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Tel: 01993 861000
email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

You are summoned to a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which will be held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB on **Wednesday 5 June 2024 at 5.30pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors: Joy Aitman, Andrew Beaney, Adam Clements, Julian Cooper, Steve Cosier, Rachel Crouch, Genny Early, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Paul Marsh, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Elizabeth Poskitt, Carl Rylett, Sandra Simpson, Ruth Smith, Alistair Wray, Liam Walker, Mark Walker and Alex Wilson.

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

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

AGENDA

1. **Election of Chair**

Purpose:

To elect a Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Civic Year 2024/25.

Recommendation:

That a Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be elected for the Civic Year 2024/25.

2. **Appointment of Vice Chair**

Purpose:

To appoint a Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Civic Year 2024/25.

Recommendation:

That a Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be appointed for the Civic Year 2024/25.

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

To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments. The quorum for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is 6 members.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

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

5. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 – 10)**

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 10 April 2024.

6. **Announcements from the Chair**

To receive any announcements from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7. **Participation of the Public**

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

8. **Approval of Upgrade to WODC Public Space CCTV Provision and Monitoring Arrangements (Pages 11 – 26)**

Purpose:

On 12 June, the Executive will consider a report that 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 Police CCTV partnership, with an associated transfer of CCTV assets and operational responsibility to TVP under a 'single owner' model; and moving monitoring arrangements to a shared Oxfordshire hub.

Recommendations:

To note the draft report to the Executive and make any recommendations for upgrading the public open space CCTV cameras and the associated changes to join the Thames Valley Police CCTV Partnership, with a shared Oxfordshire hub for monitoring.

9. **Service Performance Report 2023-24 Quarter Four (Pages 27 – 86)**

Purpose:

To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2023-24 Quarter Four (Q4).

Recommendation:

That the Committee resolves to:

- I. Note the 2023/24 Q4 service performance report.

10. **Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP) (Pages 87 – 126)**

Purpose:

To provide an update on the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP).

Recommendation:

That the Committee resolves to:

- I. Note the contents of the report.

11. **Changes To Customer Telephone Access Times (Pages 127 – 142)**

Purpose:

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:

To note that Executive are asked to agree to adopt the reduced telephone access arrangements on a permanent basis.

12. **Report back on Recommendations**

For the Committee to note the Executive's response to any recommendations arising from the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

There were no Executive's responses to any recommendations currently.

13. **Committee Work Programme (Pages 143 – 152)**

Purpose:

To provide the Committee with an updated Work Programme for 2024/25.

Recommendation:

That the Committee notes and comments on the work programme.

14. **Executive Work Programme (Pages 153 – 160)**

Purpose:

To give the Committee the opportunity to comment on the Executive Work Programme.

Recommendation:

That the Committee agrees which items on the Executive Work Programme should be subject to pre-decision scrutiny, and the priority order of those items.

15. **Leisure and Wellbeing Task and Finish Group Membership Change**

In light of Councillor Rizvana Poole being appointed to the Executive, the Committee is recommended to appoint a replacement member to the Leisure and Wellbeing Task and Finish Group.

16. **Date of Next Meeting**

It is requested that the meeting of 3 July 2024, be moved to either 15 July 2024 or 17 July 2024 at 5.30pm, in order to avoid the pre-election period for the General Election being held on 4 July 2024.

(END)

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB
at 5.30 pm on **Wednesday, 10 April 2024**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Thomas Ashby, Hugo Ashton, Julian Cooper, Rachel Crouch, Andy Goodwin, Nick Leverton, Andrew Lyon, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Sandra Simpson, Ruth Smith, Harry St John, Alistair Wray, Liam Walker, Mark Walker and Alex Wilson

Officers: Christine Elsasser, Andrew Brown (Democratic Services Business Manager) and Phil Martin (Assistant Director for Business Support)

Other Councillors in attendance: Leader, Councillor Andy Graham

Guests: Gareth Elliot, Director of Policy and Communications for Mobile

59 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carl Rylett, Mathew Parkinson, Natalie King (Councillor David Jackson substituted for Councillor Natalie King), Phil Godfrey, Rizvana Poole, Duncan Enright and David Cooper.

60 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

61 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 March 2024 were approved by the Committee.

It was to be noted that Councillors Andy Graham, Duncan Enright and David Melvin were required to be recorded as apologies rather than present at the 19 March meeting.

There was a point of clarification on why the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Draft Charging Schedule had been moved to the 10 June 2024 meeting. It was explained that this was due to the report not having sufficient time to go through all necessary internal processes.

62 Chairs Announcements

The Chair asked that Members not discuss political matters to avoid breaching pre-election period rules.

There was a requirement to change the order of the agenda due to the lateness of the presenter on Item 6. It was therefore suggested that Item 7, Report back on recommendations, Item 8, Committee Work Programme and Item 9, Executive Work Programme be discussed first.

The Chair thanked Members for their work with the Committee, recognising it was the last Committee meeting before the election, and wished everyone his very best wishes and best of luck for those standing for re-election.

It was **AGREED** by the Committee to change the order of the agenda as stated above.

63 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

64 Mobile Network Coverage

Gareth Elliot, Director of Policy and Communications for Mobile UK provided a presentation to the Committee and explained that Mobile UK was the body that represented the four major mobile network operators; which were listed as Three, Vodafone, EE. and Virgin/O2. Other networks were not included because they did not own the infrastructure and therefore used the aforementioned companies' infrastructure.

It was explained that the material presented was for the purposes of raising awareness and providing information to challenge perceptions and myths. Mobile UK could not provide specifics on mast applications because that was in line with commercial decisions made by the operators.

The difference between 4G and 5G was explained and how it was essential to for 5G to be implemented. It was explained where 5G sat on the health spectrum of radiation, and the importance of 5G access and wireless connectivity for a multitude of services including healthcare and digital inclusion.

The barriers to deployment were summarised and identified including leadership, planning delays, resources, and localised objections. Mobile UK wanted to help councils with incentives and the campaigning of digital champions. Examples of structures were presented and technical requirements were explained and the density of infrastructure required was displayed with mast options shown. More information could be provided with a library of resources and a podcast.

The following points were raised by the Committee and responses provided by Gareth Elliot and/or Officers:

- It was queried whether West Oxfordshire was only covered by one network. It was explained that planning restrictions in the UK made it difficult to build infrastructure and if you wanted coverage you needed a mast.
- Developers were not required to provide mast infrastructure and new developments were often covered with existing infrastructure. It could be useful for Mobile UK to know when developments were coming to allow some proactivity.
- It was queried if there had been any mast applications in WODC and if those applications were welcomed or objected. It was explained that Over Norton was one example of the problematic nature of mast's being welcomed in an area.
- It was suggested that if a map could be provided of all the masts required, a provision could be made for in the Local Plan. It was explained that the network operators don't provide that or share that data and they compete for contracts with applications based on the need for capacity in that area. Another Member confirmed he had seen them in planning but most were not problematic unless they involved aesthetics of listed buildings, etc.
- It was queried if there was a system of roaming and if that was an issue that needed to be addressed by the operator. It was explained that Mobile UK didn't think that roaming was a solution and you could not roam without the infrastructure.
- There was a query asked around central government budgets and what the process was for councils to report a black spot or area with very bad coverage and how that could be actioned. It was explained that this was for the shared network to decide. There was a real struggle to engage with councils at the planning levels.

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- There were various technical questions asked regarding signal coverage. It was explained that the closer you were to a mast the better your signal would be. The height of the masts were to enable more coverage and there were limitations therefore specific infrastructure was required.
- A question on what power sources and broadband linkages were required was asked. It was explained that it was dependent on the location whether microwave links or fibre was used.
- A query was raised about noise and whether sounds were omitted from the masts. It was explained that that was dependent on how big they were and what type cooling was required for the generators.
- It was asked if BTPS10 switch off would affect anything. It was explained that that was a landline network switch off owned by Openreach and not mobile. There was no control over that by Mobile UK. On the other hand, turning off 2G/3G was raised that it may affect Council services in terms of parking metres, telecare transition, etc. The Assistant Director for Business Services confirmed that the Council had looked into this and this would not affect any of the services.
- A Member noted that they found the session very informative and were ready to advocate for more mobile infrastructure in the area as required; however, they wanted to know why there was a lack of mobile coverage in certain areas. It was explained that the easiest answer was that Mobile UK was there to inform councils on how to build better relationships and create an understanding on why an application has come in and to challenge perceptions. There was a coverage of 95% of areas and it was mostly privately funded. Other holistic solutions were required to be examined such as satellite, on demand masts on wheels for disaster relief areas and concerts, etc.
- One Member requested a map of the district area and the cost of repeater antennae. It was explained the cost of various technologies mentioned was unknown but there were changes in regulations to allow boosted coverage in homes and Wi-Fi calling, etc. The map would need to be requested from the providers.
- Another Member asked if the mast used by Thames Valley Police could be used. It was explained that using existing infrastructure was not impossible and they work with other companies to use their infrastructure.
- Where churches could be used as a potential site for masts to be installed was queried. It was explained that they could potentially be used and have been; however, there were often issues with, not only listed building status and rules around that, but also access, safety parameters, fragility and viable power linkages which renders them unsuitable.

The Leader thanked Gareth Elliot for his presentation and explained that the commercial considerations were now realised and this issue would be discussed further as to how it needs to be addressed in the area. The Executive would now take this forward and address the issue further.

65 Report back on Recommendations

The Report Back on Recommendations from Executive was introduced by the Chair of the Committee and Members had the following queries:

- In relation to the item on the review and repurposing of earmarked reserves, there was a query on how tracking could be done of the name changes of the earmarked

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reserves and that these changes should be tracked through the Audit and Governance Committee. **Action Point:** Officers to come back with an explanation for this.

In relation to the actions arising attached to the minutes, the same previous queries were raised and Officers were asked to continue to chase up as **Action Points:**

- Councillor Andrew Beaney clarified that his question was based around the appeal in Over Norton - Part of the reason for allowing it was that the Council had no sites identified. If not, why not and if sites were identified where were they - without them, did the Council stand a much higher risk of losing appeals? On the point of 5 and 5 in H7 was that a rolling on from 5 or on a first come first serve?
- Councillor Harry St John added a further query - There seemed to be an ever-expanding site and activities (even at night) at Cuckoowood Farm on Cuckoo Lane south of Freeland. Had any planning officer been on a visit to see that and what was going on because it should be as per any consents/conditions? There is a very substantial building which was lit up inside - after what one would expect to be normal working hours. There were engineering works going on at the entrance the other week with a JCB, etc. doing work, which may be resident on site. A quick analysis of enforcement cases across the District showed a significant proportion of cases involved the travelling or related community by comparison to everyone else. One case had been going on for ages with social services, and police, etc. involved.

66 Committee Work Programme

The Committee Work Programme was introduced by the Chair of the Committee and he suggested that due amount of agenda items on the 5 June 2024 meeting there could be some movement of items to later meetings. It was to be noted that there was an updated Work Programme and Members should refer to that copy which they received at the meeting.

Members made the following suggestions and comments:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee could be moved to a week earlier (to be held two weeks prior to meetings of the Executive). It was suggested that this would need to be considered carefully as it would have a knock on effect with reports and would extend the Executive decision making process, which would be a wider corporate issue.
- A Member suggested that the old system of three overview and scrutiny committee be implemented to ensure decisions could be pre-scrutinised and it was suggested that this new system of having a single committee was fundamentally flawed. It was explained that the new system was decided at Council and part of the rationale for doing so was to properly embed pre-decision scrutiny as part of the Council's decision making process, which had been very challenging under the previous model, but the point was taken.
- Consideration was given to the option of holding an additional meeting in June but this option was not preferred. The Leader clarified that his expectation was that Executive reports would be coming forwards on the timescales set out in the Forward Plan.
- It was suggested to start the next meeting earlier as there were no reports being deferred at Executive, otherwise there would be no decisions made on Scrutiny. It was further explained that from the discussion so far there would be 6 items on the June agenda which were all pre-scrutiny items.

It was therefore suggested and **AGREED** that all the reports listed on the plan would be scheduled with the addition of Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP); preference would be given to pre-scrutiny with the discussions around post scrutiny items such as the

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performance reports to be moved to another meeting if necessary. The Draft Budget would be taken to the 8 January 2025 meeting,

67 Executive Work Programme

The Executive Work Programme was discussed in conjunction with Item 8.


There was a query from a Member on the Review of Public Conveniences which was as follows:

- Why were there two Council-operated public conveniences facilities within a mile of each other in two settlements (Woodstock and Chipping Norton) and was this still justified? It was explained that these questions would be included on action plan for the 3 July 2024 agenda.

The Meeting closed at 7.15 pm

CHAIRMAN

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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 JUNE 2024 EXECUTIVE – 12 JUNE 2024
Subject	APPROVAL FOR UPGRADING PUBLIC SPACE CCTV PROVISION AND NEW MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS
Wards affected	All Carterton wards, Witney Central and Witney South, Chipping Norton
Accountable member	Cllr Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer and report author	Andy Barge, Assistant Director – Communities democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary	On 12 June, the Executive will consider a report that 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 Police CCTV partnership, with an associated transfer of CCTV assets and operational responsibility to TVP under a ‘single owner’ model; and moving monitoring arrangements to a shared Oxfordshire hub.
Annexes	Annex A – Draft Executive report Annex B – Crime data
Recommendations	The Executive is asked to: I. Note the draft report and make any recommendations for upgrading the public open space CCTV cameras and the associated changes to join the Thames Valley Police CCTV Partnership, with a shared Oxfordshire hub for monitoring.
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. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

2.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1. Having no public open space CCTV would mean 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.

3.2. If privacy impact assessments are not completed for any new camera locations, there is a risk the CCTV commissioner's code would be breached.

4. EQUALITIES IMPACT

4.1. The report raises no specific implications for any particular group or individual. The addition of cameras to Chipping Norton should bring a positive impact to public safety and a reduction in crime.

5. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1. There are no specific implications arising directly from this report.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1. No background papers have been identified.

(END)



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 12 JUNE 2024
Subject	APPROVAL FOR UPGRADING PUBLIC SPACE CCTV PROVISION AND NEW MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS
Wards Affected	Carterton North East, Carterton North West, Carterton South, Witney Central, Witney South, and Chipping Norton.
Accountable Member	Councillor Geoff Saul – Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare. Email: geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities. Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Report Author	Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities. Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Summary	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.
Annexes	Annex A – Crime Data
Recommendations	That the Executive resolves to: <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, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to 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.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1.** 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.
- 1.2.** 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.
- 1.3.** 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.
- 1.4.** 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.
- 1.5.** 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.
- 1.6.** 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)

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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	Leafield, 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

Last updated
10/07/2023



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- [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

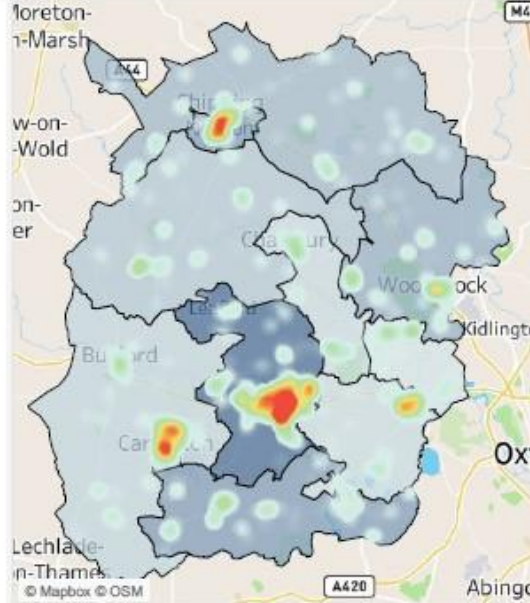
Explore local 2022

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

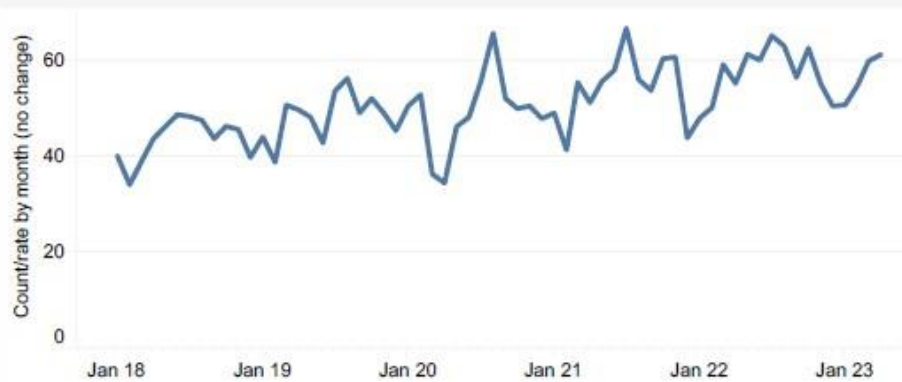
Click on an area on the map or the bar chart to filter the other visuals to a location. Click the crime bars to filter to a crime type. Click the filter again or refresh the page to exit.

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%
Leafield, 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>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 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>Annexes</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 Committee resolves to: 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>

1. BACKGROUND

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

2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT

2.1 Progress on actions in the Corporate Plan for 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. EXECUTIVE

- 4.1** This report will be reviewed by the Executive at its meeting on 12 June 2024; and any comments from the Committee will be recorded and shared with the Executive.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1** Contained in this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1** None

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** Contained in this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1** None

(END)

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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.

Putting Residents First

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

Putting Residents, Young and Old, at the Heart of What We Do

1.2

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

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Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All

2.1

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 team and Planning Policy. Stage 3 report due mid/end April. Final report on Executive Forward Plan for July 2024.

01/09/2023

05/06/2024

On Target

Tim Sumner

Rachel Biles

Regular updates have been provided to the Informal Executive and the Task and Finish group (established to oversee the process)

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.	Work with Oxfordshire County Council and others to increase the opportunity for residents to travel around and beyond the District on foot or by bike, or on public transport, to reduce car dependence and benefit from the health and economic benefits of doing so.					Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
2.3	Explore the scope for alternative means of delivering the range of homes in the District that meet the diverse needs of our communities, such as investment in tenures and sizes of homes that the market does not currently deliver enough of.	Strategic Housing Project: Internal management and modelling – proposals to be presented to Executive in paper compiled by Publica Assistant Director Planning and Sustainability to November Executive.	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

	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>01/04/2023</p>	<p>31/09/2024</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Geoff Saul</p>	<p>Jon Dearing</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>				<p>Not Scheduled to Start</p>	<p>Duncan Enright</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves</p>
	<p>Strategy and plan for reinvigorating the District's Charter Markets</p>				<p>On Target</p>	<p>Duncan Enright</p>	<p>Emma Philips</p>
	<p>Take an active role as member of Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and engagement with neighbouring LVEP's.</p>	<p>Climate team are advising on the green leaf scheme and webpages.</p>			<p>On Target</p>	<p>Duncan Enright</p>	<p>Chris Jackson</p>
	<p>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</p>		<p>01/12/2022</p>	<p>31/05/2025</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Duncan Enright</p>	<p>Emma Philips</p>
	<p>Oxfordshire County Council improvements to Witney Town Centre linked to Marriots Walk redevelopment where appropriate.</p>				<p>On Target</p>	<p>Duncan Enright</p>	<p>Emma Philips</p>
<p>Support the retention of existing and development of new services and facilities that contribute to the local economy, community</p>	<p>The commissioning of the Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (through Max Associates) to inform the development of a West Oxfordshire Leisure, Health and Wellbeing Strategy.</p>				<p>Not Scheduled to Start</p>	<p>Joy Aitman</p>	
	<p>Guide the future delivery of Salt Cross new garden village and associated infrastructure to enable delivery of Salt Cross Science Park.</p>	<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. Housing self build / community led housing toolkit being adapted as a web page. Business Park. SQW consultants work completed and sent to Members steering group for discussion. 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>	<p>01/01/2018</p>	<p>31/12/2034</p>	<p>Off Target but Mitigation in Place</p>	<p>Duncan Enright</p>	<p>Andrea Clenton</p>

wellbeing and cohesion.

<p>Marriotts Walk – implementation of CBRE recommendations inc. securing new tenants, public realm improvements & making enhanced use of the square.</p>				On Target	Duncan Enright	Jasmine McWilliams
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	01/02/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Alaric Smith, Charlie Maynard, Geoff Saul, Tim Sumner	Philippa Lowe
<p>Ubico Grounds Maintenance Contract – review contract with aim of securing both biodiversity enhancements and budgetary savings.</p>		01/03/2025	01/03/2026	Not Scheduled to Start	Lidia Arciszewska	Rachel Crookes / Bill Oddy
<p>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.</p>	<p>Management plans to be reviewed and agreed with Ubico for 2024/25 when Lead Nature Recovery Officer is in post.</p>	01/02/2022	01/03/2026	On Target	Lidia Arciszewska	Rachel Crookes / Bill Oddy
<p>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.</p>				On Target	Lidia Arciszewska	Janice Bamsey / Chris Hargraves
<p>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.</p>	<p>Application will be submitted in May 2024. National Lottery have agreed to extension.</p>	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	

<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Successful PSDS 3c for Windrush Leisure Cente, 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Heat decarbonisation plans for Elmfield, 3 Welch Way and Old Court House completed in March 2024.</p> <p>Review of LCSF 5 funding opportunity underway to consider tenanted buildings.</p>			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser, Dan Levy, Alaric Smith	Hannah Kenyon
	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	31/10/22	31/03/25	Off Target	Andrew Prosser, Tim Sumner	Claire Locke
	<p>Waste Vehicle Strategy - Supporting the Waste team on the development of the strategy to reduce emissions from the Council's waste vehicle fleet.</p>	<p>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.</p>			On Target	Lidia Arciszewska	Simon Anthony / Hannah Kenyon
	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	01/07/23	30/6/2024	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
	<p>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.</p>	<p>Discussions with the Learning and Development team and F3 team are underway to establish the best approach moving forward.</p> <p>Recommendations will be taken to the Senior Leadership team for approval in May.</p>	01/02/2023	01/04/2024	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
	<p>Solar PV project for tenanted buildings - A Publica-wide long-term project to install rooftop solar panels on council owned buildings, increasing the amount of renewable energy generated in the District.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>A full application has been submitted for solar PV at Woodgreen.</p> <p>The outcome of the prior approval application is awaited for Elmfield.</p>	01/08/2022	01/12/2023	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Andrew Turner

4.2	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Biodiversity Action Plan – Develop and deliver workstreams to restore nature and enhanced biodiversity in the District.</p>	<p>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.</p>	01/03/2023	01/03/2024	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Rachel Crookes
4.3		<p>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</p>	<p>Consider how proactive should WODC be in facilitating retrofit for the 'able to pay' market.</p>	<p>Discussions being held with Greater South East Net Zero Hub about involvement in the Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA).</p>			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
			<p>Greenlight – nature and online hub to facilitate community action for a greener future.</p>	<p>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.</p>			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
			<p>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.</p>	<p>Report going to Executive 17th April seeking funding for the Asset Management Strategy, this will consider the carbon efficiency of buildings.</p>	01/07/2023		On Target	Andrew Prosser	Jasmine McWilliams
			<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	01/06/2023	01/03/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
4.4		<p>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.</p>	<p>Explore opportunities with partners to encourage renewable energy within the District.</p>	<p>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.</p>			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser	Giles Hughes / Hannah Kenyon
4.5		<p>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.</p>	<p>Install EV charging points across the District.</p>	<p>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.</p>	26/05/2023	01/01/2025	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
			<p>Enable delivery of agreed project interventions on Government approved Investment Plan under UKSPF and REPF.</p>				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

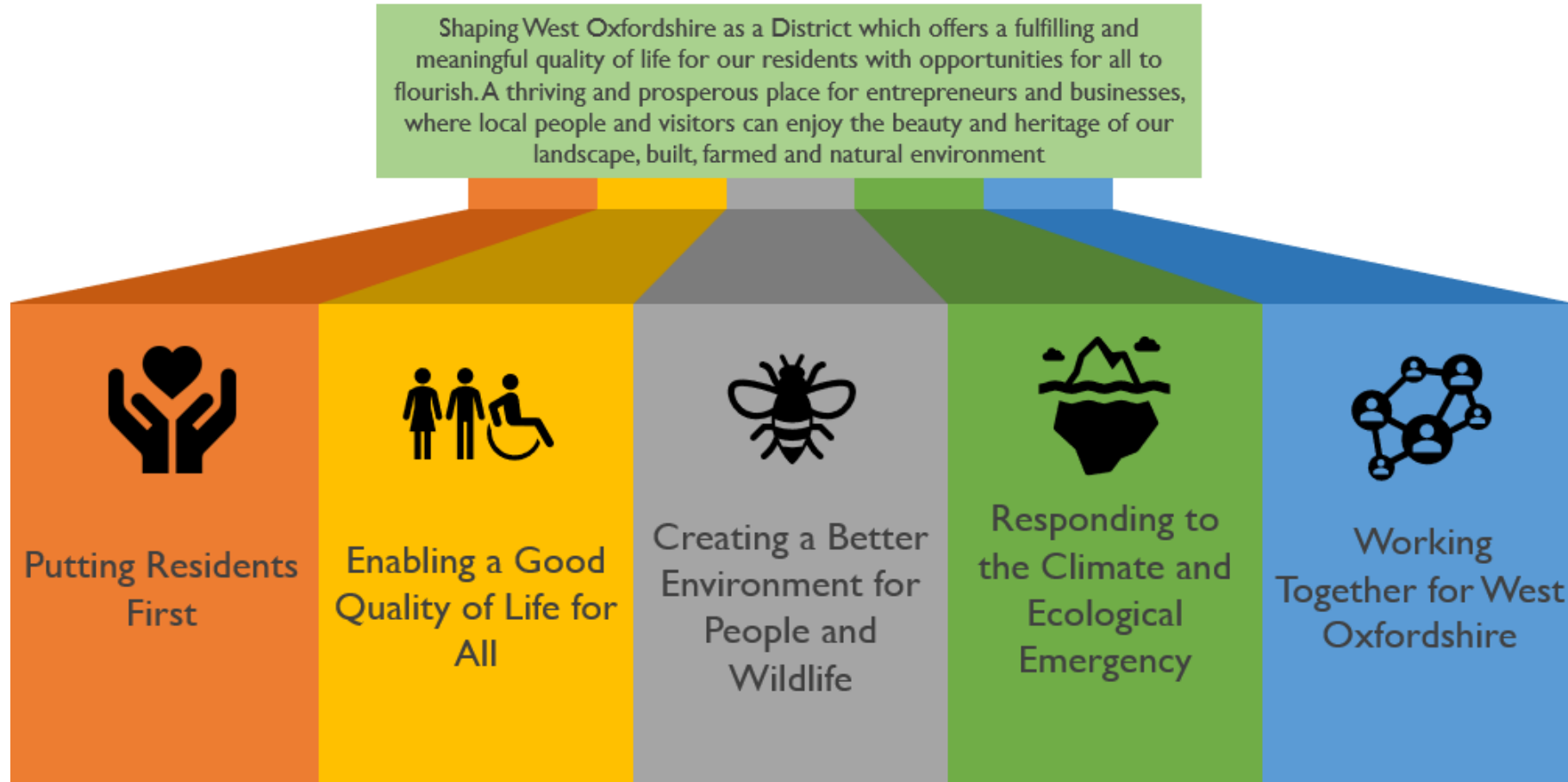


WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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.

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT:
January 2024 - March 2024

Summary Index

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Area	KPI Name	RAG	Page
Revenues, Benefits and Housing	Percentage of Council Tax Collected	Orange	6
	Percentage of Non Domestic Rates collected	Orange	7
	Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims	Green	8
	Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events	Green	9
	Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances	Orange	10
	Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay	Green	11
	(Snapshot) Long Term Empty Properties	Grey	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	Grey	13
Customer Experience	Customer Satisfaction - Telephone	Green	14
	Customer Satisfaction - Email	Grey	15
	Customer Satisfaction - Face to Face	Green	16

Summary Index

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

Summary Index

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

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A note on performance benchmarking

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

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

Benchmarking has been included wherever possible 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.

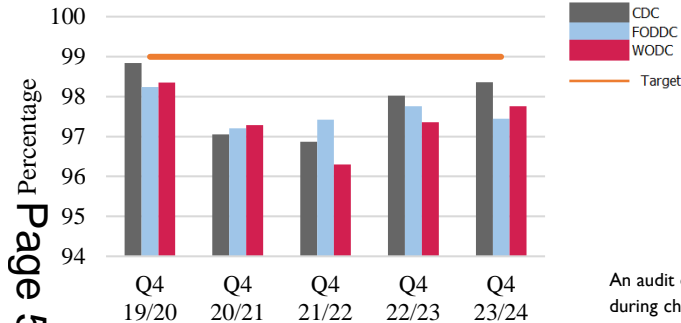
A RAG (red, amber, green) status has been applied to each KPI to provide a quick visual summary of the status of that KPI for the quarter. Additionally, RAG status has been added to the direction of travel for each metric to show how the performance against last quarter and the same quarter compared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

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%

Who 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

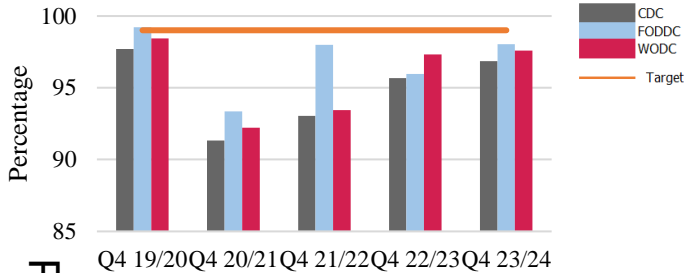
An audit of the Council Tax Services indicated that a significant sum of arrears had accumulated during challenging circumstances associated with the pandemic. Whilst the recovery of arrears had been suspended for a time, it has since been reinstated, and the current recovery cycle is up to date with 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?

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

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

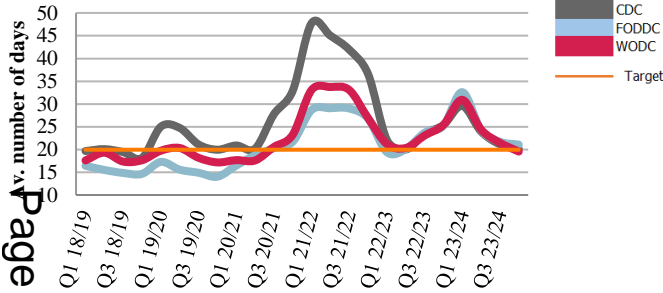
The current recovery cycle is up to date with the service reporting progress in collecting previous year's debt. The below table shows the percentage of aged debt that has been collected and the total outstanding:

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




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

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Improved since last quarter and last year

2023-24 – Lower is Good

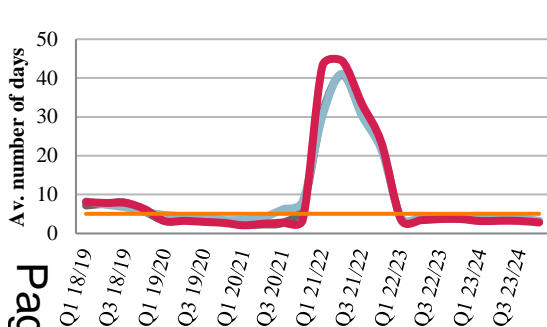
Target	20
Actual	19.57

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.


Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events




CDC
 FODDC
 WODC

Target

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Decreased since last quarter last year

2023-24 – Lower is Good

Target	5
Actual	2.81

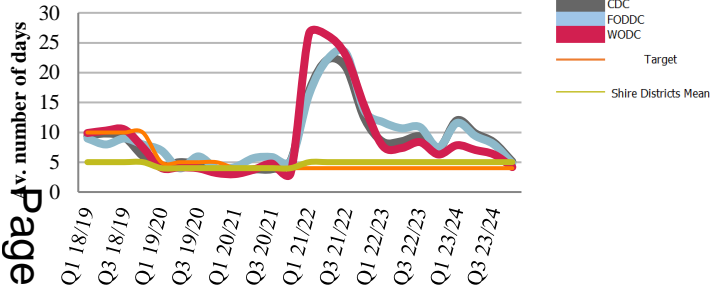
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The processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events continue to comfortably meet the target of 5 days, with processing times decreasing compared to both the last quarter and the previous year.

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](#).

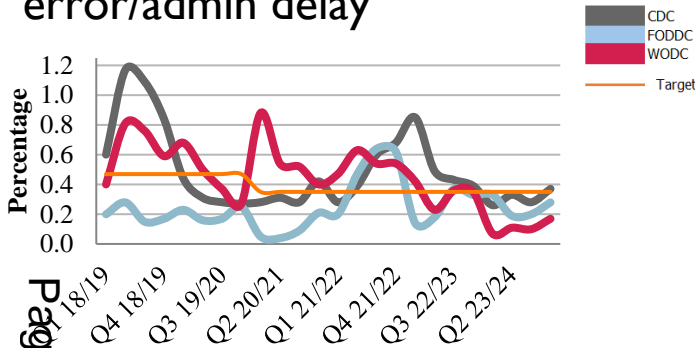
At the end of Q4, the average days to process HB changes decreased, with the Council averaging 2.34 days; however, since the target is cumulative, the ongoing statistics show higher figures. Despite being above the target, the decrease in HB Change applications amplifies the impact of delays in assessing 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%

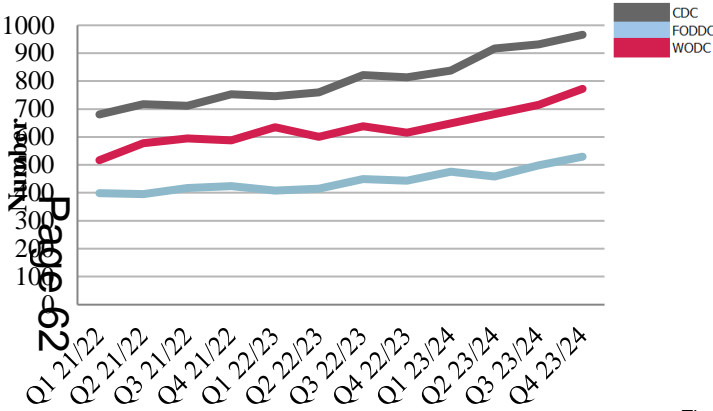
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Measures are in place to ensure that HB overpayments due to local authority errors are reduced as much as possible. Around 20% of the HB caseload is checked by Quality Assurance officers, who target areas with high error rates, such as calculation 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?

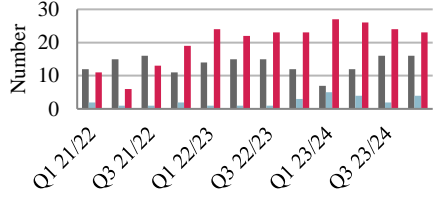
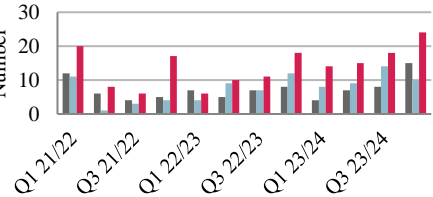
No benchmarking currently available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options

(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.

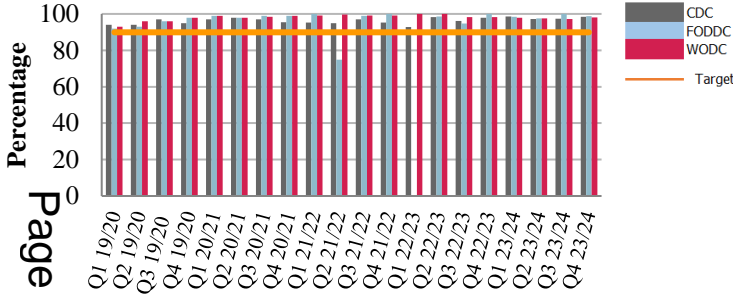
The team persistently works towards preventing homelessness, successfully averting homelessness for 294 households so far this year—154 within the statutory 56-day period and 140 before statutory duties were triggered. It's important to note that these figures are approximations and have not yet been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

How do we compare?

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


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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?

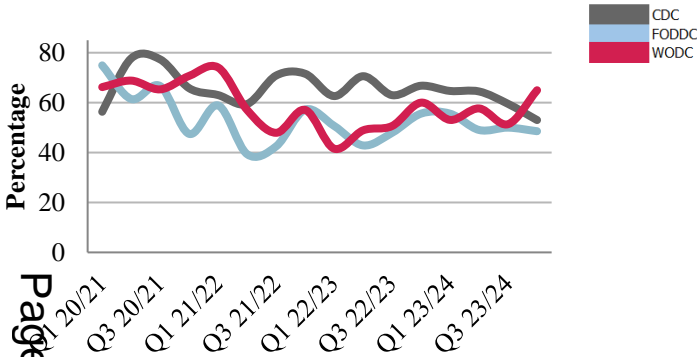
The Govmetric Channel Satisfaction Index is a monthly publication of the top performing councils across the core customer access channels. At least 100 customers need to be transferred to the survey to be included in the league table so even if satisfaction is high, it may not be included i.e. September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

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.


	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%

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%

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How do we compare?

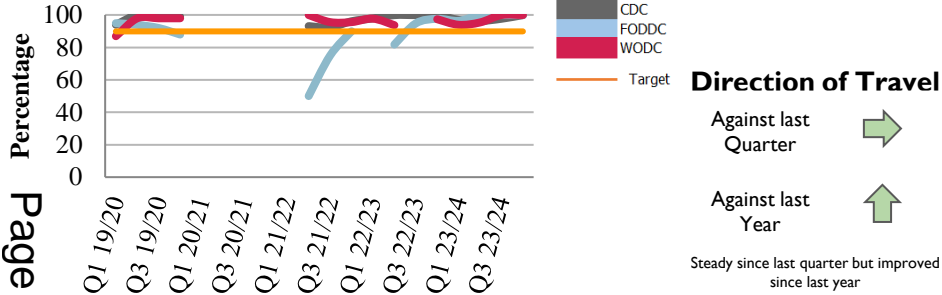
Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

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%

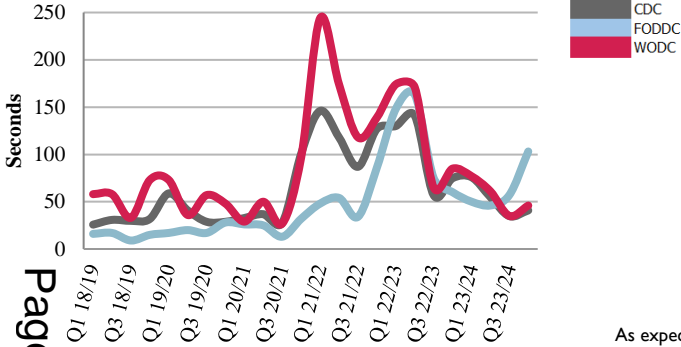
Customer Satisfaction from face to face interactions continues to be high, with a 100% satisfaction rate for the quarter, with all 39 individuals surveyed satisfied with the service.

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

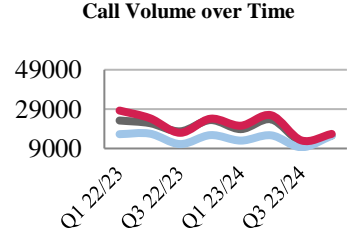
No Target
Q4 - 46 Seconds
2023-24 – 66.5 Seconds

Page 67
 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.

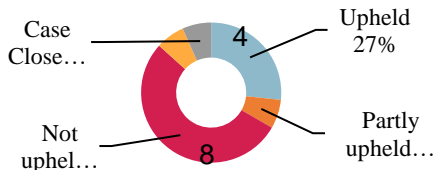
As expected, the average call waiting time increased in Q4, aligning with the traditionally higher workload during this period, primarily due to annual billing and garden waste renewals. The Council experienced a modest increase of 11 seconds compared to the previous quarter but notably decreased by 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.

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 60

How do we compare?

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.

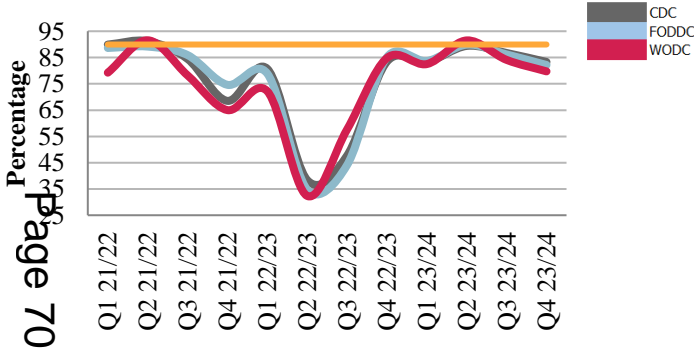
The new process has the following stages:

- 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 

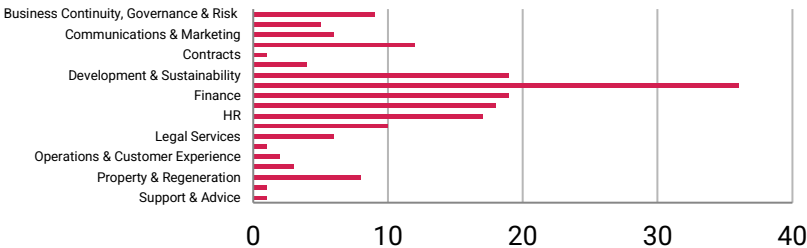
Against last Year 

Declined since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

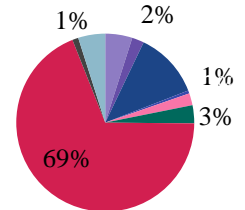
Target	90%
Q4 Actual	84.14%
2023-24 Actual	84.51%

Requests by Service Area



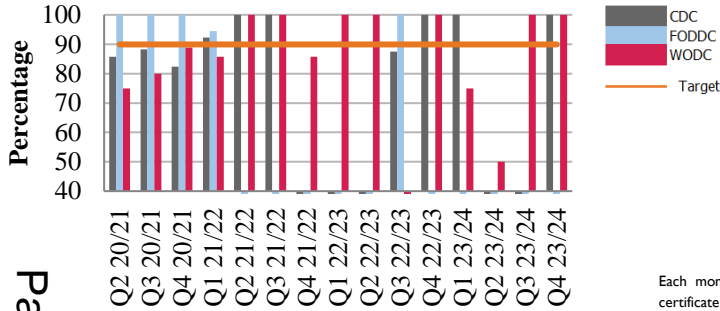
Response Type

- 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%

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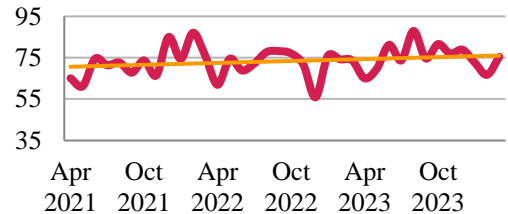
How do we compare?
Percentage of share in the market

	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.

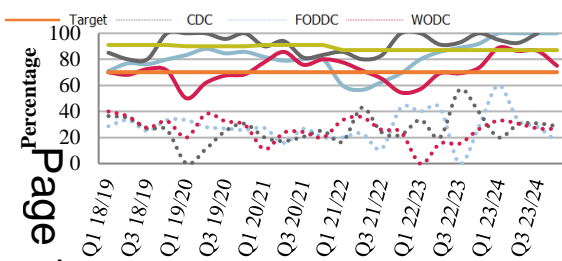
Building Control had 136 applications in Q4 and retains a strong share of the market. The below chart shows market share over time.



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%

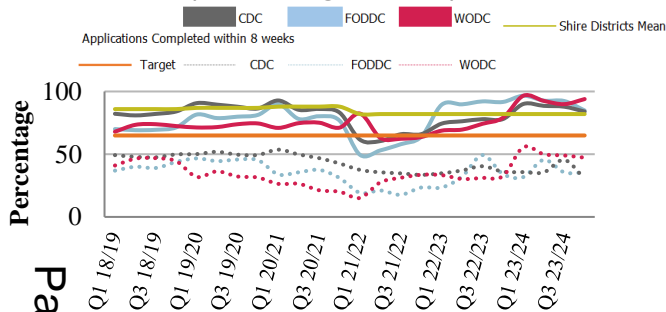
Actual 84.44%

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)





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How do we compare?

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

23/23-24 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%

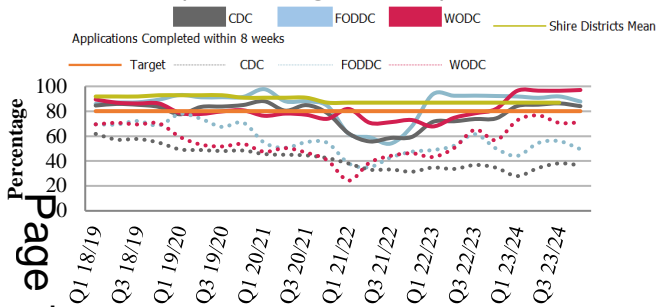
Actual 91.16%

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)




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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

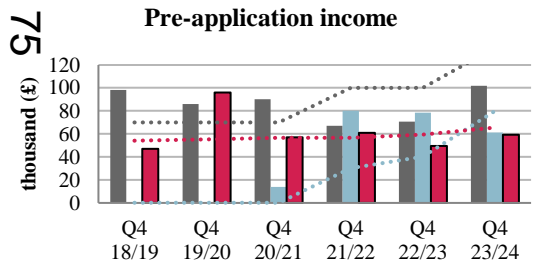
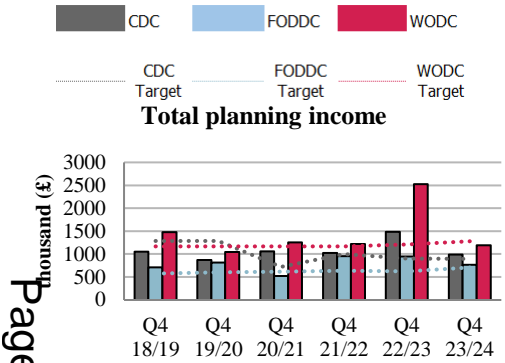
Target 80%
Actual 96.59%

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




Direction of Travel


Total Planning Income

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Pre-Application Income

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

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.

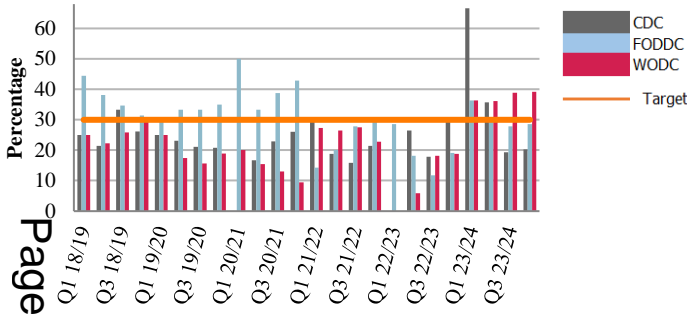
Additionally, the service has observed that a couple of major application submissions, initially slated for Q4, have been delayed and are now anticipated to be submitted during Q1. This adjustment is expected to contribute to an improvement in next year's income.

How do we compare?

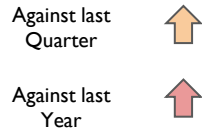
Planning Advisory Service (PAS) planned to benchmark back in 2021. No data is available in the public domain, but the data team has been in contact with PAS to find further information and are awaiting an update.

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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).

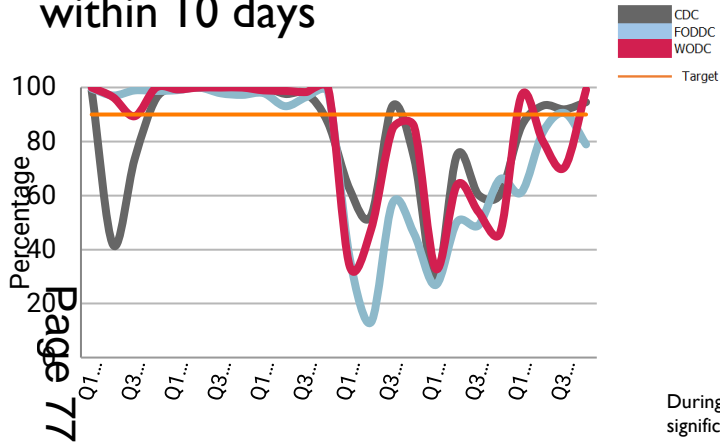
Between 1 January 2024 and 31 March 2024 ten appeals were decided, with six being supported. This quarter's allowance rate stands at 40%. However, the cumulative total for the year remains slightly above target at 39.19%. Of the ten appeals determined this quarter, four were related to Uplands applications,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

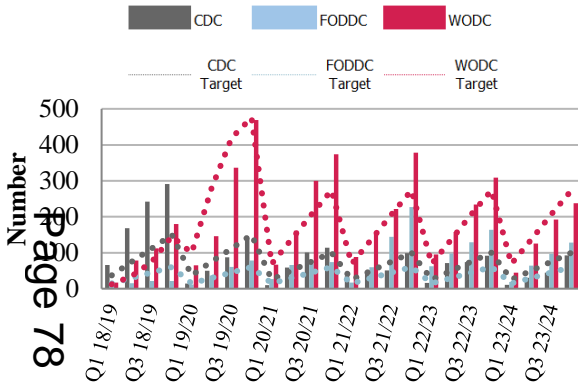
During Q4, the Council achieved its target for the first time since Q1, demonstrating a significant improvement from the last quarter by around 28%. Furthermore, since this time last year, the percentage of searches completed within 10 days has increased by 53.04%.

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.

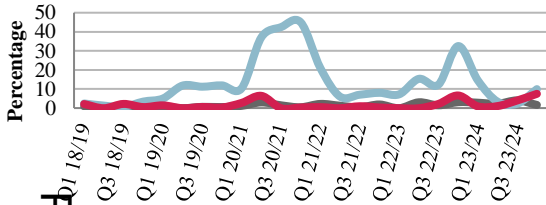
How do we compare?

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

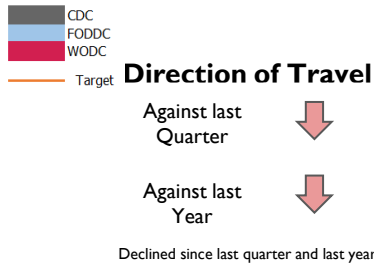
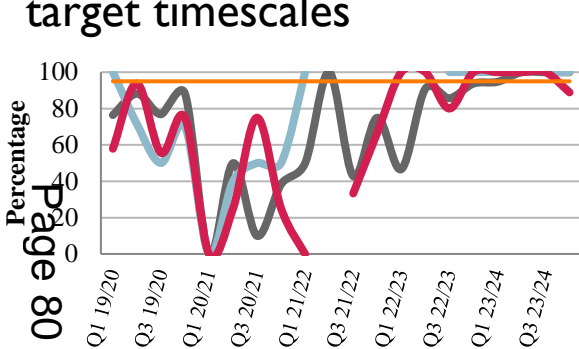
	Total Fly Tips	Total Enforcement Actions	Total FPNs	FPNs per Fly Tip	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank	Quartile
West	1150	53	14	0.012	6/16	Second
Horsham	1212	287	65	0.053	1/16	Top
Tewkesbury	655	29	1	0.001	10/16	Third
Stroud	859	11	0	0	16/16	Bottom

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



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

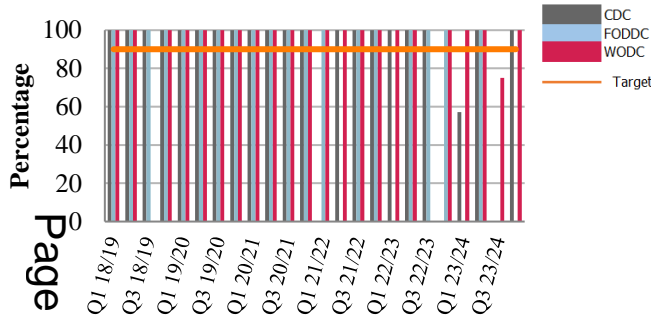
The Council conducted nine inspections, with eight completed within the designated timescales. The missed inspection had been initially arranged on time but was later canceled by the other party; however, it has since been completed.

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%

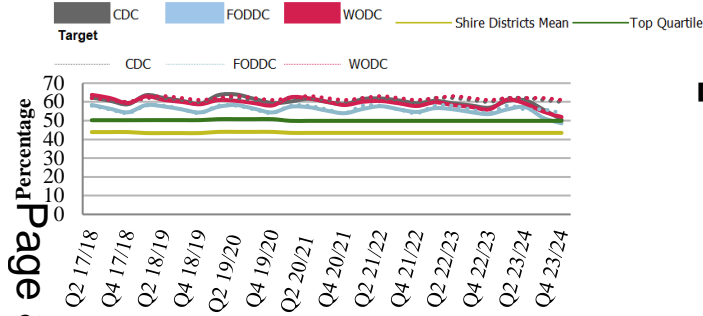
One notification was received during Q4 which was assessed within one working day.

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





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

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Declined since last quarter but slightly improved since last year

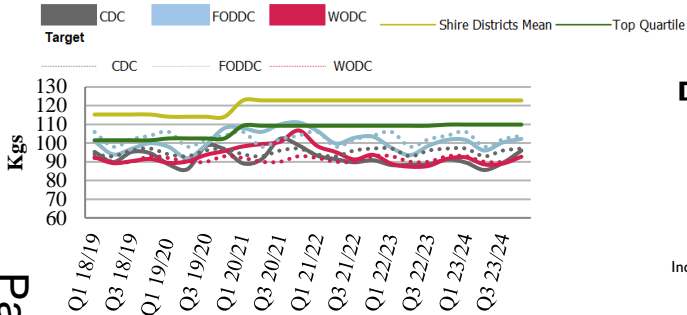
Higher is Good

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.

Residual Household Waste per Household (kg)




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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

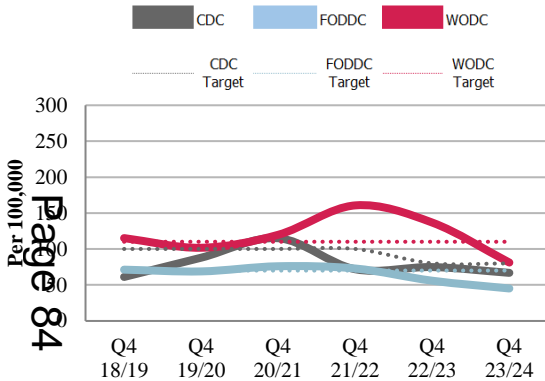
2023-24 Target 366

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

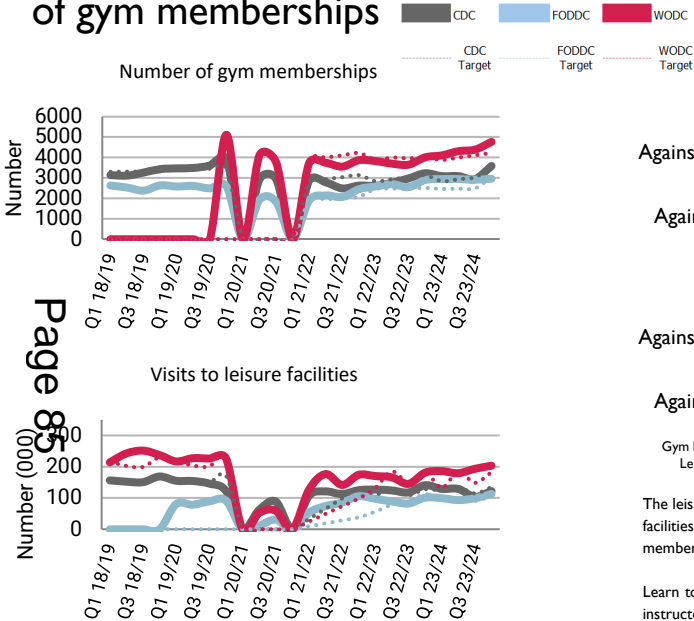
In Q4, the number missed bins per 100,000 stayed below target and saw a drop of around 14% from the preceding quarter, despite some disruptions from minor flooding and road closures impacting collection routines. In comparison to the corresponding period last year, the number of missed bins per 100,000 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




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.

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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 JUNE 2024 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:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note the contents of the report.
<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.
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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 Newsmith 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.

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The Planning Inspectorate

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 Hockenfull

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).

Council Offices
Woodgreen
WITNEY
Oxfordshire OX28 1NB
Tel: 01993 861000
www.westoxon.gov.uk



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.

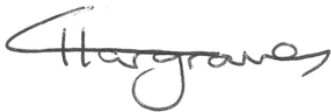
We welcome the opportunity to discuss a more detailed timetable with you in due course.

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

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 JUNE 2024 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.

I. 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 Uprating 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 Uprating 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 that the Service can cope with reduced telephone access times during the Annual Billing/Benefit Uprating 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)

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Annex A

Chart I

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

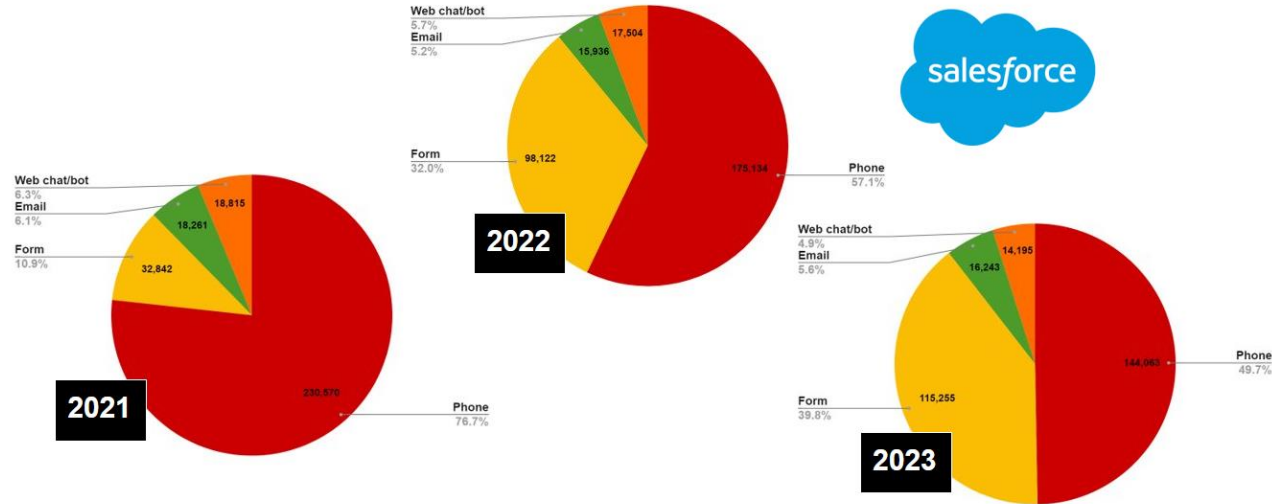


Chart 2

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

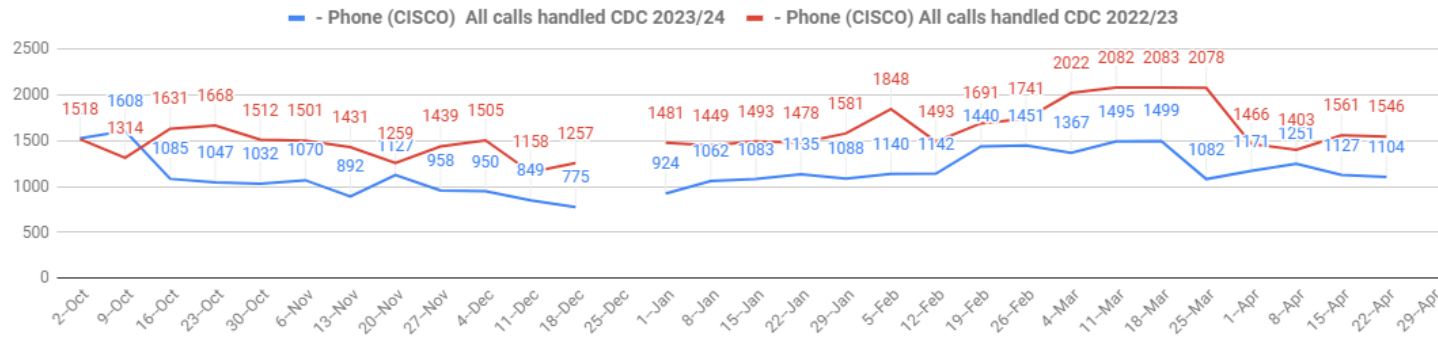


Chart 2(a)

Showing year on year drop in calls

Cotswold Year on Year - Calls Presented

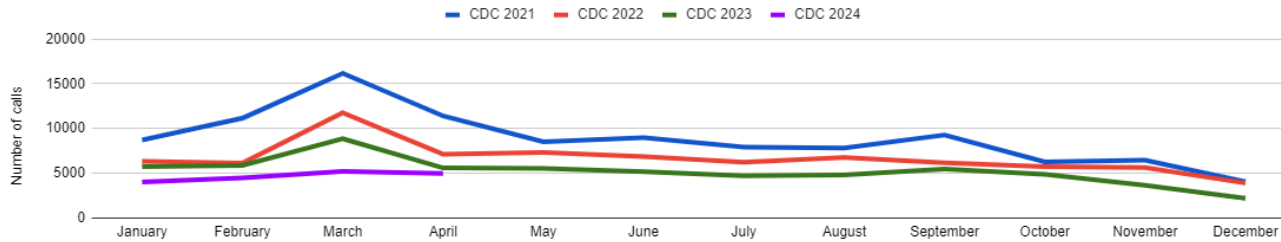


Chart 3

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

Cotswold - Calls abandoned (Main line)

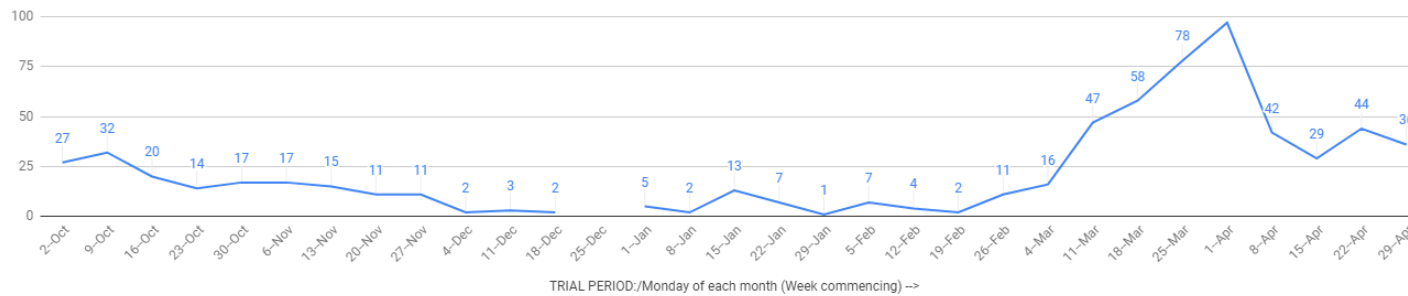
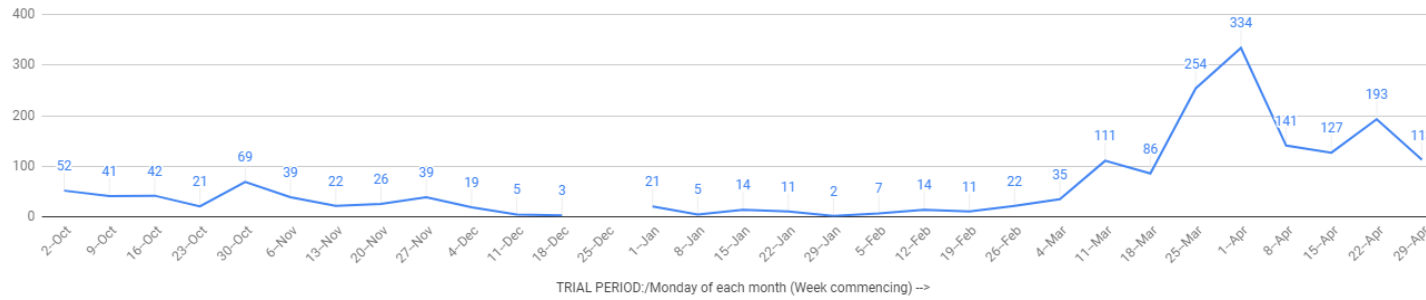


Chart 4

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: 9 th 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 16 th 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.	

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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:	

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
3 JUNE 2024 – 30 JUNE 2024

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

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

Timeliness: Is it timely to consider this issue?

Organisational priority: Is it a Council priority?

Public Interest: Is it of significant public interest?

Influence: Can Scrutiny have meaningful influence?

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

Call In

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

Item	Executive Member	Lead Officer
Wednesday, 5 June 2024		
Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP)	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Approval of Upgrade to WODC Public Space CCTV Provision and Monitoring Arrangements	Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare	Andy Barge, Assistant Director for Communities andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Service Performance Report 2023-24 Quarter Four	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Changes to Customer Telephone Access Times	Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects - Cllr Tim Sumner	Michelle Clifford, Business Manager - Customer Experience & Resources michelle.clifford@publicagroup.uk
Wednesday, TBC July 2024		
Waste Service Update	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Simon Anthony, Business Manager - Environmental Services Simon.Anthony@publicagroup.uk
Financial Performance Report 2023-24 Quarter Four	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@publicagroup.uk
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Draft Charging Schedule	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Cllr Charlie Maynard	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk

Publica Transition Update	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Pollard, Interim Programme Director Andrew.Pollard@publicagroup.uk
One-Year Publica Business Plan	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Bill Oddy, Assistant Director for Commercial Development Bill.Oddy@publicagroup.uk
Public Convenience Contract	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Maria Wheatley, Shared Parking Manager maria.wheatley@publicagroup.uk
Wednesday, 4 September 2024		
Development Management Improvement Programme	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Cllr Charlie Maynard	Phil Shaw, Business Manager - Development Management phil.shaw@publicagroup.uk
Responding to external consultations	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Climate Change Strategy	Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter One	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter One	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Wednesday, 2 October 2024		

Supporting market town and village centres	Deputy Leader - Economic Development - Cllr Duncan Enright	Philippa Lowe, Business Manager Localities philippa.lowe@publicagroup.uk
Knights Court Business Case	Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare - Cllr Geoff Saul	Business Manager Assets & Council Priorities - Andrew Turner
Wednesday, 6 November 2024		
District Boundary Review - Council Size Proposal	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk
Annual Monitoring Report	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Cllr Charlie Maynard	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Two	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Wednesday, 4 December 2024		
Affordable Housing Delivery	Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare - Cllr Geoff Saul	Charlie Jackson, Assistant Director - Planning and Sustainability charlie.jackson@publicagroup.uk
Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Two	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Draft Budget 2025 – 2026, Version One	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk

Wednesday, 8 January 2025

Draft Budget 2025 – 2026, Version Two

Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith

Madhu Richards, Director of Finance
madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk**Wednesday, 5 February 2025**

Budget 2025 – 2026

Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith

Madhu Richards, Director of Finance
madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk**Wednesday, 5 March 2025**

Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Three

Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham

Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst
Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk

Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Three

Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith

Madhu Richards, Director of Finance
madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk

Community Grants

Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities - Cllr Rizvana Poole

Andy Barge, Assistant Director for Communities
andy.barge@publicagroup.uk**Wednesday, 16 April 2025 - no items currently scheduled**

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

**DRAFT EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME
INCORPORATING NOTICE OF DECISIONS PROPOSED TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE
SESSION AND NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MAKE A KEY DECISION
1 JUNE 2024 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2024**

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

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

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

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

Key Decisions

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

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

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

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

Matters To Be Considered in Private

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

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

Documents and Queries

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

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

West Oxfordshire District Council: Executive Members 2024/25

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

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

Item for Decision	Key Decision (Yes / No)	Open or Exempt	Decision – Maker	Date of Decision	Executive Member	Lead Officer
Changes to Customer Telephone Access Times	No	Open	Executive	12 Jun 2024	Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects - Cllr Tim Sumner	Michelle Clifford, Business Manager - Customer Experience & Resources michelle.clifford@publicagroup.uk
Approval of Upgrade to WODC Public Space CCTV Provision and Monitoring Arrangements	Yes	Open	Executive	12 Jun 2024	Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare	Andy Barge, Assistant Director for Communities andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Endorsement of The Oxfordshire Councils Charter	No	Open	Executive	12 Jun 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Annual Report of the Director of Public Health	No	Open	Executive	12 Jun 2024	Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities - Cllr Rizvana Poole	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@publicagroup.uk
Service Performance Report 2023-24 Quarter Four	No	Open	Executive	12 Jun 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP)	No	Open	Executive	12 Jun 2024	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Cllr Charlie Maynard	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
West Oxfordshire District Council Productivity Plan 2024	No	Open	Executive	12 Jun 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Bill Oddy, Assistant Director for Commercial Development Bill.Oddy@publicagroup.uk
Letting of Unit at Marriott's Walk	No	Fully Exempt	Executive	12 Jun 2024	Deputy Leader - Economic Development - Cllr Duncan Enright	Jasmine McWilliams, Assets Manager jasmine.mcwilliams@publicagroup.uk

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Draft Charging Schedule	No	Open	Executive	22 Jul 2024	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Cllr Charlie Maynard	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Waste Fleet Purchase	No	Open	Executive	22 Jul 2024	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Bill Oddy, Assistant Director for Commercial Development Bill.Oddy@publicagroup.uk
Financial Performance Report 2023-24 Quarter Four	No	Open	Executive	22 Jul 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@publicagroup.uk
Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan	No	Open	Executive	22 Jul 2024	Deputy Leader - Economic Development - Cllr Duncan Enright	Philippa Lowe, Business Manager Localities philippa.lowe@publicagroup.uk
Local Plan 2041 – Preferred Options Consultation	No	Open	Executive	22 Jul 2024	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Cllr Charlie Maynard	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Our House Project Funding Extension 2024-2026	No	Open	Executive	22 Jul 2024	Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare	Caroline Clissold, Housing Manager caroline.clissold@publicagroup.uk
Strategic Outcomes Planning Model	No	Open	Executive	22 Jul 2024	Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects - Cllr Tim Sumner	Rachel Biles – Strategic Leisure Lead rachel.biles@publicagroup.uk
Publica Transition Update	Yes	Open	Executive Council	22 Jul 2024 24 Jul 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Pollard, Interim Programme Director Andrew.Pollard@publicagroup.uk
One-Year Publica Business Plan	No	Open	Executive	22 Jul 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Bill Oddy, Assistant Director for Commercial Development Bill.Oddy@publicagroup.uk
Public Convenience Contract	Yes	Fully Exempt	Executive	22 Jul 2024	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Maria Wheatley, Shared Parking Manager maria.wheatley@publicagroup.uk

Mid-Point Review of Car Parking Strategy	No	Open	Executive	11 Sep 2024	Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects - Cllr Tim Sumner	Susan Hughes, Business Manager for Support and Advice Susan.Hughes@publicagroup.uk
Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter One	No	Open	Executive	11 Sep 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter One	No	Open	Executive	11 Sep 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Climate Change Strategy	Yes	Open	Executive	11 Sep 2024	Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway Policy	No	Open	Executive	11 Sep 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Knights Court Business Case	No	Open	Executive	9 Oct 2024	Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare - Cllr Geoff Saul	Business Manager Assets & Council Priorities - Andrew Turner andrew.turner@publicagroup.uk
Annual Monitoring Report	No	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development - Cllr Charlie Maynard	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Two	No	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Two	No	Open	Executive	11 Dec 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk

Draft Budget 2025 – 2026, Version One	No	Open	Executive	11 Dec 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Affordable Housing Delivery Update	No	Open	Executive	11 Dec 2024	Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare - Cllr Geoff Saul	Charlie Jackson, Assistant Director - Planning and Sustainability charlie.jackson@publicagroup.uk
Draft Budget 2025 – 2026, Version Two	No	Open	Executive	15 Jan 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Budget 2025 – 2026	No	Open	Executive Council	12 Feb 2025 26 Feb 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Three	No	Open	Executive	12 Mar 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Three	No	Open	Executive	12 Mar 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Key Decisions Delegated to Officers						
Standing Delegation: Settlement of Legal Claims	Yes	Open	Interim Head of Legal Services - Helen Blundell	Before 31 Dec 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham, Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Helen Blundell, Interim Head of Legal Services helen.blundell@fdean.gov.uk

Review and Repurpose Earmarked Reserves to Mitigate against Four Main Financial Risks	No	Open	Director of Finance - Madhu Richards	31 Dec 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Allocation of New Initiatives Funding	Yes	Open	Chief Executive & Head of Paid Service - Giles Hughes	Before 31 Mar 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Allocate Funding from the Project Contingency Earmarked Reserve	Yes	Open	Director of Finance - Madhu Richards	Before 31 Mar 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Other Business for Council Meetings						
Outcome of Member Survey on Meeting Start Times	No	Open	Council	24 Jul 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk
Business and Planning Act 2020 - Update to Pavement Licensing Regime	No	Open	Council	24 Jul 2024	Deputy Leader - Economic Development - Cllr Duncan Enright	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Polling District and Places Review	No	Open	Council	25 Sep 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Sharon Ellison, Electoral Services Manager sharon.ellison@westoxon.gov.uk
District Boundary Review - Council Size Proposal	No	Open	Council	27 Nov 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk
Review of Members' Allowances Scheme.	No	Open	Council	29 Jan 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk