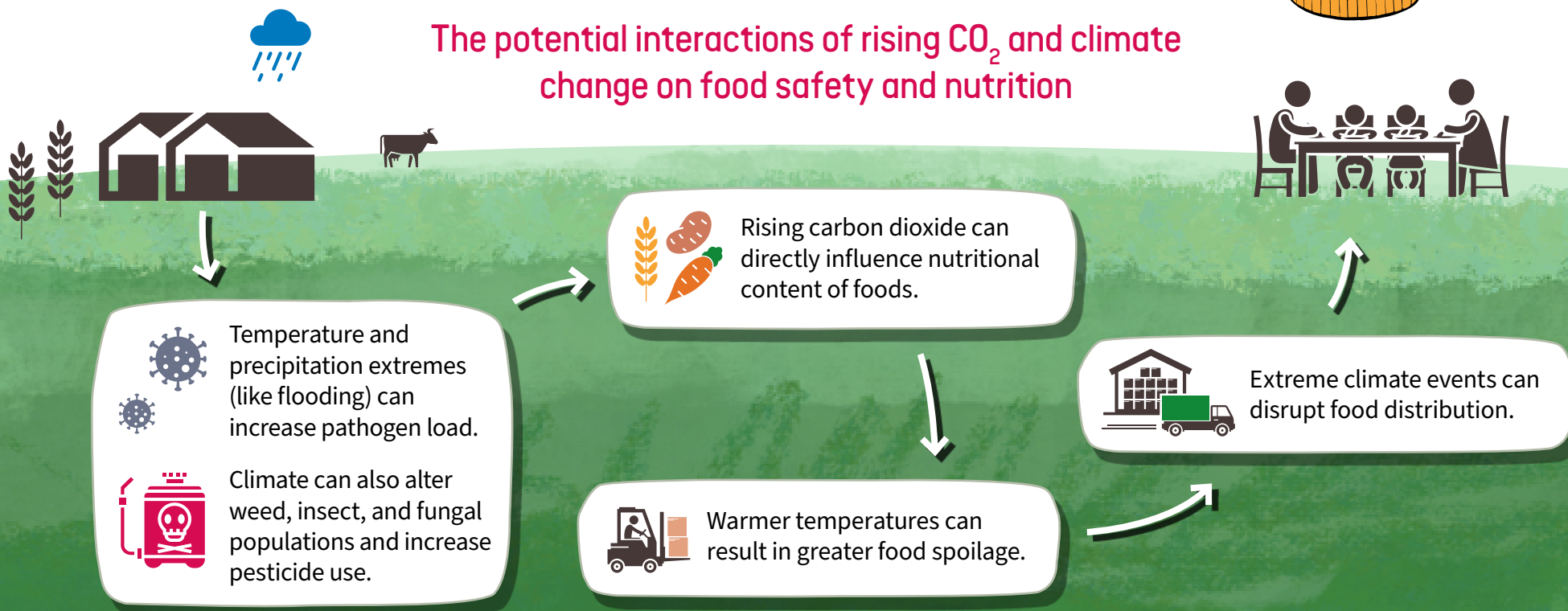
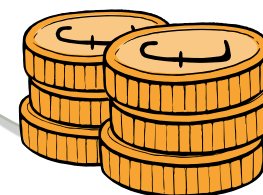
Globally, food prices are projected to increase by 20 per cent on average by 2050 in the absence of necessary climate adaptation.²⁹

When food becomes more expensive, it exacerbates food insecurity and malnutrition, especially among more deprived populations who may experience limited access to affordable and nutritious diets. This can also lead to other trade-offs in household budgets, meaning that individuals compromise on necessities like housing, heating and use of electricity. The mental health impacts of uncertainty around

food availability and affordability should not be underestimated – especially for young children and vulnerable adults.³⁰⁻³¹

Many aspects of healthy diets are more sustainable for the planet.^{5,32} Balanced diets can have positive impacts on all aspects of health, in particular the burden of obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, some cancers, and premature mortality. Examples of foods which are both healthy and sustainable include wholegrains, legumes, nuts, fruit, and vegetables.

Reducing food loss and waste can also have a significant environmental benefit and may save the average family up to **£700** per year.³³





Oxfordshire food testimony #1:

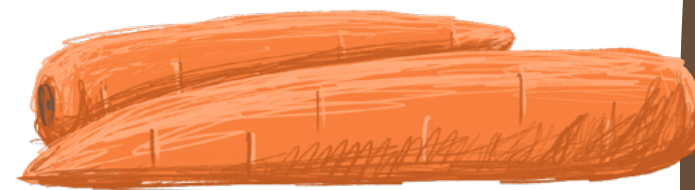
"I worked with M for years at a local school in an art club. She'd been talking about this larder and saying you should come along. I instantly liked the idea of it. In some ways, I volunteer there more for my own benefit than the benefit for others – because I enjoy being in contact with such a variety of people who are there. There is a sense of belonging to a community – you pay a weekly fee for £3.50. That gets you 10 items. They do refills from large tubs. It reduces packaging. The point about the £3.50 is you get a lot of food.

We have a café and serve hot/cold drinks and a lot of hot food and cakes. That's for people while they're waiting to come in. Lots of people take the food as they're waiting to come in. It's all stuff that's made in the kitchen. Lots of it is made from produce that's donated to the kitchen. When school comes out at 3pm, we serve the kids hot food and a hot drink. It's good food. The chefs work really hard, and it's a good team. There's a level of respect that people are showing to those who are coming to get the food. There's a great sense of camaraderie. We're volunteering and pulling together, in somewhat difficult circumstances.

During the summer, the local allotment also donates surplus goods. The food we grow on our allotment is as local as can be. We are in control of the environment – we get some manure, but no fertilisers, no pesticides. It's a lot more labour, but there's a connection to it and the place. Understanding what it means to hand pick something, I'm bent over and trying to pick something that I've grown. It makes you think who are the people doing this day to day for the food in the supermarket? How does anybody make a living growing food? Food is not just about subsistence, it's about pleasure. I really hate food waste. I'm notorious for refusing to throw food out. Part of it comes from my parents. This is a totally different generation. Food was inherently local then and my parents hated wasting food. Leftovers and using leftovers were a part of growing up in my family. I read things in the newspaper about the vast amounts of food waste – and there is a culture of food waste. One of the things that I like about the allotment, is the food scraps that we can't eat goes back round [into the compost]."



"During the summer, the local allotment also donates surplus goods. The food we grow on our allotment is as local as can be. We are in control of the environment – we get some manure, but no fertilisers, no pesticides. It's a lot more labour, but there's a connection to it and the place."





Oxfordshire food testimony #2:

"When I think about the food and environment, I think it's probably primarily the supply chains, and the cost of transporting food and the carbon footprint of the supply chains and how it's been transported. Whether you've flown in mangos or are eating greens from Oxfordshire.

What you're eating matters too – the calorie/energy cost is different – the kind of meat you're eating as compared to eating vegetables or grains. You need less land and water resources to get one or the other. I imagine that flooding impacts farming too, and droughts.

It's been very noticeable that the food prices [in Oxfordshire] have increased, and I think what's particularly difficult living in Oxford – if you don't have a car you can only really access express shops or small shops. The prices that you get there are still more expensive than if you're able to go to big shops. I'm lucky

because I've got a car so I can go and do a big shop. I get a vegetable box delivered, and that is advertised as being more local.

If you asked me where is a local market I wouldn't know. I don't think I have seen anything that's marketed as being locally sourced recently, or that I've been able to identify. Lots of the food in the supermarkets doesn't even appear to be seasonal – you can get anything all year round."

"It's been very noticeable that the food prices [in Oxfordshire] have increased, and I think what's particularly difficult living in Oxford – if you don't have a car you can only really access express shops or small shops. The prices that you get there are still more expensive than if you're able to go to big shops."

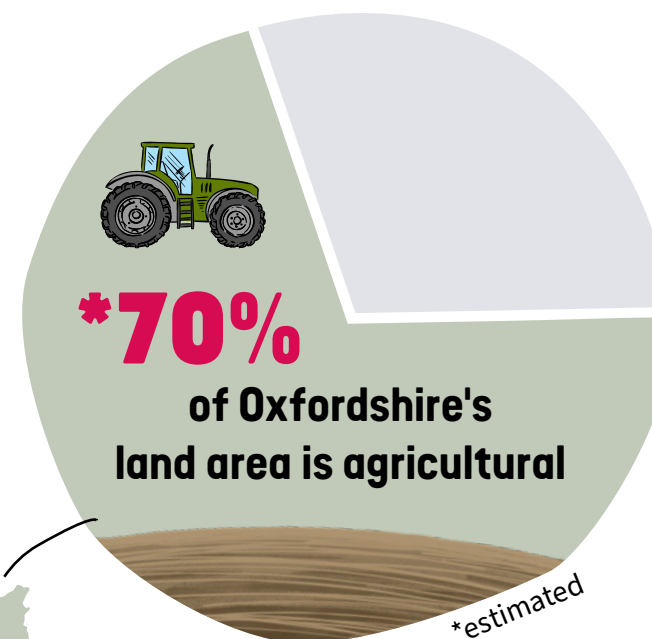
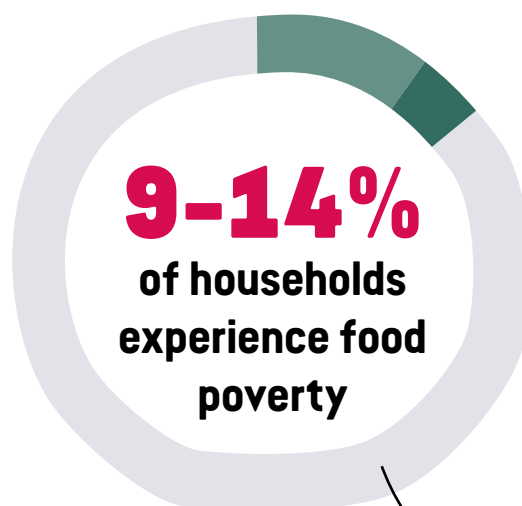




Oxfordshire's food economy accounts for 10 per cent of jobs, and in 2020 the sector generated a turnover of £2.2 billion or 10 per cent of the local economy.³⁴ It is estimated that 70 per cent of Oxfordshire's land area is agricultural (43 per cent of land used for arable farming and 27 per cent for improved grassland).³³

However, between 9-14 per cent of households across the county currently experience food insecurity.³⁴ With current diets, there is only enough farmland in the county to produce the hypothetical equivalent of 74 per cent of our food requirements.³³

Based on the most recent statistics from 2013, half of Oxford City's food came from the UK, a third came from the EU, and 15 per cent was imported from further afield. Less than 1 per cent was sourced directly from the region.³⁴





1.5 Nature

Nature is essential to our health and wellbeing. The positive effects of the natural world may be enhanced by access to green space and clean waterways for all.³⁵⁻³⁶

Potential benefits include:

- improved mental health,
- reduced social isolation,
- boosted physical activity and
- improved cardiovascular and physical health.

There is evidence that greener neighbourhoods and more exposure to green space correspond to:

- better self-assessed general and mental health;
- reduced all-cause and cardiovascular mortality;
- reduced stress;
- reduced incidence of low-birth weight;
- maintaining a healthier weight.⁵

Yet access to nature and associated health benefits is currently unfairly distributed, with specific groups consistently missing out.³⁸⁻³⁹

These include people living in areas of high deprivation, those on low incomes or unemployed, older people, black and minority ethnic groups and people with a long-term health condition or disability. It is not a coincidence that many of these groups also experience significant health inequality. Barriers to accessing and engaging with green-space and nature are associated with a range of physical, practical, and sociocultural factors.⁴⁰

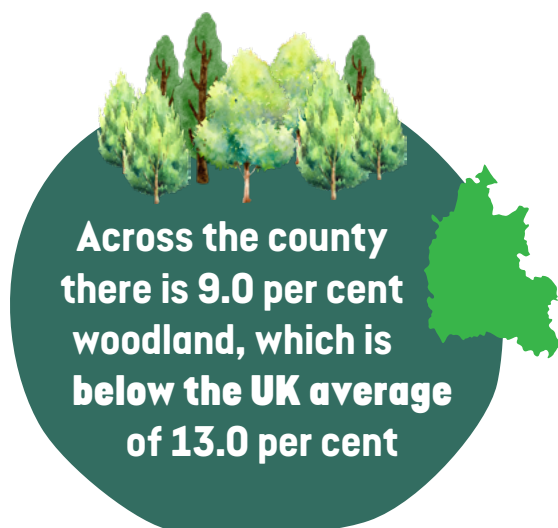
Green social prescribing – a practice that involves prescribing nature-based interventions or activities as part of a patient's treatment plan – is one specific method to enable individuals and communities to access nature-based interventions and activities which benefit their physical and mental health and wellbeing.³⁷





Additionally, around half of emissions produced from greenhouse gases may be absorbed by land and water ecosystems, providing nature-based solutions to our changing climate.⁴¹ Whether land acts as a 'source' or 'sink' of greenhouse gas emissions depends on how it is managed.

Currently land in Oxfordshire is predominantly used for intensive farming, with only 7.5 per cent for green space and gardens, see figures 18-19.³³ Arable land is typically a source of carbon emissions due to 'carbon loss' as soils are disturbed during cultivation.³³ Across the county there is 9.0 per cent woodland, which is below the UK average of 13.0 per cent.³³



Currently land in Oxfordshire is predominantly used for intensive farming, with only 7.5 per cent for green space and gardens

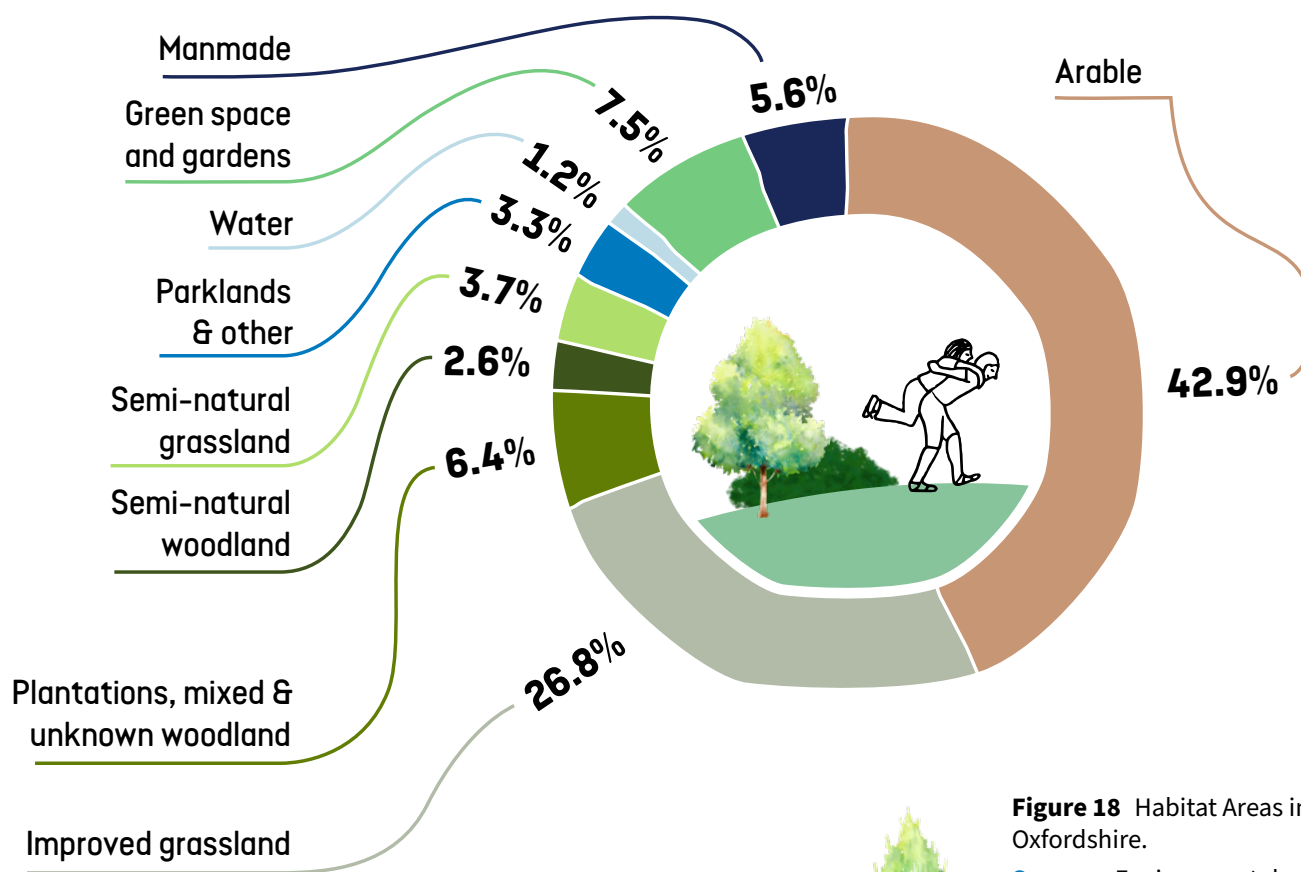
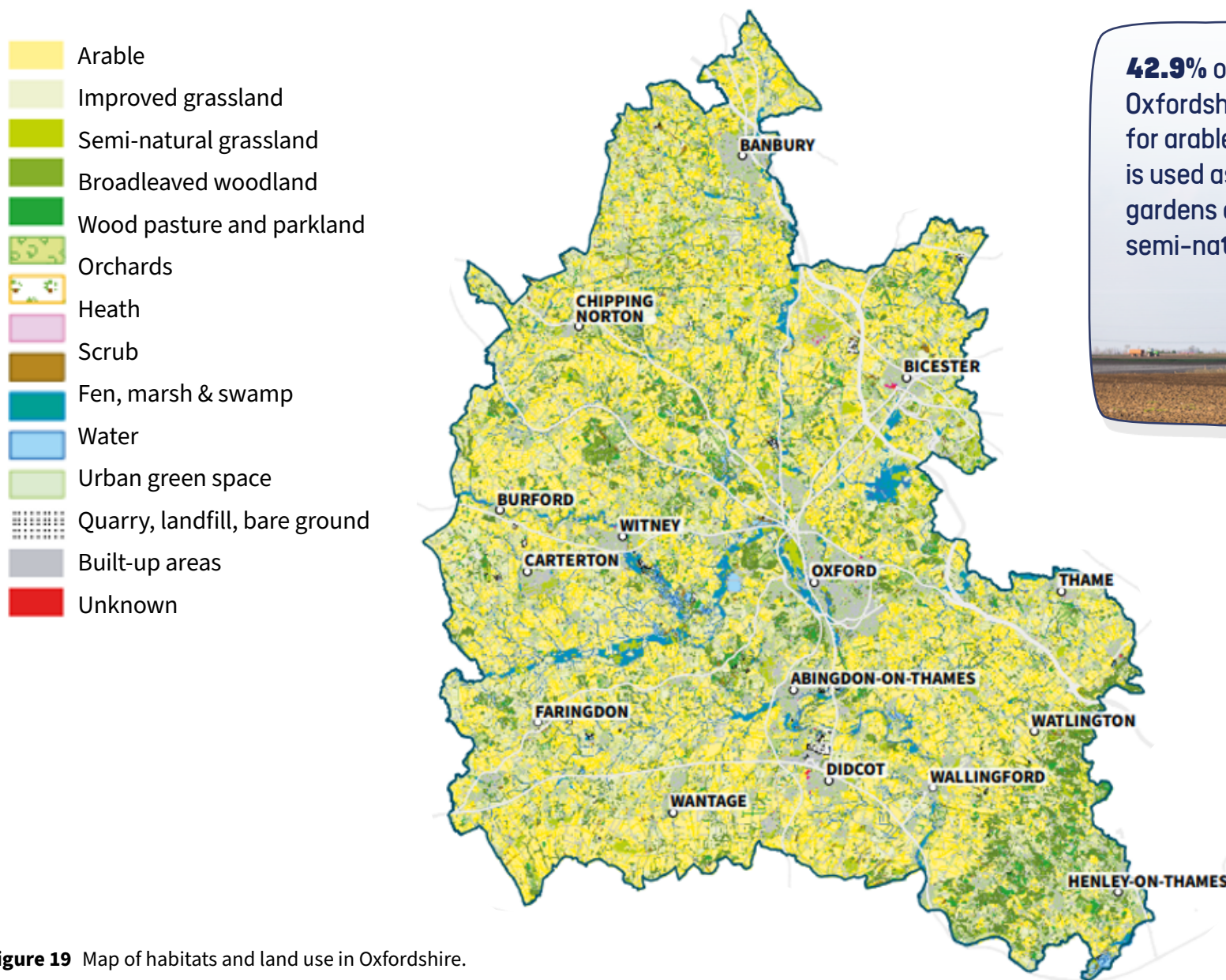


Figure 18 Habitat Areas in Oxfordshire.

Source: Environmental Change Institute, Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire





42.9% of the land in Oxfordshire is currently used for arable farming; only 7.5% is used as green space and gardens and 2.6% is used as semi-natural woodland




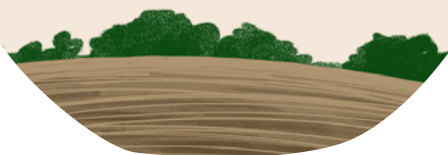
Figure 19 Map of habitats and land use in Oxfordshire.

Source: Environmental Change Institute, Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire



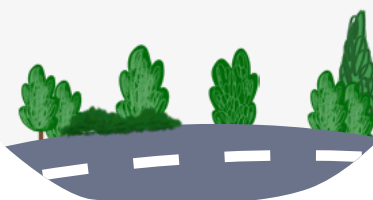
17,000

kilometres of hedgerows
and trees along field
boundaries



800,000

trees situated on or
beside public highways



**23 million
tonnes**

of carbon are currently
stored in Oxfordshire's soil
and vegetation

There are, however, already natural assets in Oxfordshire which store and sequester significant amounts of carbon and simultaneously provide opportunities to improve our health and wellbeing. Green spaces may provide shade and cooling, improve flood management, expand opportunities for active travel and improve biodiversity.⁵ The natural world therefore forms an integral part of our county's effective climate mitigation and adaptation strategy.^{33,41}

However, careful consideration should be taken when implementing green infrastructure to ensure that it does not inadvertently reduce air flow in urban streets, therefore leading to pollution build-up at a pedestrian level.⁵

Additionally, increasing the density of trees in urban places without consideration of tree species may lead to increased levels of pollen, with consequences for health.⁵

There are 17,000 kilometres of hedgerows and trees along field boundaries in Oxfordshire and as many as 800,000 trees situated on or beside public highways in Oxfordshire.³³ It is estimated that 23 million tonnes of carbon are currently stored in Oxfordshire's soil and vegetation, with an additional 115,000 tonnes sequestered each year – see figure 20.³³ By contrast, emission sources in Oxfordshire accounted for 4,309,600 tonnes of carbon in 2021, equivalent to 5.9 tonnes of carbon per person.³



The woodland areas stand out for their role in carbon storage. The higher levels of carbon storage for grassland compared to arable land can also be seen. Arable land is a source of emissions due to carbon loss as soils are disturbed during cultivation. It is offset by sequestration, primarily by woodlands and hedgerows (from PAZCO).



Figure 20 Carbon storage in soils and vegetation in Oxfordshire.

Source: Environmental Change Institute, Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PAZCO).



Nature testimony:

“Bridewell Gardens – a community garden in Oxfordshire – offers a supportive environment and green space for many. One local resident joined Bridewell with very high levels of anxiety. For their first months they did not join others to eat and did not feel able to speak with their support worker. However, by working in the gardens and with the support of staff and volunteers, this all started to change. This resident has gone on to offer their gardening services to neighbours, as well as transforming their initial garden to grow vegetables and flowers. They have continued to pursue work in the outdoors and to maintain friendships with people they met at Bridewell.”

“Bridewell gave me time and peace. Here everything grows and I grew. My favourite job was potting on, which stopped the chaos in my head and felt like I was nurturing something. I’ve learned not to suffer in silence but to speak out. I’ve still got a long way to go but I’ve found out how far I’ve come and I’m glad I am where I am.”

"Bridewell
gave me time
and peace."



"Here everything
grows and
I grew."



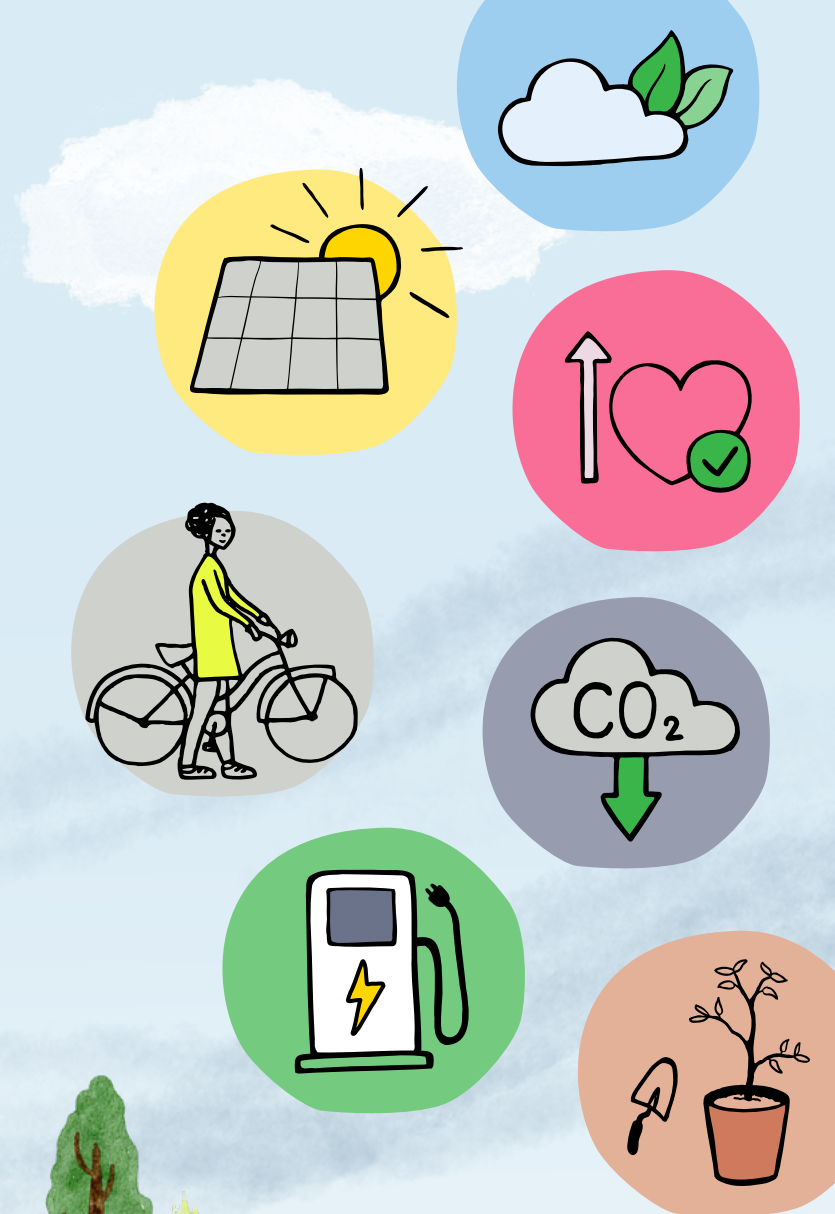
Section 2:

What are we doing now?

2.0 Introduction

This section explains what Oxfordshire County Council, local anchor institutions⁴³, system partners and community action groups are currently doing to address our changing climate – with immediate and longer-term positive benefits for health and wellbeing.

The national evidence base is currently strongest for benefits from nature-based solutions, mainstreaming climate-health considerations across sectors, interventions targeted for vulnerable populations and priority settings, undertaking early planning and action, enhancing community resilience by addressing existing inequalities, promoting adaptative behaviours and embedding climate education into health, care, and public health practice.⁵ Many of these actions work towards promoting a robust, local circular economy.



In this report, there are five themes on which climate initiatives with positive health benefits focus, including:

Energy efficient healthy homes and buildings



Green health and social care



Sustainable travel and clean air



Accessible green spaces, clean water and nature



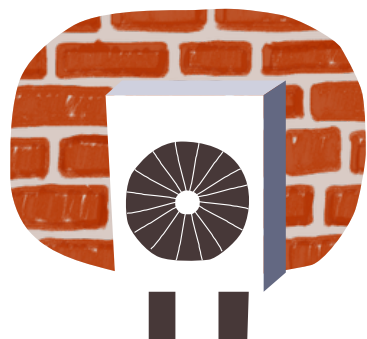
Healthy and sustainable diets



2.1 Energy efficient healthy homes and buildings

How we heat and cool our homes has an impact on our health, financial wellbeing and local climate. From a health perspective, more energy efficient and environmentally friendly heating and approaches to cooling can improve indoor and outdoor air quality, reduce exposure to toxic pollutants such as carbon monoxide, better regulate household temperatures for health and reduce pressures on local health services by doing so. These same principles apply to core local facilities, such as hospitals, prisons, GP practices, schools and libraries.

Through the climate action framework, Oxfordshire County Council has committed to prioritising action on climate change across the council's corporate estate and to reducing emissions from all its areas of influence.



What are we doing with homes in Oxfordshire?

- Better Housing Better Health.** The Better Housing Better Health (BHBH) service is a longstanding initiative commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council and the five district and city councils across Oxfordshire. The programme's objective is to support residents, those with health conditions and lower incomes and those in receipt of care, to stay warm, well and independent in their homes. New support also includes 'cooling' packs during summer months to support residents on short-term strategies to keep cool during periods of hot weather.

Examples of support include:

- understanding and accessing financial support to help pay for energy
- understanding energy bills, tariffs and heating controls
- accessing grants and funding for home improvements and heating system upgrades
- free home energy visits which offer personalised energy advice and support with bills and referrals
- signposting to local organisations to access additional support.

What are we doing with schools in Oxfordshire?

- The schools energy efficiency loan. Oxfordshire County Council has set aside a budget of £800,000 over two years to establish an **energy efficiency recycling fund**. The fund will provide schools maintained by the county council with an interest free loan to finance up to £70,000 for LED lighting and/or solar panels depending on the school's specific needs and priorities. Battery storage is also available with advice and support for the whole scheme available from Action on Carbon & Energy in Schools (ACES), an energy efficiency support service.

What are we doing with our communities in Oxfordshire?

- **Project LEO smart and fair neighbourhood trials.** Project LEO prioritises local energy solutions which are focused on testing new ways of delivering and using clean energy to the best possible advantage of households and their communities. This project works with a range of partners in collaboration with communities. For example, in Deddington and Duns Tew, the potential for use of **heat pumps** (devices which transfer heat from a cooler area to a hotter area using mechanical energy) to deliver clean, affordable energy for a rural community was tested and evaluated.
- Meanwhile, in Rose Hill the **solar saver** initiative trialled whether it would be possible for tenants in urban apartment buildings to modify their use of energy throughout the day to avoid peak hours of energy usage and to be better synchronised with peak levels of clean energy provided by solar panels.

Positive health impacts (associated with these examples)

- Reduce financial pressures of heating costs (and likely future cooling costs) for occupants and core local facilities ⁵
- Reduce burning of fossil fuels (including through open fires or poorly ventilated stoves) which significantly and negatively impact our health, primarily through air pollution – both indoor and outdoor ⁵
- Reduce air pollution which contributes to cardiovascular and respiratory morbidity and mortality along with other illnesses ⁵
- Reduce carcinogenic and developmental health risks associated with fossil fuel extraction ⁵
- Reduce cold-related mortality and morbidity by improving indoor temperatures during winter for occupants and core local facilities ⁵
- Improve health of those with existing respiratory and chronic disease, with benefits for disease symptoms, mental wellbeing, reduced health service contacts and fewer days of absence from school and work, by improving home warmth ⁵
- Improve community cohesion, resilience and adaptation in case of extreme weather events which may cause disruption to national energy supplies



2.2 Sustainable travel and clean air

Across the county, there are efforts to promote active, more sustainable travel. These initiatives have benefits for both physical and mental health – directly through increased physical activity and indirectly through cleaner, less polluted air. **Oxon Air** (www.oxonair.uk) now provides outdoor air quality monitoring maps and air quality forecasts across the county.



What are we doing with our schools?

The **School Streets** pilot scheme which is now being rolled out further, trialled the restriction of motor traffic at the school gates during drop off and pick up times. The project sought to improve road safety, by allowing school roads to be open for walking and cycling.

Nine school street trials took place between March and July 2021. Active travel to school increased by 6 per cent, with a majority of pupils surveyed describing feeling much safer or safer during trials than before. By contrast, there was a 7 per cent reduction in pupils being driven to school. Approximately 1 in 5 parent, resident and teacher drivers said that they were driving less since the school street trial had started. Almost half agreed that the air quality had improved at drop off and pick up times during the closures.



What are we doing with our bus services?

In support of the government's road to zero strategy for transition to zero emission transport by 2050, Oxfordshire was granted £32.8 million to support the local **zero emission bus regional areas (ZEBRA)** scheme. The initiative seeks to cut air pollution, reduce noise pollution, and provide more reliable bus services for local people.

The Oxfordshire County Council bid secured 159 zero emission buses now incrementally operating on 34 routes across Oxford City and nearby surroundings. This area has been defined through consideration of three core air quality management areas. All of these buses will be in operation by the end of June 2024 on services in and around Oxford City.

These new vehicles will have zero emissions at the point of operation and will be virtually silent. The impact on both air and noise pollution is expected to be significant. The ZEBRA proposal also supports wider policy proposals for Oxford, including **Connecting Oxford**, which will deliver a zero emissions zone and traffic filters to remove traffic from congested city centre routes.

What are we doing with cyclists?

There are now an increasing range of community led organisations which promote safe, accessible cycling across the county. **Windrush Bike Project** is one example, which operates as a not-for-profit social enterprise based in Witney, West Oxfordshire. The programme empowers individuals to improve their mental and physical health through cycling and developing skills in repairing bikes. The community bike workshop is run from Witney, with children and adults upskilled to repair and fix donated bikes through mechanics courses.

Additionally, the organisation runs **bikeability training** across 48 schools, with a weekly inclusive cycling activity and fortnightly social bike rides. Last year, 27 adults completed the 12 hour bike mechanics for wellbeing course – 19 asylum seekers were involved in the programme and were able to make use of the repaired bikes at the end of the course. The programme has also loaned 92 bicycles to children from low income families through the bike library, in addition to 19 trike and adapted cycles for children with additional needs.

27 

adults completed bike mechanics for wellbeing course

19 

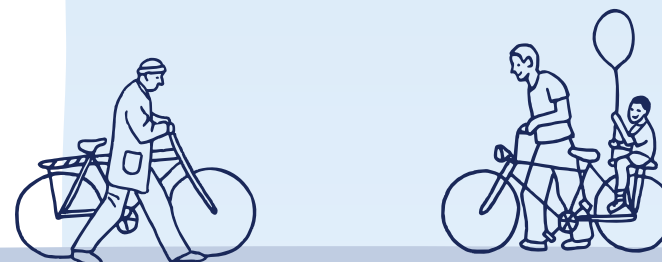
asylum seekers were involved in the programme

92 

bicycles loaned to children from low income families

Positive health impacts (associated with these examples)

- Shift unnecessary journeys from private vehicles, reducing emissions and improving air quality⁵
- Reduce risk of many chronic health conditions (such as obesity, respiratory disease and cardiovascular disease) by adopting more active, cleaner transport⁵
- Reduce harmful noise pollution through electrification of vehicles
- Improve physical health, mental health and wellbeing by adopting more active, cleaner transport⁵
- Improve equity and access to work and educational opportunities through more affordable and accessible public transport⁵
- Improve connection and engagement among and between communities



2.3 Green health and social care

In Oxfordshire, there are climate actions, policies and networks among health and care professionals working in primary care, secondary care, mental health services, out of hours services and social care. These all have a role to play in the health and wellbeing of patients, staff, and residents across the county. In particular, by greening and increasing biodiversity of estates and sites managed by healthcare providers, we can boost access to green spaces and nature across the county.

What are colleagues doing in general practice?

Greener Practice Oxfordshire is a new group bringing together like-minded primary care clinicians from across the county with the aim of supporting each other and their practices to make local healthcare more sustainable, improve the lives of local patients and communities and to be advocates for climate health. The group meets regularly and shares practical resources and solutions. Increasing numbers of GP practices across Oxfordshire can also now signpost and refer patients to green spaces for social prescribing interventions which improve mental health.

What are colleagues doing in secondary care?

In 2022, Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) NHS Foundation Trust launched the **‘Building a Greener OUH’ plan** which sets out the trust’s intention to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2040, in line with NHS England’s carbon neutral target.⁴² From April 2023, the NHS will require all suppliers with new contracts above £5 million per annum to publish a carbon reduction plan for their direct emissions. From April 2024, this will be a requirement for all new contracts irrespective of value.

OUH are one of the largest NHS teaching hospital trusts in the UK and one of the largest employers in Oxfordshire. This strategy focusses on key areas including travel and transport, procurement and supply chains, estates and facilities, medicines and digital transformation.

Oxford University Hospitals have pledged

- To invest in active travel, to support the electrification of the NHS fleet and help reduce unnecessary journeys to hospital
- To build sustainability into the scoring for award of tenders and choosing which products are purchased, to focus on inventory and supply chain management and to work to reduce single use plastics
- To review anaesthetic gases and to reduce the proportion of desflurane to sevoflurane used in surgery, to promote the appropriate prescription of low carbon inhalers and encourage taking medicine in tablet form where possible (liquid medicines require refrigeration and have shorter expiration dates)
- To care for patients closer to, or at home, to be a truly paperless organisation and be mindful of the true carbon footprint associated with digital services
- To build sustainably, to encourage biodiversity and green space for patients and staff and to promote greener cleaning and catering.

Examples of progress already made include:

- The John Radcliffe Hospital and Oxford and Horton General Hospital, Banbury, have recently been awarded **£29.8 million** across both hospitals as part of the government's public sector **decarbonisation scheme**, which supports the aim of reducing emissions from public sector buildings and estates. Oxford University Hospitals will also contribute £7.5 million toward the wider scheme, meaning that the total expenditure is £37.3 million over a three year period. Both hospitals will undergo replacement of existing pipework and plumbing with modern, cleaner and more efficient infrastructure. Existing gas boilers will be replaced with lower carbon electric heat pumps and additional energy efficiency measures. Solar panels, insulation, double glazing and draught proofing will also be installed.
- Oxford University Hospitals are currently piloting a carbon accounting methodology called **E-Liability**. This technology was developed by academics from Harvard and Oxford. It consists of an accounting algorithm that allows organisations to produce real-time, accurate and auditable data on their total direct and supplier emissions (referred to as 'cradle-to-gate'). This methodology is intended to help inform purchasing decisions by providing reliable emission impacts of making a product or delivering a service.
- Electric vehicle charging points** have been installed at the John Radcliffe Hospital, in Headington. This supports staff to charge and park their electric vehicles at work. There is a plan to roll out more electric vehicle charging points across clinical sites.
- Local bike couriers** were partnered with to deliver chemotherapy and parenteral nutrition from the local depot at the John Radcliffe and Churchill hospitals. In the first ten months of the partnership, over 36,000 products were delivered. The new OUH Swindon radiotherapy centre opened in Spring 2022, with the goal of providing patients and families with a service closer to home which will reduce their travel time (more than 13,000 journeys to Oxford each year) and features 60 solar panels to help power the building.





What are colleagues doing in community and mental health services?

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust provides essential services across Oxfordshire, not limited to district nursing, out of hours services, minor injuries units and core mental health services. Oxford Health is prioritising climate action across its sites, with examples including:

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust planted its first **Tiny Forest** at Littlemore Mental Health Centre on 6 December 2021.

The Tiny Forest is home to approximately 600 saplings of 18 different tree species and includes a range of features such as paths and rest areas for patients, staff, and visitors. It also provides a great spot to watch wildlife as a Tiny Forest can attract over 500 animal and plant species within the first three years.

As part of regular monitoring of the Tiny Forest, the team complete science days with staff and patients to find out more about how nature can have a positive impact for patients, staff, and visitors to the hospital. Both the learning disability and child and adolescent mental health services have used the Tiny Forest as part of patient therapy. Tiny Forest brings the benefits of a forest – connecting people with nature, raising awareness of the environment,

and helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change, as well as supporting urban wildlife.

Tiny Forest science days include learning about:

- Wildlife in the forest including butterflies, bees and bugs
- How trees can capture and store carbon from the air we breathe
- The forest's ability to store water
- The cooling benefits of the trees

Feedback from staff and patients has been positive. One staff member described **“I enjoy going there not just with the people we support but also going on my own. I like going round there as I find it relaxing, it takes you away from other things and lets you focus on nature”**.

A young patient said, **“I look forward to going to the Tiny Forest, I feel excited when I go there and nice and chilled out”**.

Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust completed a successful six month **trial of e-bikes for the district nursing team** in 2023. The team recognised that transport of clinical staff is essential to deliver high quality community care and wanted to use this as an opportunity to take climate action. The team adopted e-bikes as a strategy to help low carbon goals, improve local air quality and boost the mental and physical health of staff.

The project involved a scoping exercise, review of governance procedures, engagement with the community team and involvement of volunteers, implementation, and evaluation. Through this process, the team also recognised the need for more safe cycling infrastructure across the county, access to changing facilities and safe cycle storage. They also acknowledged a need for alternative forms of active, sustainable travel as e-bikes are not suited to everyone.



What are colleagues doing in social care?

Alongside the commitment to realise net zero emissions from the corporate estate by 2030, Oxfordshire County Council is committed to working with its **supply chain** to reduce emissions and ensure they are increasingly aligned to science-based targets for net zero emissions. Current work is being undertaken with Oxfordshire County Council's top 10 suppliers (by spend), including the council's main care home provider, Order of St John.

Oxfordshire County Council's business mileage is around 4 million miles a year, with 66 per cent accounted for by children's services and 15 per cent by adult social care. Progress is being made to roll out a **fleet decarbonisation programme** for council owned vehicles (including those that might be used by social service teams). This will be electrification by default but will also involve proactive work on innovation projects for hard to electrify fleet (for example heavy vehicles). E-bikes and electric pool cars are also being trialled for social care delivery.

In addition to this, Oxfordshire County Council is expanding its **supply chain emissions report**. This includes the main care home provider, Order of St John. The initial estimates suggest that social care suppliers make up a quarter of supply chain emissions and work is currently underway with suppliers to calculate actual emissions. Aligned with this work, the following policy position was adopted by cabinet in June 2023:

- Engage with our suppliers on their carbon emissions and expand supply chain emission reporting.
- Collaborate with our suppliers, partners and purchasing organisations on decarbonisation opportunities.
- Implement low carbon principles and specifications in future council contracts.
- Maximise the effectiveness of Oxfordshire County Council's social value policy to realise further supply chain emission reduction opportunities.

Positive health impacts (associated with these examples)

- Reduce the significant contribution of emissions accounted for by the NHS, and in doing so reduce longer-term demand for health and social care services⁵
- Shift unnecessary journeys from private vehicles, reducing emissions and improving air quality⁵
- Reduce risk of many chronic health conditions (such as obesity, respiratory disease and cardiovascular disease) by adopting more active, cleaner transport to and from work⁵
- Improve quality of health care through more stable power supplies for refrigeration, lighting, and medical equipment⁵
- Improve quality and sustainability of social care services, especially for our ageing population
- Improve access to digital care for patients with limited mobility or living in remote areas⁵
- Improve air quality, mental health of staff and patients, natural cooling and carbon storage by maximising use of green space for health⁵
- Contribute to the circular economy of Oxfordshire by influencing positive social change among staff and patients on climate and health action

2.4 Healthy and sustainable diets

Food and nutrition are implicitly linked to our health. Accessible, healthy and sustainable food has the potential to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and several cancers. As discussed in last year's annual report, in Oxfordshire, over half of adults and one third of children in year 6 are overweight or obese and the burden of obesity is higher in the most deprived wards of the county.

In tandem, the number of people using services to address food poverty is significant – a snapshot of 40 providers of community food services in Oxfordshire reported over 23,000 beneficiaries on average per month in 2021.²⁴

To overcome the combined challenges of health, food poverty and our changing climate, Oxfordshire must strive toward a sustainable food system. Most recently, the war in Ukraine, COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit have all impacted on the cost and availability of food in the county and have emphasised the importance of resilient local food chains and community led programmes to tackle food poverty.

What are we doing within local authorities?

The Oxfordshire food strategy champions the importance of healthy and sustainable diets across the county and represents a joint commitment to tackling local food insecurity



and climate related food impacts.²⁴ The strategy was developed in partnership with **Good Food Oxfordshire**, an organisation which represents over 150 organisations working to create a better food system across the county.

Oxfordshire was awarded a prestigious **Sustainable Food Places silver award** in November 2023. This award acknowledges the work across Oxfordshire to build a local food system that is good for people, communities and climate.



The award recognises the work of the food partnership – Good Food Oxfordshire – and of stakeholders (communities, food and farming businesses and institutions) across the local area in promoting healthy, sustainable and local food. It also acknowledges work to tackle some of today's greatest social challenges; from food poverty and diet related ill health to the disappearance of family farms and the loss of independent food retailers. Sustainable Food Places commended Oxfordshire's excellent example of transitioning from city to county scale, promoting representation and encouraging participation through District Food Action working groups.



What are volunteer groups doing?



The Cherwell Collective. This umbrella organisation aims to empower their local community to reduce waste and their carbon footprint. The organisation was founded during COVID-19 due to concerns that families and individuals were facing unprecedented hardship and adversity, in particular families with young children reliant on free school meals.

The Cherwell Collective is based in Kidlington, but the community encompasses all of Oxfordshire. Actions include the direct distribution of food surplus via the **Cherwell Larder Marketplace**, the repurposing of surplus food via the **Climatarian Kitchen** and by growing food for the community in **Harvest@Home**. A new related project includes the Waste Innovation Station, which repurposes non-food items.



OX4 Food Crew. OX4 Food Crew is an alliance of nine grassroots organisations working collaboratively toward a common goal: – that everyone living in OX4 has enough food, is well nourished and can thrive. These organisations came together during the COVID-19 pandemic to tackle the high levels of food inequality experienced by people living in OX4. During 2021, this partnership developed and expanded, responding to diverse needs and a shift in emphasis with a focus on community led recovery and resilience.

Collectively, the OX4 Food Crew has distributed 20,000 food parcels and 20,000 cooked meals to people living in OX4. 'Pay as you feel' community meals are also run every Monday, across different venues in OX4. Cooking for health and wellbeing courses are run in conjunction with the programme, with some focussing on family cooking and people experiencing homelessness.

Positive health impacts (associated with these examples)

- Reduce the health burden and related costs of obesity-related illness to the NHS for both children and adults ⁵
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions attributed to food waste in households and communities, and their indirect impacts on health ⁵
- Improve support for low-income families and provide affordable nutritious options
- Improve social cohesion and community resilience





2.5 Accessible green spaces, clean water and nature

Nature is an important asset for our communities, and biodiversity allows the natural world to be productive, resilient and adaptable. Time spent in green space and nature is linked to reduced stress, improved mood, boosted self-esteem and better mental health. However, the indirect health co-benefits of the natural world are far greater. In the absence of biodiversity and crop biodiversity, we are more reliant on pesticides and fertilisers to compensate for lowered crop resilience and less rich soil.²⁹

Some pesticides and fertilisers have negative impacts on human health, depending on their composition – these effects may include the nervous system, irritation of the skin or eyes, altered hormone production and increased risk of developing certain cancers.

In the UK, the greatest benefits from green space are generally seen for those living in the most deprived areas.⁵ Barriers to accessing and engaging with green space and nature are associated with a range of physical, practical, and sociocultural factors.

Green spaces, clean water, nature and biodiversity are increasingly prioritised across Oxfordshire, as demonstrated through the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership. Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership is an organisation of key partners working together to radically enhance nature, its positive impact on our climate and the priority it is given, helping to make Oxfordshire a county where people and nature thrive.

What are we doing with district councils?

Our district councils are each prioritising access to green space and nature for residents:

- Cherwell District Council** began their partnership with walking app **Go Jauntly** in 2022 to digitise and make more accessible local countryside walks and health routes. Walks are available in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington and more are added all the time. Print ready guides are also available.
- South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils** have recently launched a nature recovery project called **Let it Bee**, which aims to increase biodiversity of council land by allowing wildflowers and plants to grow on specific sites. The councils have

chosen locations which do not impact on pedestrians or sightlines for drivers and are also near shorter grass areas and pathways for people wishing to exercise, play or relax.

- Oxford City Council's GO Active Outdoors** programme aims to provide the public with all the information they need to be more active outdoors. The programme has dedicated web pages on green spaces and nature, including links with information on how to access city parks, local nature reserves, walking routes and wellbeing walks, and is a provider and licensor of Forest School activities.
- West Oxfordshire District Council** has **funded the planting of wildflower meadow bulbs, plug plants and seed** through the UK shared prosperity fund as part of its commitment to enhance green spaces within the district. Thirty volunteers turned out to help in a planting session at Carnival Meadow, an area of Eynsham's playing fields owned by the town council, to provide colour and bring wildlife to the space. West Oxfordshire District Council has also installed **two brand new wooden footbridges** at Deer Park South in Witney with further developments planned for the area. The new footbridges will provide a safer and more accessible route across Colwell Brook.

What are volunteer groups doing?

- Children's allotment.** This is a volunteer run community space in East Oxford. The site hosts Forest Schools, family music sessions, a Growing Group and more. The site had been disused for 10 years and was overgrown with brambles. A group of parents, community members and educators formed a cooperative and transformed the dilapidated plant nursery into a positive green educational space for families to be outside and connect with nature. The site offers child and community education, for early years foundation stage children and older, with a focus on Forest School, food growing, outdoor play and self-directed learning.
- Oxford Urban Wildlife Group.** Oxford Urban Wildlife Group manages **Boundary Brook Nature Reserve**. The reserve was created in 1990 when local community members formed Oxford Urban Wildlife Group, rescuing a plot of disused allotments to create a tranquil, wild space in East Oxford. The reserve includes mixed woodland, meadows, a nature pond and butterfly glade. It has been described as a vital green lung in East Oxford. Events include mindfulness in nature, singing in nature, weekly conservation work and grassland restoration work.



- International Trees Foundation (ITF)** with partner Refugee Resource. This project coordinates a series of visits for refugees and asylum seekers to local nature sites across the county. The project focusses on adults, children and young people who are currently in receipt of psychological, social or practical support from Refugee Resource to engage them in a series of woodland activity sessions. The aim of this initiative is to improve physical and mental wellbeing, build confidence, reduce social isolation and give individuals the opportunity to be immersed in nature. The project builds on a series of taster sessions for families during the summer of 2022. The first event was held at the Oxford Botanic Gardens: '**Healing in the Outdoors**'.

Positive health impacts (associated with these examples)

- Improved self-assessed physical and mental health⁵
- Improve maintenance of a healthier weight⁵
- Improve wellbeing and cognition in children⁵
- Reduce all-cause and cardiovascular mortality⁵
- Reduce incidence of low birth weight⁵
- Reduce demand for (carbon intensive) healthcare⁵
- Improve availability of natural cooling and carbon storage provided by natural environments⁵
- Reduce flooding risk, and secondary health effects, through sustainable drainage systems and tree planting along rivers⁵

Section 3:

Call for action

This report identifies both the opportunities and threats posed by the climate emergency to health. We highlight exciting climate actions, policies and strategies which are underway in Oxfordshire and show why we all need to take urgent climate action now to improve our health and wellbeing and protect our environment.

This report mandates urgent climate action for health across Oxfordshire.

We have shown the immediate and positive health benefits of taking action to address our changing climate, and we need to ensure that we accelerate and facilitate these measures across our county.

Every climate action, policy and strategy should identify and maximise the opportunity to improve our health and wellbeing.

By the same token, every health action, policy, and strategy should mitigate for and prevent the negative health impacts of our changing climate.

3.1 System actions

This responsibility cannot and should not be shouldered by individuals alone. We need real structural changes, and system wide actions to mitigate and adapt to our changing climate and to improve health.

Based on this report, our main priorities for system partners are:

1



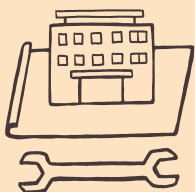
Work together for cleaner indoor and outdoor air by promoting active, sustainable travel and adopting low-carbon energy and supply chains

2



Increase and improve access for all to safe, inclusive green spaces and clean waterways with positive impacts on wildlife, biodiversity and adaptation

3



Adapt and upgrade buildings, estates and facilities to ensure high-quality services can be delivered now and in the future as resources are made available

4



Work with suppliers and the supply chain to reduce carbon emissions, ensure decisions consider carbon impacts, and encourage suppliers to develop more sustainable practices, including maximising social value and environmental standards for food and catering

5



Ensure partnership working through existing forums and networks to accelerate action on climate mitigation and adaptation, whilst maximising benefits for health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on delivery of system wide action to address the risks of extreme weather events

6



Build and continuously bolster community resilience by adapting infrastructure to meet the needs of our changing climate

3.2 National policy and funding

With the right national policy framework, local authorities could achieve so much more. The recent report by Chris Skidmore MP, [The Future is Local](#), sets out the key opportunity for local authorities working in partnership with central government to deliver low carbon solutions.

With favourable policy from central government, local authorities will be able to deliver more, faster than under the current national policy and legislative framework. Based on this report, our main priorities for central government are aligned with the [Blueprint Coalition](#).

The Blueprint Coalition is an influential group of local government organisations, environmental groups and research institutions who are calling on the government altogether to support local authorities in delivering climate action with a joined up approach:



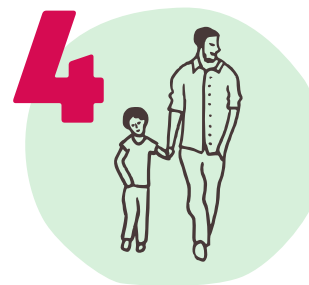
Reduce air pollution by investing in low carbon and climate resilient infrastructure including public transport, renewable energy and electric vehicle charging



Create good, secure employment and reduce inequalities by supporting reskilling, retraining, remote working and research to accelerate the move to a net zero economy



Improve our residents' health and wellbeing by upgrading our homes, healthcare facilities and schools to ensure they are fit for the future



Boost our physical and mental health by making it easy for people to walk, cycle, and use active, sustainable transport



Improve our mental and physical health, capacity for natural cooling and air quality by ensuring access for all to green spaces and other green infrastructure

3.3 Individual actions

Last, but not least, there are many practical things that each of us can do, with very little time and effort. Some of these are free and many save money. Almost all improve our own health and the health of others. These small changes can add up to big action.

Take a look at [Climate Action Oxfordshire](#) or [Home | Cag Oxfordshire | Community Action Group Network | England](#) where there are plenty of suggestions to get started.

There are also [resources and support available](#) if you are experiencing the effects of climate anxiety, or eco anxiety (often defined as a longer-term fear of environmental doom, and worries about what might happen if we do not take action to avert disaster due to the climate emergency). There is also [tailored support](#) available for young people.



Appendix A

Health and Wellbeing in Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South East region. Oxfordshire's population is relatively healthy.

Oxfordshire does better or similar to the national average on most Public Health indicators. Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in Oxfordshire are each significantly higher than national and regional averages for both males and females.

Oxfordshire's population is ageing, a trend that is forecast to continue.

House prices are continuing to increase, and the cost of renting remains well above average. The future increase in the population (especially the numbers of young people) is very dependent on levels of house building in future and will vary across the county.

For 2019 to 2021, Cancer was the leading cause of death in Oxfordshire, followed by Heart Disease for males and Dementia & Alzheimers Diseases for females. The prevalence of Cancer and Depression in Oxfordshire in 2020-21 were each above the national average.

The latest ONS measures of personal wellbeing (2020-21) for Oxfordshire show a decline in reported happiness and an increase in anxiety. The average level of anxiety in Oxfordshire has remained above the England average. Mental health rates of diagnosis and referrals are continuing to increase.

According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2019), Oxfordshire was ranked the 10th least deprived of 151 upper-tier local authorities in England (up from 11th in 2015). Oxfordshire had 1 out of 407 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) ranked within the 10% most deprived areas nationally, part of Northfield Brook ward, south east Oxford. A further 16 areas were ranked in the 20% most deprived areas nationally, 9 in Oxford City, 6 in Banbury and 1 in Abingdon.

As a result Oxfordshire has wide inequalities in health and wellbeing. Males living in the more affluent areas of the county are expected to live around 11 years longer than those in poorer areas. For females the gap in life expectancy is around 12 years.

For more detailed live information on Oxfordshire's health and wellbeing please see the [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2022](#).

Oxfordshire
JSNA



References


- 1** Green Alliance. Why we need to talk about health and climate: an essay collection. 2023. London: Green Alliance.
- 2** Council Climate Action Scorecards. County Council Climate Action Scorecards. Available at: <https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/scoring/county/>. (Accessed: 2 January 2024).
- 3** Oxfordshire County Council. Oxfordshire greenhouse gas emissions annual report. 2023. Oxford: Oxfordshire County Council.
- 4** Atkins SNC Lavalin. Oxfordshire County Council – Climate Resilience; Current and future climate risk and vulnerability and health impacts assessments in Oxfordshire. 2023. Unpublished.
- 5** UK Health Security Agency. Health Effects of Climate Change (HECC) in the UK: 2023 report. 2023. London: UK Health Security Agency.
- 6** UK Health Security Agency. Adverse Weather and Health Plan: supporting evidence 2022 - 2023. 2022. London: UKHSA.
- 7** Office for National Statistics. Excess mortality during heat-periods: 1 June to 31 August 2022. London: Office for National Statistics.
- 8** Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Full Report 2023. Oxford: Oxfordshire County Council.
- 9** Jeffrey J. NHS Overheating Analysis of the impact of heatwaves on the people who rely on and work in the NHS. 2023. Manchester: Round Our Way.
- 10** South Central Ambulance Service. Ambulance Call-Out and Acuity Data 2022-2023. Oxfordshire: South Central Ambulance Service.
- 11** Milner J, Turner G, Ibbetson A, Eustachio P, Green R, Dangour AD et al. Impact on mortality of pathways to net zero greenhouse gas emissions in England and Wales: a multisectoral modelling study. 2023. 7(2):128-136.
- 12** Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2022). Air Pollution: applying All Our Health. London: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.
- 13** Smith L. Air quality: policies, proposals and concerns. 2023. London: House of Commons Library.
- 14** Williams M, Evangelopoulos D, Katsouyanni K, Walton H. Personalising the Health Impacts of Air Pollution – Summary for Decision Makers. 2019. London: King’s College London.
- 15** Singh A, Bartington SE, Song C, Ghaffarpasand O, Kraftl M, Shi Z et al. Impacts of emergency health protection measures upon air quality, traffic and public health: evidence from Oxford, UK. Environmental Pollution. 2022. 293: 118584.
- 16** Beggs PJ, Clot B, Sofiev M, Johnston FH. Climate change, airborne allergens, and three translational mitigation approaches. eBioMedicine. 2023. 93: 104478.
- 17** Oxfordshire County Council Emergency Planning Unit. 15b. OCC Flood Plan v1.1. 2023. Oxford: Oxfordshire County Council.
- 18** Oxfordshire County Council Emergency Planning Unit. Adverse Weather Plan Version 7.2. Oxford: Oxfordshire County Council.
- 19** Public Health England. The English National Study of Flooding and Health – summary of the evidence generated to date. 2020. London: Public Health England.
- 20** Garner G, Hannah DM. Water in a changing climate: past changes and future prospects for the UK. 2015. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.
- 21** Bevan J. Reflections on water: the good, the bad and the future [speech]. World Water-Tech Innovation Summit. 2023. Environmental Agency.
- 22** Oxford Rivers Project. Citizen Science Water Quality Sampling Final Report. 2022. Oxford: Oxford Rivers Project
- 23** Richardson AJ, Frankenberg RA, Buck AC, Selkon JB, Colbourne JS, Parsons JW et al. An outbreak of waterborne cryptosporidiosis in Swindon and Oxfordshire. Epidemiology and Infection. 1991. 107(3): 485-495.

- 24** Cressey D. Climate change is making algal blooms worse. *Nature*. 2017. doi.org/10.1038/nature.2017.21884
- 25** Dickin S, Bayoumi M, Gine R, Andersson K, Jimenez A. Sustainable sanitation and gaps in global climate policy and financing. *NPJ Clean Water*. 2020. 3, 24. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41545-020-0072-8>
- 26** The Countryside Charity Oxfordshire. Flood and Pollution Report – A survey of Oxfordshire’s Town & Parish Councils, 2021. Watlington: CPRE Oxfordshire
- 27** Water Resource South-East. Revised Draft Regional Plan Water Resources South East. 2023. Water Resource South-East.
- 28** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Drought and Health: Health Implications of Drought. 2022. Washington DC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- 29** Scott E. Impact of climate change and biodiversity loss on food security. 2022. House of Lords Library.
- 30** Leung CW, Stewart AL, Portela-Parra ET, Adler NE, Laraia BA, Epel ES. Understanding the Psychological Distress of Food Insecurity: A Qualitative Study of Children’s Experiences and Related Coping Strategies. 2020. 120(3): 395-403.
- 31** Prendergast M, Kanella I, Milton-Jones H, Moula Z, Scott K, Shah R. Public health for paediatricians: 15-minute guide to identify and address food insecurity. *Archives of Disease in Childhood – Education and Practice*. 2022. 107:392-396.
- 32** British Dietetic Association. Sustainable Diet. 2021. BDA Sustainable Diets Specialist Group.
- 33** Hampton S, Knight L, Scott H, Budnitz H, Killip G, Wheeler S et al. Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire. 2021. Oxford: Environmental Change Institute.
- 34** Good Food Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire Food Strategy. 2022. Oxford: Oxfordshire County Council.
- 35** WHO. Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment: Nature and Health. 2021. Geneva: WHO.
- 36** White MP, Elliott LR, Grellier J, Economou T, Bell S, Bratman GN. Associations between green/blue spaces and mental health across 18 countries. *Nature*. 2021. 11, 8903.
- 37** Department of Health and Social Care. Exploring perceptions of green social prescribing among clinicians and the public. 2023. London: Department of Health and Social Care.
- 38** Mitchell R, Popham F. Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequalities: an observational population study. *Lancet*. 2008 Nov 8;372(9650):1655-60.
- 39** Groundwork. Out of Bounds Equity in Access to Urban Nature. London: Groundwork, 2021. Available at: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/about-groundwork/reports/outofbounds/>. Accessed on 30 November 2023.
- 40** Public Health England. Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020. London: Public Health England.
- 41** United Nations. Biodiversity – the strongest natural defence against climate change. Climate Action. New York: United Nations.
- 42** Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Building a Greener OUH 2022 – 2027. 2021. Oxford: Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Footnotes:

‘Anchor institutions’ are large organisations that have a strong and long term tie to the area and who make a significant and lasting impact to the prosperity and wellbeing of the community. Examples include NHS trusts, Oxford Health, GP practices, councils, care homes, universities and colleges, housing groups and large established companies. Anchor institutions have a significant stake in a region, in terms of spaces they occupy, their environmental impact and the direct and indirect jobs they sustain. They also have significant economic and social influence through the budgets they manage, the supply chains they use and their approach to development.

Testimonies were gathered from individual interviews with Oxfordshire residents completed in November and December 2023. People agreed to share their lived experience of the impacts of climate change on the basis that their account would remain anonymous.

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JUNE 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24 QUARTER FOUR</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Alison Borrett – Senior Performance Analyst. Email: alison.borrett@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2023-24 Quarter Four (Q4).</p>
<p>Annex</p>	<p>Annex A – Corporate Plan Action Tracker Annex B – Council Priorities Report Annex C – Performance Indicator Report</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I. Note the 2023/24 Q4 service performance report.</p>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>Publica Directors, Assistant Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.</p>

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1** The new Council Plan was adopted in January 2023 and the Action Plan, setting out how the priorities within the Council Plan will be delivered, then followed. Additionally, following on from the external audit report in August 2023 which included a recommendation to review performance management to match the Council Plan and measure performance, a new performance framework has been developed to include a Corporate Action Plan Tracker and a Priority Report alongside the service output metrics.
- I.2** A high-level Commissioning Framework was approved by the Executive in October 2020, which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica provides the necessary information, including a range of performance indicators, to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and standard.
- I.3** The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for reviewing and approving the information provided in this report prior to its publication.

2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT

- 2.1** Progress on actions in the Corporate Plan for Q4 include:
- The initial viability report for the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule has been received and is currently under review by Officers. The draft charging schedule is expected to be presented to the Executive in the coming months.
 - All 23 properties, acquired through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) in partnership with Cottsway and Miller Homes, have reached completion. The exchange process has been finalised, and the allocation of the properties is currently in progress.
 - The legal challenge to the Net Zero Carbon Development policy in the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan was resolved in favour of the community group. Amendments are now underway to align with updated requirements following a Ministerial Statement published in December 2023.
 - The Council has secured £50,000 from the DEFRA Coronation Living Heritage Fund to support the Coronation Community Orchard Scheme. Following the closure of the first round of applications in January 2024, six community groups have been awarded grants to commence fruit tree planting.
 - The Executive approved the updated Carbon Action Plan in March 2024. A document redesign is currently in progress before its publication on the website.
 - Under the Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2) scheme, to date, 15 homes within the district have received grant funding to implement energy-saving measures.
- 2.2** An overview of progress against all actions in the Corporate Plan is attached at Annex A and the Council Priority highlight report is attached at Annex B.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Overall, the Council's performance has been positive, with commendable progress in a number of areas including visits to the leisure centres, Official Land Charge Search Times and Processing times for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit.

3.1 Service performance above target:

- Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims (19.57 days against a target of 20 days)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (2.81 days against a target of 5 days)
- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.17% against a target of 0.35%)
- Customer Satisfaction (99.09% against a target of 90%)
- Building Control Satisfaction (100% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (75% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (94.05% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (97.03% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 90%)
- Missed bins per 100,000 (81.37 against a target of 110)
- Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (99.23% against a target of 90%)
- Number of visits to the three leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (4769 memberships against a target of 4214 memberships and 202,757 visits against a target of 182,560)

3.2 Service Performance below target:

Percentage of Council Tax Collected (97.76% against a target of 99%) and Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected (97.59% against a target of 99%)

By the end of Q4, the Council noted a slight improvement in their in-year collection rates for Council Tax compared to the previous year, with a 0.4% increase. Although the Council's collection rate fell short of the year-end target of 99% by 1.24%, there has been a consistent upward trend in collection rates over recent years, nearing pre-pandemic levels by a margin of 0.59%. For non-domestic rates, the Council observed a 0.27% increase in their collection rates compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. However, collection rates remain just over 1% lower than pre-Covid-19 levels.

The service has recently concluded an extensive improvement programme aimed at refining operational procedures. This initiative has led to the successful implementation of dashboards, to improve visibility of individual performance as well as the adoption of weekly work schedules and heightened automation. These efforts have enabled a more efficient approach to service delivery, ensuring that the in-year recovery process remains up to date.

While a 99% target is ambitious for collection rates, it is recognised that it may not be achievable within a single year but rather over the debt's lifespan. As such, discussions with the service are planned to review the in-year target to ensure they are realistic yet still challenging.

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (4.2 days against a target of 4 days)

The standalone figures for Q4 indicate that Housing Benefit Changes of Circumstances are being processed within an average of 2.34 days, surpassing the target of 4 days. However, since the targets are cumulative, the rolling statistics show that the average processing days are above target.

Automation of tasks received directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and customers is currently operating at a level of 60–70%. This automation allows for a heightened focus

on processing applications and addressing reported changes. Furthermore, the UC section of the DWP is actively exploring enhancements to the data sent to local authorities. Ongoing testing of the system is underway as part of these improvement efforts.

The automation of processing applications for the DWP and the trial for reduced phone line opening hours at Cotswold and West has released capacity for officers to process claims, contributing to the reduction in the outstanding workload and processing times.

It's important to emphasise that the processing times commence from the moment the service receives an application, irrespective of its completion status. Therefore, even incomplete applications are included in the count from receipt, so making it even more challenging to meet the target because this delays processing as well as potentially exaggerating the figures.

Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (234 against a target of 274)

During Q4, a total of forty-six properties were delivered across Hailey, Enstone, and Carterton, comprising 26 for affordable rent and 20 for shared ownership. This brings the year's total deliveries to 234 properties. Completions have begun in Enstone on the 23 properties constructed using the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), with the remaining expected to be completed during Q1 24-25.

It's worth noting that completion rates vary throughout the year due to the nature of housing developments, which often span multiple months or even years. Some projects may be phased over several years, contributing to fluctuations in completion numbers. Delays in handovers, particularly related to third-party work scheduling, have impacted expected completions in Carterton and Enstone. Consequently, the delivery of these properties has been pushed back to Q1–Q2 of 2024–2025.

The 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) outlined a yearly requirement of 660 homes in West Oxfordshire until 2031, including 274 affordable units. Since 2013–14, the Council have delivered 2,443 homes, falling short of the SHMA's target of 3,014 homes by 517 units. However, there has been an increase in the delivery of affordable homes following the adoption of the Local Plan in September 2018. Typically, these numbers have surpassed annual targets, gradually narrowing the shortfall observed in previous years.

Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales (88.88% against a target of 95%)

During Q4, the Council conducted nine inspections, with eight completed within the designated timescales. One food premise was not inspected canceled by the other party but it has since been completed. Throughout the year, a total of 28 inspections were carried out, with 27 of them inspected within the target timescales.

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

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

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 4.1** This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5 June 2024; and any comments from the Committee will be recorded and shared with relevant Executive Members.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** There are no direct financial implications from this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1** Contained in this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1** None

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** Contained in this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1** None

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

Corporate Strategy Action Tracker

Green	On target
Amber	Off target but action being taken to ensure delivery (where this results in a reviewed target date, this is made clear in the table)
Red	Off target and no action has yet been agreed to resolve the situation
Complete	Action completed
Not Scheduled to Start	The action/project has either a future start date or is still in its early stages, with no start date established yet.

Our Focus	Actions	Quarter 4 Update	Start Date	Date Due	Status	Executive Member	Link Officer
Putting Residents First	The Council will listen and act in the best interests of residents by: -Being an outward facing, accessible, inclusive and open Council, improving our use of technology to increase understanding and access to what we do, how we work and the decisions we take -Providing easy to use platforms for public consultations that are effective, accessible and timely so that the voice of residents can be heard in planning and other Council decisions -Positively engaging with and listening to locally elected representatives on Town and Parish Councils -Actively seeking the voice of the seldom heard, including those of young people, to understand their particular needs and ensure that the Council is taking decisions that meet these needs.	Explore how the Council leads Youth Engagement, ensuring youth are engaged across the wide range of activity it undertakes.			Not Scheduled to Start	Joy Aitman	Emmy-Lou Bossard / Heather McCulloch
	Customer Experience Improvement Programme	Trial for the change in hours (9 - 2) comes to the end of the 6 month period and will go to Exec and Cabinet in June to seek a permanent arrangement. All very positive at every level (efficiencies and digital uptake).	01/07/2020	01/01/2024	On Target	All	Giles Hughes

1.2	Putting Residents, Young and Old, at the Heart of What We Do	The Council will act with outstanding levels of transparency and accountability, with high standards of governance and trustworthiness.	Proposal to implement a robust system and process for: > the allocation of matters to the councils' forward plans > report preparation, consultation and approval > transparency and publication of decision making; and > decision tracking.		01/05/2021	31/12/2023	On Target	Andy Graham	Giles Hughes
1.3		The Council will actively manage Council budgets, delivering good levels of service through the wise and efficient use of funds available as well as enabling those budgets to grow so that the Council can take action	Procurement: Publica-wide project to embed climate, ecological and social value considerations in procurement processes to maximise the use of sustainable suppliers and support local businesses.				Ongoing	Alaric Smith	Ciaran O'Kane / Phil Martin
1.4		The Council will seek to attract inward investment in our towns, villages and rural areas so that they can flourish and be sustained with new jobs and housing and infrastructure that are designed to meet the needs and aspirations of our current and future residents.					Ongoing		Chris Jackson
2.1	Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All	Ensure the timely provision of built and green infrastructure which meets the needs of existing and incoming residents and that supports health and care to enable physical and mental well-being, community cohesion and delivers a high quality of life.	Adopt and implement CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy).	Draft viability report now received and being considered by Officers with a view to finalisation by the end of April 2024. To then be considered by the Executive in June following the elections. Consultation to take place in July 2024.	01/11/2019	31/08/2024	On Target	Charlie Maynard	Giles Hughes / Charlie Jackson / Chris Hargraves
			Commission (Sport England) Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) through Max Associates to inform a West Oxfordshire Leisure, Health and Wellbeing Strategy which will define a more holistic leisure provision offer (inc. arts, culture, entertainment and sport). The SOPM will also inform the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (and Local Plan Review) and Town Centre regeneration plans.	Stage 1 and 2 of the planning model recieved and reviewed by officers including Climate teamand Planning Policy. Stage 3 report due mid/end April. Final report on Executive Forward Plan for July 2024. Regular updates have been provided to the Informal Executive and the Task and Finish group (established to oversee the process)	01/09/2023	05/06/2024	On Target	Tim Sumner	Rachel Biles
			Explore opportunities for green investment for strategic development areas eg through the Carterton Masterplan and also through the Pan-Regional Partnership.	Revised draft Carterton Strategic Plan received from consultants and currently with Officers for review. It is anticipated that the report will be completed by the end of April but subject to further potential stakeholder engagement.	01/01/2023	31/08/2025	On Target	Tim Sumner, Andrew Prosser	Philippa Lowe
			Explore how the Local Plan can address the issue of securing long term maintenance of green infrastructure on large SDA's.	Ongoing. Scope and content of Local Plan preferred option paper to be worked up during April/May. To address Green Infrastructure and maintenance/stewardship of community assets more generally.	31/08/2022	31/08/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Chris Hargraves
			Consideration of community stewardship and maintenance of Strategic Development Areas – how do we enable this?	As above.	31/08/2022	31/08/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Chris Hargraves

2.2

The Council will be a hive of activity to help build and support thriving towns and villages that provide residents with a high quality of life by supporting a vibrant local economy, homes and infrastructure that meet people's needs, excellent health and wellbeing and ensuring equal access to opportunity for all.

2.3

Page 161

Work with Oxfordshire County Council and others to increase the opportunity for residents to travel around and beyond the District on foot or by bike, or on public transport, to reduce car dependence and benefit from the health and economic benefits of doing so.							Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
Explore the scope for alternative means of delivering the range of homes in the District that meet the diverse needs of our communities, such as investment in tenures and sizes of homes that the market does not currently deliver enough of.	Strategic Housing Project: Internal management and modelling – proposals to be presented to Executive in paper compiled by Publica Assistant Director Planning and Sustainability to November Executive.	Completed	01/04/2023	15/11/2023	Complete	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	
	Strategic Housing Project: Assessing scope for investment and modelling.	In recruitment phase for Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager	01/04/2023		Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Alaric Smith, Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	
	Strategic Housing Project: Overview of modelling options and delivery. Proposed approach to the November Executive.	Completed	01/04/2023	15/11/2023	Complete	Tim Sumner, Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	
	Further exploration of the best route to be more interventionist in housing delivery via direct provision – clarity needed over the desired objectives of establishing the council owned housing company or pursue an alternative route eg via a Joint Venture (OxPlace/Oxfordshire wide).	In recruitment phase for Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager	01/04/2023		Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	
	Development of business cases for existing Council owned sites – initial focus should be on Woodford Way – a housing scheme which integrates carparking (what is needed/tie in with EVPC). Key landowners/development partners.	In recruitment phase for Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager	01/04/2023		Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Geoff Saul	Andrew Turner	
	Further exploration of modular building – how, where and with whom including visits manufacturers. To understand options for delivery.	In recruitment phase for Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager	01/04/2023		Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	
	Emergency accommodation – Acquisition of - consider the balance – single/couple and family accommodation).	We have provided Oxford City's Property Company with all of the details and are awaiting their options appraisal.			On Target	Geoff Saul	Frank Wilson / Jon Dearing	
	Completion of housing development at Walterbush Road, Chipping Norton.		01/10/2021	31/07/2023	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Geoff Saul	Andrew Turner	

2.4	Work with partners to support a vibrant local economy which gives residents the opportunity to prosper and fulfil their ambitions through secure jobs and exciting careers, entrepreneurship and developing new skills to participate in and contribute to the local economy.	Deliver the Local Authority Housing Fund as a means to relieve pressures on short term accommodation and bridging hotels with a longer term of objective to see the housing being used for more general affordable purposes.	All 23 properties (WODC) have now exchanged and a programme of allocation is in place. LAHF Round 3 is now open and we expect to secure a further 4 (WODC) properties with Soha HA.	01/04/2023	31/09/2024	On Target	Geoff Saul	Jon Dearing
		Work with Carterton Town Council and other relevant stakeholders to identify economic regeneration priorities for the town and immediate area following completion of the UKSPF funded Carterton Strategic/Master Plan.				Not Scheduled to Start	Duncan Enright	Chris Hargraves
		Strategy and plan for reinvigorating the District's Charter Markets				On Target	Duncan Enright	Emma Philips
		Take an active role as member of Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and engagement with neighbouring LVEP's.	Climate team are advising on the green leaf scheme and webpages.			On Target	Duncan Enright	Chris Jackson
		Set future project priorities for Council and Stakeholders to secure the long term viability of our Market Towns via enhancements inc wayfinding & signage, public realm and support for independent retailers and appropriate		01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Duncan Enright	Emma Philips
		Oxfordshire County Council improvements to Witney Town Centre linked to Marriots Walk redevelopment where appropriate.				On Target	Duncan Enright	Emma Philips
2.5	Support the retention of existing and development of new services and facilities that contribute to the local economy, community	The commissioning of the Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (through Max Associates) to inform the development of a West Oxfordshire Leisure, Health and Wellbeing Strategy.				Not Scheduled to Start	Joy Aitman	
		Guide the future delivery of Salt Cross new garden village and associated infrastructure to enable delivery of Salt Cross Science Park.	<p>Area Action Plan (AAP). Judgement received in favour of the community claim in relation to policy 2 Net Zero. PINs report on policy 2 was quashed and the Council do not have a PINs report for policy 2. In addition Ministerial Statement 23 December 2023 provided clarity for Net Zero. The council have taken legal advice for moving forwards to achieve a PINs report for policy 2 and reaching the milestone of adoption of the AAP. The council have written to PINs proposing a way forwards based on legal advice.</p> <p>Housing self build / community led housing toolkit being adapted as a web page.</p> <p>Business Park. SQW consultants work completed and sent to Members steering group for discussion.</p> <p>A40 Improvements scheme. WODC sent letter of support for underpass to be incorporated within the A40 Improvements scheme. WODC awaiting Homes England / OCC negotiations outcomes.</p>	01/01/2018	31/12/2034	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Duncan Enright	Andrea Clenton

wellbeing and cohesion.

Marriotts Walk – implementation of CBRE recommendations inc. securing new tenants, public realm improvements & making enhanced use of the square.

On Target

Duncan Enright
Jasmine McWilliams

Development of the Carterton Strategic/Master Plan to regeneration the town and in doing so redressing balance between housing development with investment in the town centre, leisure and culture facilities, community space and business opportunities. Will seek to determine the best way to maximise the economic benefit of the RAF's largest airbase for the town and immediate area.

Revised draft Carterton Strategic Plan received from consultants and currently with Officers for review. It is anticipated that the report will be completed by the end of April but subject to further potential stakeholder engagement.

01/02/2022

31/05/2025

On Target

Alaric Smith,
Charlie Maynard, Geoff Saul, Tim Sumner
Philippa Lowe

Ubico Grounds Maintenance Contract – review contract with aim of securing both biodiversity enhancements and budgetary savings.

01/03/2025

01/03/2026

Not Scheduled to Start

Lidia Arciszewska
Rachel Crookes / Bill Oddy

Biodiversity Land Management Plans - Working with Ubico to change land management processes across key WODC sites, for example reduced mowing frequency, creation of urban meadows, changes to floodplain meadow management, invasive species action, subsidence works, to improve them for both wildlife and people.

Management plans to be reviewed and agreed with Ubico for 2024/25 when Lead Nature Recovery Officer is in post.

01/02/2022

01/03/2026

On Target

Lidia Arciszewska
Rachel Crookes / Bill Oddy

Support DEFRA funded Landscape Recovery Project (contiguous with the Evenlode and Windrush Catchments) in partnership with the North East Cotswolds Farmer Cluster and the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership.

On Target

Lidia Arciszewska
Janice Bamsey / Chris Hargraves

Windrush in Witney funding bid, in partnership with Wychwood Forest Trust - Landscape-scale enhancements across the Witney Floodplains, working with OCC, WTC and Wychwood Forest Trust to introduce grazing, improve floral diversity, pollard willow trees, establishment of a new volunteer group and delivery of a series of community engagement/rural skills training events. Linked to 3.5.

Application will be submitted in May 2024. National Lottery have agreed to extension.

01/05/2022

01/03/2025

Off Target but Mitigation in Place

Andrew Prosser
Nick Dalby / Rachel Crookes

Work with others, and fulfil our statutory obligations, to ensure that land, air and water support biodiverse habitats, reduce pollution and bring about nature recovery to the District, putting it at the forefront of local decision making.

	The Council will be a progressive custodian of our environmental resources, supporting a healthy natural landscape and functioning ecosystem which is rich in wildlife and habitats that are enjoyed by and benefit all.		Coronation Community Orchard Scheme	Secured £50k grant funding from DEFRA Coronation Living Heritage Fund. First round of applications closed in January 2024 and six community groups were awarded grants to plant fruit trees. Grant claim submissions are currently in progress. Second round of funding will open in June 2024 and planting to be completed by March 2025.	01/11/2023	21/03/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser/Lidia Arciszewska	Rachel Crookes	
3.2		Recognise and support the vital role of farming in natural ecosystem conservation, local food production and economic resilience, and the role that environmentally sustainable farming can play in achieving this.	Engaging with farmers as part of a wider consideration of the District's rural economy. How can WODC work to support (within its powers) a strong local rural economy, including diversification and the visitor economy.	Local Plan focused discussion arranged for 23 April.			Not Scheduled to Start	Lidia Arciszewska, Andrew Prosser	Chris Jackson / Hannah Kenyon	
3.3		Help people to connect with nature by improving understanding of and public access to green spaces and the countryside.	Deer Park South Access Project – Infrastructure improvements to enhance public access to woodland adjacent to strategic development area.	Nature trail brass rubbing posts have been designed by a local artist and schoolchildren from Windrush CofE Primary School. The posts have been installed by Ubico. Interpretation panels have been designed and are in production. Schoolchildren from Windrush CofE Primary School are visiting the site in April 2024 to complete the trail.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Duncan Enright	Hannah Kenyon	
3.4		Be an active participant in the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and contribute to the production of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to establish priorities and map proposals for action to drive nature's recovery, achieve Biodiversity Net Gain and provide wider environmental benefits specific to West Oxfordshire.	Officer group to convene with Local Nature Partnership- maintain relationship with LNP and work with partners to develop workstreams.	Public consultation on the LNRS Phase 1 report held through surveys, workshops and town and parish council events. Analysis of results will be presented in April 2024.	01/07/2022	01/07/2025	On Target	Lidia Arciszewska, Duncan Enright	Hannah Kenyon	
			Explore the potential for the Council to acquire land for Biodiversity Net Gain and nature-based carbon sequestration.	Nature based carbon sequestration project will start in April 2024. Interviews for nature recovery officer, funded by this project, are scheduled for April 2024.	8/12/2024	31/03/2026	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Frank Wilson / Hannah Kenyon	
3.5		Work with others to facilitate environmentally sensitive flood management of our river catchments.	Support of the Catchment Partnerships including the promotion (where appropriate) of other water quality campaigning groups. Sewerage and Water Agency Group continue to facilitate (Links with the Pan Regional Partnership – Scoping and Modelling Work).					Not Scheduled to Start	Lidia Arciszewska, Andy Graham	
			Delivery of the Local Plan – overview including how can the site allocations process through the Local Plan review play a positive role in water management? Coordination of policy. Linked to 4.2.		01/06/2022	31/12/2024	On Target	Charlie Maynard	Chris Hargraves	

Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Drive down carbon emissions from Council operations including leisure, waste and street cleansing and running of the Council's estate, and in so doing lead by example to inspire others to take action to collectively reduce the overall carbon emissions of the District.	Decarbonisation of council owned buildings, including leisure centres and sports pavilions – secure external PSDS funding and extend the MEEES project to include the full decarbonisation of tenanted buildings.	Successful PSDS 3c for Windrush Leisure Centre, securing £1.6 million. Council approval was granted on 11th March 2024, and the project began on 1st April 2024. An open tender is due to be issued for a design and build contract for the works. Successful Swimming Pool Support Fund bid for solar PV and shower flow restrictors to be installed at Windrush Leisure Centre, and for solar PV and heat recovery to the AHUs to be added to Chipping Norton Lido. Heat decarbonisation plans for Elmfield, 3 Welch Way and Old Court House completed in March 2024. Review of LCSF 5 funding opportunity underway to consider tenanted buildings.			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser, Dan Levy, Alaric Smith	Hannah Kenyon
	PSDS 3b funded Carterton Leisure Centre decarbonisation - Carbon reduction through the replacement of the heating and hot water system of the building with a low-carbon alternative and increasing the amount of solar PV on site.	Business case for revised scheme is not viable due to high capital costs which would mean the Council would have an ongoing annual subsidy of around £130,000. Report being submitted to Executive on 17th April recommending that the project is paused to enable opportunities for an increased level of grant funding or reduced scheme costs to be developed.	31/10/22	31/03/25	Off Target	Andrew Prosser, Tim Sumner	Claire Locke
	Waste Vehicle Strategy - Supporting the Waste team on the development of the strategy to reduce emissions from the Council's waste vehicle fleet.	Member steering group and officer delivery group have been established. eHGV trial date set for w/c 20th May after which a strategy can be built. Project to install charge points for vehicles at depots is being progressed.			On Target	Lidia Arciszewska	Simon Anthony / Hannah Kenyon
	Carbon Action Plan to 2030 and Climate Change Strategy to 2050 - Update of the Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change strategy to include scope 3 emissions, district carbon budgets, route maps to net zero, and actions.	The updated Carbon Action Plan was approved by Executive in March 2024. A redesign of the document is underway ahead of the Plan being published on the website. A tender has been undertaken for the carbon baseline, which form the basis of the new Climate Change Strategy, and nine bids were received. These will be evaluated in April 2024.	01/07/23	30/6/2024	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
	Climate Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT) – Develop the tool as a mandatory requirement on projects so as to embed climate and nature considerations in council decision making.	Discussions with the Learning and Development team and F3 team are underway to establish the best approach moving forward. Recommendations will be taken to the Senior Leadership team for approval in May.	01/02/2023	01/04/2024	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
	Solar PV project for tenanted buildings - A Public-wide long-term project to install rooftop solar panels on council owned buildings, increasing the amount of renewable energy generated in the District.	A tenant price for the solar energy is being agreed with the CFO for Unit 5 at Talisman Business Park and Units 2 and 6 Des Roches Square. A full application has been submitted for solar PV at Woodgreen. The outcome of the prior approval application is awaited for Elmfield.	01/08/2022	01/12/2023	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Andrew Turner

4.2	The Council will be a community leader in responding to the challenges of climate change, including rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing the District and its communities for the impacts of climate change to ensure a fair transition for all to a future that will be defined by climate change.	Encourage the use of nature based solutions to sequester carbon and combat the risks arising from climate change at a river catchment scale, such as restoration of meadows and trees to reduce flooding and improve water quality.	Biodiversity Action Plan – Develop and deliver workstreams to restore nature and enhanced biodiversity in the District.	Following public consultation, the Biodiversity Action Plan was renamed the Nature Recovery Plan (NRP). The NRP was approved by Executive in February 2024. Along with the Carbon Action Plan, the NRP is being redesigned to be engaging and accessible for the public before being uploaded to the Council website.	01/03/2023	01/03/2024	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Rachel Crookes
4.3		Work with partner organisations and residents to facilitate the retrofit of carbon reduction measures in homes and businesses and pursue a drive to net zero carbon buildings in new developments through planning policy	Consider how proactive should WODC be in facilitating retrofit for the 'able to pay' market.	Discussions being held with Greater South East Net Zero Hub about involvement in the Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA).			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
			Greenlight – nature and online hub to facilitate community action for a greener future.	Greenlight content has been reviewed and updated, including funding information. Library added to Greenlight to encourage communities to share resources on nature recovery and climate action.			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
			Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) project for tenanted buildings - A Publica-wide review of tenanted buildings to determine what measures are needed to bring the EPC rating up to a B or above by 2030.	Report going to Executive 17th April seeking funding for the Asset Management Strategy, this will consider the carbon efficiency of buildings.	01/07/2023		On Target	Andrew Prosser	Jasmine McWilliams
			Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) - A countywide scheme to upgrade energy efficiency and low carbon heating for low-income householders in the worst performing off-gas grid homes.	WODC's Revenues and Benefits Team provided Council Tax discount recipient date for a targeted mailout. At the end of Year 1 of the HUG2 scheme, 15 homes in WODC district have received grant funding to install measures. Continued comms support to promote the HUG2 scheme as it moves into Year 2.	01/06/2023	01/03/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
4.4		Encourage renewable energy generation at appropriate sites in the District, improving local energy and economic resilience and supporting the community benefits that this resilience will bring.	Explore opportunities with partners to encourage renewable energy within the District.	Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) working group are finalising the scope of the plans in April, which will encompass these priority areas. FOP will be taking a decision on this in June 2024.			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser	Giles Hughes / Hannah Kenyon
4.5		Work with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver on our joint commitment to active travel and public transport, including through improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and better public transport services.	Install EV charging points across the District.	Compiled draft long list of sites for charging points and consulted internal teams. Engagement with town and parish councils in April/May 2024. Legal challenge from another council about the use of the use of a regulated concession contract under Oxford City's DPS. Run the tender as an independent concession contract and county to procure via open tender with WODC having its own contract with the Charge Point Operator (CPO). Award contact in December, not October, so about 6-8 weeks delay. Earliest 'spade in the ground' will be 2025.	26/05/2023	01/01/2025	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
			Enable delivery of agreed project interventions on Government approved Investment Plan under UKSPF and REPF.			On Target	Duncan Enright	Emma Philips	

**Working
Together for
West
Oxfordshire**

The Council recognises that to deliver on our aspirations and the priorities in this Council Plan for West Oxfordshire, working collaboratively with others will be essential

5.1	Target available Council grant budgets to proposals by other organisations that will deliver on Council priorities.	Successful implementation of new Grant Scheme: a) Crowdfunding, b) Community and Voluntary Sector Service Level Agreements and c) Youth initiatives.	Crowdfunding Westhive - First round completed with 2 projects reaching fundraising target. Second round underway CVS 3 Yr SLA's - Assessment complete and awards announced. Demand outstripped supply 3:1. Budget was increased. Legal agreements currently being drafted. Monitoring and Eval process agreed and kick off meetings booked in. No specific applications to Westhive from young people. The new youth role should enable this funding to be distributed.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Joy Aitman	Andy Barge
5.2	Work with existing businesses and new start-ups to access support available to enable their success.							
5.3	Support Town and Parish Councils to represent their communities energetically and take action on issues important to their locality.	Towns and Parish Biodiversity project– UKSPF funded project to provide case studies for communities on how to enhance biodiversity in different habitats.	Community Town and Parish Guide to Nature Recovery updated. In person event held at Woodgreen Offices on 21st March 2024 to launch the guidance and showcase demonstrators to other town and parish councils. Online launch event rescheduled for 16th April 2024.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Rachel Crookes
5.4	Support the Voluntary and Community Sector to continue to undertake activity which serves the needs of residents including established organisations and more informal groups working to address particular needs such as access to food, youth support and cultural provision.	Community Grants	In addition to the main funding schemes mentioned above: Food - Food Action plan agreed and £23.5k available to support actions in the plan. HSF4 funding of £40k+ for community food network. Youth Development role out to advert with a £20k fund to stimulate projects. COMF funding secured to partner the OXCEP bid to ACE for a cultural programme for young people. Local Area Coordination pilot starts in Chipping Norton with funding for a permanent LAC to support residents - funded by OCC. Local Ward Profile in Witney begins in March 2024 funded by Public Health to create a health profile to inform service delivery, identify actions needed to tackle issues and provide grant funding to groups to deliver these actions. Approved use of COMF funding of £120k to fund interventions which tackle poor mental health - invested partly in SLA's. Community Builder role in place in Witney.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Joy Aitman	Andy Barge
5.5	Make a dedicated effort to further understand and meet the needs of our young people and support their mental health, including children, teenagers and young adults leaving school, entering the world of work and/or seeking to set up home in the District.	Focussed programme of engagement with young people, and other groups, on mental and physical health, local facilities and spaces for young people, to ensure future leisure, sport, culture and arts provision in the District best provides for these.	Youth development role currently out to advert - this person will be stimulating services in West Oxfordshire to make more services available for young people as well as pushing internally to make youth engagement a priority for all teams. Current project to stimulate more parent support.			Not Scheduled to Start	Joy Aitman, Tim Sumner	
		Have Your Say Events – focussed topic event for young people.	Engagement with young people will be an element of the new Youth development role and this engagement will take a number of forms. Have your say is too prescriptive at this stage.			Not Scheduled to Start	Joy Aitman	Emmy-Lou Bossard / Heather McCulloch

5.6

Page 168

	Look to invest in the building of homes that meet the diverse housing needs of our residents at all stages of their lives, including for those seeking to downsize or affordable social housing.								
--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITIES REPORT
January 2024 – March 2024

Background

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



Putting Residents First



Actions we are taking

The Council is working in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, district and city councils, town and parish councils and parish meetings to develop a shared charter. The charter will be a commitment of principles to support successful partnership working across all councils in Oxfordshire. An event has been hosted where representatives of our local councils were invited to share their reflections to help shape the content of the charter. An online survey providing further opportunity for councillors to shape the priorities, aims and principles of the charter concluded in December 2023. Subsequently, a Town and Parish Forum convened in February to discuss the charter, with the intention of bringing it to the Executive for endorsement in the coming months.

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

Residents and visitors who frequent Guildenford car park in Burford and Hensington Road car park in Woodstock were encouraged to share their feedback as part of the Council's Car Parking Strategy Consultation, which took place from January 15 to February 12. The consultation sought to gather insights from regular users, prioritising an understanding of their experiences and ensuring that the facilities meet both present and future needs. Additionally, comprehensive studies, including the use of counters at Guildenford car park, are planned to gather detailed usage data. The Council's overarching strategy for car parking in Woodstock and Burford aims to align provisions with the evolving needs of users, with the eventual goal of outlining improvements to enhance the usability of these facilities for all stakeholders.



Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All

Actions we are taking

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced by the Government in 2008 to ensure fair and transparent contributions from developments towards necessary infrastructure like schools and roads. In March 2023, the Council's Executive decided to commission new viability evidence for a revised CIL charging schedule. Progress is underway as the Council actively moves towards adopting and implementing the CIL. Additional information has been provided to Dixon Searle Partnership, the appointed consultants, and discussions are ongoing about which development typologies to assess and the best approach for consulting with key stakeholders, including landowners and developers. A consultation survey, facilitated by the Council on behalf of the consultants, is scheduled for distribution in July 2024 to gather community input for a well-informed and collaborative implementation of the CIL. The draft viability report has been received and is currently under review by Officers, aiming for finalisation by the end of April 2024. It is anticipated to be presented to the Executive in June.

The Strategic Housing Project at the Council is undergoing significant developments with the planned recruitment for a Strategic Housing Development and Enabling Manager. This new role will lead project work focused on identifying and advancing innovative ideas and models for increased affordable housing. The project includes assessing the scope for investment and modelling, exploring the best route for more interventionist housing delivery, developing business cases for existing Council-owned sites, and further exploration of modular building options. This comprehensive strategy underscores the council's commitment to addressing housing challenges through proactive planning and innovative solutions.

The Weavers Fold development, comprising eight 2 and 3-bedroom zero carbon homes available through a discount market sale in Chipping Norton, offers buyers the unique opportunity to custom-build their homes, influencing design and specifications. Although there have been delays in the project, the Executive approved a new delivery model proposal in November, jointly developed by Green Axis and Homes England, with legal agreements currently in progress.

The Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) is an innovative capital fund that supports local authorities in England to obtain housing for those who are unable to find settled accommodation on resettlement schemes. The Council were successful in their bid for funding to relieve pressures on short term accommodation with a longer term objective of seeing the housing used for more general affordable purposes. Collaborating with Cottsway and Miller Homes, the Council facilitated the construction of 23 additional affordable units within the district. All properties have been exchanged, and an allocation program is now in progress. With LAHF Round 3 currently open, the Council is optimistic about securing a successful bid that would enable the acquisition of an additional 4 properties in partnership with Soha HA.

Salt Cross Garden Village is a proposed new standalone settlement, self-contained with its own village facilities, such as schools, community resources and employment opportunities. The initial garden village proposals set out in the Local Plan include 2,200 new homes and a new science business park which will give local people an alternative to driving to work in Oxford. Nearby Hanborough railway station together with a new Park and Ride facility to the north of Eynsham will give people an alternative to using their cars. The Area Action Plan (AAP) has undergone a thorough revision, encompassing modifications identified during the examination process in preparation for its adoption. After the Inspector's report was received, a legal challenge was submitted focusing on the conclusions reached by the Inspector in relation to the soundness of AAP Policy 2 – Net Zero Carbon Development. The High Court ruled in favor of the community group in a hearing held on 14-15 November 2023. Subsequently, additional clarity on Net Zero was provided through a Ministerial Statement on 23 December 2023, work is underway to amend APP Policy 2 to align with the new requirements.

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

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

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

Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife



Actions we are taking

The Council has committed to the preparation of a new Local Plan covering the period up to 2041. The emerging plan is currently at the 'Regulation 18' stage of plan preparation, where views are sought on the content of the plan and different options and alternatives are considered and tested. An initial public consultation, 'Your Voice Counts' took place from August – October 2022 seeking general views on what sort of issues the new plan should focus on. More recently, a further public consultation took place from 30 August – 25 October 2023, and sought specific views on potential draft objectives for the new plan, along with different scenarios for the potential future pattern for growth and ideas/opportunities for how land might be used across the District, as well as a call for sites which Officers are assessing their potential suitability. The consultation was held predominantly online via the Council's digital engagement platform, citizenlab, but also included a number of 'in-person' events. 225 individuals and stakeholder organisations responded through citizenlab and a further 180 representations were received via email or letter. Further public consultation will take place in the new year as the Local Plan moves forward through further Regulation 18 consultation. It is anticipated that this will comprise a series of preferred policy approaches, building on the consultation feedback to date and emerging technical evidence on issues such as housing need. The Environment Agency has launched their 'Spheres of Influence' Project, for which WODC is one of three pilot areas nationally. Participation in this initiative will help shape local plan policies related to the water environment.

The Council is collaborating with the Wychwood Forest Trust on a funding bid for the Windrush in Witney project. This initiative aims to implement landscape-scale enhancements across the Witney Floodplains area. Partnering with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), Witney Town Council (WTC), and the Wychwood Forest Trust, the project will focus on introducing grazing, enhancing floral diversity, pollarding willow trees, establishing a new volunteer group, and organizing a series of community engagement and rural skills training events.

The Coronation Community Orchard Scheme seeks to facilitate the planting of trees in non-woodland areas, strategically located near residential areas, to serve as a tangible and enduring homage to King Charles III's coronation within local communities. The Council has secured £50,000 from the DEFRA Coronation Living Heritage Fund to support this initiative. Following the closure of the first round of applications in January 2024, six community groups have been awarded grants to commence fruit tree planting. Currently, grant claim submissions are underway. The second round of funding is slated to open in June 2024, with the goal of completing all planting activities by March 2025.

The Deer Park South Access Project is progressing with infrastructure improvements designed to enhance public access to the woodland adjacent to the strategic development area with the installation of two new bridges over the Colwell Brook. Footpath enhancements have already been completed, accompanied by the addition of a bench offering a picturesque view of the sites' balancing ponds. As part of the project, nature trail brass rubbing posts have been crafted by a local artist in collaboration with Windrush CofE Primary School students. Ubico has installed these posts, contributing to the immersive experience of the trail. Furthermore, interpretation panels are currently in production, designed to enrich visitors' understanding of the area's natural features and heritage.



Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Actions we are taking

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

The decarbonisation of Council owned buildings continues with funding secured via the Local Carbon Skills Fund for heat decarbonisation plans at Elmfield Council Offices and Welch Way. The Windrush Leisure Centre has achieved success with Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 3c (PSDS 3c), securing a significant £1.6 million investment. Council approval for the project was granted on March 11, 2024, and the project commenced on April 1, 2024. Additionally, a successful bid has been made to the Swimming Pool Support Fund, enabling the installation of solar PV panels and shower flow restrictors at the Windrush Leisure Centre. Furthermore, solar PV panels and heat recovery systems will be added to the air handling units (AHUs) at Chipping Norton Lido, enhancing energy efficiency. In March 2024, heat decarbonisation plans for Elmfield, 3 Welch Way, and Old Court House were finalised, marking progress in the Council's sustainability efforts.

The Executive approved the updated Carbon Action Plan for 2030 in March 2024, signaling a commitment to addressing climate change. Ahead of its publication on the website, the document is undergoing a redesign to enhance accessibility and readability. Furthermore, a tender process has been initiated for establishing the carbon baseline, which will serve as the foundation for the new Climate Change Strategy. Nine bids have been received and are currently under evaluation, with decisions expected in April 2024.

The Council's New Nature Recovery Plan aims to tackle the climate and ecological emergencies across the district up to 2030. Currently, the plan is undergoing revisions to ensure it is engaging and accessible to the public before its publication on the Council website. Given the Council's custodianship of approximately 106 hectares of greenspace, including parks, fields, greens, and public spaces within housing estates, there is a recognition of the ongoing need to enhance these areas for both wildlife and public enjoyment. While progress has been made on Council-owned sites in recent years, there remains much work to be done to safeguard and restore habitats and species. The new plan will focus on identifying areas for improvement within Council-owned spaces and exploring natural methods to enhance resilience and biodiversity. By adopting these strategies, the Council aims to make these areas more vibrant and resilient ecosystems for the benefit of both wildlife and the community.

The Greenlight initiative, launched on July 17, 2023, is a nature and online hub fostering community action for a greener future. It features a greenspace competition, Q&A sessions, local group events, and recently added Library to encourage communities to share resources on nature recovery and climate action, along with regular updates to keep the information current.

The Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) is a countywide initiative aimed at enhancing energy efficiency and promoting low carbon heating solutions, particularly targeting low-income households residing in the least energy-efficient off-gas grid homes. The council, in collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council, are highlighting the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) to those residents that may be eligible, with communications to residents outlining the Welcome the Warmth Oxfordshire Scheme. At the conclusion of Year 1 of the HUG2 scheme, 15 homes within the district received grant funding to implement energy-saving measures. Additionally, the Revenues and Benefits Team facilitated the provision of Council Tax discount recipient data for a targeted mailout, ensuring effective outreach to eligible residents.



Working Together for West Oxfordshire

Actions we are taking

The Community Infrastructure Fund, hosted on the Westhive platform (<https://www.spacehive.com/movement/westhive/>), aims to revitalise and grow local infrastructure as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Levelling Up scheme. It offers capital grants of up to £20,000 or 50% of the project's crowdfunding target. With a generous budget of £40,000 for this financial year and a total of £226,000 over two years, the fund supports projects fostering community restoration, local pride, belonging, and positive contributions to health and wellbeing. The Council encourages submissions emphasising environmental sustainability, aiding vulnerable communities, and addressing exclusion due to mental health, physical or mental disability, or financial hardship. There's a particular focus on projects for or by young people, aligning with the Council's commitment to empower young voices. The Spacehive team hosted a well-attended project creators workshop to guide potential applicants in developing and securing funds for project delivery. The Council pledges up to £10,000 for eligible projects, in addition to public contributions via the platform. Currently, six projects are actively crowdfunding, with Cotswolds Arts Through Schools and Cycles of Good fully funded.

Funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Wild Oxfordshire, a charity dedicated to fostering a more natural, resilient, and biodiverse Oxfordshire, is collaborating with Officers to update a Biodiversity Toolkit. This toolkit aims to offer guidance for Town and Parish Councils interested in managing their land in nature-friendly ways. Three pilot projects in Asthall, Eynsham, and Filkins & Broughton Poggs will serve as demonstrations of the toolkit's efficacy, producing case studies to assist other parishes in their nature recovery endeavours. Meanwhile, the recently updated Community Town and Parish Guide to Nature Recovery provides valuable insights and resources for local communities to enhance biodiversity and promote nature conservation. An in-person launch event held at Woodgreen Offices on March 21, 2024, featured demonstrators showcasing practical examples to representatives from various town and parish councils, fostering knowledge sharing and collaboration. Furthermore, an online launch event, rescheduled for April 16, 2024, aims to provide a broader audience with access to the guidance and resources virtually. This event seeks to deepen community involvement in nature recovery efforts across the region, emphasising the importance of collective action in preserving and enhancing Oxfordshire's natural heritage.

This page is intentionally left blank



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT:
January 2024 - March 2024

Summary Index

Area	KPI Name	RAG	Page
Revenues, Benefits and Housing	Percentage of Council Tax Collected		6
	Percentage of Non Domestic Rates collected		7
	Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims		8
	Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events		9
	Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances		10
	Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay		11
	(Snapshot) Long Term Empty Properties		12
	(Snapshot) Number of households in B&B/hotel-type accommodation & Hostels (LA owned or managed); and Number of successful 'Move On' into suitable independent/long-term accommodation from B&Bs/hotels/hostels		13
Customer Experience	Customer Satisfaction - Telephone		14
	Customer Satisfaction - Email		15
	Customer Satisfaction - Face to Face		16

Summary Index

Area	KPI Name	RAG	Page
Customer Experience	Customer Call Handling - Average Waiting Time		17
	Complaints		18
	Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days		20
Development Management and Land Charges	Building Control Satisfaction		21
	Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (including AEOT)		22
	Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (including AEOT)		23
	Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (including AEOT)		24
	Total Income achieved in Planning & Income from Pre-application advice		25
	Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed		26
	Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days		27
	Number of affordable homes delivered		28

Summary Index

Area	KPI Name	RAG	Page
Waste and Environment	Number of fly tips collected and percentage that result in an enforcement action		29
	Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales		30
	Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day		31
	Percentage of household waste recycled		32
	Residual Household Waste per Household (kg)		33
	Missed bins per 100,000		34
Leisure	Number of visits to the leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships		35

A note on performance benchmarking

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

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

Benchmarking has been included wherever possible ranking against Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Nearest Neighbours model which uses a range of demographic and socio-economic indicators to identify the local authorities most similar to your own. The Councils identified Nearest Neighbours are Bromsgrove, East Cambridgeshire, East Hampshire, Harborough, Hinckley and Bosworth, Horsham, Lichfield, Mid Sussex, Rushcliffe, South Oxfordshire, Stafford, Stratford-upon-Avon, Stroud, Test Valley, Tewkesbury. Additional investigations are underway to provide it for those metrics that are missing comparisons.

A RAG (red, amber, green) status has been applied to each KPI to provide a quick visual summary of the status of that KPI for the quarter. Additionally, RAG status has been added to the direction of travel for each metric to show how the performance against last quarter and the same quarter compared to last year is progressing.

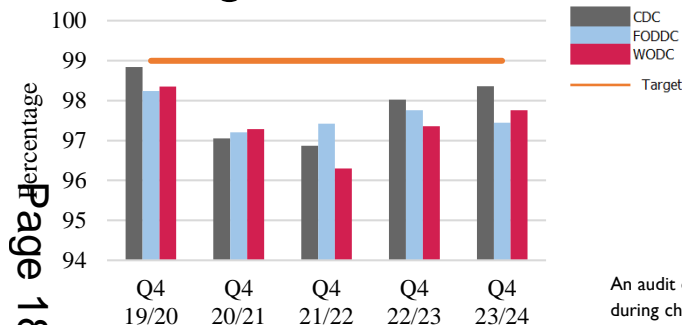
Overall Performance

Overall, the Council's performance has been positive, with commendable progress in Number of visits to the leisure centres, Official Land Charge Search Times and Processing times for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit. However, there are some indicators that are exhibiting a negative trend including the Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days and the Percentage of household waste recycled.

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

Note: Currently, the Waste Data Flow Data is received by the data team from Oxfordshire County Council, but it is a quarter behind. Therefore, the narrative and graphs within this report pertain to Q2 2023/2024 (July-September).

Percentage of Council Tax Collected



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter

N/A

Against last
Year



Slightly improved since last year

**2023-24 – Higher
is Good**

Target

99%

Actual

97.76%

How do we compare?

Benchmarking via Gov.uk Tables and Individual Council Websites using CIPFA Nearest Neighbours - Current Dataset is up to Dec '23 (Q3 23-24)

Q3 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	89.98	1/16	Top
East Hampshire	86.42	3/16	Top
Bromsgrove	85.13	6/16	Second
Tewkesbury	84.96	9/16	Third
Stafford	83.1	14/16	Bottom
Stratford-upon-Avon	82.31	15/16	Bottom

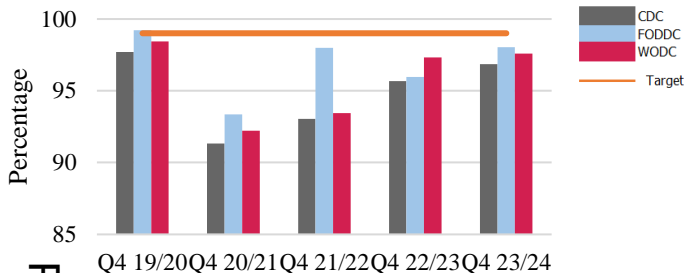
An audit of the Council Tax Services indicated that a significant sum of arrears had accumulated during challenging circumstances associated with the pandemic. Whilst the recovery of arrears had been suspended for a time, it has since been reinstated, and the current recovery cycle is up to date with the service reporting progress in collecting the previous year's debt. The below table shows the percentage of aged debt that has been collected and the total outstanding:

2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	Total Outstanding
33.48%	33.18%	34.06%	£4,165,186

By March 2023, authorities in England had collected £35.7 billion in council tax for 2022-23, along with an additional £800 million in aged debt. They achieved an average in-year collection rate of 96.0%, marking a 0.2 percentage point increase from 2021-22 (source: gov.uk).


At the end of Q4, the Council observed a slight improvement in their in-year collection rates compared to the previous year, with an increase of 0.4%. While the Council's collection rate fell just short of the year-end target of 99% by 1.24%, there has been a consistent upward trend in collection rates over recent years, nearing pre-pandemic levels by a margin of 0.59%.

Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter N/A

Against last Year 

Improved since last year

2023-24 – Higher is Good

Target 99%

Actual 97.59%

How do we compare?

Benchmarking via Gov.uk Tables and Individual Council Websites using CIPFA Nearest Neighbours – Current Dataset is up to Dec '23 (Q3 23-24)

Q3 23-24 Benchmark

	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	84.36	7/16	Second
Hinckley and Bosworth	92.58	1/16	Top
Stratford-upon-Avon	84.79	5/16	Second
Tewkesbury	83.39	10/16	Third
East Hampshire	82.06	14/16	Bottom
Mid Sussex	79.31	16/16	Bottom

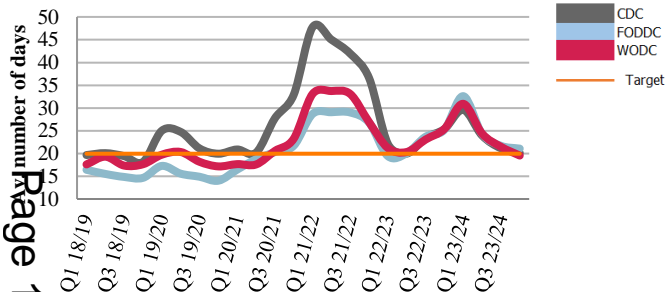
The current recovery cycle is up to date with the service reporting progress in collecting previous year's debt. The below table shows the percentage of aged debt that has been collected and the total outstanding:

2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	Total Outstanding
51.24%	67.25%	48.29%	£924,001

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

By the end of the year, the Council observed a 0.27% increase in their collection rates compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. However, collection rates are just over 1% lower than pre-Covid-19 levels. The service remains committed to supporting businesses, actively reaching out through reminders, phone calls, and emails to encourage dialogue with the Councils so that we can support them via manageable repayment plans. All in year recovery processes are up to date.

Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



2023-24 – Lower is Good

Target	20
Actual	19.57

Improved since last quarter and last year

Throughout Q4, processing times for new Council Tax Support (CTS) claims consistently stayed under the 20-day target, averaging 14.13 days. By year-end, the Council achieved a cumulative average of 19.57 processing days, marking the first time since Q2 2020/21 the cumulative target was met and achieving the lowest cumulative year-end processing times since 2019/2020. Notably, this represents a decrease of 1 day from the previous quarter.

Automation of tasks received directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and customers is currently operating at a level of 60–70%. This automation allows for a heightened focus on processing applications and addressing reported changes. Furthermore, the UC section of the DWP is actively exploring enhancements to the data sent to local authorities. Ongoing testing of the system is underway as part of these improvement efforts.

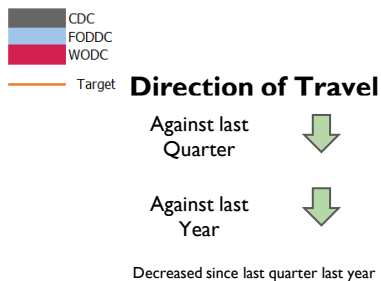
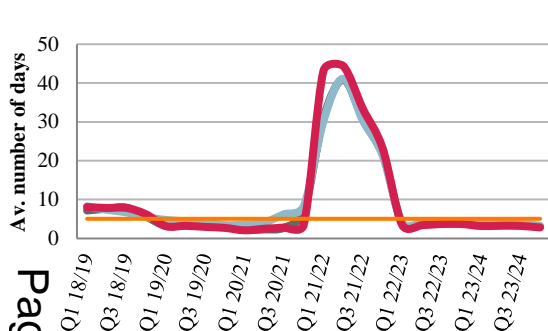
The automation of processing applications for the DWP and the trial for reduced phone line opening hours have released capacity for officers to process claims, contributing to the reduction in the processing times.

How do we compare?

Gov.uk produces tables to show a snapshot of the number of CTS claimants at the end of each financial year. The below table shows number of claimants at the end of Dec 2023 and the percentage change from Q3 2022 for each authority, plus the data for all authorities in England

	Number of Claimants at end of December 2023	Percentage Change since December 2022	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank (Higher = less claimants)
West Oxfordshire	4,358	1.42%	4/16
Harborough	2,934	0.89%	1/16
South Oxfordshire	4,997	1.59%	10/16
Stafford	6,714	4.5%	16/16

Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events



2023-24 – Lower is Good

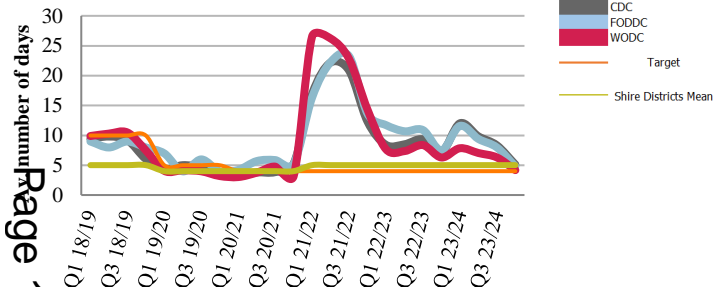
Target	5
Actual	2.81

The processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events continue to comfortably meet the target of 5 days, with processing times decreasing compared to both the last quarter and the previous year.

How do we compare?

Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Improved since last quarter and last year

2023-24 – Lower is Good

Target

4

Actual

4.2

Why do we compare?

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

Q3 23-24 Benchmark	Days	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	5	5/16	Top
Test Valley	3	1/16	Top
Harborough	7	7/16	Second
East Cambridgeshire	8	10/16	Third
Stroud	9	14/16	Third
South Oxfordshire	15	16/16	Bottom

Please see [Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims](#).

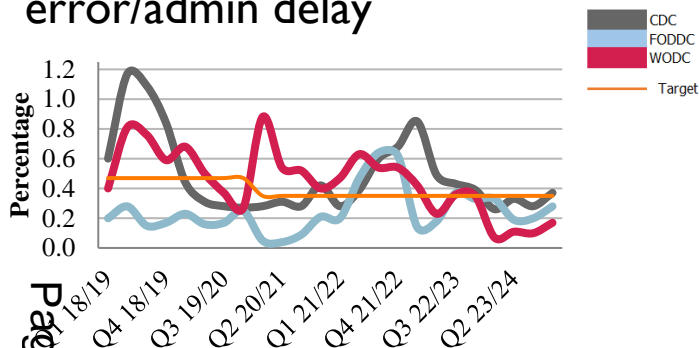
At the end of Q4, the average days to process HB changes decreased, with the Council averaging 2.34 days; however, since the target is cumulative, the ongoing statistics show higher figures. Despite being above the target, the decrease in HB Change applications amplifies the impact of delays in assessing an application due to outstanding evidence required on average processing days. It's important to emphasise that the processing times commence from the moment the service receives an application, irrespective of its completion status. Therefore, even incomplete applications are included in the count from receipt, potentially exaggerating the figures.

It should be noted that the number of expected changes that would affect Housing Benefit are reducing significantly, as can be seen by the number of HB changes assessed compared to the number of CTS changes assessed.


HB Changes – 3,313
CTS Changes – 6,213


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

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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Increased since last quarter but declined since last year

2023-24 – Lower is Good

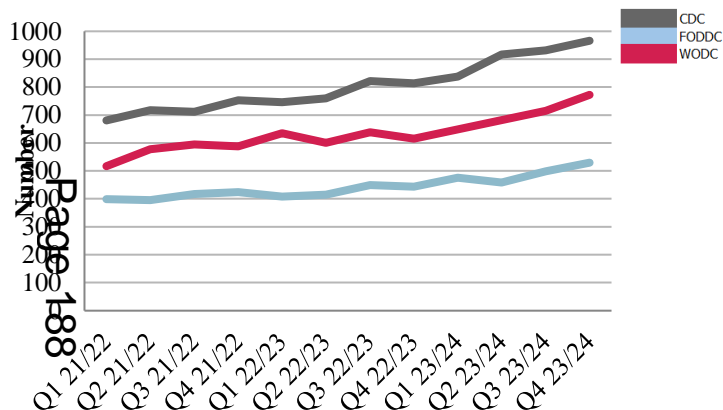
Target	0.35%
Actual	0.17%

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


How do we compare?
TBC


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

(Snapshot) Long Term Empty Properties



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Increased since last quarter and last year

**2023-24 –
Lower is Good**

No Target

772

The graph indicates a clear upward trend in property additions, although properties continue to be added and removed from the list. To address this trend, the Council's Long-Term Empty Homes Strategy is undergoing a refresh. This strategy aims to identify the reasons behind properties remaining empty and seeks to alleviate housing needs within the district. By understanding the causes of empty properties, the Council can develop targeted interventions to address the issue and ensure that these properties are utilised effectively to meet housing demands.

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

How do we compare?

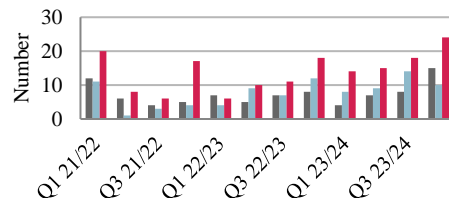
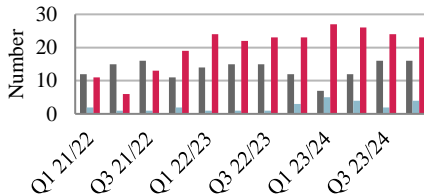
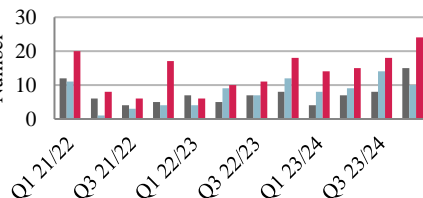
No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

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

Successful 'Move on' into s
independent/LT accomm

Households in B&B/hotel type
accommodation

Households in hostels



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter	B&B/Hotels	⬆️
Against last Year	B&B/Hotels	⬆️
Against last Quarter	Hostels	⬇️
Against last Year	Hostels	➡️
Against last Quarter	Move Ons	⬆️
Against last Year	Move Ons	⬆️

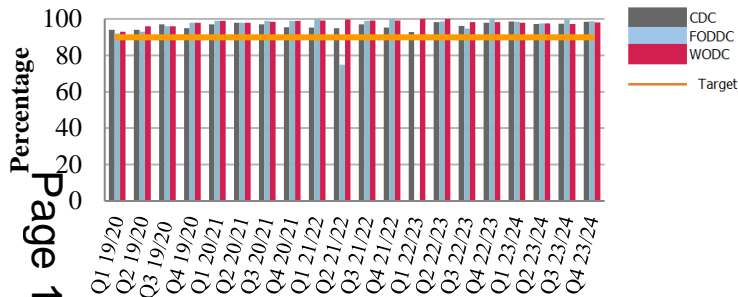
Homelessness remains a significant challenge for all three Councils, putting considerable pressure on Housing services, systems, and pathways. The service has observed a notable surge in homelessness applications during Q4. This rise is attributed to various factors, including heightened pressures on the countywide support system. Contributing to this strain are several factors: an influx of individuals leaving refugee hotels, reduced capacity in adult homelessness pathways, and a scarcity of affordable housing options outside the social rented sector. Additionally, the surge in homelessness has led to increased competition for available social rented accommodations, resulting in prolonged stays for individuals transitioning from hostels and B&Bs.

The team persistently works towards preventing homelessness, successfully averting homelessness for 294 households so far this year—154 within the statutory 56-day period and 140 before statutory duties were triggered. It's important to note that these figures are approximations and have not yet been officially confirmed through the reporting system.

How do we compare?

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

Customer Satisfaction - Telephone



Higher is Good

Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Slightly improved since last quarter but steady
since last year

Target	90%
Q4 Actual	98.17%
2023-24 Actual	97.95%

How do we compare?

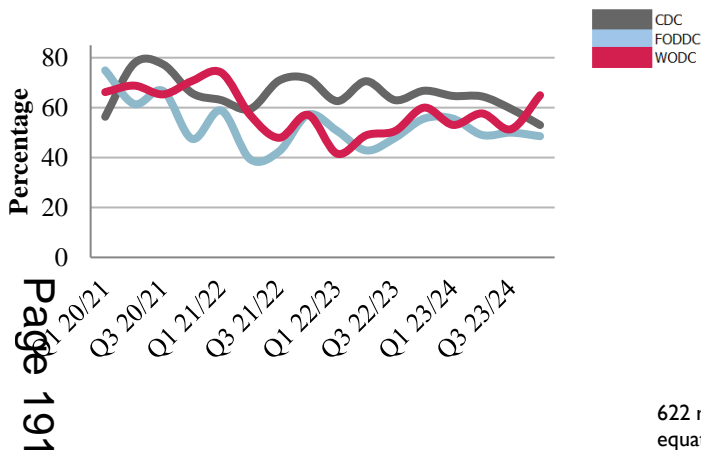
The Govmetric Channel Satisfaction Index is a monthly publication of the top performing councils across the core customer access channels. At least 100 customers need to be transferred to the survey to be included in the league table so even if satisfaction is high, it may not be included i.e. September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

	Jan Rank	Jan Net Sat.	Feb Rank	Feb Net Sat.	Mar Rank	Mar Net Sat.
Cotswold	4	93%	2	98%	2	97%
Forest	N/A	N/A	1	98%	1	98%
West Oxfordshire	1	99%	4	96%	3	96%


Services provided via the telephone consistently yield high satisfaction.


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

Customer Satisfaction - Email



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Improved since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

No Target

Q4 - 64.95%

2023-24 - 55.66%

How do we compare?

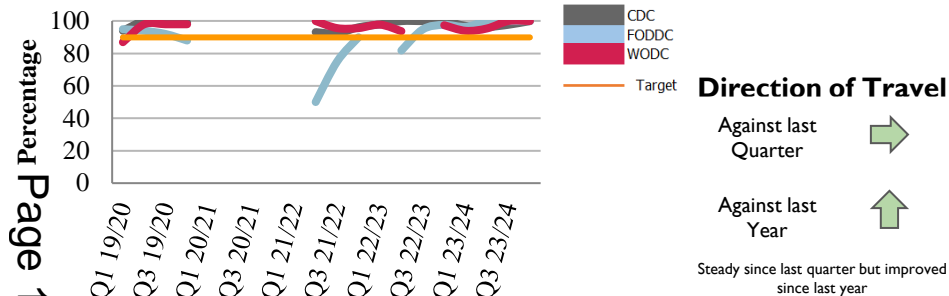
Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

622 residents responded to the survey, of which 404 were satisfied. This equates to a rate of 64.95% satisfaction for the quarter, up from 51.4% during Q3.

All outbound emails sent by customer services from Salesforce contain a link to the survey.

A piece of work was undertaken to review the responses from the email surveys due to the more negative responses. Upon review, it appears to be dissatisfaction surrounding service failures such as missed bins, container deliveries, responses from Planning or Housing etc. System and process improvements by the individual services are being implemented, which may affect these figures in the future.

Customer Satisfaction - Face to Face



Higher is Good

Target	90%
Q4 Actual	100%
2023-24 Actual	96.89%

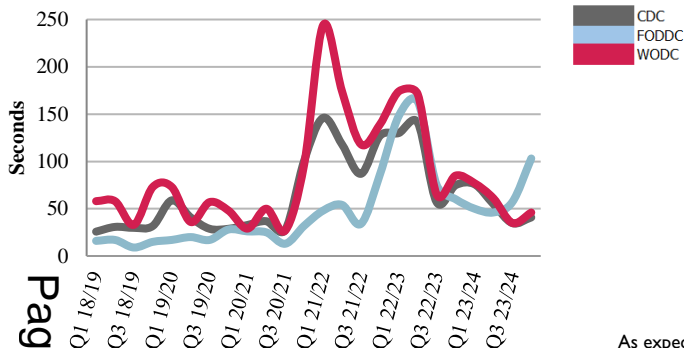
Customer Satisfaction from face to face interactions continues to be high, with a 100% satisfaction rate for the quarter, with all 39 individuals surveyed satisfied with the service.

How do we compare?


Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.


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

Customer Call Handling - Average Waiting Time



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

increased since last quarter but declined since last year

Lower is Good

No Target

Q4 - 46 Seconds

2023-24 – 66.5
Seconds

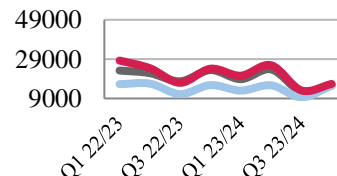
Page 193
How do we compare?

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

As expected, the average call waiting time increased in Q4, aligning with the traditionally higher workload during this period, primarily due to annual billing and garden waste renewals. The Council experienced a modest increase of 11 seconds compared to the previous quarter but notably decreased by 39 seconds compared to Q4 of the previous year. This decrease in waiting time compared to last year can be attributed to the implementation of the phone trial model at the Council. This model has enabled the strategic allocation of resources to the phone lines during peak demand periods.

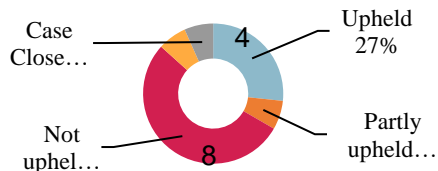
Call Volume over Time

The Council saw a decline of over 7,000 calls compared to the same period the previous year, as depicted in the chart to the right. This data reflects an overarching trend of lower call numbers over time, a trajectory expected to persist owing to sustained initiatives in Channel Choice, aimed at fostering customer self-service options.



Number of complaints upheld

Complaints by Status



Direction of Travel

Complaints upheld or partly upheld at Stage 1

Against last
Quarter



No Target

Against last
Year



Steady since last quarter and last year

Page 104

How do we compare?

The complaints and enquiries received in the period by the Ombudsman. The decisions made in the period by the Ombudsman. Compliance with recommendations recorded during the period by the Ombudsman.

2022-23

	Complaints Investigated	Percentage Upheld	Upheld decisions per 100,000 residents	Percentage Compliance with Recommendations	Percentage Satisfactory Remedy	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	1	50	0.9	N/A	100	12/16	Third
Harborough	11	0	0	N/A	N/A	1/16	Top
Mid Sussex	5	20	0.7	100	0	5/16	Second
Lichfield	2	100	1.9	100	0	16/16	Bottom

During Q4, the Council experienced a decrease in complaints received from last quarter. The majority of the cases were not upheld.

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

A new Customer Feedback Procedure went live on the 1st October 2021.

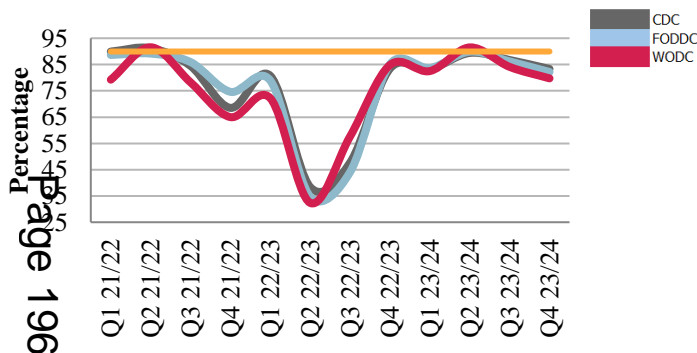
The new process has the following stages:

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

Complaints Upheld or Partially Upheld Breakdown

Service area	Description	Outcome/learning	Decision	Response time (days)
Housing	Upset with handling of case	Breach of the standard practice as verbal decision was not followed up with written confirmation - officers reminded to follow best practice	Partly Upheld	10+
Waste and Recycling	Food Caddy not arrived in a timely manner	System Error uncovered - Dealt with by Depot/Contact Monitoring Officer	Upheld	5
Revenues and Benefits	Incorrect customer pursued for a debt	Dealt with by Service	Upheld	10+
Revenues and Benefits	Unhappy regarding Officers rude and dismissive attitude	Dealt with by Service and apology offered	Upheld	10
Trees	Tree not being inspected regularly, and incorrect information relayed by Customer Services	Updated the Customer Services Script to ensure correct information	Upheld	10

Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Declined since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Target

90%

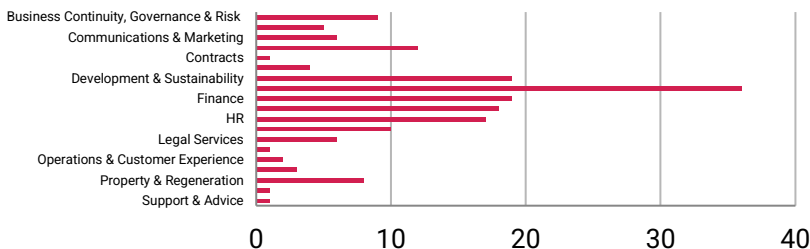
Q4 Actual

84.14%

2023-24
Actual

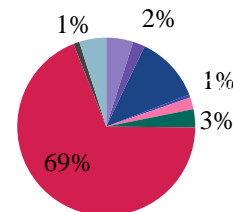
84.51%

Requests by Service Area



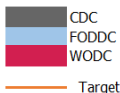
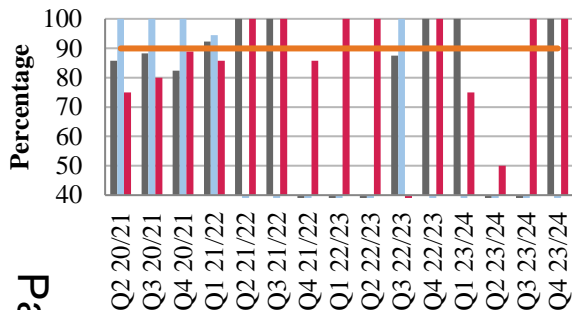
Response Type

- Directed to other Local Authority
- Directed to Website
- Exemption Applied
- Extension Applied
- FOI Closed - no clarification
- Information Not Held
- Information Provided in Full
- Information Provided in Part
- Outstanding



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

Building Control Satisfaction



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year

N/A

Improved since last quarter
No data from last year

**Q4 – Higher is
Good**

Target

90%

Actual

100%

Page 197

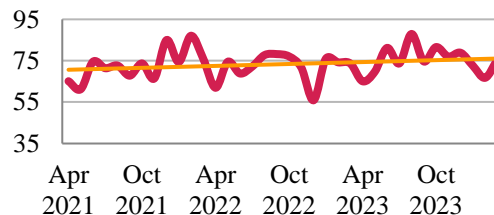
How do we compare?
Percentage of share in the market

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Number of Apps for Quarter
Cotswold	47%	48%	57%	124
Forest	60%	70%	62%	88
West	73%	67%	75%	136

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

The data on satisfaction surveys still faces challenges with a low number of returns, as only one survey was received during Q4.

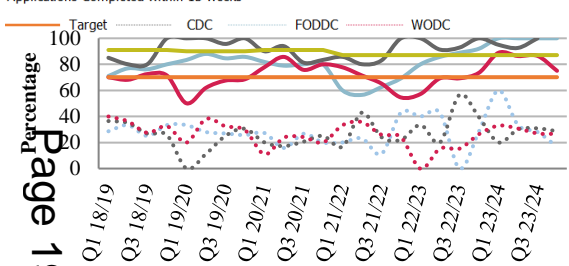
Building Control had 136 applications in Q4 and retains a strong share of the market. The below chart shows market share over time.



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

Applications Completed within 13 weeks

Legend: CDC (Grey), FODDC (Blue), WODC (Red), Shire Districts Mean (Yellow)



How do we compare?
Major Developments - % within 13 weeks or agreed time – LG Inform

Q3 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	87	10/16	Third
East Cambridgeshire	100	1/16	Top
Rushcliffe	100	1/16	Top
Stratford-on-Avon	92	7/16	Second
Lichfield	79	13/16	Third
Bromsgrove	33	16/16	Bottom

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Decreased since last quarter but slightly improved since last year

Q4 – Higher is Good

Target	70%
Actual	75%

YTD - Cumulative

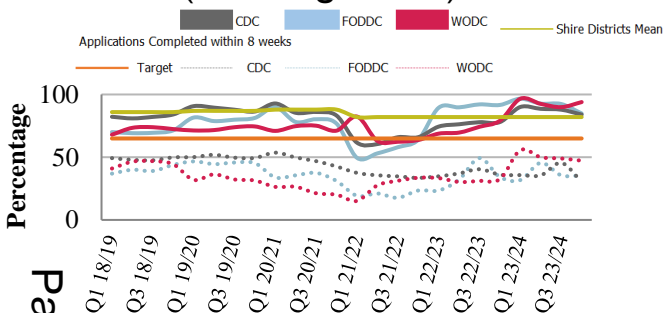
Target	70%
Actual	84.44%

The service has exceeded its target in processing major applications within the designated timeframes, but there's been a recent performance dip compared to the previous quarter, albeit with a slight increase of 1.47% from the same period last year. However, the cumulative percentage of applications determined within agreed timescales for 2023-24 remains comfortably above the 70% target, standing at 84.44%, up from 75.53% in 2022-23.

During Q4, eight major applications were determined, while throughout the entire 2023-24 period, a total of 45 major applications were determined.

[See slide for Minor Developments for further narrative](#)

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



How do we compare?

Minor Developments - % within 8 weeks or agreed time – LG Inform

Q3 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	85	9/16	Third
Stroud	97	1/16	Top
Mid Sussex	95	2/16	Top
East Hampshire	89	6/16	Second
Rushcliffe	81	12/16	Third
Stafford	68	16/16	Bottom

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Slightly declined since last quarter but improved since last year

Q4 – Higher is Good

Target	65%
Actual	94.05%

YTD - Cumulative

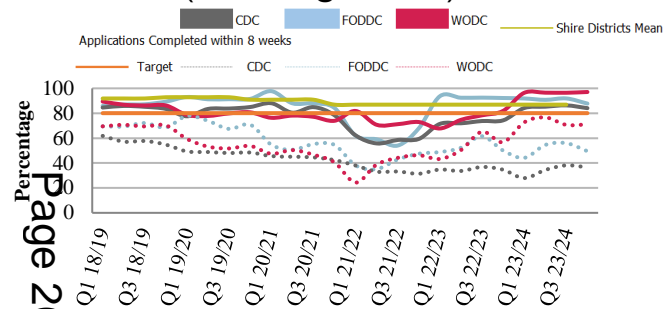
Target	65%
Actual	91.16%

The service has performed very well processing Minor applications within time. 84 minor applications were determined in Q4.

The Development Management Improvement Plan, initiated following the PAS report, remains actively pursued, with significant progress achieved on many key recommendations. Notably, the implementation of a new negotiation protocol for the Councils. Additionally, work is underway on further suggestions, such as the creation of a concise Householder application report template.

The Council are experiencing a larger number of speculative Major applications as they can no longer demonstrate a 5 year land supply. It should be noted that due to impending resourcing challenges within the service, it is anticipated that the number of applications determined within time is likely to decrease over the next quarter.

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



How do we compare?
Other Developments - % within 8 weeks or agreed time – LG Inform

Q3 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	96	3/16	Top
Mid Sussex	99	1/16	Top
Horsham	94	7/16	Second
South Oxfordshire	91	11/16	Third
Stafford	86	13/16	Bottom
Harborough	81	16/16	Bottom

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Improved since last quarter and last year

Q4 – Higher is Good

Target	80%
Actual	97.03%
YTD - Cumulative	
Target	80%
Actual	96.59%

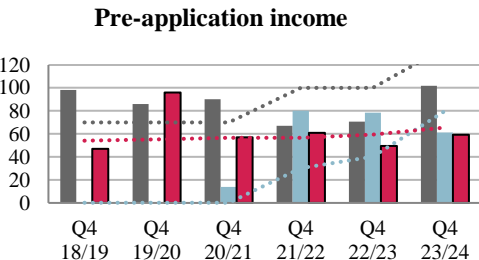
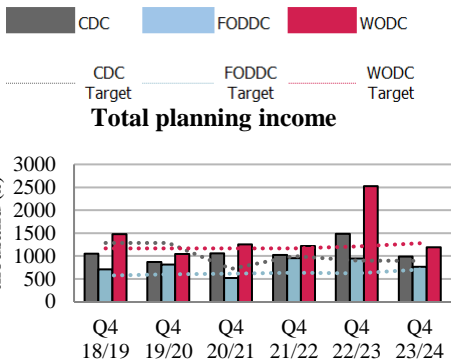
Determination times for Other applications have slightly increased since last quarter by 0.6% but remain markedly improved since this time last year by 15.18%.

236 Other applications were determined in Q4.

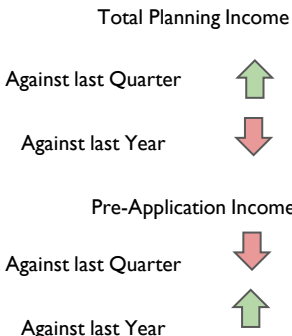
[See slide for Minor Developments for additional narrative](#)

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

Page 201



Direction of Travel



2023-24 – Higher is Good

Total Planning Income (£)	
Target	1,277,373
Actual	1,193,137
Pre-Application Income (£)	
Target	65,373
Actual	59,258

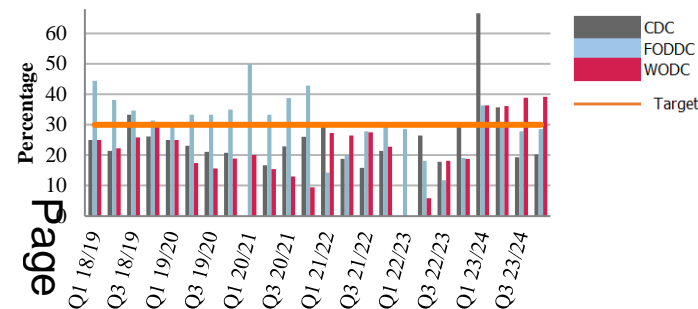
Total income increased since last quarter but declined since last year
Pre-App Income declined since last quarter but increased since last year

At the end of Q4, the planning income for the Council fell slightly short of its target by approximately 6%, with pre-application income also coming in below target by around 9%. However, it's worth noting that the income generated from pre-applications saw a significant 20% increase compared to the previous year.

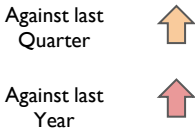
Additionally, the service has observed that a couple of major application submissions, initially slated for Q4, have been delayed and are now anticipated to be submitted during Q1. This adjustment is expected to contribute to an improvement in next year's income.

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

Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative)



Direction of Travel



Increased since last quarter and last year

2023-24 – Lower is Good

Target	30%
Actual	39.19%

How do we compare?

Percentage of planning appeals allowed – LG Inform

Q3 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	33	9/16	Third
East Cambridgeshire	0	1/16	Top
Test Valley	18	5/16	Second
Lichfield	33	9/16	Third
South Oxfordshire	40	15/16	Bottom
Bromsgrove	67	16/16	Bottom

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

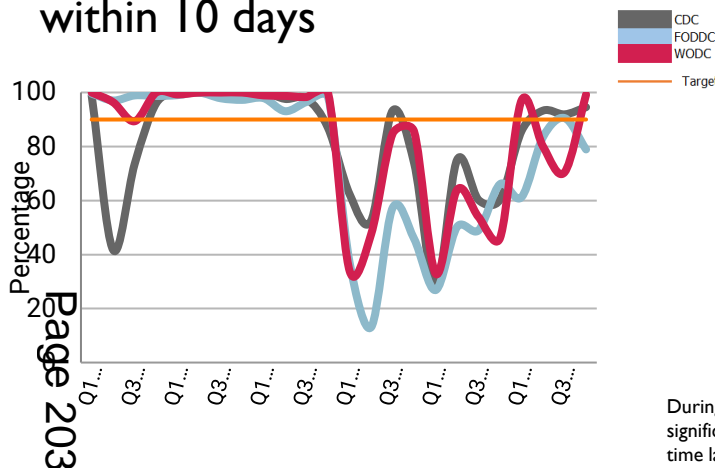
Between 1 January 2024 and 31 March 2024 ten appeals were decided, with six being supported. This quarter's allowance rate stands at 40%. However, the cumulative total for the year remains slightly above target at 39.19%. Of the ten appeals determined this quarter, four were related to Uplands applications, with two supported, resulting in a 50% allowance rate. Additionally, six appeals were related to Lowlands applications, with four supported, equating to a 33% allowance rate.

The below shows the appeal split between Uplands and Lowlands for the year;


	Decided	Allowed	% Allowed
Uplands	17	5.5	32.35
Lowlands	20	9	45


The enforcement project, focusing on enhancing the front end for registering enforcement issues, is currently in progress, with the new user forms allowing cases to be triaged quicker. It is anticipated to result in a decrease in repeat customer contact/chasing, as well as a reduction in the number of non-breach cases due to improved online reporting facilities and back office triage.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Improved since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Target	90%
Q4 Actual	99.23%
2023-24 Actual	85.32%

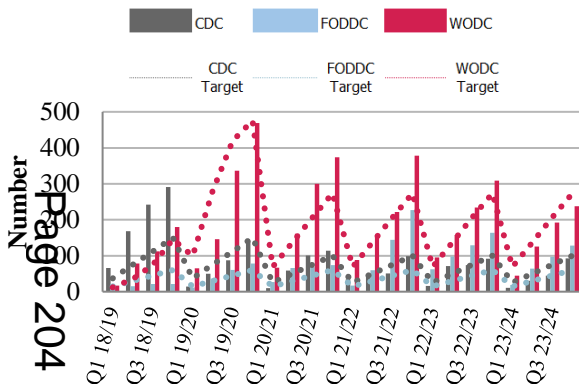
During Q4, the Council achieved its target for the first time since Q1, demonstrating a significant improvement from the last quarter by around 28%. Furthermore, since this time last year, the percentage of searches completed within 10 days has increased by 53.04%.

The Land Charges Lead was recognised at the Local Land Charges Awards and was awarded the Best Performing Searches Team Member award.

How do we compare?

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

Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative)



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Decreased since last quarter and last year

2023-24 – Higher is Good

Target	274
Actual	238

During Q4, a total of forty-six properties were delivered across Hailey, Enstone, and Carterton, comprising 26 for affordable rent and 20 for shared ownership. Delays in handovers, particularly related to third-party work scheduling, have impacted expected completions in Carterton and Enstone. As a result, deliveries have been pushed back to Q1-Q2 2024-2025.

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

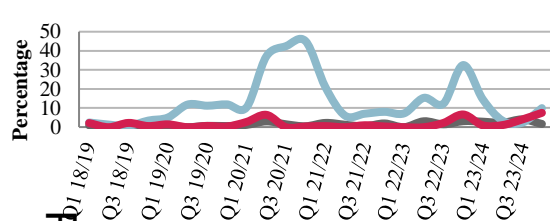
How do we compare?

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

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

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

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



Direction of Travel

Number of Fly Tips

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Percentage Enforcement Action

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



No Target

Number of Fly Tips Collected

243

Percentage Enforcement
Action

7.55%

How do we compare?

Number of Fly Tips reported for year 2022-23 for Local Authorities in England

There are 301 authorities with a total of 995545 Fly Tips reported (Range - 34830)

Fly Tips – Increased since last quarter and but slightly decreased since last year
Enforcement Action – Increased since last quarter and slightly increased since last year

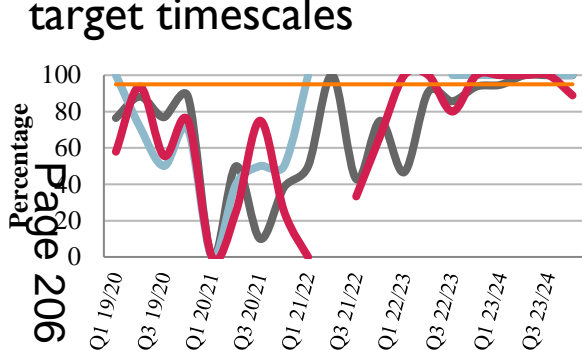
	Total Fly Tips	Total Enforcement Actions	Total FPNs	FPNs per Fly Tip	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank	Quartile
West	1150	53	14	0.012	6/16	Second
Horsham	1212	287	65	0.053	1/16	Top
Tewkesbury	655	29	1	0.001	10/16	Third
Stroud	859	11	0	0	16/16	Bottom

In Q4, there was a notable increase in the number of fly-tipping incidents reported, while the percentage of enforcement actions experienced an increase of around 3%.

To address this trend, the service is proactively reviewed its systems to streamline enforcement efforts. This includes a comprehensive examination of duplicate report input procedures to ensure efficient handling of cases.

The proposed surveillance cameras are scheduled for implementation in Q1 at fly tipping hotspots.

Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Declined since last quarter and last year

Q4 – Higher is Good

Target

95%

Actual

88.88%

YTD - Cumulative

Target

95%

Actual

96.42%

How do we compare?

APSE performance networks are introducing benchmarking for environmental sectors for 2023-24

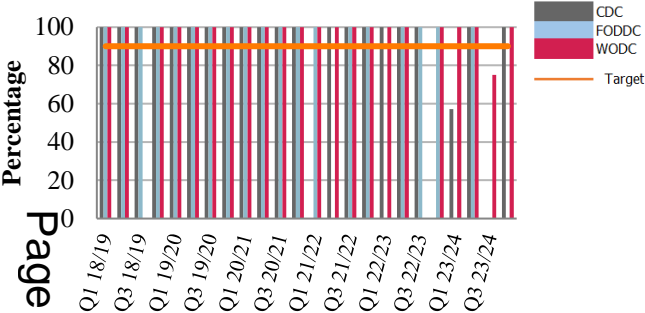
The Council conducted nine inspections, with eight completed within the designated timescales. The missed inspection had been initially arranged on time but was later canceled by the other party; however, it has since been completed.

Throughout the year, a total of 28 inspections were carried out, with 27 of them inspected within the target timescales.


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


Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day

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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Increased since last quarter and steady since last year

Q4 – Higher is Good

Target	90%
Actual	100%

YTD - Cumulative

Target	90%
Actual	90.90%

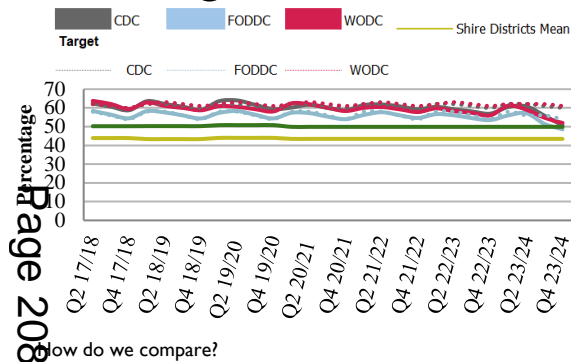
One notification was received during Q4 which was assessed within one working day.

Throughout the year, a total of 11 notifications were received, 10 assessed within the target timescale.

How do we compare?

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

Percentage of household waste recycled



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Declined since last quarter but
slightly improved since last year

Higher is Good

Target

61%

Q4 Actual

51.91%

2023-24

Actual

56.68%

In Q4, recycling rates experienced a slight decrease of approximately 1.26% compared to the preceding quarter. Nevertheless, there has been a marginal improvement of about 0.73% in recycling rates compared to the same period last year. Although the Council is observing a modest upward trend annually, there is a broader national trend of declining recycling rates, as evidenced by England's recycling rate dropping by 0.8% to 43.3% in 2022/23.

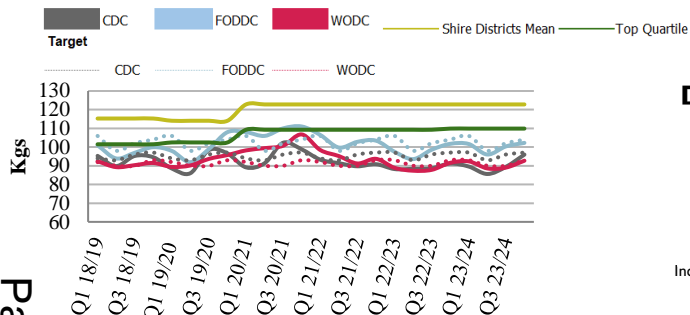
The Council actively participated in the national 'Recycle Week 2023' campaign held in October 2023. This year's theme, 'Big Recycling Hunt,' targeted commonly overlooked or unknown recyclable items. Additionally, during Q3, the focus extended to food waste recycling initiatives around Halloween and Christmas, accompanied by tailored messaging promoting recycling and waste reduction during the festive season.

How do we compare?

Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting

Q4 22-23 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	53.1	4/16	Top
South Oxfordshire	55.42	1/16	Top
Tewkesbury	47.58	6/16	Second
Harborough	38.5	10/16	Third
Hinckley and Bosworth	36.68	14/16	Bottom
Bromsgrove	31.98	16/16	Bottom

Residual Household Waste per Household (kg)



Page 209

How do we compare?

Residual household waste per household (kg/household)

2022-23 Benchmark	Kg	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	85.56	4/16	Top
Stroud	76.83	1/16	Top
Tewkesbury	104.61	7/16	Second
Rushcliffe	114.93	11/16	Third
Lichfield	117.41	14/16	Bottom
Bromsgrove	126.69	16/16	Bottom

Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter



Against last
Year



Increased since last quarter and last year

Lower is Good

Q4 Target

93

Q4 Actual

92.79

2023-24

Target

366

2023-24

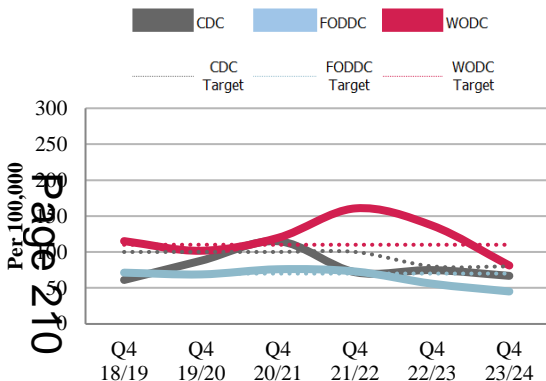
Actual

363

During Q4, the Council observed a rise in the volume of household waste, with an increase of around 5% per household compared to the previous quarter, totaling 92.79kg. In comparison to the same period the previous year, there was an average increase of just over 1kg per household.

Overall, all household waste tonnages have seen a slight increase compared to the previous year (2022-2023), yet they still fall below the levels recorded in 2021-22.

Missed bins per 100,000



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Improved since last quarter and last year

Lower is Good

Q4 Target	110
Q4 Actual	81.37
2023-24 Target	440
2023-24 Actual	419

In Q4, the number missed bins per 100,000 stayed below target and saw a drop of around 14% from the preceding quarter, despite some disruptions from minor flooding and road closures impacting collection routines. In comparison to the corresponding period last year, the number of missed bins per 100,000 collections decreased by roughly 40%. Furthermore, these misses mark the lowest recorded since 2018/19.

How do we compare?

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

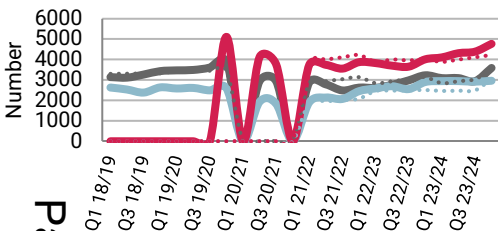
Note: since the implementation of In-Cab technology, the data source for missed collections is Alloy, In-Cab's back office system. This data source is more accurate than the previous data source.

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

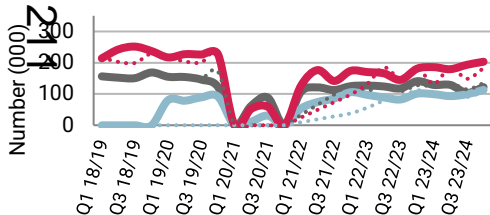
Number of gym memberships

Legend: CDC (black), FODDC (blue), WODC (red)

Direction of Travel: CDC Target (dotted), FODDC Target (dotted), WODC Target (dotted)



Visits to leisure facilities



Direction of Travel

Gym Memberships

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Leisure Visits

Against last Quarter



Against last Year



Gym Memberships - Improved since last quarter and last year

Leisure Visits- Improved since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Gym Memberships

Target

4214

Actual

4769

Leisure Visits – Q4

Target

182,560

Actual

202,757

Leisure Visits – End of Year

Target

648,310

Actual

760,272

The leisure targets were reviewed at the end of 2021-22, resulting in higher visitor number targets. Visits to leisure facilities increased compared to the previous quarter, surpassing the quarterly target by 11%. During Q4, gym memberships also rose compared to both the previous quarter and the same period last year.

Learn to Swim participation figures continue to decline, this trend may persist due to a national shortage of swim instructors and the backlog reduction resulting from the COVID-19 facility closures.


The Council successfully secured over £330,000 in Capital Grant Funding to enhance the energy efficiency of leisure facilities.

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

How do we compare?

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

This page is intentionally left blank

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JUNE 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>SALT CROSS GARDEN VILLAGE AREA ACTION PLAN (AAP)</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Charlie Maynard – Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development. Email: charlie.maynard@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Charlie Jackson – Assistant Director, Planning and Sustainability. Email: charlie.jackson@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves – Planning Policy Manager. Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To provide an update on the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP).</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Salt Cross AAP Written Judgement (20 February 2024) Annex B – Letter from the Planning Inspector (22 April 2024) Annex C – Letter to the Planning Inspector (8 May 2024)</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to: I. Note the contents of the report.</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>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>The Salt Cross Garden Village AAP has been the subject of extensive previous consultation. The re-opening of the examination will involve</p>

	further stakeholder engagement.
--	---------------------------------

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Salt Cross is a planned new garden village community to the north of the A40 near Eynsham. The area is identified in the adopted Local Plan as a strategic location for growth and is expected to include around 2,200 homes, a 40-hectare science and technology park along with schools, open space and other community facilities.
- 1.2** To guide the future delivery of Salt Cross, the District Council is preparing a new Area Action Plan (AAP). Once adopted, the AAP will form part of the statutory development plan alongside the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.
- 1.3** The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the current timetable for taking the AAP through to formal adoption following a third-party legal challenge last year.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Following extensive public consultation, the draft AAP was formally submitted for examination in February 2021, with examination hearing sessions conducted by Mr Darren McCreery MA BA (Hons) MRTPI in June/July 2021.
- 2.2** The examination was subsequently paused to enable the Council to undertake some additional work on the phasing of infrastructure. Mr David Spencer BA (Hons) MRTPI was appointed as joint Inspector with effect from 2 February 2022.
- 2.3** Following public consultation on the additional infrastructure phasing work which closed on 6 April 2022, the Inspectors wrote to the Council on 26 May 2022 to confirm that the examination was able to progress to the Main Modifications stage.
- 2.4** Consultation on those proposed Main Modifications took place from 23 September to 4 November 2022 and the Inspectors' final report was received on 1 March 2023.
- 2.5** However, shortly afterwards, a legal challenge was submitted by Leigh Day on behalf of Rights Community Action (RCA) which challenged the legality of the Inspectors' conclusions regarding AAP Policy 2 – Net Zero Carbon Development by way of a judicial review.
- 2.6** The case was heard in the High Court in November 2023 and the written judgement was handed down on the 20 February 2024. A copy of the judgement is attached to this report at Annex A.
- 2.7** The subsequent order of 4 March 2024 confirmed that the claim for judicial review is allowed and that the Inspectors' report into the Salt Cross Area Action Plan dated 1 March 2023 and the Inspectors' proposed Main Modifications to the Salt Cross Area Action Plan are quashed, insofar as they relate to Policy 2 of the said Plan.
- 2.8** As a result, the District Council is now unable to proceed with the formal adoption of the AAP.
- 2.9** Having taken legal advice on the matter, Officers wrote to the Planning Inspectorate on 2 April to suggest that the examination be re-opened on a focused basis to re-consider Policy 2 and that a new Inspector should be appointed.

3. RE-OPENING OF THE AAP EXAMINATION

- 3.1** On 22 April 2024, the Planning Inspectorate confirmed that the examination has been re-opened and that a new Inspector - Helen Hockenhull BA(Hons) B.PI MRTPI has been appointed.
- 3.2** The Inspector wrote to the Council on the same day and a copy of her letter is attached at Annex B. It has also been published on the garden village examination web page.
- 3.3** In summary, the Inspector's letter confirms that:
- The AAP examination has been re-opened;
 - The scope of the examination is constrained by the Order of the Court and will only consider Policy 2 and any other consequential revisions to the plan;
 - The starting point for the re-opened examination is Policy 2 as originally submitted in February 2020;
 - Policy 2 will need to be considered in light of the legal challenge and the Government's Local Energy Efficiency Standards Update in the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) dated 13 December 2023;
- 3.4** The letter helpfully outlines the work that is anticipated to be needed from the Council including:
- Main Modifications to Policy 2 (as originally submitted);
 - Any consequential modifications to the AAP;
 - Evidence to address the criteria in the WMS including viability and consideration of the impact on housing supply and affordability;
 - Updated Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
- 3.5** It also highlights the need to appoint a Programme Officer to help administer the examination process, as well as the creation of a new examination web page.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1** On 8 May, Officers wrote to the Planning Inspector to confirm the anticipated scope of work and provide an approximate timetable. A copy of the letter is attached at Annex 3.
- 4.2** In terms of timescales, the letter indicates that the Council will need around 3-4 months to undertake the necessary work requested by the Inspector (i.e. the period May – July/August) after which point it will be submitted for her consideration.

- 4.3** Timings beyond this will depend on a number of factors but the overall process could be as set out below (although clearly this will be expedited wherever possible).

Stage	Indicative Timings
Appointment of Programme Officer and web page updates	May 2024
Preparation of Main Modifications and supporting evidence	May – July/August 2024 (3-4 months)
Submission to Inspector	August 2024
Inspector prepares and publishes Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs)	August – September 2024
Hearing session/s	October 2024
Potential consultation on any further Main Modifications	November/December 2024
Inspector's Report	February/March 2025
Adoption of AAP	April 2025

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1** The District Council could choose not to further progress the AAP but in the absence of a formally agreed planning framework, it would then find it difficult to approve any current or future planning applications for the site, leading to further delay in the delivery of new homes and jobs.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** The re-opening of the examination raises a number of financial implications with additional costs now expected to be incurred in relation to the preparation of additional evidence, the appointment of a Programme Officer as well as legal support and the fees of the Planning Inspectorate.
- 6.2** These additional costs are however able to be met through existing budgets.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The re-opened examination is a direct result of the successful legal challenge which was heard in 2023. This report itself however raises no direct legal implications.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** The report presents no significant risks.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** The extent to which the Council had met its obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty was considered by the Inspector and set out in his final report of March 2023.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** The re-opened examination provides the District Council with a second opportunity to make the case for delivering net zero carbon development at Salt Cross Garden Village.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1** None.



Neutral Citation Number: [2024] EWHC 359 (Admin)

Case No: AC-2023-LON-001146
CO/1308/2023

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
KING'S BENCH DIVISION
ADMINISTRATIVE COURT
PLANNING COURT

Royal Courts of Justice
Strand, London, WC2A 2LL

Date: 20/02/2024

Before :

MRS JUSTICE LIEVEN

Between :

THE KING

(on the application of RIGHTS COMMUNITY ACTION LTD)

Claimant

and

**SECRETARY OF STATE FOR LEVELLING UP,
HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**

Defendant

and

- (1) WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
(2) GROSVENOR DEVELOPMENTS LTD

Interested Parties

Mr Alex Goodman KC and Mr Alex Shattock (instructed by Leigh Day Solicitors) for the
Claimant

Mr Mark Westmoreland Smith (instructed by Government Legal Department) for the
Defendant

The First Interested Party was not represented

Mr Charles Banner KC (instructed by West Oxfordshire District Council Legal Services)
for the Second Interested Party

Hearing dates: **14 November 2023**

Approved Judgment

This judgment was handed down remotely at 10.30am on 20 February 2024 by circulation to the parties or their representatives by e-mail and by release to the National Archives.

.....
MRS JUSTICE LIEVEN

Mrs Justice Lieven DBE :

1. This is an application for judicial review of the Inspectors’ Report into the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (“AAP”). The Claimant is a Non-Governmental Organisation (“NGO”) involved in community planning, particularly in relation to the formulation of local development plans. The Defendant is the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (“SoS”) on whose behalf the Inspectors report. The First Interested Party is the Local Planning Authority (“LPA”) responsible for the AAP. The Second Interested Party is the developer of the Salt Cross development area.
2. The Claimant was represented by Alex Goodman KC and Alex Shattock, the Defendant was represented by Mark Westmoreland Smith, the First Interested Party was not represented, and the Second Interested Party was represented by Charles Banner KC.
3. The case concerns whether the Inspectors erred in law in their treatment of a Written Ministerial Statement (“WMS”) dated 2015, which purported to control how energy performance requirements in new housing development would relate to the Building Regulations and the Code for Sustainable Homes. There is some inconsistency in the documentation between whether the Inspectors should be called “the Examiners” and whether their report is an Inspectors’ Report or an Examiners’ Report. For the purposes of consistency, I describe them throughout as the Inspectors and refer to the Inspectors’ Report (“IR”).
4. The case raises the following issues:
 - a. The Claimant’s standing to bring the case;
 - b. Whether there is a justiciable decision;
 - c. The Grounds:
 - i. Whether the Inspectors erred in law in respect of their approach to the WMS?
 - ii. Whether the IR failed to lawfully deal with the inconsistency of approach with other Inspector’s reports dealing with the same WMS?
 - iii. Whether there was procedural unfairness.

The Planning and Energy Act 2008 and the Written Ministerial Statement 2015

5. The legislative framework for the scope of energy policies in Local Authority development plan documents is set out in section 1 of the Planning and Energy Act 2008 (“PEA”) which provides:

“1 Energy policies

(1) A local planning authority in England may in their development plan documents, a corporate joint committee may in their strategic development plan, and a local planning authority in Wales may in their

local development plan, include policies imposing reasonable requirements for—

(a) a proportion of energy used in development in their area to be energy from renewable sources in the locality of the development;

(b) a proportion of energy used in development in their area to be low carbon energy from sources in the locality of the development;

(c) development in their area to comply with energy efficiency standards that exceed the energy requirements of building regulations.

(2) In subsection (1)(c)—

“energy efficiency standards” means standards for the purpose of furthering energy efficiency that are—

(a) set out or referred to in regulations made by the appropriate national authority under or by virtue of any other enactment (including an enactment passed after the day on which this Act is passed), or

(b) set out or endorsed in national policies or guidance issued by the appropriate national authority;

“energy requirements”, in relation to building regulations, means requirements of building regulations in respect of energy performance or conservation of fuel and power.

(3) In subsection (2) “appropriate national authority” means—

(a) the Secretary of State, in the case of a local planning authority in England;

...

(4) The power conferred by subsection (1) has effect subject to subsections (5) to (7) and to—

(a) section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (c. 5), in the case of a local planning authority in England;

...

(5) Policies included in development plan documents by virtue of subsection (1) must not be inconsistent with relevant national policies for England.

...

(7) Relevant national policies are—

(a) national policies relating to energy from renewable sources, in the case of policies included by virtue of subsection (1)(a);

(b) national policies relating to low carbon energy, in the case of policies included by virtue of subsection (1)(b);

(c) national policies relating to furthering energy efficiency, in the case of policies included by virtue of subsection (1)(c)."

[emphasis added]

6. The issue at the centre of the case is the interpretation of, and approach to, a WMS issued by the then SoS, Eric Pickles MP, in 2015. The WMS covered a series of disparate town planning issues and included a heading "Housing Standards Streamlining the system". There was then a sub-heading "Plan making". This included the following:

"For the specific issue of energy performance, local planning authorities will continue to be able to set and apply policies in their Local Plans which require compliance with energy performance standards that exceed the energy requirements of Building Regulations until commencement of amendments to the Planning and Energy Act 2008 in the Deregulation Bill. This is expected to happen alongside the introduction of zero carbon homes policy in late 2016. The Government has stated that, from then, the energy performance requirements in Building Regulations will be set at a level equivalent to the (outgoing) Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4. Until the amendment is commenced, we would expect local planning authorities to take this statement of the Government's intention into account in applying existing policies and not set conditions with requirements above a Code level 4 equivalent. This statement does not modify the National Planning Policy Framework policy allowing the connection of new housing development to low carbon infrastructure such as district heating networks."

[emphasis added]

7. A summary version of the WMS was inserted into the National Planning Policy Guidance ("NPPG") on 15 March 2019. This states:

"The Written Ministerial Statement on Plan Making dated 25 March 2015 clarified the use of plan policies and conditions on energy performance standards for new housing developments. The statement sets out the government's expectation that such policies should not be used to set conditions on planning permissions with requirements above the equivalent of the energy requirement of Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes (this is approximately 20% above current Building Regulations across the build mix)."

8. Subsequent to the WMS, various things happened which materially impacted upon the policy set out therein.

9. Firstly, the Deregulation Act 2015 gained Royal Assent and therefore became an Act and not a Bill. However, the amendments to the PEA which were contained in the Deregulation Act 2015, and referred to in the WMS, have not been commenced.
10. Secondly, in a statement made in January 2021 the Government stated that “To provide some certainty in the immediate term, the Government will not amend the Planning and Energy Act 2008, **which means that local planning authorities will retain powers to set local energy efficiency standards for new homes.**” [emphasis added].
11. Thirdly, amendments to Part L of the Building Regulations in 2021, set energy standards for homes at a level exceeding Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Therefore the current standards in the Building Regulations are above those that the WMS told local authorities not to exceed.
12. Fourthly the Government’s January 2022 response to the Select Committee report on Local Government and the path to net zero, where it said:

*“The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that the planning system should support the transition to a low-carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low-carbon energy and associated infrastructure. **The NPPF expects Local Plans to take account of climate change over the longer term; local authorities should adopt proactive strategies to reduce carbon emissions and recognise the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008. Local authorities have the power to set local energy efficiency standards that go beyond the minimum standards set through the Building Regulations, through the Planning and Energy Act 2008. In January 2021, we clarified in the Future Homes Standard consultation response that in the immediate term we will not amend the Planning and Energy Act 2008, which means that local authorities still retain powers to set local energy efficiency standards that go beyond the minimum standards set through the Building Regulations. In addition, there are clear policies in the NPPF on climate change as set out above. The Framework does not set out an exhaustive list of the steps local authorities might take to meet the challenge of climate change and they can go beyond this.**”*

[emphasis added]

13. It can be seen from this statement that the most recent Government statement is that local authorities can go beyond the Building Regulations, although the WMS was not referred to in this document and had not at this point been withdrawn.

The Area Action Plan and Policy 2

14. West Oxfordshire’s 2018 Local Plan includes Policy OS2 which identifies the development of a self-contained settlement based on garden village principles to the

north of Eynsham, that is to be delivered as part of the overall distribution of housing set out in Policy H1. Policy EW1 sets out more detailed policy for the comprehensive development of a free-standing development of an exemplar Garden Village that is to be led by an Area Action Plan (AAP), which was the subject of the recent examination.

15. The AAP for Salt Cross was submitted to the SoS pursuant to the process in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (“PCPA 2004”).
16. The core objective of the AAP is set out at GV3:

“To design buildings fit for the future, mitigating the impact of Salt Cross on climate change by achieving zero-carbon development through ultra-low energy fabric and 100% use of low and zero-carbon energy, with no reliance on fossil fuels.”

17. Policy 2 sets out very detailed requirements as to how net-zero is to be achieved:

“Policy 2 - Net Zero Carbon Development

Proposals for development at Salt Cross will be required to demonstrate net zero operational carbon on-site through ultra-low energy fabric specification, low carbon technologies and on-site renewable energy generation. An energy strategy will be required with outline and detailed planning submissions, reconfirmed pre-commencement, validated pre-occupation and monitoring post-completion demonstrating alignment with this policy.

Building Fabric

Proposals will need to use ultra-low energy fabric to achieve the KPI for space heating demand of <15 kWh/m².yr, demonstrated through predicted energy modelling. This should be carried out as part of any detailed planning submission, reconfirmed pre-commencement, validated pre-occupation and monitored post-completion.

Overheating

Thermal comfort and the risk of overheating should be given full consideration in the earliest stages of design to ensure passive-design measures are prioritised over the use of more energy-intensive alternatives such as mechanical cooling. At outline planning stage, overheating should be mitigated through appropriate orientation and massing and at the detailed planning stage, a modelling sample proportionate to development density will be required to demonstrate full compliance with CIBSE TM59 for residential and TM52 for non residential development, addressing overheating in units considered at highest-risk.

Overheating calculations should be carried out as part of the detailed planning submission and reconfirmed pre-commencement.

Energy Efficiency

Energy budgets (EUI targets) must be demonstrated using predicted energy modelling. The following KPI targets will apply:

- Residential <35 kwh/m2.yr*
- Office <55 kwh/m2.yr*
- Research labs <55-240 kwh/m2.yr**
- Retail <80 kwh/m2.yr*
- Community space (e.g. health care) <100 kwh/m2.yr*
- Sports and Leisure <80 kwh/m2.yr*
- School <65 kwh/m2.yr*

To ensure best practice, an accurate method of predictive energy modelling, agreed in consultation with the District Council, will be required for a cross-section of building typologies (e.g. using Passive House Planning Package - PHPP or CIBSE TM45 or equivalent). This modelling should be carried out with the intention of meeting the target EUIs as part of the detailed planning submission, be reconfirmed pre-commencement, validated pre-occupation and monitored post-completion.

Fossil Fuels

The development will be expected to be fossil-fuel free. Fossil fuels, such as oil and natural gas should not be used to provide space heating, hot water or used for cooking.

Zero Operational Carbon Balance

100% of the energy consumption required by buildings on-site should be generated using on site renewables, for example through Solar PV. The quantum of proposed renewable energy for the whole site (outline planning) and each phase (detailed planning) should be shown in kWh/yr. The amount of renewable energy should equal or exceed the total energy demand for the development in order to achieve net zero operational carbon as a whole.

The energy strategy should state the total kWh/yr of energy consumption of the buildings on the site and the total kWh/yr of energy generation by renewables to show that the zero-carbon operational balance is met. An explanation should be given as to how these figures have been calculated.

Renewable energy contribution calculations should be carried out as part of the outline and detailed planning submissions, be reconfirmed pre-

commencement, validated pre-occupation and monitored post-completion.

A detailed low- and zero-carbon viability assessment should be carried out in support of the energy strategy detailing the selection of on-site low- and zero-carbon energy technologies.

Embodied carbon

Development proposals will need to demonstrate attempts to reduce embodied carbon to meet the following KPI:

< 500 kg CO₂/m² Upfront embodied carbon emissions (Building Life Cycle Stages A1- A5). Includes Substructure, Superstructure, MEP, Facade & Internal Finishes.

As part of the submission of any planning application, a report should be prepared which demonstrates the calculation of the expected upfront embodied carbon of buildings. Full lifecycle modelling is encouraged.

Embodied carbon calculations should be carried out as part of the outline and detailed planning submission, be reconfirmed pre-commencement, and validated preoccupation.”

18. Following submission of the AAP to the SoS, the Inspector (Mr McCreery) issued a list of matters, issues and questions to be explored during the examination. Matter 7 related to environmental issues including net zero policy. The Local Authority’s response referred to an expert net zero carbon report which it had commissioned.
19. During the course of the examination hearing sessions, held between 28 June and 8 July 2021, Policy 2 was discussed. The promoters of the site, the Second Interested Party, Grosvenor Developments Ltd (“IP2”), objected to Policy 2 based on previous representations made. The matters raised by IP2 included (inter alia) criticisms on the grounds that the net zero obligations included in Policy 2 were inconsistent with national policy, and that the evidence as to the deliverability and viability of the requirements was lacking.
20. During and following the hearing sessions, no further Matters, Issues and Questions (“MIQs”) were issued by the Inspector as to the sufficiency of the net zero carbon report or the wider evidence base underlying Policy 2. The Inspector did not request that further evidence be provided. The only relevant agreed action points following the hearing sessions, was for the Council to “*provide details of other plans that have taken a similar approach to AAP policy 2.*”
21. On 26 May 2022, nearly a year after the oral hearings had finished and the examination had been paused, the Inspectors wrote to the Council to confirm that the AAP would progress to the Main Modification and Reporting stage. By this time, a second Inspector has been appointed. Following this appointment, the Inspectors indicated that Policy 2 was not, in their view, sound:

“Our conclusions on the issues and the reasons for Main Modifications will be set out fully in our report and we will take account of consultation responses, updated sustainability appraisal and other relevant information before reaching a final conclusion. As such, any detailed reasoning for recommending a specific Main Modification is best left to our report. Notwithstanding this, we anticipate that our conclusions in relation to Policy 2 (Net Zero Carbon Development) will come as a disappointment. As such, we will say at this stage that we are not satisfied that Policy 2 is either consistent with national policy or justified. As such, we are unable to conclude that the policy is sound. Our fuller reasoning on this matter will be set out in our report.”

The Consultation

22. In accordance with section 20(7C) of the PCPA 2004, the Council requested that the Inspectors should recommend any Main Modifications (“MMs”) necessary to rectify matters that they considered would otherwise make the AAP unsound and thus incapable of being adopted. The draft MMs recommended by the Inspectors included the requirement to significantly ‘dilute’ the prescriptive elements of Policy 2.
23. The Council wrote in response on 19 July 2022 to express concerns that the Inspectors had not provided sufficient reasons to enable it to understand why these MMs to Policy 2 were required, and that interested parties would be unable to respond effectively to the proposed changes if no explanation was given as to why they were necessary. The Council requested that the Inspectors explain why the policy as proposed did not accord with national policy and why it was not justified and that this was necessary for consultation on the proposed MMs to be effective. The Council drew attention to the Inspectorate’s own procedural guidance for the MMs stage. The Council pointed out that the Inspectors had not followed their own guidance which states:

“6.4. The Inspector will aim to ensure that the LPA has a reasonable understanding of why all the potential main modifications are likely to be needed. Wherever possible the Inspector will seek to communicate this during the hearing sessions, but if there are issues for which this is not possible the Inspector will do so in writing as soon as possible afterwards. However, the Inspector’s final recommendations, and the reasons for them, will be set out in the Inspector’s report at the end of the examination.”

24. On 19 July 2022, the Inspectors replied as follows:

“Policy 2 was discussed at length during the Hearing sessions, with views heard from a number of parties. The potential need for modification to the policy was also raised by the Inspector and prompted the Council to document an action relating to the policy and the question of whether it was inconsistent with national policy. These actions by the Inspector were sufficient to meet the aim of ensuring that the Council had a reasonable understanding that potential main modification was likely to be needed, in line with the best practice set out in the Procedure Guide.

It is not usual practice for Inspectors to share more detailed reasoning ahead of Main Modifications being identified and consulted upon. This is because any final conclusions are subject to the outcome of that consultation. However, in this instance, as the Inspectors knew the issue was of particular importance to the Council, as a courtesy they took the step of providing some additional explanation in the letter of 26 May.

The consultation on the Main Modifications is on the substance of modifications themselves. It is not on whether parties agree or not with the Inspector's reasoning for saying that a Modification is needed. As such, the full reasoning is not required in order to take part in the consultation. Providing such reasoning would instead

25. On 25 July 2022, the Claimant wrote separately to the Inspectorate expressing its view that the Inspectors had not provided any reasonable explanation why the tests for soundness had not been met in relation to Policy 2. The letter provided:

“It is extremely frustrating that you have failed to provide any reasons for your finding that the council’s draft of Policy 2 is unsound other than that it is inconsistent with national policy and unjustified. Without further explanation it is impossible for either the council, stakeholders, or members of the public to have a reasonable understanding of whether your analysis of the legal and policy position is correct, and therefore how to respond to any consultation on the MMs. It is particularly disappointing that you have taken this approach when Policy 2 is such a fundamental part of the draft AAP and is being looked closely at by other authorities who are attempting to address the climate emergency in their local plans.

We consider that you have acted in breach of the Planning Inspectorate (“PINS”) procedural guide for local plan examinations...”

26. The letter goes on to reference paragraph 6.4 of the Inspectorate guidance.
27. The Inspectorate responded to the Claimant on 29 July 2022 enclosing the same response that had been sent to the Council.
28. The consultation on the MMs took place from 23 September 2022 to 4 November 2022. The Council took the unusual step of responding to its own consultation, emphasising its interpretation of the applicable national policy (which accords with the Claimant’s), and highlighting a recent government response to an enquiry from Somerset and Bath Council: *“Plan-makers may continue to set energy efficiency standards at the local level which go beyond national Building Regulations standards if they wish”.*

The Inspectors’ Report

29. The Inspectors produced their Report on 1 March 2023. They dealt with Policy 2 under Issue 4. The Report at IR121 acknowledges that Salt Cross is intended to be seen as an exemplar and supports the principle of taking an *“ambitious approach to zero carbon building at Salt Cross”*. They raise two soundness issues, consistency with national policy and whether the overall approach is justified. It is necessary to set out the entirety of the section on the first issue:

“Consistency with national policy

123. In relation to the building performance standards in Policy 2 as they would apply to dwellings, there is a question of whether the approach is consistent with national policy. The issue arises by virtue of Paragraph 154(b) of the NPPF and the need for local requirements for the sustainability of buildings to reflect the Government’s policy for national technical standards.

124. Although various Government consultations linked to the Future Homes Standard have signalled potential ways forwards, the current national planning policy relating to the endorsement of energy efficiency standards exceeding the Building Regulations remains the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) on Plan Making dated 25 March 2015. This is supported by the associated NPPG dated from 2019 which explains that the 2015 WMS sets out the Government’s expectation that policies should not be used to set conditions on planning expectation that policies should not be used to set conditions on planning permissions with requirements above the equivalent of the energy requirement of Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes (approximately 20% above the 2013 Building Regulations across the building mix). The 2015 WMS remains an extant expression of national policy.

125. The KPIs and wider approach in Policy 2 would amount to additional bespoke standards. The KPIs would sit alongside Part L of the Building Regulations and the Standard Assessment Procedure that is used to demonstrate compliance with it. They do not have a direct relationship with the Building Regulations that allows a percentage above the regulations to be easily generated. However, as the conclusions of the Elementa Report indicate, the standards in Policy 2 would amount to a significant uplift on the 2013 Building Regulations. The approach in Policy 2 therefore conflicts with national policy set out in the 2015 WMS.

126. The 2015 WMS predates a number of events, notably in this context the climate emergency declared by the Council and others, publication of more recent carbon budgets that signal the pace of change needed in order to reach net zero 2050, and delay to the timeline in the WMS for bringing forwards the Future Homes Standards.

127. It also predates the changes to Part L of the Building Regulations which came into effect on 15 June 2022, intended to pave the way for the Future Homes and Building Standards in 2025. In relation to residential buildings, the 2022 changes to the Building Regulations exceeds what the NPPG endorses only by exception. The WMS accompanying the 2022 changes to the Building Regulations is clear there will be no need for policies in development plans to duplicate the new overheating standard (which would be exceeded in the case of Policy 2).

128. Notwithstanding the passage of time and intervening events, the 2015 WMS remains current national policy on this matter. The future of national planning policy is open to speculation. Nevertheless, it is

uncontroversial to observe that higher standards of building performance will be required in order to meet necessary reductions in carbon emissions. What is less clear is the degree to which Government policy will require those standards to be applied as part of a nationally consistent approach utilising the Building Regulations as opposed to locally specific standards applied through the planning system.

129. Section 1 of the Planning and Energy Act 2008 allows local planning authorities to include in their development plan documents reasonable requirements for development to comply with energy efficiency standards that exceed the energy requirements of the Building Regulations. This is subject to requirements being reasonable and also the stipulation at Section 5 that policies must not be inconsistent with relevant national policies.

130. In this respect, there are inconsistencies between the approach set out in Policy 2 of the AAP and the national policy position explained above relating to exceeding the Building Regulations. In light of our conclusions relating to whether the overall approach in Policy 2 is justified, we do not regard the requirements as reasonable. As a result, the Council's ability to rely on Section 1 of the Planning and Energy Act 2008 is not demonstrated."

30. The Inspectors then consider the question of factual justification and refer to the Council's supporting report, the Elementa Report. IR134 says that there is an absence of detailed site-specific consideration to show whether their standards could be realistically met by an end user. IR135-6 refers to the lack of a detailed evidence base.

31. IR137 -8 states:

"137. The detailed requirements also do not reflect the evolving nature of zero carbon building policy, where standards inevitably will change in response to technological and market advancement and more stringent nationally set standards, including within the Building Regulations. Policy 2 contains little flexibility to allow for such changes, or indeed to respond to detailed master planning that will evolve over time. This brings into question whether the evidence that supports the standards justifies the approach as a sound one.

138. We appreciate that Policy 2 provides a high degree of certainty about the standards that will be applied over the lifetime of the development. However, even judged on a proportionate basis, the evidence that underpins the prescriptive requirements lacks the necessary depth and sense of realism to show that Policy 2 represents an appropriate strategy. As such, Policy 2 is not justified."

32. The Inspectors' conclusions are set out at IR139-144:

"139. There are inconsistencies between the approach in Policy 2 and national policy around exceeding the Building Regulations. We acknowledge that there are examples of plans that impose standards

relating to the performance of buildings exceeding Building Regulations beyond the extent set out in the 2015 WMS. Some of these examples have been highlighted by the Council [WODC EXAM 06] and additionally in response to the proposed Main Modifications. Where the highlighted policies have been examined and adopted, they have been found sound on the basis of their own evidence base which, unlike the evidence underpinning Policy 2, was found to be robust. In addition, none of the examples provided set standards that are as prescriptive as submitted for Policy 2, and with the same degree as inflexibility.

140. Overall, the evidence base does not justify the approach in Policy 2 as an appropriate strategy, even on a proportionate basis. There is also an absence of robustness and credibility to justify departing from national standards, which leads us to conclude that Policy 2 is inconsistent with national policy.

141. In terms of resolving the soundness issues, removing Policy 2 from AAP altogether would result in a reliance on Policy EH6 of the Local Plan. As EH6 is a reactive policy, such an outcome would not align with Policy EW1 of the Local Plan.

142. Removal of Policy 2 would also not be consistent with the overarching vision of the AAP, which puts climate action front and centre. Nor would it fully reflect the general position of the evidence base, including the Energy Plan [EV18] prepared by Oxfordshire County Council. This evidence justifies taking an ambitious approach to zero carbon building at Salt Cross, notwithstanding our position in terms of whether the specific approach in Policy 2 is justified.

143. Modifying the AAP to remove or adjust specific standards relating to energy performance caught by the 2015 WMS or making a judgement on whether other individual standards in Policy 2 could be adjusted would also not be a sound approach. This is because the standards in Policy 2 are intended to work as a coherent whole.

144. Therefore, MM4 substitutes the wording of Policy 2 to introduce the need for an ambitious approach to the use of renewable energy, sustainable design, construction methods and energy efficiency. This is to be assessed at the planning application stage in response to an energy statement. The modification sets out what should be included within an energy statement, including elements set out in the submitted policy but without the specific, stringent requirements which we have found are neither consistent with national policy nor justified.”

Other Inspectors’ reports

33. A number of other Inspectors have addressed the same issue as arises in this case. The Claimant relies on the reports of two different Inspectors into Development Plans which addressed the same issue of compatibility of those Plans with the WMS 2015, and which were drawn to the attention of the current Inspectors. The Claimant submits that

the Inspector's approach in the present case is inconsistent with those other reports, and insufficient explanation for the inconsistency has been given:

34. The first report is that of Inspector Lewis to Bath and North East Somerset Council dated 13 December 2022, when he said:

“84. The WMS 2015 has clearly been overtaken by events and does not reflect Part L of the Building Regulations, the Future Homes Standard, or the legally binding commitment to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050.

85. I therefore consider that the relevance of the WMS 2015 to assessing the soundness of the Policy has been reduced significantly, along with the relevant parts of the PPG on Climate Change, given national policy on climate change. The NPPF is clear that mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy, is one of the key elements of sustainable development, and that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. Whilst NPPF154 sets out that any local requirements for the sustainability of buildings should reflect the Government's policy for national technical standards, for the reasons set out, that whilst I give the WMS 2015 some weight, any inconsistency with it, given that it has been overtaken by events, does not lead me to conclude that Policy SCR6 is unsound, nor inconsistent with relevant national policies.”

35. The second report is that of Inspector Paul Griffiths to Cornwall Council dated 10 January 2023 following examination of the Cornwall Council Climate Emergency Development Plan Document, where he said:

“166. Provisions to allow Councils to go beyond the minimum energy efficiency requirements of the Building Regulations are part of the Planning and Energy Act 2008. The WMS of 25 March 2015 says that in terms of energy performance, Councils can set and apply policies which require compliance with energy performance standards beyond the requirements of the Building Regulations until the Deregulation Bill gives effect to amendments to the Planning and Energy Act 2008. These provisions form part of the Deregulation Act 2015, but they have yet to be enacted. Further, the Government has confirmed that the Planning and Energy Act will not be amended. The result of all this is that Councils are able to set local energy efficiency standards for new homes, without falling foul of Government policy.

167. The WMS of 25 March 2015 has clearly been overtaken by events. Nothing in it reflects Part L of the Building Regulations, the Future Homes Standard, or the Government's legally binding commitment to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. In assessing the Council's approach to sustainable energy and construction, the WMS of 25 March 2015 is of limited relevance. The Framework makes clear in paragraph 152 that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. Whilst paragraph 154b) of the Framework requires that any local requirements for the sustainability of buildings

should reflect the Government's national technical standards, for the reasons set out, the WMS of 25 March 2015 has been superseded by subsequent events. While it remains extant, any inconsistency with its provisions does not mean that the approach the Council has taken lacks justification. In that sense, there is nothing in the Council's approach that raises issues of soundness."

36. I have also been referred to a third report in respect of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, however as this post-dated the Inspector's recommendation, it is of limited relevance.

Submissions and Conclusions

Jurisdiction

37. The Defendant and the Interested Party submit that the challenge is premature and there is no decision at present which is amenable to judicial review. They do not actually rely on the ouster clause in section 113 of the PCPA 2004, but they refer to it as being relevant to the approach to challenges under the Act. Fundamentally, they submit that the Inspectors under the PCPA have only made a "recommendation" and not a "decision", and therefore there is no justiciable decision.
38. The answer to this issue lies in the statutory scheme under the PCPA, which is quite different from that for a planning decision under s.77 Town and Country Planning Act 1989 ("TCPA"), and recommendations of a planning inspector made thereunder.
39. Under the PCPA 2004 the LPA submits the Plan to the Defendant who then carries out an examination:

"20 Independent examination

(1) The local planning authority must submit every development plan document to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

(2) But the authority must not submit such a document unless—

(a) they have complied with any relevant requirements contained in regulations under this Part, and

(b) they think the document is ready for independent examination.

(3) The authority must also send to the Secretary of State (in addition to the development plan document) such other documents (or copies of documents) and such information as is prescribed.

(4) The examination must be carried out by a person appointed by the Secretary of State.

(5) The purpose of an independent examination is to determine in respect of the development plan document—

(a) whether it satisfies the requirements of sections 19 and 24(1), regulations under section 17(7) and any regulations under section 36 relating to the preparation of development plan documents;

(b) whether it is sound; and

(c) whether the local planning authority complied with any duty imposed on the authority by section 33A in relation to its preparation.

(6) Any person who makes representations seeking to change a development plan document must (if he so requests) be given the opportunity to appear before and be heard by the person carrying out the examination.

(6A) The Secretary of State may by notice to the person appointed to carry out the examination—

(a) direct the person not to take any step, or any further step, in connection with the examination of the development plan document, or of a specified part of it, until a specified time or until the direction is withdrawn;

(b) require the person—

(i) to consider any specified matters;

(ii) to give an opportunity, or further opportunity, to specified persons to appear before and be heard by the person;

(iii) to take any specified procedural step in connection with the examination. In this subsection “specified” means specified in the notice.

(7) Where the person appointed to carry out the examination—

(a) has carried it out, and

(b) considers that, in all the circumstances, it would be reasonable to conclude—

(i) that the document satisfies the requirements mentioned in subsection (5)(a) and is sound, and

(ii) that the local planning authority complied with any duty imposed on the authority by section 33A in relation to the document's preparation, the person must recommend that the document is adopted and give reasons for the recommendation.

(7A) Where the person appointed to carry out the examination—

(a) has carried it out, and

(b) is not required by subsection (7) to recommend that the document is adopted, the person must recommend non-adoption of the document and give reasons for the recommendation.

(7B) Subsection (7C) applies where the person appointed to carry out the examination—

(a) does not consider that, in all the circumstances, it would be reasonable to conclude that the document satisfies the requirements mentioned in subsection (5)(a) and is sound, but

(b) does consider that, in all the circumstances, it would be reasonable to conclude that the local planning authority complied with any duty imposed on the authority by section 33A in relation to the document's preparation.

(7C) If asked to do so by the local planning authority, the person appointed to carry out the examination must recommend modifications of the document that would make it one that—

(a) satisfies the requirements mentioned in subsection (5)(a), and

(b) is sound.

(8) The local planning authority must publish the recommendations and the reasons.”

40. The LPA's powers to adopt the Plan are set out in s.23:

“23 Adoption of local development documents

(1) The local planning authority may adopt a local development document (other than a development plan document) either as originally prepared or as modified to take account of—

(a) any representations made in relation to the document;

(b) any other matter they think is relevant.

(2) If the person appointed to carry out the independent examination of a development plan document recommends that it is adopted, the authority may adopt the document—

(a) as it is, or

(b) with modifications that (taken together) do not materially affect the policies set out in it.

(2A) Subsection (3) applies if the person appointed to carry out the independent examination of a development plan document—

(a) recommends non-adoption, and

(b) under section 20(7C) recommends modifications (“the main modifications”).

(3) The authority may adopt the document—

(a) with the main modifications, or

(b) with the main modifications and additional modifications if the additional modifications (taken together) do not materially affect the policies that would be set out in the document if it was adopted with the main modifications but no other modifications.

(4) The authority must not adopt a development plan document unless they do so in accordance with subsection (2) or (3).

(5) A document is adopted for the purposes of this section if it is adopted by resolution of the authority.”

41. It can be seen from these provisions that if the Inspector recommends non-adoption, or modifications, then the LPA cannot adopt the Plan, unless the recommended modifications are made, see s.23(3) and (4).
42. The Claimant submits that although the language of the PCPA 2004 is that the Inspector makes a “recommendation”, in reality this binds the LPA as to its future formal decision making. It has a binary choice as to whether to accept the recommendations or to abandon the Plan. There is no option to reject or depart from the recommendation, as is generally the position in other parts of the Town Planning statutory scheme. As such, the recommendation of the Inspector is a justiciable decision because it has direct (and unavoidable) legal and practical consequences.
43. The Claimant also submits that there are strong practical reasons why a challenge should be allowed at the recommendation stage. To have to wait until the formal decision of the LPA would be to build in delay and further cost for the LPA who would have to go through the formal adoption process (or abandon the Plan) and then would have to judicially review their own decision. This is both administratively cumbersome and wasteful of resources. Mr Goodman relies on the comments of Lord Carnwath in R (Champion) v North Norfolk DC [2015] UKSC 52 at [63] and R (Burkett) v LB of Hammersmith and Fulham [2002] UKHL 23 at [38]:

“Leaving to one side for the moment the application of Ord 53, r 4(1) on the running of time against a judicial review applicant, it can readily be accepted that for substantive judicial review purposes the decision challenged does not have to be absolutely final. In a context where there is a statutory procedure involving preliminary decisions leading to a final decision affecting legal rights, judicial review may lie against a preliminary decision not affecting legal rights. Town planning provides a classic case of this flexibility. Thus it is in principle possible to apply for judicial review in respect of a resolution to grant outline permission and for prohibition even in advance of it: see generally Wade & Forsyth, Administrative Laws, 8th ed, p 600; Craig, Administrative Law, 4th ed, pp 724–725; Fordham, Judicial Review Handbook, 3rd ed (2001), para

4.8.2. It is clear therefore that if Mrs Burkett had acted in time, she could have challenged the resolution. These propositions do not, however, solve the concrete problem before the House which is whether in respect of a challenge to a final planning decision time runs under Ord 53, r 4(1) from the date of the resolution or from the date of the grant of planning permission. It does not follow from the fact if Mrs Burkett had acted in time and challenged the resolution that she could not have waited until planning permission was granted and then challenged the grant.”

44. The caselaw shows that the court’s jurisdiction to consider a judicial review depends very much on the particular statutory scheme, and the particular facts. One example is R v SSE ex p Burch (1985) 50 P&CR 53, where the Court quashed an opinion of the Secretary of State as to what sort of development would be granted permission under a Circular, on the basis that the practical effect was to constrain the LPA on the use of its powers. Therefore the approach of the Court has been to look at the substantive nature of the matter under challenge, rather than the nomenclature used in the statutory scheme.
45. Mr Westmoreland Smith, supported by Mr Banner, submits that to allow this challenge would “*revolutionise the way the planning system works both with regard to the plan-making process under the 2004 Act but in other systems too...*”. He is, it appears, referring to the fact that “recommendations” arise in s.77 TCPA cases and other decision making processes and to make these justiciable would be a very significant change to the way planning challenges are currently brought. For the reasons I explain below I consider this analogy is plainly wrong on the face of the two statutes, and the *in terrorem* argument Mr Westmoreland Smith raises is not correct.
46. All parties referred me to the line of cases from Manydown Co Ltd v Basingstoke BC [2012] JPL 1188, through to R (CK Properties) v Epping Forest DC [2019] PTSR 183, in respect of the scope of the ouster clause in s. 113 PCPA. However, neither Defendant nor Interested Party submitted that the ouster provision applied to this stage of the statutory process. Therefore I do not need to consider these cases further.
47. In my view, the Defendant’s argument fails to engage with the reality, rather than the nomenclature, of the PCPA. The reality is that the Inspector’s report in this regard is not actually a “recommendation” at all, in the sense that it does not leave the LPA with a free discretion. In the s.77 TCPA situation, the SoS has complete discretion as to whether he accepts the recommendation or not, subject to normal principles of public law. That is what is commonly understood by the word “recommendation”. But in contrast under s.23 PCPA, the LPA’s discretion is fundamentally curtailed. It can choose not to accept the recommendations for modifications, but then the entire Plan falls.
48. In practice under the statutory scheme, the critical moment if the Inspector recommends main modifications, is that of that recommendation. The LPA’s hands are at that point tied and their discretion to act removed. In my view there is no benefit, and significant disbenefit, in making any challenger, whether it be the LPA or another, wait until the LPA has decided whether to adopt the Plan with the modifications or to allow the whole Plan to lapse. The delay is itself inimical to good planning, see Champion. But further it will involve the LPA in the cost and administrative burden of not merely adopting the

Plan, that in a large part it objects to, but then potentially having to judicially review itself for having so adopted. That is hardly conducive to good administration.

49. For these reasons I conclude that the subject matter of this challenge is justiciable.

Standing

50. The Defendant and IP2, led on this point by Mr Banner, submit that the Claimant has no standing to bring the challenge. The test for standing in a judicial review was recently considered in *R (Good Law Project) v Runnymede Trust* [2022] EWHC 298 (Admin) at [16]-[29]. There are two parts of those passages which are particularly relevant in this context. Firstly, that in deciding standing it is necessary to have regard to the entire nexus of the case, including the substance and the merits, see [19]. Secondly, that the Court should be looking to exclude the mere busybody, but that will again depend on the context, see [25]:

“Lord Reed returned to this theme in Walton v Scottish Ministers [2012] UKSC 44; 2013 SC 67, at paragraphs 89 and following. At paragraph 92, Lord Reed said:

"As is clear from that passage, a distinction must be drawn between the mere busybody and the person affected by or having a reasonable concern in the matter to which the application relates. The words 'directly affected', upon which the Extra Division focused, were intended to enable the court to draw that distinction. A busybody is someone who interferes in something with which he has no legitimate concern. The circumstances which justify the conclusion that a person is affected by the matter to which an application relates, or has a reasonable concern in it, or is on the other hand interfering in a matter with which he has no legitimate concern, will plainly differ from one case to another, depending upon the particular context and the grounds of the application. As Lord Hope made plain in the final sentence, there are circumstances in which a personal interest need not be shown."

51. The IP submits that the Claimant does not have “sufficient interest in the matter to which the application relates”, pursuant to s.31(3) of the Supreme Court Act 1981. Mr Banner submits that the “matter” cannot be the AAP because otherwise the ouster provision would apply, and it is not the adoption of the Plan or it would be premature. Therefore the “matter” is the recommendation and the Claimant was not entitled to be a party to the examination, under s.20(6), because the Claimant did not respond to the regulation 18 or 19 consultation in respect of the AAP. Therefore the Claimant does not have sufficient interest in the recommendation to have standing.
52. The Claimant’s involvement in the AAP process is set out in the witness statement of Dr Luhde-Thompson. The Claimant is an NGO involved in community planning and particularly the formation of local development plans. It has the specific aim of addressing the climate crisis through the planning system, and in particular by monitoring the work being done by LPAs through their development plan documents. It is through this work that the Claimant became aware of, and began monitoring, the Salt Cross AAP.

53. The Claimant wrote to the Inspectors highlighting their concerns on 25 July 2022.
54. On 29 July 2022 the Inspectors wrote back to the Claimant stating that they were awaiting the Council's response, but the Claimant's letter had been placed on the examination webpage. Following the Council's decision to consult on the MMs, the Inspectors wrote further to the Claimant on 28 September 2022, stating that:
- "We ... encourage you to respond to the consultation which we will carefully consider before taking decisions relating to the AAP. Please note that we have instructed that this response be placed on the examination webpage."*
55. The Claimant further submitted a detailed consultation response on the MMs which ran from 23 September 2022 to 4 November 2022. Once again, this consultation response was placed on the examination webpage.
56. Mr Banner described this involvement as *"belated, fleeting and superficial"*. He relied upon a passage in the *Good Law Project* at [59]:
- "In the circumstances of the present case we have reached the conclusion that the obviously better-placed claimant for judicial review for the purposes of the public sector equality duty challenge is the Runnymede Trust, an organisation which exists specifically to promote the cause of racial equality. We consider that the Runnymede Trust has standing to bring the public sector equality duty challenge, but the Good Law Project does not."*
57. Mr Banner submits that there is an obviously better-placed claimant for the judicial review, namely the LPA, at the appropriate time.
58. The test for standing in judicial review is simply whether the claimant has sufficient interest in the matter to which the application relates. In this case, the matter is plainly the Inspectors' recommendation, which as I have set above, I find to be justiciable. In my view it is not material, or certainly not sufficiently material, that the Claimant may not have been entitled to be a party to the examination. The matter being challenged is the Inspectors' recommendation, which emerged from the AAP process.
59. The Claimant did engage in the AAP process, albeit only in the latter stages. However, this later engagement is both understandable and justifiable, because until the Inspectors indicated that they were considering recommending against Policy 2, there was no reason for the Claimant to engage. The LPA was pursuing a Plan which entirely accorded with the Claimant's aims, and there would not have appeared to have been any reason for the Claimant to take active steps. However, once the Inspectors' issue emerged that position entirely changed.
60. In my view the Claimant cannot properly be described as a busybody. It is an NGO established and operating in precisely the field of this AAP and this challenge, namely the role of LPA development plan making and climate change. That is an issue of enormous public concern, and one where this Claimant has particular knowledge and interest.

61. Further, I do not read the Divisional Court decision in *Good Law Project* as seeking to create a new test for standing, of whether there is a “*better placed claimant*”. Such a test would be a radical tightening of the rules in standing, this being a long step from a requirement that a claimant is not a busybody. There may be many judicial reviews where it could be said that someone other than the Claimant was better-placed, in the sense that they were more directly affected by the decision. But there may equally be many reasons why such a person chooses not to bring a challenge.
62. In any event, considering the facts at [59] of *Good Law Project*, the better placed claimant was an organisation with the specific aim relevant to the case. That test would be met here by the Claimant in any event.
63. Therefore I find that the Claimant has standing to bring this claim.

The Grounds

Ground One

64. Ground One is that the Inspectors misinterpreted the WMS. The Claimant relies on the part of the WMS that states:

“[L]ocal planning authorities will continue to be able to set and apply policies in their Local Plans which require compliance with energy performance standards that exceed the energy requirements of Building Regulations until commencement of amendments to the Planning and Energy Act 2008 in the Deregulation Bill 2015.”

65. The Claimant states, correctly, that the amendments that were to be brought in by the 2015 Bill (now Act) have not been brought into effect, and the Government has now indicated that it does not intend to do so. Therefore the WMS cannot be interpreted to proscribe local plan policies that exceed the Building Regulations, because the premise of the policy no longer exists. The Claimant submits that this must be the correct interpretation because no other interpretation now makes any sense of the policy position.
66. The intention of the WMS was that the LPAs could require standards above the Building Regulations until the PEA amendments came into force. This was part of a careful framework by which s.43 of the Deregulation Act 2015 was intended to remove the power to set standards for energy efficiency above the Building Regulations.
67. However, those amendments have not come into force, and the Government has issued a statement in January 2021 that they do not intend to bring them into force. Therefore the WMS has to be interpreted taking into account this change since the date of its drafting.
68. Section 1 of the 2008 Act gives the LPA the power to set policies for energy efficiency that exceed the Building Regulations. That would have been constrained by s.43 of the 2015 Act, but that section has not been brought into force. The Claimant submits, correctly, that the WMS cannot mis-state the law, or restrict the legal powers of the LPA under the 2008 Act. However, it is important to note that the breadth of the power in s.1(1) is itself then constrained by the limitation in s.1(5). Part of the difficulty in this

case is that national policy is not defined in the statute, and can in practice be promulgated in different ways, and unfortunately can and sometimes is, contradictory. The reality here is that the Government has issued documents and statements that pull in different directions, and that has made the interpretation of “policy” a difficult task.

69. There have also been a series of further changes, as set out above, which are inconsistent with the Inspectors’ interpretation of the WMS as being a bar on the LPA setting higher standards in the AAP. Most importantly, in my view, is the Building Regulations (Amendment) in June 2022 which sets standards with a 31% reduction from the 2013 position. This leads to the odd situation by which the Building Regulations themselves now provide for stricter standards than the WMS appears to allow. This situation does not create a rational basis for applying a black letter interpretation to the WMS.
70. Mr Westmoreland Smith, supported by Mr Banner, submits that this challenge is a complaint about the application of planning policy, rather than the interpretation of policy, and is therefore a matter for the Inspector rather than the court.
71. The principles which the court should apply in challenges to planning decisions were helpfully summarised by Lindblom LJ in *St Modwen*:

“6. In my judgment at first instance in Bloor Homes East Midlands Ltd. v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2014] EWHC 754 (Admin) (at paragraph 19) I set out the "seven familiar principles" that will guide the court in handling a challenge under section 288. This case, like many others now coming before the Planning Court and this court too, calls for those principles to be stated again – and reinforced. They are:

"(1) Decisions of the Secretary of State and his inspectors in appeals against the refusal of planning permission are to be construed in a reasonably flexible way. Decision letters are written principally for parties who know what the issues between them are and what evidence and argument has been deployed on those issues. An inspector does not need to "rehearse every argument relating to each matter in every paragraph" (see the judgment of Forbes J. in Seddon Properties v Secretary of State for the Environment (1981) 42 P. & C.R. 26, at p.28).

(2) The reasons for an appeal decision must be intelligible and adequate, enabling one to understand why the appeal was decided as it was and what conclusions were reached on the "principal important controversial issues". An inspector's reasoning must not give rise to a substantial doubt as to whether he went wrong in law, for example by misunderstanding a relevant policy or by failing to reach a rational decision on relevant grounds. But the reasons need refer only to the main issues in the dispute, not to every material consideration (see the speech of Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood in South Bucks District Council and another v Porter (No. 2) [2004] 1 W.L.R. 1953, at p.1964B-G).

(3) The weight to be attached to any material consideration and all matters of planning judgment are within the exclusive jurisdiction of the decision-maker. They are not for the court. A local planning authority

*determining an application for planning permission is free, "provided that it does not lapse into Wednesbury irrationality" to give material considerations "whatever weight [it] thinks fit or no weight at all" (see the speech of Lord Hoffmann in *Tesco Stores Limited v Secretary of State for the Environment* [1995] 1 W.L.R. 759 , at p.780F-H). And, essentially for that reason, an application under section 288 of the 1990 Act does not afford an opportunity for a review of the planning merits of an inspector's decision (see the judgment of Sullivan J., as he then was, in *News Smith v Secretary of State for Environment, Transport and the Regions* [2001] EWHC Admin 74 , at paragraph 6).*

*(4) Planning policies are not statutory or contractual provisions and should not be construed as if they were. The proper interpretation of planning policy is ultimately a matter of law for the court. The application of relevant policy is for the decision-maker. But statements of policy are to be interpreted objectively by the court in accordance with the language used and in its proper context. A failure properly to understand and apply relevant policy will constitute a failure to have regard to a material consideration, or will amount to having regard to an immaterial consideration (see the judgment of Lord Reed in *Tesco Stores v Dundee City Council* [2012] P.T.S.R. 983 , at paragraphs 17 to 22).*

*(5) When it is suggested that an inspector has failed to grasp a relevant policy one must look at what he thought the important planning issues were and decide whether it appears from the way he dealt with them that he must have misunderstood the policy in question (see the judgment of Hoffmann L.J., as he then was, *South Somerset District Council v The Secretary of State for the Environment* (1993) 66 P. & C.R. 80 , at p.83E-H).*

*(6) Because it is reasonable to assume that national planning policy is familiar to the Secretary of State and his inspectors, the fact that a particular policy is not mentioned in the decision letter does not necessarily mean that it has been ignored (see, for example, the judgment of Lang J. in *Sea Land Power & Energy Limited v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* [2012] EWHC 1419 (QB) , at paragraph 58).*

*(7) Consistency in decision-making is important both to developers and local planning authorities, because it serves to maintain public confidence in the operation of the development control system. But it is not a principle of law that like cases must always be decided alike. An inspector must exercise his own judgment on this question, if it arises (see, for example, the judgment of Pill L.J. in *Fox Strategic Land and Property Ltd. v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* [2013] 1 P. & C.R. 6 , at paragraphs 12 to 14, citing the judgment of Mann L.J. in *North Wiltshire District Council v Secretary of State for the Environment* [1992] 65 P. & C.R. 137 , at p.145)."*

72. Mr Westmoreland Smith submits that the Inspectors' approach in IR124 is entirely consistent with the words of the WMS. The Inspectors should be assumed to understand

national policy, and they understood that the WMS did not proscribe policies from exceeding the Building Regulations, they simply applied the policy as a matter of judgement. In accordance with the principles set out in *Tesco v Dundee*, this case is not a question of interpretation of policy, but merely the application of policy, and as such there is no error of law and no role for the Court.

73. In my view this is not a correct reading of the IR, and in particular IR124, 125 and 130. The Inspectors were interpreting the WMS and the NPPG in IR124 as Government policy being that “*policies should be not used to set conditions ... above the equivalent ... of Level 4*”. In IR125 that is why they say the approach in Policy 2 “*conflicts with national policy set out in the 2015 WMS*”. That sentence is based on their interpretation of the WMS, not on the application of the WMS to the facts of the particular case. They then revert to this point in IR130 by saying that there is inconsistency between the approach in Policy 2 and the AAP.
74. It follows from this analysis of the IR that Ground One does go to the interpretation of policy, and not merely its application.
75. The WMS has to be interpreted in accordance with the mischief it was seeking to address, and with an “updating construction”, see by analogy with statute, Bennion on Statutory Construction (Eighth Edition) at Chapter 14. The WMS is not a statute but a policy, but even with a statute the mischief is a highly relevant consideration in interpretation, and the principle of applying an updating construction is well established. In order to make sense of the WMS in the circumstances that applied in 2023 it is essential to have regard to the fact that the restriction on setting conditions above Code Level 4, upon which the Inspectors relied in IR124, no longer apply.
76. In my view, the Inspectors’ interpretation neither makes sense on the words, seen in their present context, or of the mischief to which it was applying. To interpret the WMS so as to prevent or restrict the ability of the LPA to set a standard higher than Level 4 is plainly wrong in the light of subsequent events. For this reason, the Inspectors erred in law in their approach by finding that Policy 2 of the AAP was inconsistent with the WMS.
77. I note that this analysis entirely accords with the position of the Government in its response to the Select Committee on Housing Communities and Local Government in January 2022, when it said: “*Local authorities have the power to set local energy efficiency standards that go beyond the minimum standards set through the Building Regulations....*” Therefore the Government itself did not appear to be suggesting that the policy in the WMS remains extant.
78. The same analysis necessarily follows in respect of the NPPG, given that it merely reflects the language of the WMS.
79. I therefore allow Ground One.

Ground Two

80. The Claimant submits that the IR is inconsistent with the Reports of the Inspectors in Bath and North East Somerset and Cornwall. The Inspectors at IR139 did refer to this

inconsistency but said that it turned on the findings relating to the specific evidence base in the other Plans.

81. In my view this Ground adds nothing to Ground One. The IR does refer to the inconsistency, so it was taken into account. The Inspectors considered that the different approach rested on the specific facts, but that plainly is not the case. The other two Inspectors found that the WMS “*had been overtaken by events*” (BANES at [84]) and therefore found that the relevant policies were not inconsistent with it, see [85]. The Cornwall Inspector took the same approach, see Cornwall at [167]. Although these inspectors refer to giving the WMS less weight, in practice they applied the WMS in a wholly different way, finding no inconsistency.
82. Both Mr Westmoreland Smith and Mr Banner refer to the specific factual differences between the areas, and the Inspectors’ findings, but a proper reading of the Reports shows that there was a completely different approach to the WMS, quite separately from any different evidential findings.
83. In the present case the Inspectors found inconsistency with the WMS at IR127 and then relied on s.5 of the PEA. Therefore there is a fundamental difference of approach to the WMS between the IR in this case, and the other two Inspectors.
84. However, if the current Inspectors’ approach to the WMS was lawful, then there would be no separate error of law in respect of the inconsistency between the two approaches. The Inspectors here have explained why they took their approach. In other words, if Ground One failed, then Ground Two would not give rise to a successful Ground. Equally, if Ground One succeeds then Ground Two adds nothing.

Ground Three

85. The Claimant alleges that the Inspectors approach to Policy 2 was procedurally improper because they failed to explain the nature of their concerns to the Local Authority either before or during the hearing sessions. They only did so when they presented their Report, by which stage it was too late for the Local Authority or the Claimant to influence the conclusions.
86. The fundamental problem with Ground Three is that for it to succeed, the Claimant has to show prejudice, see *R (Clientearth) v Secretary of State for BEIS and Drax Power* [2020] EWHC 1303 (Admin). The Local Authority has not brought the claim and is not arguing that it was prejudiced by the procedure adopted.
87. The Claimant submits that it was prejudiced because it did not understand the Inspectors’ concerns. However, as the SoS points out, the Claimant did not participate in the hearings and it was at those hearings that Policy 2 was explored and the potential need for a Main Modification considered. The issues underlying the Inspectors’ concerns were set out in advance in Questions 7 and 8.
88. The PINS Procedural Guide sets out the relevant requirement as being “*the LPA has a reasonable understanding of why the potential main modifications are likely to be needed*”. Firstly, this is aimed at the LPA and not a third party such as the Claimant. Secondly, the LPA had had sufficient information to meet this requirement, because they had received Questions 7 and 8, and had participated in the hearings.

89. In my view the Claimant's failure to understand the Inspectors' reasons, and thus alleged prejudice, arose from the fact it had not been involved in the earlier stage, not from any lack of fairness in the process.
90. For these reasons Ground Three fails.

Relief

91. The SoS and the IP submit that even if the Claimant succeeds on Grounds One and Two no relief should be granted because the Inspectors found that the Policy 2 was unjustified on the evidence submitted in any event. This appears from IR131-138 and from the overall conclusions.
92. Those parties rely on s.31(3C) of the Senior Courts Act 1981, which provides that the Court should refuse relief if it is highly likely that the outcome for the Claimant would not be substantially different if the error of law had not occurred.
93. It is correct that the Inspectors divide their assessment into two parts, the first dealing with consistency with national policy and the second whether the overall approach in Policy 2 is justified. In IR131-138 they set out various policy specific points about Policy 2.
94. However, I do not accept that the *highly likely the outcome would be the same test* is met in the light of the precise language of the IR. The Inspectors' overall conclusions in IR139 -140 closely link the issue about the consistency of Policy 2 with national policy, with the evidence base issue. In IR139 their reasons for departing from the approach of the BANES and Cornwall Inspectors conflate the national policy issue and the evidence base conclusion. They then do the same thing in IR140 saying that there is a lack of evidence "*to justify departing from national standards*". It therefore appears that in the evidence base analysis the Inspectors were testing the arguments against their misinterpretation of the WMS, rather than against the Government's changed position.
95. Overall, in my view, the Inspectors error in respect of the WMS infected the entirety of their analysis. If they had properly understood and applied national policy, then they might well have reached a different set of conclusions on Policy 2, whether in part or on its entirety.

Postscript

96. After the end of the hearing but before judgment, on 13 December 2023 the SoS issued a further Written Ministerial Statement, which withdrew the 2015 WMS. The 2023 WMS included as follows:

"In 2015, in reference to an uncommenced provision in the Deregulation Act 2015 which amended the Planning and Energy Act 2008, a written ministerial statement (WMS) (HC Deb, 25 March 2015, vol 584, cols 131-138WS) stated that until that amendment was commenced, local plan policies exceeding minimum energy efficiency standards should not go beyond level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Since then, the introduction of the 2021 Part L uplift to the Building Regulations set

national minimum energy efficiency standards that are higher than those referenced in the 2015 WMS rendering it effectively moot.”

97. The Claimant submits that this supports its case, as set out above. However, as the SoS and Interested Party submit, the 2023 WMS comes well after the Inspectors’ recommendation, and is irrelevant to the question before me, whether the Inspectors’ erred in law. This is not a case where there is any ground to rely on post-decision facts, and therefore I place no weight on the 2023 WMS.

This page is intentionally left blank

Examination of the Remitted Part of the Salt Cross Village Area Action Plan (AAP)

Inspector Helen Hockenhull BA (Hons) B.PI MRTPI

Chris Hargraves
Planning Policy Manager
West Oxfordshire District Council
Woodgreen
Witney
Oxfordshire
OX28 1NB

22nd April 2024

By Email

Dear Mr Hargraves,

Examination of the Remitted Part of the Salt Cross Village Area Action Plan (AAP)

1. Thank you for your letter of 2 April 2024 addressed to Mr Giles in the Local Plans Team seeking guidance on the way forward following the successful legal challenge in respect of Policy 2 of the Salt Cross Village AAP.
2. As you know, the order of the Court dated 4 March 2024 quashed the Inspectors' report and Main Modifications insofar as they relate to Policy 2.
3. I have been appointed to reopen the Examination and examine the Remitted Part of the AAP. The scope of the examination is constrained by the Order of the Court. It will only consider Policy 2 and any other consequential revisions to the Plan. No other matters or policies will be examined.
4. For clarity, the starting point for the reopened Examination is Policy 2 as originally submitted at Regulation 19 stage. It will be necessary to consider Policy 2 in light of the legal challenge and the Government's Local Energy Efficiency Standards Update in the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) dated 13 December 2023.
5. It appears to me that the work required will entail the following:
 - Main Modifications to Policy 2;
 - Any consequential modifications to the AAP;
 - Evidence to address the criteria in the WMS including an update to the draft AAP Financial Viability Appraisal and consideration of the impact on housing supply and affordability;

- Update to the Sustainability Appraisal.

I would be grateful for confirmation of the scope of the work the Council intends to undertake and the anticipated timeframe.

6. I suggest that once completed, this work be submitted to me for my consideration and to enable me to prepare Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQ's). The MIQ's will then be published and consulted on for a period of 6 weeks. This will enable all stakeholders and representors to provide their response and submit Hearing Statements.
7. The next stage would be for a Hearing Session to be held. I would anticipate 1 to 2 days, but I will keep this under review as the Examination progresses.
8. Following the hearing any further Main Modifications that may be necessary will need to be consulted upon for a period of 6 weeks. I will then prepare a report on the Remitted Part of the AAP containing my recommendations.
9. In consultation with the Council, I will prepare a more detailed timetable in due course. A Programme Officer should be appointed as a matter of urgency (if the Council has not already done so). Please can their contact details be provided to me as soon as possible.
10. In the interim, it would also be helpful if the Council could set up a separate web page within the Examination website for the Remitted Part of the AAP. A separate Examination Library for the reopened examination should also be set up. By way of background, and to assist me to understand the issues previously raised, this should include all the representations made in respect to Policy 2 at the Regulation 19 stage, the previous Hearing Statements, any representations made at Main Modifications stage and any other documents or evidence the Council considers to be relevant to Policy 2.
11. I would be grateful if the Council could respond to this letter to confirm agreement to the way forward as suggested. Should the Council have any queries or require further information please contact me through the Programme Officer (assuming one has been appointed) or through the Local Plans Team at the Inspectorate.
12. A copy of this letter should be placed on the Examination web page for the information of all those following the progress of the examination.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hockenhull

INSPECTOR.

CHRIS HARGRAVES

Planning Policy Manager

Tel: 01993 861686

Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk

Council Offices

Woodgreen

WITNEY

Oxfordshire OX28 1NB

Tel: 01993 861000

www.westoxon.gov.uk



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

8 May 2024

Inspector Helen Hockenhull BA (Hons) B.PI MRTPI

Dear Ms Hockenhull

Examination of the Remitted Part of the Salt Cross Village Area Action Plan (AAP)

Thank you for your recent letter of 22 April 2024 confirming the re-opening of the Salt Cross AAP examination.

The clarity provided on the scope of the examination is helpful and we agree that the additional work you have identified appears appropriate. Some brief comments on each aspect are set out below.

Main Modifications to Policy 2 and consequential modifications to the AAP

The District Council will draft Main Modifications to Policy 2 and any associated minor Additional Modifications to the remainder of the AAP in conjunction with the consultant team that prepared the original Policy 2 evidence base in May 2020 (reference EV17).

Supporting Evidence to Address the WMS (December 2023)

In terms of supporting evidence, we propose to commission the same consultant team to produce an update of their original study (reference EV17) to reflect the requirements of the December 2023 Written Ministerial Statement (WMS).

We will also commission consultants to prepare an update of the previous AAP viability assessments (reference EV34 and EV38 – EV42) reflecting the outcome of any update to the Policy 2 evidence base.

Unless addressed as part of the work outlined above, we may also commission consultants to update the previous AAP housing strategy advice (reference EV16) to consider any potential impact on housing supply and affordability.

Update to the Sustainability Appraisal

We intend to commission consultants to undertake any necessary update of the previous AAP Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (reference CD2 and CD3).

Anticipated Timescales

In terms of timescales, we envisage that the work outlined above will take around 3-4 months to complete, effectively covering the period May – July/August 2024, after which point we will submit it to you for your consideration.

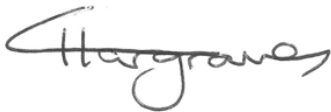
We welcome the opportunity to discuss a more detailed timetable with you in due course.

With regards to the other points raised in your letter, we are currently in the process of appointing a Programme Officer and I will forward the relevant contact details under separate cover as soon as possible.


Finally, with regard to the Council's website, your letter of 22 April has already been published and we are currently in the process of implementing your other requested changes.

I trust the above is helpful but please let me know if you require any further information at this time.

Yours sincerely



Chris Hargraves
Planning Policy Manager

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JUNE 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL PRODUCTIVITY PLAN 2024</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Bill Oddy – Assistant Director, Commercial Development. Email: bill.oddy@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To outline the proposed approach to adopting the Council's Productivity Plan 2024.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Letter from the Local Government Minister about Productivity Plans</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the requirement from the Government, outlined in the letter from the Local Government Minister at Annex A, for the Council to adopt a Productivity Plan; and 2. Agree to delegate the decision to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to adopt the Productivity Plan and submit it to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by the 19 July 2024 deadline.
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire

Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 On 16 April 2024, the Minister of State for Local Government wrote to Local Authority Chief Executives about Productivity Plans, a copy of this letter is attached at Annex A.
- 1.2 The plan needs to consider and include the following themes:
- How the Council has transformed the way it designs and delivers services to make better use of resources;
 - How the Council plans to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design, and use of resources;
 - The Councils plans to reduce wasteful spend within the organisation and systems;
 - The barriers preventing progress that the government can help to reduce or remove.
- 1.3 The plan needs to have “Member oversight and endorsement” and needs to be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) by the 19 July 2024 as well as being published on the Council’s website.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 A small officer working group, chaired by the Assistant Director for Commercial Development, has been established to develop the plan.
- 2.2 The Productivity Plan was scheduled to be considered by the Executive on 10 July 2024. As a result of the announcement on 22 May 2024 by the Prime Minister that a General Election will take place on 4 July 2024, the Executive meeting previously scheduled for 10 July 2024 has been rescheduled to 22 July 2024. This is after the deadline which the plan has to be submitted to the Government (19 July 2024). For this reason, the Executive is asked to delegate the decision to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to adopt the Productivity Plan and submit it to Government, by the 19 July 2024 deadline.
- 2.3 A draft plan is scheduled to be ready by 17 June 2024 and this will be circulated to Executive Portfolio Holders to review and comment on prior to submission to the Government.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no additional financial implications associated with the Productivity Plan.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 There are no specific risks in adopting the Productivity Plan.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

6.1 Not Applicable

7. CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY, AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency is one of the priorities in the Council Plan and this will be a key component of the productivity plan.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

(END)



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Simon Hoare MP
Minister for Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

16 April 2024

Dear Chief Executive

Productivity in Local Government

As you know, the Government is reviewing productivity across all public services and local government is, of course, part of that exercise. The recent [Local Government Finance Settlement](#) announced that councils would be asked to produce productivity plans. This letter formally begins that process.

May I first thank you for your very helpful engagement with my officials. Your views and thoughts have been valuable in shaping this approach to make it as useful as possible for all of us.

Local government has already done a huge amount in recent years to improve productivity and efficiency. However, lockdown and post-lockdown has proved challenging, and you are looking for new ways to go further. These new plans will help us understand what is already working well across the whole country, what the common themes are, whether there are any gaps and what more we need to do to unlock future opportunities. We will share these important lessons across the sector.

Productivity is not one-dimensional, and I would encourage you to consider the various facets that encompass the drive for greater productivity. When developing your plans, please think broadly and include reference to not only how you run your organisation, but also how you run the public services you provide and how you provide place leadership. It is with this wide view that we can ensure we are providing value for money for residents.

I am not looking to impose excessive burdens. I am not issuing you with a formal template or a detailed list of criteria to meet. I expect your plans to be three to four pages in length, and to set out what you have done in recent years, alongside your current plans, to transform your organisation and services. I do not want to specify a list of metrics you must report, but I do want to understand how you will monitor and assess your plans to assure yourselves and your residents that they will be delivered.

The plans should consider the below themes and where appropriate, should reference the work your council undertakes alongside other public services, such as the NHS and police.

1. How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources.

Questions to consider:

- how has the organisation changed in recent years to become more productive? You may wish to consider what you have done around staffing, structures, operating models etc;
- how do you measure productivity in your organisation?
- what changes have you made to improve services, and what effects have those had?
- what are your current plans for transformation over the next two years and how will you measure the effects of those changes?

- looking ahead, which service has greatest potential for savings if further productivity gains can be found? What do you estimate these savings to be?
- what role could capital spending play in transforming existing services or unlocking new opportunities? If you have already used capital spending to boost growth or improve services, we would be interested in learning more;
- what preventative approaches you have undertaken and can the value of these be quantified?
- are there wider locally-led reforms that could help deliver high quality public services and improve the sustainability and resilience of your authority?

2. How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.

Questions to consider:

- what are your existing plans to improve the quality of the data you collect; how do you use it and how do you make it available to residents?
- are there particular barriers from legacy systems?
- how often do you share data with other organisations, and do you find this useful?
- Are there opportunities to use new technology to improve workflows and systems, such as predictive analytics and AI?

3. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.

I know we will share the aim to reduce waste wherever we can and, while you have all made huge strides in recent years, no organisation is ever 100% efficient. You should set out your plans to reduce wasteful or “gold-plated” spend.

Questions to consider:

- how do you approach identifying and reducing waste in the organisation? How do you monitor progress?
- where have you followed invest to save and what was the result?
- how much time and money do you spend on staff EDI training (internal and external), networks, and other programmes? How many EDI Champions do you have as an organisation? How do you log and report the time and money spent on EDI related activity? How do you assess the effectiveness of that training?
- what percentage of total staff budget is spent on a) agency and b) consultants? How do you assess value for money on agency & consultancy spend and what are your plans to reduce use / costs? How many of those consultants or agency staff have been in place for over a year?
- what governance structures do you use to ensure accountability of spend?
- do you share office functions with other councils and if so, how useful do you find this?
- if you share external training costs with neighbouring councils, how do you factor out duplications of service between your council and your upper-tier council (if you have one)?

- if you have one, what is your assessment and experience of working with an elected mayor, combined authority, or devolution deal?
- what proportion of your paybill is spent on trade union facility time?

4. The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.

There will be barriers preventing you from going as far or as fast as you would like to. I would like your plans to set those out, so that we can understand how government, or the market, can help you overcome these barriers to go even further.

Questions to consider:

- what are the barriers preventing you from improving productivity further within your organisation?
- what are the barriers preventing you from improving services further?
- are these barriers consistent across multiple services?
- what would you need to remove those barriers? What do you need from government, the market or elsewhere?

Your plans must be returned by 19 July 2024, by email to productivityplans@levellingup.gov.uk.

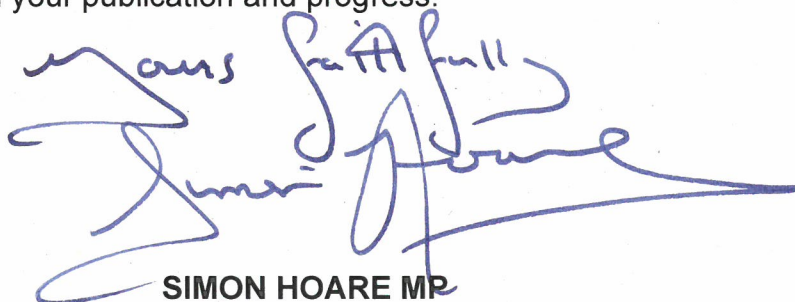
You must ensure that there is member oversight and endorsement of the plan before it is submitted, and the plan must also be uploaded to your website so that residents can see it. You should consider how you will update the plans and report on progress on a regular basis. The plans should also contain relevant metrics and key performance indicators to allow you and your residents to monitor progress.

Once received, we will review the plans to identify common themes and issues across the sector. We are keen to highlight best practice that others can learn from.

Individual plans will not be rated or scored, and we will not produce any kind of league tables. We are interested in understanding what is happening across the sector.

We are setting up a panel to consider the themes and evidence that comes from the plans. I will chair the panel and bring together experts from the sector and beyond, including Oflog and the LGA. They will consider the issues emerging from the plans, the implications for future national policy design, the role of government in supporting further change and the role of the sector in going further. The panel will advise national government and local government, and I believe this collaborative approach will ensure the most effective outcomes.

I look forward to updates on your publication and progress.


SIMON HOARE MP
 Minister for Local Government

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of
Regulation 21(1)(A) of the Local Authorities (Executive
Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England)
Regulations 2000.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of
Regulation 21(1)(A) of the Local Authorities (Executive
Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England)
Regulations 2000.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of
Regulation 21(1)(A) of the Local Authorities (Executive
Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England)
Regulations 2000.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of
Regulation 21(1)(A) of the Local Authorities (Executive
Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England)
Regulations 2000.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank