

Public Document Pack



Tuesday, 3 September 2024

Tel: 01993 861000

e-mail: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Executive which will be held in Upper Hall, Chipping Norton Town Hall, High Street, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire OX7 5NA on **Wednesday, 11 September 2024 at 2.30 pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Executive

Councillors: Andy Graham, Duncan Enright, Lidia Arciszewska, Hugo Ashton, Rizvana Poole, Andrew Prosser, Geoff Saul, Alaric Smith and Tim Sumner

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

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

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive any Apologies for Absence from Members of the Executive.
The quorum for the Executive is 3 Members.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations of interest from members of the Executive on any items to be considered at the meeting.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 14)**
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Monday 22 July 2024.
4. **Receipt of Announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council, Members of the Executive or the Chief Executive.
5. **Participation of the Public**
Any member of the public, who is a registered elector in the District, is eligible to ask one question at the meeting, for up to three minutes, of the Leader of the Council, or any Member of the Executive on any issue that affects the district or its people.

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

democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

or by post to:

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

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

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

The appropriate Executive Member will either respond verbally at the meeting or provide a written response which will be included in the minutes of the meeting.

6. **Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
To consider any reports or recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which meets on Wednesday 4 September 2024.
7. **Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee**
There has been no meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee since the last meeting of the Executive.

8. **Proposed Reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the Planning System (Pages 15 - 62)**

Purpose:

To consider a number of proposed changes to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and to agree West Oxfordshire District Council's response to those proposed changes.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Note the content of the report, including the summary overview of the proposed changes to national planning policy;
2. Delegate responsibility to the Planning Policy Manager, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, to agree, finalise and submit the suggested draft consultation response attached at Annex A.

9. **Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter One (Pages 63 - 80)**

Purpose:

To detail the Council's financial performance for Quarter One 2024-2025.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Note the Council's Financial Performance for Quarter One 2024-2025;
2. Recommend to Council that an additional £750,000 should be included in the revised Capital Budget for 2024/25, as set out in 2.25 in the report.

10. **Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter One (Pages 81 - 140)**

Purpose:

To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2024-25 Quarter One (Q1).

Recommendation:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Note the 2024/25 Q1 service performance report.

11. **Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway Policy (Pages 141 - 160)**

Purpose:

To consider and approve a new Policy in respect of the enforcement of Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway.

Recommendation:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Approve the Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway Policy, set out in Annex A.

12. **Allocation of S106 Monies to Witney Town Council to Design, Build and Operate a New Third Generation (3G) Pitch at West Witney Sports Ground (Pages 161 - 166)**

Purpose:

To obtain approval to release S106 funding to Witney Town Council for the design, build and operation of a new third generation (3G) pitch with sports lighting at West Witney Sports Grounds, Witney.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Approve that West Witney Sports Ground is the preferred location for a new 3G pitch, and approves a Section 106 funding spend on the project to be transferred to Witney Town Council to design, build and operate the facility;
2. Delegate authority to Assistant Director for Communities, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Executive Members for Leisure & Major Projects and Finance, to finalise the legal agreement for terms of transfer.

13. **Carterton Leisure Centre Decarbonisation (Pages 167 - 174)**

Purpose:

To review opportunities to apply for funding and deliver the decarbonisation of Carterton Leisure Centre.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Note the review of costs contained within this report and proceed with the preparation of a business case for solar PV and battery storage at Carterton Leisure Centre.
2. Agree that an application for Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme or other grant funding should be made with the agreement of the Director of Finance, if grant terms are subsequently published which provide funding which would mean the Council would not have an ongoing revenue deficit.

14. **Witney & Chipping Norton Air Quality Action Plan (Pages 175 - 182)**

Purpose:

To approve the Witney and Chipping Norton Air Quality Action Plan, prior to publishing on the District Council's website.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Approve the Witney and Chipping Norton Air Quality Action Plan.

15. **Dry Mixed Recycling Bulking and Haulage Contract (Pages 183 - 188)**

Purpose:

To seek approval to enter into a contract with N+P Group for bulking, haulage and processing of recycling collected as part of the residential kerbside and business waste collections.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

1. Agree to enter into a Dry Mixed Recycling Bulking and Haulage Contract with N+P for 2 years from 1 October 2024;
2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Commercial Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and the Director of Finance, to award a Glass Recycling Bulking and Haulage Contract with the preferred bidder for up to 2 years from 1 October 2024, following a procurement exercise.

16. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

If the Executive wishes to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for the Executive to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of the Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities ((Executive Arrangements) Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

17. **Exempt Annex A: Dry Mixed Recycling Bulking and Haulage Contract (Pages 189 - 190)**

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the

Executive.

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB
at 2.00pm on **Monday 22 July 2024.**

PRESENT

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

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Bill Oddy (Assistant Director – Commercial Development), Phil Martin (Assistant Director – Business Services), Andrew Brown (Business Manager – Democratic Services), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer), Caroline Clissold (Business Manager – Housing), Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager), Cheryl Sloan (Business Manager – Business Continuity, Governance and Risk) and Maria Wheatley (Parking Manager).

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

199 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence received from members of the Executive.

200 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by members of the Executive.

201 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 12 June 2024, be agreed by the Executive as a true and accurate record.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 12 June 2024, as a true and accurate record.

202 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, welcomed members and officers to the meeting, and announced that Councillor Hugo Ashton had been appointed to the Executive as Executive Member for Planning. The Executive welcomed Councillor Ashton to the Executive.

The Leader advised that the Council had taken legal advice regarding agenda item 13 (Publica Transition Plan), as to whether officers who were present at the meeting and employed by Publica, who were in scope for Phase I of the transition, would need to declare an interest and/or leave the room whilst the Executive considered the agenda item.

The Leader advised that Publica employees did not have an interest in the context of public law decision making, as they were not the decision maker, however there was a need to avoid the appearance of bias. The Leader stated that Publica employees, who were in scope for Phase I of the transition, would leave the room whilst the Executive considered the agenda

Executive

22/July2024

item. Officers employed by Publica who would advise members in relation to the Publica transition, were permitted to remain in the room, as, in accordance with the viewpoint of the Council's Director of Governance, the need for members to receive answers to questions outweighed the appearance of bias.

The Leader further advised that an annex contained within the final agenda item (Public Convenience Contract) included commercially sensitive information. The Leader advised that if the Executive wished to discuss the information contained within the exempt annex, the meeting would need to agree to enter private session with the appropriate juncture being highlighted when necessary.

203 Participation of the Public

The Executive provided the following answer to the following question:

QI Asked by Andrew Eaton, Associate – JPPC Chartered Town Planners:

Can the Council seek to charge only on new build dwellings and set a nil rate for residential extensions, outbuildings and annexes?

If the Council applied a zero rating to residential extensions, outbuildings and annexes, it would unquestionably save an awful lot of unnecessary CIL work for both officers and applicants/developers, and at a time when one of the main objectives for the country is to provide new homes.

AI Answered by Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:

People who extend their own homes or erect residential annexes within the grounds of their own homes are exempt from having to pay CIL, provided that they meet the criteria laid down in regulations 42A and 42B of the CIL regulations (as amended).

204 Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

205 Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee

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

206 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Draft Charging Schedule

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which recommended Council approve a new draft CIL charging schedule for the purpose of public consultation prior to submission for independent examination.

The Leader stated that the public consultation on the CIL charging schedule would run between 16 August 2024 and 27 September 2024, to allow extra time for responses to be submitted over the summer holiday period, in addition to the statutory 4-week period.

Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager, was invited by the Leader to give an overview of the report. The Planning Policy Manager detailed the robustness of the charging schedule that had been formulated by external consultants, and detailed the simplicity of the charging schedule as set out in the report.

In debate, the Executive highlighted the impact of the Draft Charging Schedule on Town and Parish Councils and how the schedule would impact 'strategic' sites in relation to development. The Planning Policy Manager acknowledged the requirement for discussions with

Executive

22/July2024

Town and Parish Councils surrounding Section 106 agreements as a part of the forthcoming consultation.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillor Julian Cooper queried which parishes would be involved in discussions regarding strategic sites and non-residential developments. The Planning Policy Manager stated that non-residential development exemptions stemmed from a viability report received in relation to the charging schedule, and the consultation would provide opportunities for non-residential development to be examined as part of the schedule. The Planning Policy manager also confirmed that discussions relating to the schedule would take place with Town and Parish Councils who were deemed to be most affected, including Eynsham and Hailey Parish Councils, as well as Chipping Norton & Witney Town Councils.

Councillor Dan Levy urged the Executive to work constructively with external partners, in particular Oxfordshire County Council.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule (DCS) attached at Annex A for the purposes of a six-week period of public consultation in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended);
2. Delegate authority to the Planning Policy Manager to make any minor factual/typographical amendments to the CIL Draft Charging Schedule (DCS) following consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, prior to publication;
3. Recommend to Council to delegate authority to the Planning Policy Manager to submit the CIL charging schedule for independent examination in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) including any minor modifications, following consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, subject to there being no significant issues raised during the six-week consultation period;
4. Ensure that appropriate mechanisms are put in place to enable Town and Parish Councils to meaningfully contribute with regard to potential Section 106 planning obligations when these are being negotiated.

207 Financial Performance Report 2023-24 Quarter Four

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the report, which reported the financial performance of the Council in 2023/24 Quarter Four.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the 2023/24 financial performance;
2. Recommend to Council to carry forward the capital budget of £4,086,328;

Executive

22/July2024

3. Recommend to Council to approve the transfers to and between Earmarked Reserves as detailed in the report.

208 West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which provided an update on the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041, and sought to agree a revised timetable for taking the plan through to adoption.

Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager, was invited by the Leader to give the Executive an overview of the pathway that had been followed to bring the Council to its current position, and highlighted the desired future actions and timetable that would be followed for the Local Plan to be externally examined and adopted.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the content of the report;
2. Approve the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) attached at Annex A, including the following key milestones for the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041:
 - Regulation 18 preferred option consultation – October 2024,
 - Regulation 19 pre-submission draft publication – March 2025,
 - Submission for examination – June 2025.

209 Our House Project Funding Extension 2024-2026

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, introduced the report, which updated members on the 'Our House' project since its inception with a recommendation that funding be extended from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2026.

In seconding the recommendations, Councillor Rizvana Poole affirmed their support for the outcomes of the extension, adding that the previous Council administration had worked hard to provide empowerment and self-worth to residents who would benefit from the project.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve a 2-year funding extension for the Our House project from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2026;
2. Agree to continue with the current Support Provider via waiver;
3. Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, to approve the delegation of any minor amendments to this funding extension;
4. Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, to apply for external funding should any become available;

Executive

22/July2024

5. Recommend to Council that it agrees to utilise Housing Projects Reserves as set out in section 4 of the report.

210 Outside Body Appointments

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which provided a list of appointments to Outside Bodies for the civic year 2024/25.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the appointments to outside bodies as set out in Annex A;
2. Recommend to Council to note the appointments to outside bodies as set out in Annex A;
3. Note the guidance for members who are appointed to outside bodies (Annex B).

211 Publica Transition Plan

Ahead of the agenda item being considered, the Leader stated that Publica employees, who were in scope for Phase I of the transition, would leave the room. Officers employed by Publica who would advise members in relation to the Publica transition, remained in the room, as, in accordance with the viewpoint of the Council's Director of Governance, the need for members to receive answers to questions outweighed the appearance of bias.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which considered a Detailed Transition Plan for Publica. The report also sought the Executive to note its content and approve recommendations therein.

The Leader reaffirmed the Executive's commitment, in partnership with Cabinets at partner Councils, to ensuring that the transition process was as smooth as possible, and that services to residents would not be affected during the transition. The Leader also stated that the Executive remained steadfast in ensuring that the terms and conditions of staff were protected as part of the transition, and paid tribute to the work of those directly involved in the transition project.

By invitation of the Leader, Giles Hughes, Chief Executive, reminded the Executive that the Publica model was not the same as the one that was initially set up in 2017, and the needs and aims of both individual councils and residents had changed over the time that the partnership working model had been in place. The Chief Executive highlighted that generic working practises had changed significantly since Publica's creation in 2017, and the project was underpinned with the Council's future in full view. The project was key to ensuring the Council's ambitious plans were better placed to be achieved as a result of the transition.

The Chief Executive stated that the first phase of the transition would take effect on 1 November 2024, with Council staff employed by Publica in roles which directly supported a sole Council from the partnership, being transferred to the Council's employment via a TUPE process. The Chief Executive highlighted that employment which would fall under the Council's direct ownership would have greater clarity and certainty in the work undertaken by sovereign departments and employees.

Executive

22/July2024

The Chief Executive stated that employees who would remain in shared roles with partner councils (e.g. Cotswold District Council) would be employed by one District Council as appropriate, in keeping with detail contained within the transition plan. The Chief Executive reaffirmed commitments to ensure that any redundancy measures were minimised as much as possible.

In debate, the Executive paid tribute to all staff employed as part of the Publica partnership, highlighting that additional work related to the transition came on top of normal working commitments. The Executive also stated that the transition was part of a wider aspiration of partner councils to return to previous working arrangements, and that each council would play their own role in the transition. The Executive also paid tribute to the work of the transition team to ensure that financial implications pertaining to the transition were fully visible and thorough.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillor Julian Cooper queried the shared working proposals between partner councils and how that would work in practise. The Chief Executive confirmed that initial shared working would remain between partner councils of Publica, and that any potential opportunities for shared working with other councils or organisations would be considered when appropriate.

Councillor Michele Mead queried if any staff training would be undertaken in relation to a move to a non-partner council working arrangement. The Chief Executive stated that appropriate training would be considered for all employees as appropriate and would be built into further transition plans and then implemented at the appropriate juncture.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to recommend to Full Council to:

1. Approve the implementation of Phase I of the Publica Transition on the basis of the Detailed Transition Plan;
2. Delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council the decision to deal with any final detail matters arising from the Detailed Transition Plan;
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance in liaison with the Leader to update the constitution by making any consequential changes required as a result of Phase I of the Publica Transition;
4. Carry out a budget re-basing for the 2026/7 financial year so that the funding provided to Publica is proportionate to the services received.

Officers employed by Publica Group, who had left the room ahead of the agenda item being considered, returned to the Council Chamber.

212

One-Year Publica Business Plan

Giles Hughes, Chief Executive, introduced the report by invitation of the Leader, which considered the Draft Publica Business Plan 2024-25 produced by the Publica Board, in consultation with Directors and Shareholders, and recommended that the Leader (as Shareholder Representative) approve the plan.

Executive

22/July2024

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the 2024/25 Publica Business Plan;
2. Note that the Leader of the Council, as shareholder representative, will approve the Publica Business Plan 2024-2025 in due course.

213 Public Convenience Contract

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment, introduced the report, which considered whether to agree a contract award for the cleaning and maintenance of public conveniences.

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

The Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Award the contract for cleaning and maintenance of public conveniences to the preferred contractor.

214 Exclusion of Press and Public

The item was not considered at the meeting.


215 Exempt Annex B – Public Convenience Contract – Contract Award

The exempt annex was considered as part of the public consideration of the Public Convenience Contract.

The Meeting closed at 3.02pm.

CHAIR

This page is intentionally left blank

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>PROPOSED REFORMS TO THE NPPF AND OTHER CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Hugo Ashton – Executive Member for Planning Email: hugo.ashton@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves – Planning Policy Manager Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves – Planning Policy Manager Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To consider a number of proposed changes to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and to agree West Oxfordshire District Council's response to those proposed changes.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Draft Consultation Response</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the content of the report, including the summary overview of the proposed changes to national planning policy; 2. Delegate responsibility to the Planning Policy Manager, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, to agree, finalise and submit the suggested draft consultation response attached at Annex A.
<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>

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The proposed national planning policy changes are the subject of public consultation from 30 July 2024 – 24 September 2024. The purpose of this report is to consider the proposed changes and to agree the District Council's response to the consultation.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** The Government is consulting on a series of proposed changes to national planning policy.
- 1.2** This includes a number of specific changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and a number of broader reforms relating to planning fees, local plan intervention and the thresholds used for determining applications under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime.
- 1.3** The consultation is running from 30 July – 24 September 2024 and the Government has indicated that a new version of the NPPF will be published before the end of the year.
- 1.4** The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the proposed changes together with an initial Officer response, highlighting, where possible, any particular implications for West Oxfordshire.
- 1.5** Annex A then provides a more detailed suggested draft response to each of the specific questions included within the consultation document.

2. BACKGROUND CONTEXT

- 2.1** In terms of the overall rationale for the proposed changes, the preamble to the consultation reinforces the following key points:
 - Sustained economic growth is needed and this will be delivered through a focus on three pillars; stability, investment and reform.
 - The planning system is seen as being in decisive need of reform, with the Chancellor’s speech of 8 July 2024 having committed to consulting on changes to the NPPF to take a different, growth-focused approach.
 - The proposed changes are vital to delivering the Government’s commitments on economic growth including the construction of 1.5 million new homes.

3. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY CHANGES

- 3.1** The proposed changes fall into a number of broad topics as follows:
 - Housing;
 - Previously developed (brownfield) land;
 - Green Belt;
 - Design;
 - Infrastructure;
 - Delivering community needs;
 - Green energy and the Environment;
 - Plan-making;
 - Planning fees and cost recovery.
- 3.2** Set out below is a summary overview of the most significant changes proposed under each topic. This should be read in conjunction with the full consultation proposals which are available to view [online](#).

Housing

- 3.3** Many of the proposed changes relate to housing – reflecting the importance being placed by Government on securing economic growth by building 1.5 million new homes.
- 3.4** The most significant change relates to the use of the ‘standard method’ for assessing local housing need.
- 3.5** Members will be aware that the standard method is essentially a formula that is used to establish the minimum number of new homes needed in any particular area. The current formula is based on household projections which are then adjusted to take account of affordability. In some circumstances that figure is capped to limit the increase, and finally an urban uplift (35%) is applied to some larger urban areas.
- 3.6** The consultation proposes a completely new standard method which is based on a set percentage of an area’s existing housing stock (0.8%) and then applies a stronger affordability multiplier to increase the baseline in proportion to price pressures. No cap or urban uplift is applied.
- 3.7** This new method is intended to be more ambitious in relation to housing growth, provide greater certainty, achieve a more balanced distribution of homes across the country and be easier to understand and apply.
- 3.8** The table below illustrates the impact of the proposed change on the level of housing need across Oxfordshire.

Local Authority	Current standard method	Proposed standard method	Average annual net additions (2020 – 2023)
Cherwell	706	1,095	1,242
Oxford	762	1,051	437
South Oxfordshire	579	1,179	1,010
Vale of White Horse	633	937	1,162
West Oxfordshire	549	889	865

- 3.9** It is evident that the new standard method significantly increases the level of housing need across Oxfordshire. For West Oxfordshire, the need increases from 549 homes per year to 889 homes per year. Over the 20-year period of the proposed new West Oxfordshire Local Plan (2021 – 2041) this equates to a total of 17,780 new homes compared to 10,980 under the current standard method.
- 3.10** Other important changes include the fact that the standard method will no longer be an ‘advisory starting point’ – rather it will be mandatory and there will no ‘exceptional circumstances’ for departing from it.

- 3.11** The consultation also makes it clear that Councils will be expected to make *‘all efforts to allocate land in line with their housing need as per the standard method’*. This is particularly important because whilst a local authority may choose to set a lower housing requirement through their local plan, this would need to be robustly evidenced and justified.
- 3.12** In particular, Councils would need to demonstrate they have taken all possible steps to meet their housing need in full, including optimising densities, sharing need with neighbouring authorities, and reviewing Green Belt boundaries, before a lower housing requirement will be considered.
- 3.13** The consultation invites views on a number of other important housing-related changes including a reinstatement of the requirement for Councils to continually demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.
- 3.14** In addition, the requirement to add a 5% buffer to the 5-year supply calculation is to be reinstated (increased to 20% in areas of significant under-delivery) and past over-supply will no longer be able to be taken into account.
- 3.15** Other housing related changes include:
- Increased emphasis on achieving higher densities in urban areas with reference to consideration of ‘local character’ being removed as being overly restrictive;
 - A shift away from District-wide design codes and towards more localised design codes, masterplans and guides for areas of greatest change and potential;
 - The presumption in favour of sustainable development to be amended to clarify that the ‘tilted balance’ is engaged when policies relating to the supply of land are out of date and to ensure that location, design and the provision of affordable homes are particular considerations when any adverse impacts of proposed development are weighed against the harms;
 - Increased emphasis on strategic planning across LPA boundaries including the use of Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs) with particular reference to housing needs, strategic infrastructure and building economic and climate resilience;
- 3.16** With specific regard to affordable housing provision, the consultation places an increased emphasis on social rented housing including a requirement for Councils to specify the minimum proportion of social rented homes needed.
- 3.17** The current requirement for 10% of affordable homes on major sites to comprise affordable home ownership options will be removed and will instead be a matter for local decision-making. Similarly, the current requirement for 25% First Homes will also become a matter of local discretion.
- 3.18** Additional support is proposed to be given to mixed tenure sites in the interests of accelerating delivery and creating more diverse communities. The consultation also seeks views on how the current requirement for 10% of a Local Plan’s housing requirement to be met on smaller sites of less than 1 hectare could be strengthened and clarified.

3.19 Specific reference is proposed to be made to ‘looked after children’ in the context of those groups whose housing needs should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. Support for community-led housing is to be further strengthened by expanding the definition of such development and by removing the size-limit for community-led exception sites where an alternative limit is established through the Local Plan.

Officer Response

3.20 Given the Government’s stated ambitions around economic growth and the delivery of new homes, it is unsurprising that many of the proposed national policy changes relate to housing.

3.21 A number of the proposed changes are supported in principle, including the increased emphasis on social rented and community-led housing, greater local discretion on the provision of First Homes and other affordable home ownership options and the increased drive towards more tenure diverse communities.

3.22 Also supported is the push towards more strategic planning which is considered to be an effective tool for dealing with important cross boundary issues such as housing, jobs and infrastructure. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 was a good example of the merits of such an approach.

3.23 The proposals around achieving higher densities in urban areas are sensible although Officers do not consider it necessary to remove the reference to ‘local character’ as the current NPPF wording is not felt to be overly restrictive. It is perfectly possible to achieve higher density development whilst respecting local character – indeed this should be a pre-requisite of such development.

3.24 Also supported is the move away from District-wide design codes and towards more local-level documents in areas of potential change and opportunity. This is of particular relevance to key locations such as Salt Cross Garden Village.

3.25 The clarification provided on the application of the ‘tilted balance’ is welcome, however there are concerns that the additional safeguards on location, design and affordable housing will not be sufficient to offset the inevitable increase in speculative applications and planning appeals that will ensue upon the introduction of the new standard method.

3.26 It is notable that the consultation document itself acknowledges that more Councils will be brought into the scope of the ‘tilted balance’ in the short-term and simply inserting some additional text on relatively subjective matters including location and design are unlikely to provide much of a safeguard.

3.27 This leads onto the more substantive concerns of Officers which revolve around the proposed standard method and its mandatory application by all local planning authorities. Whilst Officers accept that such an approach would provide greater certainty (insofar as there would no longer be any debate about what constitutes ‘exceptional circumstances’) the impact of the new method will be significant and will inevitably pave the way for a very difficult period of speculative planning applications and planning by appeal.

- 3.28** In basing the calculation on a proportion of an area's existing dwelling stock, the approach seems arbitrary compared to the current method which takes into account anticipated household formation. Whilst the number of existing dwellings is a fixed, known quantity, it is not clear why this should be seen as a key determinant for the number of new homes that are needed in the future.
- 3.29** In addition, the proposed affordability multiplier serves to greatly inflate the level of identified housing need to potentially unachievable levels whilst in reality, doing very little to influence the cost of market housing to buy or rent. New-build homes make up such a small percentage of the overall housing stock, that simply saturating the market with new build homes will have very little impact on overall affordability.
- 3.30** Linked to the concerns around the introduction of the standard method, Officers have strong concerns around the related issue of 5-year housing land supply. As the proposals currently stand, many Councils, including West Oxfordshire, will not be able to demonstrate a 5-year supply and thus the 'tilted balance' of the NPPF will be engaged as soon as the new NPPF is published.
- 3.31** This will inevitably lead to increased pressure for development in inappropriate and unsustainable locations and will diminish the ability of LPAs to resist it.
- 3.32** This will be exacerbated by the intention to bring the new standard method in immediately and by reinstating the requirements to annually demonstrate a 5-year supply and apply a 5% or 20% buffer to the calculation.
- 3.33** If the new standard method is introduced, it should be introduced on a phased basis to enable Councils to properly plan for it in a sustainable and co-ordinated manner.
- 3.34** With regards to the calculation of 5-year housing land supply, there should be no requirement to annually report this, provided that the Local Plan is less than 5-years' old, or where the Council is consistently achieving housing delivery levels above identified needs.
- 3.35** No buffer should be required given the significant step-change in housing need arising from the new standard method and consideration should also be given to the definition of 'deliverable' housing land such that outline planning permissions and local plan allocations can be more readily counted within the 5-year supply period.
- 3.36** Moreover, the application of the tilted balance and calculation of housing land supply should recognise the fact that the number of housing completions coming forward within a 5-year period is beyond the control of local planning authorities and is effectively at the behest of landowners and developers.
- 3.37** A revised measure should be considered based on the number of permissions granted rather than the number of homes expected to be completed. This would more fully reflect the role, responsibility and degree of influence which LPAs have.

Previously developed (brownfield) land

- 3.38** The consultation includes a number of changes which are intended to further encourage the re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land. In short, the NPPF is to be amended such that development involving brownfield land is to be generally regarded as acceptable in principle.
- 3.39** With specific regard to the re-use of brownfield land in the Green Belt, the text is to be amended to make it clear that such development will not be considered inappropriate provided it would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 3.40** Views are also sought on whether the current definition of brownfield land should be expanded to include hardstanding and glasshouses without compromising the needs of the horticultural sector.

Officer Response

- 3.41** The current NPPF already lends significant support to the re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land. The proposed changes are intended to further reinforce this and are therefore welcomed in principle. Although the wording relating to development in the Green Belt is proposed to be more flexible, the main safeguard of preserving the openness of the Green Belt remains in place.
- 3.42** With regard to the definition of brownfield land, Officers have a slight concern the inclusion of glasshouses could lead to increased pressure for the re-development of such sites even when they are in active use. As such, it is suggested that the definition should only be applied to sites that are no longer in active use or capable of being brought back into active use.

Green Belt

- 3.43** A number of key changes are proposed in relation to Green Belt policy.
- 3.44** Importantly, where a local authority is unable to meet its housing, commercial or other needs after fully considering all opportunities to make effective and efficient use of brownfield land and wider opportunities, it should undertake a Green Belt review.
- 3.45** In undertaking any such review, the authority should apply a sequential approach which prioritises the release of previously developed (brownfield) land, followed by other 'grey belt' sites and then, higher performing Green Belt sites.
- 3.46** The consultation includes a proposed definition of 'grey belt' land which is land within the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and any other parcels and/or areas of Green Belt land that make a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes.
- 3.47** Whether land can be judged to be making a 'limited contribution' will depend on the following considerations:
- Not strongly perform against any Green Belt purpose; and
 - Have at least one of the following features:
 - Land containing substantial built development or which is fully enclosed by built form;

- Land which makes no or very little contribution to preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- Land which is dominated by urban land uses, including physical developments;
- Land which contributes little to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns

3.48 Importantly, in recognition of the fact that it will take time to reflect the above through local plan preparation, a further amendment to the NPPF is proposed to take more immediate effect through the development management process.

3.49 Specifically, a new paragraph is to be inserted such that where a local planning authority cannot demonstrate adequate housing delivery, or there is unmet commercial or other need, development within the Green Belt will not be considered inappropriate provided that it is on sustainable 'grey belt' land and would not fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole.

3.50 Such development would be subject to a number of 'golden rules' being met including:

- in the case of residential schemes, at least 50% affordable housing, with an appropriate proportion being Social Rent, subject to viability;
- Necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and
- The provision of new, or improvements to existing, local green spaces with residential schemes having to ensure new residents are able to access good quality green space.

3.51 Notably, the consultation emphasises that the proposed changes to Green Belt policy are intended to support the release of land to address unmet needs for traveller sites.

Officer Response

3.52 On the whole, the proposals are supported. Notwithstanding the concerns outlined earlier in relation to the new standard method, if it is introduced and levels of identified housing need increase as anticipated, it is entirely appropriate to expect local authorities to undertake a Green Belt review before they conclude that they are unable to meet their housing need in full.

3.53 Inevitably across large areas of Green Belt there will be parcels of land that differ in their existing use, character and quality and thus the contribution that they make to the function and purpose of the Green Belt. Clearly some areas of land may be suitable for development and the proposed sequential approach which seeks to prioritise brownfield land first, followed by other 'grey belt' land and then, higher performing Green Belt land, is sensible.

3.54 The specific references made to Green Belt land release helping to address the unmet needs for traveller sites is particularly welcome.

3.55 However, Officers are concerned that the proposed definition of 'grey belt' land is very broad in referring to 'previously developed land and *any other parcels and/or areas of Green Belt land that make a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes*'.

- 3.56** Although the consultation seeks to define how a ‘limited contribution’ could be judged, the wording is quite vague and open to interpretation. The likely outcome is that additional parcels of land will be actively promoted with developers arguing that they make a limited contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, that they meet the Government’s proposed ‘golden rules’ and that the Council does not have a 5-year housing land supply.
- 3.57** In short, the proposals appear to ‘open the door’ too widely to speculative development within the Green Belt. As such, the proposed changes should be limited to plan-making and should not applied with immediate effect to the development management process.
- 3.58** There also appears to be a contradiction in some of the proposed wording. For instance, at paragraph 151, the proposed NPPF text refers to previously developed land which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, whereas paragraph 152 in referring to grey belt land (which includes previously developed land) requires development not to undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole. The proposed definition of grey belt land then refers to land which makes a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes.
- 3.59** The text should therefore be checked for consistency and to avoid any contradiction it may be sensible to make a clearer distinction between previously developed land and other ‘grey belt’ land.

Design

- 3.60** Some minor changes are proposed in relation to design – specifically, it is proposed that all current references in the NPPF to the concept of ‘beauty’ and ‘beautiful’ buildings and places are removed as they are overly subjective and difficult to define.
- 3.61** A minor amendment is also proposed in relation to the use of the National Model Design Code as the primary basis for preparing and using local design codes.

Officer Response

- 3.62** The proposed changes are minor in nature and raise no concerns. Officers agree that the terms ‘beauty’ and ‘beautiful’ are overly subjective and could usefully be deleted.

Infrastructure

- 3.63** A number of changes to the NPPF are proposed in relation to the provision of infrastructure to help grow the economy. Specifically, wording changes are proposed to provide particular support for lab space, gigafactories (battery cell manufacturing), digital infrastructure (e.g. data centres) and freight and logistics.
- 3.64** The consultation also seeks views on whether digital infrastructure projects should be integrated into the NSIP (nationally significant infrastructure projects) regime.

Officer Response

- 3.65** The proposed changes are generally supported. The issue of whether digital infrastructure projects should be classed as nationally significant infrastructure projects and thus considered under the NSIP regime rather than via the traditional planning application route will largely

depend on the scale and thresholds used but in principle, it would seem to be sensible for larger digital infrastructure projects to be considered via this route.

Delivering Community Needs

- 3.66** A number of important changes are proposed in relation to community needs.
- 3.67** Firstly, increased emphasis is to be placed on the importance of facilitating new, expanded, or upgraded public service infrastructure, with such considerations to be afforded significant weight when development proposals are considered.
- 3.68** The consultation also places an increased emphasis on the provision of a sufficient number of early-years and post-16 education places.
- 3.69** In relation to transport planning, the consultation includes proposed amendments to the NPPF to emphasise the importance of taking a ‘vision-led’ approach, whereby local authorities set a vision for how places should be and then design the transport and behavioural interventions needed to help achieve that vision. This represents a purposeful shift away from the traditional approach of ‘predict and provide’ based on past trends and projections.
- 3.70** The consultation also seeks general views on how national planning policy could better support health and well-being.

Officer Response

- 3.71** The proposed changes are supported, in particular the increased emphasis placed on the provision of supporting infrastructure – which is a key concern often raised through local plan consultation.
- 3.72** Also supported is the increased emphasis on early years and post-16 education places and the proposed shift towards a more vision-led approach to transport planning.
- 3.73** In Oxfordshire, the County Council’s Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) is already rooted in a move away from ‘predict and provide’ and towards ‘decide and provide’ and the proposed changes are entirely consistent with this approach.

Green Energy and the Environment

- 3.74** A number of important changes are proposed in relation to green energy and the environment more generally.
- 3.75** Firstly, in relation to on-shore wind, changes to the NPPF are proposed to remove the current restrictions placed on such development compared to other forms of renewable energy.
- 3.76** It is also proposed that on-shore wind proposals would be re-integrated into the NSIP regime and thus, beyond a certain scale, will not be a matter for local authorities to determine directly. Specifically, the consultation proposes that the NSIP threshold for on-shore wind generating schemes should be increased from 50 megawatts (MW) to 100 MW. An increase for solar projects from 50 MW to 150 MW is also proposed.
- 3.77** Secondly, the text of the NPPF is to be amended to give increased weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and to set a stronger expectation that authorities proactively identify sites for renewable and low carbon development when producing local plans.

- 3.78** Other proposed changes include the provision of greater clarity over which nationally important water infrastructure projects should fall within the NSIP regime, minor changes to the NPPF text to reflect the new name for legally designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – ‘National Landscapes’ and the removal of text relating to best and most versatile agricultural land being considered alongside other policies when deciding which sites are most appropriate for development.
- 3.79** The consultation also invites general views on how national planning policy could do more to address climate change mitigation and adaptation including in relation to flood risk management.

Officer Response

- 3.80** With regard to the issue of on-shore wind, the proposed changes to footnotes 58 and 59 of the NPPF, which effectively ease the current restrictions placed on such development, are supported.
- 3.81** Wind energy has a key role to play in facilitating a transition towards a net zero carbon future and whilst often controversial, there is no reason for such proposals to be considered any differently to other forms of renewable energy. The proposed change effectively introduces a more level playing field and is thus supported.
- 3.82** The principle of large-scale onshore wind projects being considered through the nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIP) regime is also supported. The proposed threshold of 100MW appears reasonable, however the significant resource implications of local authorities having to deal with planning applications falling below this threshold must be recognised, along with the resource implications of dealing with very large NSIP projects – particularly for host authorities.
- 3.83** Also supported is the proposed wording change to paragraph 164 of the NPPF which will help to ensure that all local authorities support planning applications for renewable and low carbon energy development as well as the proposed wording change to paragraph 160 which sets a stronger expectation for local authorities to pro-actively identify suitable sites rather than relying on criteria-based policies.
- 3.84** Officers are however concerned about the proposed changes relating to best and most versatile agricultural land which effectively seek to revoke a previous change made to the NPPF in December 2023 which was intended to ensure that the availability of agricultural land used for food production is considered alongside other policies in the NPPF, when deciding which sites are most appropriate for development.
- 3.85** The protection of best and most versatile agricultural land is an important consideration and Officers can see no reason why this should not be explicitly referenced as a factor to be taken into account by local authorities when determining which sites should come forward for development.
- 3.86** Finally, Officers agree that it would be helpful to provide greater clarity over which strategic water infrastructure projects should fall within the scope of the NSIP regime and this aspect of the consultation is therefore supported.

Plan-Making

- 3.87** The consultation proposals include a number of proposed changes to plan-making including the criteria used to determine when central Government may intervene and the transitional arrangements that will apply to local plans currently in preparation such as the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041.
- 3.88** With regards to central Government intervention, views are sought on whether the current criteria for intervention should be updated or removed, the rationale being that future intervention should be swifter and more proportionate, justified by local circumstances and providing the Secretary of State with greater flexibility.
- 3.89** In terms of transitional arrangements, the consultation usefully clarifies that the proposed changes to the system of plan-making previously set out under the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act will be introduced from summer or autumn 2025.
- 3.90** However, in recognition of the significant implications of the various national policy changes set out in this current consultation, the deadline for submitting local plans has been extended from June 2025 to December 2026, meaning that all local plans submitted by December 2026 will be examined under the current plan-making system.
- 3.91** The transitional arrangements stipulate that any emerging Local Plan that has already been submitted for examination will continue to be examined under the current NPPF. This will apply for example to Oxford City's Local Plan 2040 which is currently at examination.
- 3.92** Those plans that have been formally published under Regulation 19 but not yet submitted for examination can progress to examination under the current NPPF provided there is a gap of no more than 200 dwellings per annum between their proposed housing requirement and their revised local housing need under the new standard method. If the gap is more than 200 dwellings per annum, they will be required to revise their plan in line with the new NPPF before submitting for examination.
- 3.93** Other Local Plans that are at a relatively early stage and have not yet reached the formal Regulation 19 stage (such as the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041) should be progressed as quickly as possible against the revised version of the NPPF.

Officer Response

- 3.94** With regards to the proposed changes to current Local Plan intervention criteria, Officers have no firm view on this. Clearly in some instances it will be appropriate for central Government to intervene in respect of plan-making to ensure timely progress is made.
- 3.95** The most important issue is that any such intervention criteria must be clear and reasonable so that the local authority is given every opportunity to remedy the situation themselves before matters are effectively taken out of their hands.

Planning Fees and Cost Recovery

- 3.96** The consultation proposals include a number of proposed changes to current planning application fees as well as the possible introduction of new fees for certain types of application that do not currently attract a charge.
- 3.97** In short, it is proposed that the current fee for householder applications will increase from £258 to £528 (the rationale being that the current fee is inadequate for recovering the cost of processing such applications).
- 3.98** In addition, more general views are sought on whether there are any other types of application (e.g. prior approval) where a fee increase should be sought to better reflect the cost incurred by the Council as well as whether there are any other applications that do not currently attract a fee but should do (e.g. listed building consent).
- 3.99** Views are also being sought on the potential localisation of planning fees whereby they would be set locally rather than nationally as is currently the case. Two possible models for localised fee setting are identified including 'full localisation' where no national fees would exist and all local authorities would have to set their own fees (capped so as to not exceed cost recovery) and 'local variation' whereby nationally set 'default' fees would remain in place but local authorities would have the option to vary these within prescribed limits if they wished to do so.
- 3.100** In addition, views are sought on the extent to which planning fees might reasonably be increased to cover the costs of wider planning services (e.g. conservation and design).
- 3.101** In addition to the various potential changes to planning fees outlined above, views are also being sought on how local authorities could better recover the costs of dealing with planning applications that are dealt with under the NSIP regime (e.g. Botley West Solar Farm).
- 3.102** Currently, any such cost recovery is dealt with on an informal basis for example through a planning performance agreement (PPA). Views are sought on whether 'host authorities' (both lower and upper tier in two-tier authority areas such as Oxfordshire) should be able to charge a fee directly to the applicant. To provide flexibility, host authorities would be able to continue to rely on a PPA to recover their costs if they wished to. Any costs incurred by neighbouring authorities (which will generally be much less) would continue to be recovered via a PPA.

Officer Response

- 3.103** The proposed increase to householder application fees is supported as this will better reflect the true costs of dealing with such applications. Also supported in principle is the need to further explore fees being charged on other types of application that do not currently attract a charge. These can in some instances require a good proportion of Officer time and resource and so it would seem appropriate that some form of charge is applied. For this reason, Officers also support in principle the extension of fees to cover the costs of wider service input e.g. heritage and design.
- 3.104** In terms of the localisation of planning fees, Officers have concerns that this could lead to considerable variation across the country. Conversely, nationally set fees provide greater certainty for all parties and consistency of approach. If a localised model were to be

introduced, this should be on the basis of the 'local variation' model which has been identified whereby nationally set default fees would remain in place but with some scope for local variation.

3.105 With regard to the recovery of costs for projects dealt with under the NSIP regime, the proposals are fully supported. It is essential that local authorities are able to properly recover the costs incurred and setting an application fee would provide certainty to all parties, whilst retaining the flexibility to rely on a planning performance agreement if preferred.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 Subject to the agreement of Members, the draft consultation response attached at Annex A will be submitted to Government. The Government has indicated that a revised version of the NPPF will be published before the end of 2024. The other, wider planning reforms outlined in the consultation are anticipated to follow.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 The District Council could choose not to respond to the consultation but that would represent a missed opportunity to input into some significant proposed changes to national policy that will have a direct impact on West Oxfordshire including the preparation of its new Local Plan to 2041.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The report raises no direct financial implications. Indirectly, there may be some additional costs associated with the preparation of the Local Plan as evidence needs to be re-worked, updated and commissioned to take account of the potential increase in housing need arising from the new standard method.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The report raises no direct legal implications.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 The proposed introduction of the new standard method will result in a significant increase in housing need for West Oxfordshire. In the absence of any transitional arrangements, as soon as this is introduced through the new NPPF (expected before the end of 2024) the Council will be under increased pressure from speculative development as a result of not being able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.

8.2 There is also a significant risk that the timetable for preparing the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 will need to be amended to enable further work to be undertaken as a result of the proposed increase in housing need.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** The consultation invites views on whether the proposals contained therein have any particular implications for businesses, or any differential impact on persons with a relevant protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010 compared to persons without that protected characteristic.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** A number of aspects of the consultation relate to the climate and ecological emergencies, with the proposals, in the main, seeking to strengthen national policy in this respect.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

(END)

Annex A

Question 1: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made to paragraph 61?

Yes, the proposed changes will help to clarify the purpose and status of the standard method and will avoid unnecessary debates about what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances' for departing from it.

We do however have concerns about the rationale for the new standard method and the significant increase in housing need that results from its application (see responses to Questions 15 – 19).

Question 2: Do you agree that we should remove reference to the use of alternative approaches to assessing housing need in paragraph 61 and the glossary of the NPPF?

Yes, this will help to avoid unnecessary debate at examination. We do however have concerns about the rationale for the new standard method and the significant increase in housing need that results from its application (see responses to Questions 15 – 19).

Question 3: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made on the urban uplift by deleting paragraph 62?

No. Larger urban areas should be expected to provide a proportionately larger number of new homes as they are the most sustainable locations for new development with the largest range of services and facilities and ability to travel by non-car modes of transport.

The proposed changes to the standard method result in an increase in many rural areas and a decrease in larger urban areas which is entirely counter-intuitive. In essence, it is imposing the exportation of unmet housing needs from larger urban centres and circumventing the duty to co-operate.

Question 4: Do you agree that we should reverse the December 2023 changes made on character and density and delete paragraph 130?

Yes. The concept of higher density development and safeguarding the character of an area are not mutually exclusive. As currently drafted, paragraph 130 infers that they are. Balancing the design merits of a scheme in terms of density and character of the surrounding built form is a standard planning consideration and doesn't warrant being singled out within the NPPF as a particular consideration.

Question 5: Do you agree that the focus of design codes should move towards supporting spatial visions in local plans and areas that provide the greatest opportunities for change such as greater density, in particular the development of large new communities?

Yes. Design Coding across a larger (e.g. authority-wide) area is often difficult and the take up of such documents appears to have been poor. Whilst Design Guides can be prepared

successfully on a larger-scale basis, design codes are more effectively focused on smaller geographical areas including areas of significant opportunity for change.

Question 6: Do you agree that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be amended as proposed?

No. Whilst the proposed clarification regarding which policies may be considered out of date in relation to the 'tilted balance' (i.e. those relating to the supply of land) is helpful and supported, the amendments made in relation to the location and design of development and the provision of affordable housing are considered to represent inadequate 'safeguards' against the proliferation of speculative applications that are likely to ensue upon introduction of the new standard method.

Simply identifying location, design and affordable housing provision as particular considerations to be taken into account when weighing up the potential harms of development against the benefits, will not help local authorities that are drawn immediately into the position of having a significant housing land supply shortfall.

Question 7: Do you agree that all local planning authorities should be required to continually demonstrate 5 years of specific, deliverable sites for decision making purposes, regardless of plan status?

No. Once a Local Plan has been adopted, there should be no requirement to have to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Instead, they should be required to report on the progress of allocated sites and larger planning permissions as part of their Annual Monitoring Report.

Only where it is apparent that the anticipated housing trajectory is falling behind schedule and that an insufficient number of homes will be delivered within a 5-year period, should the LPA be required to publish an updated housing land supply position statement in order to quantify the extent of any such shortfall so it is able to be weighed in the balance with all other relevant material considerations.

Question 8: Do you agree with our proposal to remove wording on national planning guidance in paragraph 77 of the current NPPF?

No. Housing delivery is cyclical by nature and there will inevitably be periods of over and under-supply. If there is a particular period of over-delivery, it seems counter intuitive that a local authority could then find itself unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of land without being able to reference the past over-delivery in some way. Where is the incentive to encourage LPAs to permit new development if any periods of over-delivery are simply excluded from any future calculation?

Question 9: Do you agree that all local planning authorities should be required to add a 5% buffer to their 5-year housing land supply calculations?

No. The proposed new standard method results in a very significant increase in housing need for many local authorities. The consultation acknowledges that the result of this will be many authorities being unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply and thus the tilted balance of the NPPF will be engaged.

In the absence of any phased introduction of the proposed standard method, to apply a 5% buffer on top, will simply exacerbate the situation and lead to an increase in speculative applications and planning by appeal. Many local authorities will quickly find themselves having to then apply a 20% buffer and will end up trapped in a cycle of never being able to demonstrate a 5-year supply and take a sustainable plan-led approach to development. Speculative development will become rife and local authorities will face significant resource implications as they are drawn into an increasing number of costly appeal situations.

That could then in turn lead to greater central Government intervention depending on the proportion of appeals that are upheld and a loss of control at the local authority level.

Question 10: If yes, do you agree that 5% is an appropriate buffer, or should it be a different figure?

No buffer should be applied to the 5-year housing land supply requirement given the significant increase in housing need associated with the new standard method.

Question 11: Do you agree with the removal of policy on Annual Position Statements?

Yes. We are not aware of any local authorities that have taken up this opportunity and so it would seem sensible to remove the requirement.

Question 12: Do you agree that the NPPF should be amended to further support effective co-operation on cross boundary and strategic planning matters?

Yes. It is essential that national policy requires effective cross-boundary co-operation on strategically important matters and it is helpful that paragraph 24 is proposed to make specific reference to housing, infrastructure and economic and climate resilience.

The proposed introduction of paragraph 27 is supported in principle, however it should be recognised that the investment plans of infrastructure providers do not always align with local plan timescales and priorities. It may be more appropriate for the text to require alignment with local plan infrastructure evidence rather than local plan policies themselves.

Question 13: Should the tests of soundness be amended to better assess the soundness of strategic scale plans or proposals?

No, but the text of the NPPF should be amended to clarify that Inspector's will apply the tests of soundness on a proportionate basis taking account of the strategic nature of the plan or proposals being examined.

The current text refers to the tests of soundness being applied proportionately in relation to non-strategic policies and could easily be amended to cover strategic policies too.

Question 14: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

The District Council supports the use of spatial development strategies and welcome the reference made to such strategies being potentially rolled out beyond mayoral areas. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 was a good example of the merits of such an approach before a decision was taken to cease further progress with it.

Question 15: Do you agree that Planning Practice Guidance should be amended to specify that the appropriate baseline for the standard method is housing stock rather than the latest household projections?

No. Whilst using a proportion of the existing household stock provides a known, fixed quantity, there appears to be no rationale provided as to why this is the starting point under the new standard method. It will simply penalise more populated areas including those that have already absorbed significant growth in recent years such as Oxfordshire.

Conversely, household projections provide an informed forecast of future household formation based on a range of factors including migration flows. They are a much more appropriate starting point and should be retained.

If there are concerns around the use of such projections, consideration should be given as to how the outputs could be improved before they are discarded completely.

Question 16: Do you agree that using the workplace-based median house price to median earnings ratio, averaged over the most recent 3 year period for which data is available to adjust the standard method's baseline, is appropriate?

No. The proposed methodology is geared too strongly towards housing affordability, resulting in an unreasonable upward push to overall housing need. This is particularly exacerbated in areas of high house prices such as Oxfordshire.

Whilst increasing the overall supply of new homes will increase to an extent the number of new affordable homes provided, in reality, because new builds make up such a small percentage of the overall housing stock, it will do very little, if anything, to suppress the overall level of house prices through supply and demand type arguments.

Whilst we fully recognise that issues of housing affordability need to be addressed, using it as a reason to inflate overall housing need is simply not reasonable or sustainable. In Oxfordshire, there has been a significant increase in the number of new homes built since 2014 and yet house price affordability has worsened rather than improved.

Question 17: Do you agree that affordability is given an appropriate weighting within the proposed standard method?

No – see response to Question 16. It is being given too significant a weighting which is pushing the overall level of identified housing need to unreasonable and unsustainable levels. For a rural authority like West Oxfordshire, delivering 889 new homes every year consistently over the period of our new Local Plan to 2041 would represent a huge if not unachievable challenge.

Question 18: Do you consider the standard method should factor in evidence on rental affordability? If so, do you have any suggestions for how this could be incorporated into the model?

The rental market is becoming increasingly significant in many areas and so it would seem sensible that rental affordability should be factored into any calculation of housing need. We have no specific suggestions as to how this should be done. If it is incorporated in the final methodology, it will be essential that it does not further inflate overall levels of identified housing need for the reasons outlined in response to Questions 16 and 17.

Question 19: Do you have any additional comments on the proposed method for assessing housing needs?

The concept of an agreed 'standardised' method for assessing housing need is welcome. In the absence of such an approach, there is a danger that local authorities will all take different approaches, leading to considerable delay and debate at examination.

For this reason, we are supportive of the proposals to remove the NPPF reference to 'exceptional circumstances' which will ensure that everyone is working to the same point of reference.

However, as set out in our response to the other consultation questions, we have significant concerns about the proposed standard method both in terms of the methodology that underpins it and the outcomes it leads to.

Whilst the desire to bolster house building is fully recognised, the delays experienced in recent years are not due to local authorities developing local plans with overly low housing requirements. Rather, they are a result of a complex, multitude of issues including land assembly, lengthy Section 106 negotiations, infrastructure funding constraints etc.

There are other areas of the planning system which should be tackled first in order to bolster housing delivery, rather than adopting a new method that simply inflates the overall level of need from the outset. This will lead to unsustainable development in inappropriate locations and significant pressure on local communities and supporting infrastructure to accommodate it.

Question 20: Do you agree that we should make the proposed change set out in paragraph 124c, as a first step towards brownfield passports?

Yes, although the wording should be caveated so that brownfield sites which are currently in active use are not put under undue pressure from new development e.g. pressure for new homes on a site that is currently actively used for employment or commercial uses.

Question 21: Do you agree with the proposed change to paragraph 154g of the current NPPF to better support the development of PDL in the Green Belt?

Yes, the proposed change would encourage the use of previously developed land without compromising the openness of designated areas of Green Belt.

Question 22: Do you have any views on expanding the definition of PDL, while ensuring that the development and maintenance of glasshouses for horticultural production is maintained?

We support the inclusion of areas of hardstanding within the definition of previously developed land on the basis that should development come forward, there will be policy safeguards in place to ensure that no substantial harm is caused to the openness of the Green Belt.

The inclusion of glasshouses requires more careful consideration as this could lead to increased pressure from speculative development leading to the loss of existing glasshouses, including those in active use.

We would suggest that if the definition is to be expanded to include glasshouses that it should only be applied to sites that are no longer in active use or capable of being brought back into active use.

Question 23: Do you agree with our proposed definition of grey belt land? If not, what changes would you recommend?

No. For clarity, a distinction should be made between previously developed land and grey belt land. At the moment, grey belt land includes previously developed land which is confusing. As there is an existing definition of previously developed land within the NPPF, this should be retained and amended as appropriate (e.g. to include areas of hardstanding).

There should then be a separate and clear definition of what other land within the Green Belt could reasonably be classified as 'grey belt' land. At present, the proposed definition is vague and open to interpretation in referring to land that makes a limited contribution to the five Green Belt purposes.

Although an attempt has been made to quantify how a 'limited contribution' might be judged, those in themselves are open to interpretation. More specific criteria/guidance should be provided.

We are supportive of the concept of lower grade 'grey belt' land coming forward within the Green Belt to help meet identified development needs, but greater clarity is needed in terms of how any such land is defined and identified.

Question 24: Are any additional measures needed to ensure that high performing Green Belt land is not degraded to meet grey belt criteria?

This could be incorporated into a clearer definition of grey belt land. In other words, the definition should explicitly state that it will exclude any land which has obviously been purposefully degraded in order to try and meet the definition.

Question 25: Do you agree that additional guidance to assist in identifying land which makes a limited contribution of Green Belt purposes would be helpful? If so, is this best contained in the NPPF itself or in planning practice guidance?

Yes. As outlined above, we have concerns about the vague criteria currently identified to identify whether land makes a limited contribution and so anything that provides additional clarity on this would be welcome. In the interests of brevity, this would be better addressed within separate planning practice guidance.

Question 26: Do you have any views on whether our proposed guidance sets out appropriate considerations for determining whether land makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes?

Yes – the proposed guidance is too vague and open to interpretation. A clearer definition of grey belt land should be developed which would avoid the need for criteria to define what is meant by a ‘limited contribution’ to Green Belt purposes.

If a definition can be produced for previously developed land, we can see no reason why a definition cannot be produced for ‘grey belt’ land.

Question 27: Do you have any views on the role that Local Nature Recovery Strategies could play in identifying areas of Green Belt which can be enhanced?

Whilst LNRS are an emerging concept, they are likely to be able to play a key role in identifying areas of potential enhancement within the Green Belt.

The text of the NPPF or associated planning practice guidance could usefully be amended to stipulate that when Green Belt reviews are undertaken, as part of that process, full regard should be had to any existing or emerging LNRS.

Question 28: Do you agree that our proposals support the release of land in the right places, with previously developed and grey belt land identified first, while allowing local planning authorities to prioritise the most sustainable development locations?

Yes. The application of a sequential approach to the release of land within the Green Belt whereby the primary focus is previously developed land, followed by grey belt land then higher performing Green Belt sites, is logical and thus supported.

Question 29: Do you agree with our proposal to make clear that the release of land should not fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole?

Yes, the proposed change is supported.

Question 30: Do you agree with our approach to allowing development on Green Belt land through decision making? If not, what changes would you recommend?

The intention to apply the release of land through decision making (as opposed to plan-making) only to previously developed land and ‘grey belt’ sites is supported. However, as set out in our response to earlier questions, the vague definition of grey belt sites is likely to lead to significant pressure from speculative development, particularly in those areas where

a significant increase in housing need renders the local authority unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.

Developers will simply argue that the proposed 'golden rules' have been met, that the site makes a limited contribution to the purpose of the Green Belt and that planning permission should be forthcoming.

We strongly feel that the proposed change to Green Belt policy, including the concept of grey belt land, if introduced, should be confined to plan-making only and properly assessed through Green Belt reviews where necessary.

Question 31: Do you have any comments on our proposals to allow the release of grey belt land to meet commercial and other development needs through plan-making and decision-making, including the triggers for release?

In respect of non-residential development, the proposed 'golden rules' set out in paragraph 155 of the NPPF only cover two issues – provision of necessary improvements to infrastructure and the provision of new or improved green space.

Given that these should be pre-requisites of new development in any case, it is hard to see how they provide any particular justification for releasing land within the Green Belt, either through plan-making or decision-taking.

Question 32: Do you have views on whether the approach to the release of Green Belt through plan and decision-making should apply to traveller sites, including the sequential test for land release and the definition of PDL?

Yes – the proposed amendments to Green Belt policy should be seen as a positive opportunity to consider the accommodation needs of the travelling community – particularly in areas of high need and unmet need.

Question 33: Do you have views on how the assessment of need for traveller sites should be approached, in order to determine whether a local planning authority should undertake a Green Belt review?

No specific view but it would seem sensible to benchmark the level of identified need against supply in some way so as to justify the need for Green Belt release or otherwise. As local authorities are required to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply for travelling communities, the NPPF should be revised to require a Green Belt review where there is an inadequate supply of sites identified.

Question 34: Do you agree with our proposed approach to the affordable housing tenure mix?

Whilst we have in principle concerns with the application of the proposed golden rules and the release of 'grey belt' land through the decision-making process, if they are to be introduced, it would seem appropriate to stipulate a high proportion of affordable housing

and yet leave the proportion of different tenures, including social rented housing, to local discretion. This would allow any existing or emerging local plan policies to be able to be taken into account.

Question 35: Should the 50 per cent target apply to all Green Belt areas (including previously developed land in the Green Belt), or should the Government or local planning authorities be able to set lower targets in low land value areas?

The proposed wording already allows for a reduction in the proportion of affordable homes provided subject to viability. As such, the 50% target should apply as a general requirement to all Green Belt areas and not be 'tailored' individually by local authorities.

Question 36: Do you agree with the proposed approach to securing benefits for nature and public access to green space where Green Belt release occurs?

Yes, although the proposed wording is not ambitious or challenging enough.

If land is to be released from the Green Belt, it would be entirely appropriate to require a developer to go 'above and beyond' the standard provision of green space that would be expected from all development and yet as proposed to be worded, all that is currently required is the provision of new or improved green space that is accessible to the public.

That hardly seems particularly aspirational and should be strengthened to ensure that where land is released from the Green Belt, there is a demonstrable improvement in the level of green space provided or enhanced beyond the standard 'do minimum'.

Similarly, there is no specific reference to nature recovery. One option would be to amend the text of the NPPF to stipulate that when land is released from the Green Belt either through plan preparation or decision-making, that the national minimum default for BNG should be increased from 10% to 20%.

Question 37: Do you agree that Government should set indicative benchmark land values for land released from or developed in the Green Belt, to inform local planning authority policy development?

Not specific benchmark land values as this is likely to be difficult to do across a wide area with significant variables. However, it would seem appropriate for the NPPF to build on the current 'existing use value plus' approach set out in national policy and planning guidance and stipulate that when land is released for development in the green belt, in recognition of the lower 'development value' of the land, that any uplift in value should be calculated at the lower end of the spectrum e.g. no more than 10x existing use value.

Question 38: How and at what level should Government set benchmark land values?

See response to Question 37 above.

Question 39: To support the delivery of the golden rules, the Government is exploring a reduction in the scope of viability negotiation by setting out that such negotiation should not occur when land will transact above the benchmark land value. Do you have any views on this approach?

We support this approach. If land is transacting above a minimum defined benchmark land value, there must be a presumption that it is viable and a stipulation that no further negotiations in relation to viability are to take place, other than in very exceptional circumstances.

Question 40: It is proposed that where development is policy compliant, additional contributions for affordable housing should not be sought. Do you have any views on this approach?

By policy compliant, we assume this to mean the 'at least 50% affordable housing' referred to in proposed new paragraph 155 of the NPPF. Given the text refers to at least 50% it would seem contradictory to then stipulate that no additional contributions for affordable housing should be sought on the grounds of viability. In some instances, it may be perfectly possible to deliver more than 50% affordable housing and this should be recognised in the new text inserted at Annex 4.

Question 41: Do you agree that where viability negotiations do occur, and contributions below the level set in policy are agreed, development should be subject to late-stage viability reviews, to assess whether further contributions are required? What support would local planning authorities require to use these effectively?

Yes, but the cost of any such late-stage review should be borne exclusively by the applicant and not the local authority.

Question 42: Do you have a view on how golden rules might apply to non-residential development, including commercial development, travellers sites and types of development already considered 'not inappropriate' in the Green Belt?

As proposed to be worded, the 'golden rules' relating to infrastructure and green space provision would apply equally to residential schemes and non-residential schemes which is appropriate. The only difference is in relation to the application of proposed criteria a) relating to affordable housing.

We have no firm view on this but it may be possible for other non-residential development to stipulate some form of alternative 'catch-all' benefit that would effectively act as a substitute for the affordable housing requirement that is intended to apply to residential development.

Question 43: Do you have a view on whether the golden rules should apply only to 'new' Green Belt release, which occurs following these changes to the NPPF? Are there other transitional arrangements we should consider, including, for example, draft plans at the regulation 19 stage?

So as to not impact on plans that have already reached an advanced stage of preparation, the proposed golden rules should only be applied to 'new' Green Belt release. As stipulated elsewhere under the proposed transitional arrangements for plan-making, in some instances, LPAs will be required to revise and re-publish plans that have reached the Regulation 19 stage, in which case those authorities would have the opportunity to consider how to apply the proposed 'golden rules' in any plan revisions that they are having to make.

In cases where there is no requirement to review and re-publish a local plan, it should be allowed to proceed to examination without consideration of the proposed new golden rules.

Question 44: Do you have any comments on the proposed wording for the NPPF (Annex 4)?

Only that it is unlikely to be possible to stipulate a single benchmark land value for greenfield and previously developed land within areas of Green Belt and that this would therefore be better expressed as 'no more than X times existing use value (EUV)'.

Question 45: Do you have any comments on the proposed approach set out in paragraphs 31 and 32?

We support the concept of a potentially strengthened role for local authorities in assembling land to bring forward policy-compliant development.

Question 46: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

In referencing the provision of at least 50% affordable housing subject to viability, the proposed golden rules could usefully specifically reference the provision of a proportion of social rented homes as part of this, in line with the proposed amendments to paragraph 63 of the NPPF.

Question 47: Do you agree with setting the expectation that local planning authorities should consider the particular needs of those who require Social Rent when undertaking needs assessments and setting policies on affordable housing requirements?

Yes, we are fully supportive of proposals to bring forward additional social rented properties as part of the overall delivery of new affordable homes. The proposed amendments will help to strengthen the expectation that the need for social rented properties is properly assessed and reflected in planning policy.

As set out in response to Question 46 above, we can see no reason why the proposed golden rules relating to the release of Green Belt land, should not stipulate that a proportion of the 50% affordable requirement should be in the form of social rented housing.

Question 48: Do you agree with removing the requirement to deliver 10% of housing on major sites as affordable home ownership?

Yes. Whilst affordable home ownership options clearly have an important role to play, it should be a matter of local discretion and decision-making as to what proportion is sought rather than an arbitrary national minimum proportion.

Question 49: Do you agree with removing the minimum 25% First Homes requirement?

Yes, for the reasons provided in response to Question 48 above.

Question 50: Do you have any other comments on retaining the option to deliver First Homes, including through exception sites?

No specific comment although First Homes have a valuable role to play and should continue to be recognised in national policy including in relation to exception sites.

Question 51: Do you agree with introducing a policy to promote developments that have a mix of tenures and types?

Yes, mixed-tenure sites have a number of clear benefits and it is appropriate for national planning policy to provide stronger support in this respect without being overly prescriptive.

Question 52: What would be the most appropriate way to promote high percentage Social Rent/affordable housing developments?

This should be a matter for local plan-making based on identified housing needs and stakeholder consultation.

Question 53: What safeguards would be required to ensure that there are not unintended consequences? For example, is there a maximum site size where development of this nature is appropriate?

This should be a matter for local plan-making based on identified housing needs and stakeholder consultation.

Question 54: What measures should we consider to better support and increase rural affordable housing?

The current threshold of 5 units or lower for affordable housing provision in designated rural areas should be extended to apply to all rural areas – either in the form of on-site provision, where feasible and practical, or in the form of an off-site contribution.

The wording around the proportion of market homes on rural exception sites could also possibly be reviewed so that it is clearer that any such provision should be subsidiary to the provision of new affordable homes.

Question 55: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraph 63 of the existing NPPF?

Yes, it is essential that the needs of looked after children are taken into account in assessing housing needs. However, clarity could usefully be provided (e.g. within the supporting PPG) on how planning policies can meaningfully influence the provision of accommodation to meet such identified needs.

Question 56: Do you agree with these changes?

Yes, the additional flexibility regarding the definition of community-led development is considered appropriate as is the ability for local authorities to set a different size-limit for community-led exception sites through local plan making. In referring to the ‘development plan’ it is assumed that footnote 39 is intended to apply to both local plans and neighbourhood development plans but this could usefully be clarified.

Question 57: Do you have views on whether the definition of ‘affordable housing for rent’ in the Framework glossary should be amended? If so, what changes would you recommend?

The current definition already recognises the potential for non-registered providers to come forward in relation to build to rent schemes and so it would seem sensible to expand this to apply to other forms of affordable housing for rent, potentially with specific reference to community-led development as set out in the consultation proposals.

Question 58: Do you have views on why insufficient small sites are being allocated, and on ways in which the small site policy in the NPPF should be strengthened?

The 10% small-site requirement raises a number of potential difficulties for local authorities which perhaps explain why it has not been successfully applied 'on the ground'. In simple terms, the more allocations that are included in a local plan, the more objections tend to be raised, the more evidence needed to demonstrate soundness and the more complex the process becomes.

Smaller sites often raise issues around their cumulative impact on local infrastructure such that the infrastructure requirements of one large scheme of 1,000 homes will be much easier to identify and deliver than 100 allocations of 10 homes.

The consultation does not mention how many, if any local plans have been rejected on the basis of an insufficient number of small sites having been identified but it would be helpful to understand this.

Arguably, the national policy requirement could be strengthened and it could be made more explicit that plans will be rejected at examination if they do not make sufficient provision for a proportion of smaller schemes as part of their overall housing supply (i.e. option a as set out in the consultation).

However, this would require careful consideration so as to not impinge on plan delivery for the reasons outlined above.

Arguably greater clarity (e.g. a specific definition) of small and medium sites could assist although the same reasons for local authority reticence would probably remain.

It is not clear what is meant in the consultation by small-site strategy and so we are unable to comment on the merits of such an approach.

Question 59: Do you agree with the proposals to retain references to well-designed buildings and places, but remove references to 'beauty' and 'beautiful' and to amend paragraph 138 of the existing Framework?

Yes, the current references to 'beauty' and 'beautiful' are subjective and add little to the importance placed on well-designed buildings and places.

Question 60: Do you agree with proposed changes to policy for upwards extensions?

Yes. It was never clear why mansard roofs were singled out in particular and the proposed change to refer to mansard roofs as one form of upward extension are supported in seeking to achieve the same aim of maximising the use of existing space, whilst providing a much greater degree of local flexibility as to how this is best achieved.

Question 61: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

No.

Question 62: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraphs 86 b) and 87 of the existing NPPF?

Yes, the particular support now offered for modern economic uses is supported however the amended wording could be more neatly woven in as follows:

'set criteria, and identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period. This should include consideration of appropriate sites and space for commercial development which meet the needs of a modern economy such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics'.

Question 63: Are there other sectors you think need particular support via these changes? What are they and why?

It would be helpful if green industries were to be specifically referenced here in recognition of the climate emergency and the economic potential that exists in this key sector.

Question 64: Would you support the prescription of data centres, gigafactories, and/or laboratories as types of business and commercial development which could be capable (on request) of being directed into the NSIP consenting regime?

Yes, subject to the setting of an appropriate threshold and any other specific requirements as appropriate.

Question 65: If the direction power is extended to these developments, should it be limited by scale, and what would be an appropriate scale if so?

We have no specific threshold suggestion, but would simply observe that it will be important for local authorities to retain the ability to determine the majority of any such applications and so the threshold should be set such that only the very largest proposals would fall under the NSIP regime.

Question 66: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

No.

Question 67: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraph 100 of the existing NPPF?

Yes, it is entirely appropriate to afford significant weight on the provision of new, expanded or enhanced public service infrastructure when development proposals are considered.

Question 68: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraph 99 of the existing NPPF?

Yes, the proposals relating to the provision of post-16 education and early year's provision are strongly supported.

Question 69: Do you agree with the changes proposed to paragraphs 114 and 115 of the existing NPPF?

Yes, it is essential that local authorities move away from a past-trend based 'predict and provide' approach and towards a more visionary 'decide and provide' approach. This is already being reflected in an increasing number of local transport plans including the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5). As such, it will be helpful for such an approach to be embedded in the NPPF and any associated planning practice guidance.

Question 70: How could national planning policy better support local authorities in (a) promoting healthy communities and (b) tackling childhood obesity?

National planning policy could usefully be amended to refer specifically to the concept of 'healthy place shaping' which could usefully be defined within the glossary of the NPPF and in any accompanying planning practice guidance.

Specific reference could also usefully be made to the use of Health Impact Assessments (HIA) both in plan-making and decision-taking.

The specific example provided in the consultation of avoiding hot food takeaways near schools is a helpful example to include as we understand some local authorities have successfully taken forward such policies, whilst others have failed at examination.

If the NPPF were to explicitly state that the locational aspects of development should take into account health considerations including the availability of healthy food choices, that would be very helpful in providing clarity to local authorities on what policies are likely to succeed at examination.

Question 71: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

No.

Question 72: Do you agree that large onshore wind projects should be reintegrated into the NSIP regime?

Yes, given the potential scale and nature of such proposals, it would seem appropriate that they are dealt with under the NSIP regime.

Question 73: Do you agree with the proposed changes to the NPPF to give greater support to renewable and low carbon energy?

The proposed amendment to paragraph 160 is supported in strengthening the expectation that local authorities identify suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources. The text (or accompanying practice guidance) could usefully be amended to clarify that this is referring to both the delineation of broad areas of suitability as well as specific sites.

The proposed amendments to paragraph 163 and 164 are also supported but could usefully be strengthened with cross-reference to the December 2023 Written Ministerial Statement on Energy Efficiency, making it clear that local authorities are able to set their own standards in excess of current and planned building regulations subject to specific caveats.

Question 74: Some habitats, such as those containing peat soils, might be considered unsuitable for renewable energy development due to their role in carbon sequestration. Should there be additional protections for such habitats and/or compensatory mechanisms put in place?

An additional criteria should be added to the re-numbered paragraph 161 to ensure that in plan-making, local authorities take account of any such sensitivities in seeking to increase the supply and use of renewable and low carbon energy and heat.

Paragraph 164 in applying to decision-taking should be amended in the same way.

Question 75: Do you agree that the threshold at which onshore wind projects are deemed to be Nationally Significant and therefore consented under the NSIP regime should be changed from 50 megawatts (MW) to 100MW?

Yes, for the reasons set out in the consultation paper, it would seem appropriate to increase the threshold.

Question 76: Do you agree that the threshold at which solar projects are deemed to be Nationally Significant and therefore consented under the NSIP regime should be changed from 50MW to 150MW?

Yes, for the reasons set out in the consultation paper, it would seem appropriate to increase the threshold.

Question 77: If you think that alternative thresholds should apply to onshore wind and/or solar, what would these be?

Not applicable.

Question 78: In what specific, deliverable ways could national planning policy do more to address climate change mitigation and adaptation?

National policy should be strengthened in a number of ways.

Firstly, in relation to the issue of new build development it should be made clear that local authorities can set energy efficiency requirements which exceed building regulations in line with the December 2023 Written Ministerial Statement.

Policy should be updated to refer to the use of water efficiency standards, making it clear that subject to evidence on water scarcity and viability, that local authorities can choose to introduce more stringent requirements that go beyond the current optional building regulations.

It should also be updated to emphasise the importance of an integrated approach being taken in relation to the water environment such that issues of flood risk, drainage, supply, waste water and efficiency are dealt with in a holistic manner.

National policy could also be stronger in relation to the issue of retro-fitting renewable and low carbon energy solutions, with specific planning practice guidance on how such issues should be approached in areas where there are heritage sensitivities.

Stronger reference should also be made in relation to the inter-relationship between local plan policy and nature recovery strategies. Current references to LNRS are very limited and could usefully be expanded to ensure that they are properly reflected through plan-making.

Question 79: What is your view of the current state of technological readiness and availability of tools for accurate carbon accounting in plan-making and planning decisions, and what are the challenges to increasing its use?

In terms of plan making, West Oxfordshire District Council has recently partnered with Bioregional and Space Syntax in relation to the application of a zero carbon spatial planning tool to help inform the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041. The tool will help to quantify the carbon emissions associated with different spatial strategy and development site options.

Whilst the tool is currently at the beta-testing stage, it is fully functional and expected to be released to the wider market within the next 12 months. The challenges to increasing the use of such approaches are likely to be resource constraints and consistency of approach between different authorities as well as broader understanding of methodology and outputs amongst stakeholders.

Question 80: Are any changes needed to policy for managing flood risk to improve its effectiveness?

As per our response to Question 79, national policy should be updated to emphasise the importance of an integrated approach being taken in relation to the water environment such that issues of flood risk, drainage, supply, wastewater and efficiency are dealt with in a holistic manner.

Question 81: Do you have any other comments on actions that can be taken through planning to address climate change?

See response to Question 78.

Question 82: Do you agree with removal of this text from the footnote?

No, we cannot see any reason for this footnote to be removed. It is entirely appropriate for agricultural land classification to be taken into account as one of a number of considerations in determining which sites should come forward for development.

Question 83: Are there other ways in which we can ensure that development supports and does not compromise food production?

Yes, linked to the issue of healthy place shaping, there should be stronger national policy support for the creation of healthier food environments, use of local food production (e.g. allotments and community gardens) and shortening of food supply chains.

Question 84: Do you agree that we should improve the current water infrastructure provisions in the Planning Act 2008, and do you have specific suggestions for how best to do this?

Water scarcity is a live issue for Oxfordshire and the wider south-east region and so we are fully supportive of proposals to provide greater water supply resilience. It is essential that the primary focus of Government action is on ensuring that water companies remedy existing deficiencies within the water supply infrastructure network (leaks etc.) and also seek to provide any necessary upgrades to supply and disposal at the earliest possible stage.

National planning policy should be strengthened to ensure that as part of the infrastructure planning work that accompanies local plan-making, that proper regard is had to the timely provision of supporting water infrastructure.

It may be appropriate for national planning policy to make reference to the use of Grampian planning conditions whereby the occupancy of development is restricted until the necessary upgrades to supporting infrastructure (e.g. foul water capacity) have been made.

On the basis that subsuming certain water infrastructure projects within the NSIP regime has the potential to improve the effectiveness and timeliness of delivery, we would be supportive of such intentions.

Question 85: Are there other areas of the water infrastructure provisions that could be improved? If so, can you explain what those are, including your proposed changes?

See previous response to Question 84 above.

Question 86: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

No.

Question 87: Do you agree that we should we replace the existing intervention policy criteria with the revised criteria set out in this consultation?

Yes, the revised criteria are succinct and clear, whilst providing flexibility and the ability for LPAs to put forward any exceptional circumstances. As such, they are supported.

Question 88: Alternatively, would you support us withdrawing the criteria and relying on the existing legal tests to underpin future use of intervention powers?

No, we support the use of the revised criteria outlined in relation to Question 87.

Question 89: Do you agree with the proposal to increase householder application fees to meet cost recovery?

Yes, this appears to be evidentially based and whilst the fee increase is not insignificant, it will remain a relatively small proportion of the overall cost of any such development.

Question 90: If no, do you support increasing the fee by a smaller amount (at a level less than full cost recovery) and if so, what should the fee increase be? For example, a 50% increase to the householder fee would increase the application fee from £258 to £387.

No – we support the proposed increase to £528 for the reasons outlined above.

If Yes, please explain in the text box what you consider an appropriate fee increase would be.

We support the proposed increase to £528 for the reasons outlined above.

Question 91: If we proceed to increase householder fees to meet cost recovery, we have estimated that to meet cost-recovery, the householder application fee should be increased to £528. Do you agree with this estimate?

Yes

If No, please explain in the text box below and provide evidence to demonstrate what you consider the correct fee should be.

N/a

Question 92: Are there any applications for which the current fee is inadequate? Please explain your reasons and provide evidence on what you consider the correct fee should be.

No.

Question 93: Are there any application types for which fees are not currently charged but which should require a fee? Please explain your reasons and provide evidence on what you consider the correct fee should be.

A fee should be payable for any application that involves time and resource on behalf of the local planning authority. Owners of listed buildings and buildings within Conservation Areas as well as those who own properties affected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) are made fully aware of the potential implications when purchasing those properties and so it would not be unreasonable to expect reasonable costs to be covered when any such applications are submitted.

As per our response to Question 95, planning fees should be localised through a local variation model which would enable each LPA to determine the most appropriate fees to charge within an overall national framework.

This would ensure that any fees are reflective of the nature and number of application types typically received by each authority.

Question 94: Do you consider that each local planning authority should be able to set its own (non-profit making) planning application fee?

Yes

Please give your reasons in the text box below.

To provide greater local discretion whilst set within an overarching national framework (i.e. a local variation model) – see response to Question 95 below.

Question 95: What would be your preferred model for localisation of planning fees?

Local Variation – Maintain a nationally-set default fee and giving local planning authorities the option to set all or some fees locally.

Please give your reasons in the text box below.

This would provide a good degree of local discretion based on evidence of incurred costs and the type of applications that come forward whilst providing a degree of certainty for applicants by being set within a guideline national framework.

Question 96: Do you consider that planning fees should be increased, beyond cost recovery, for planning applications services, to fund wider planning services?

Yes, in principle and the adoption of a local variation model would allow this to happen based on evidence of incurred costs and the type of applications that come forward whilst providing a degree of certainty for applicants by being set within a guideline national framework.

If yes, please explain what you consider an appropriate increase would be and whether this should apply to all applications or, for example, just applications for major development?

This should be a matter for local discretion based on a local variation model with each LPA required to assess and determine an appropriate increase set within a national framework of guideline fees.

Question 97: What wider planning services, if any, other than planning applications (development management) services, do you consider could be paid for by planning fees?

Climate, heritage, landscape, design and tree advice would all seem appropriate candidates for the application of wider planning fees, as these often require significant input and resource which will stray well beyond current fees, particularly for householder applications.

Question 98: Do you consider that cost recovery for relevant services provided by local authorities in relation to applications for development consent orders under the Planning Act 2008, payable by applicants, should be introduced?

Yes, the costs incurred by local authorities in dealing with NSIP projects are often significant and yet dealt with on an informal basis through planning performance agreements. The introduction of specific planning application fees would help to provide greater certainty for all parties and potentially better meet the actual costs incurred.

Question 99: If yes, please explain any particular issues that the Government may want to consider, in particular which local planning authorities should be able to recover costs and the relevant services which they should be able to recover costs for, and whether host authorities should be able to waive fees where planning performance agreements are made.

Cost recovery through planning application fees should be in place for category 'B' and 'C' (host) local authorities who directly incur the greatest proportion of costs in dealing with such applications. The costs of any neighbouring authorities (categories A and D) should continue to be recovered through planning performance agreements.

We support the proposed flexibility of the arrangement whereby a planning fee can be waived in favour of a planning performance agreement where this is already in place or where the local authority determines this to be the more appropriate route.

Question 100: What limitations, if any, should be set in regulations or through guidance in relation to local authorities' ability to recover costs?

No limitations should be prescribed. We support the use of a 'local variation' model for charging planning fees and this should be extended to include fees payable under the NSIP regime to provide an overarching national framework within which local authorities can then choose to set an appropriate local fee based on the scale and specific nature of the application proposed.

Question 101: Please provide any further information on what the impacts of full or partial cost recovery are likely to be for local planning authorities and applicants. We would particularly welcome evidence of the costs associated with work undertaken by local authorities in relation to applications for development consent.

As outlined in response to the previous consultation questions above, in some instances, the nature and scale of NSIP proposals are such that significant LPA resources are required to facilitate the process, particularly for host authorities.

We consider that the Government should adopt a local variation model for the charging of planning fees and that this should be extended to include the NSIP regime. In doing so, the Government could usefully undertake some analysis of the costs incurred by engaging directly with host authorities involved in a selection of NSIP schemes. This would help to determine a suitable national guideline fee framework within which local authorities could then seek a local variation where appropriate and evidenced.

Question 102: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

No.

Question 103: Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements? Are there any alternatives you think we should consider?

Whilst we support the proposed transitional arrangements in a general sense, it would seem appropriate to allow those authorities that have reached the Regulation 19 stage to proceed to examination under the current NPPF irrespective of any differences in housing requirement.

Question I04: Do you agree with the proposed transitional arrangements?

Yes, in particular the proposed extension of time from June 2025 to December 2026 for plans to be submitted and examined under the current plan-making regime. This is essential given the significant implications associated with the proposed new standard method.


Question I05: Do you have any other suggestions relating to the proposals in this chapter?

No.

Question I06: Do you have any views on the impacts of the above proposals for you, or the group or business you represent and on anyone with a relevant protected characteristic? If so, please explain who, which groups, including those with protected characteristics, or which businesses may be impacted and how. Is there anything that could be done to mitigate any impact identified?

No.

This page is intentionally left blank

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024
Subject	FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25 QUARTER ONE
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Madhu Richards – Director of Finance Email: madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Georgina Dyer – Chief Accountant Email: georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Annexes	Annex A – Detailed Revenue Budget Comparison Annex B – Capital Spend Against Budget
Purpose	To detail the Council’s financial performance for Quarter One 2024-2025.
Recommendations	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the Council’s Financial Performance for Quarter One 2024-2025; 2. Recommend to Council that an additional £750,000 should be included in the revised Capital Budget for 2024/25, as set out in 2.25 in the report.
Corporate Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees	Nil

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the financial performance of the council's activities for the first quarter of the 2024/25 financial year from 1 April 2024 to 30th June 2024.
- 1.2. The report considers the significant variances in revenue income and expenditure against the approved revenue budget set by Full Council on 28th February 2024 which anticipated a contribution of £5,107 to General Fund reserves.
- 1.3. The report also includes progress in delivering the approved Capital Programme and a request for the Executive and Council to approve additional funding for urgent works.
- 1.4. At this stage of the year a year-end forecast is not included. It will be part of subsequent quarterly budget monitoring reports as data becomes easier to extrapolate.

2. MAIN POINTS

Financial Performance Revenue Budget Monitoring - Summary

- 2.1. At quarter 1 (Q1) there is an overall overspend **£257,013** against the profiled budget for the period. The key factors driving this revenue position are income shortfalls in garden waste and development management, the delayed Elmfield office letting and increased expenditure in respect of the materials recycling contract.
- 2.2. Garden waste income may struggle to recover but development management income may do so if we receive a major application. The recycling contract with Suez expires at the end of September 2024 with the new contract, if approved at the Executive meeting on 11th September 2024, delivering a budget saving of £300,000 from 2025/26 (£62,000 in 2024/25).
- 2.3. The Elmfield offices have been empty since August 2023 and require capital investment before the new tenant occupies the building. Work is ongoing to finalise the schedule of capital works and set a realistic timeframe for occupation.
- 2.4. The table below sets out the summary revenue monitoring position for the 30th June 2024 against profiled budget by service area.

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - Budget Monitoring

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2024/25 - Quarter 1, 1st April to 30th June 2024

Service Area	Quarter 1			
	Original Budget 2024/25	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£	£
Democratic and Committee Services	1,233,712	382,978	403,531	20,554
Environmental & Regulatory Services	941,117	177,757	172,009	(5,748)
Environmental Services	8,545,309	542,942	808,623	265,680
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	1,089,330	1,022,924	1,017,910	(5,014)
ICT, Change & Customer Services	2,309,350	1,609,978	1,580,294	(29,684)
Land, Legal & Property	396,355	67,431	164,212	96,781
Leisure & Communities	227,208	(1,158,033)	(1,189,865)	(31,832)
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,061,472	313,220	345,806	32,587
Revenues & Housing Support	1,345,917	465,328	443,505	(21,823)
Investment Property and Retained Services	(318,880)	(65,661)	(80,162)	(14,500)
Total cost of services	16,830,890	3,358,864	3,665,865	307,000
Plus:				
Investment income receipts	(1,156,230)	(289,058)	(339,045)	(49,987)
Cost of services before financing:	15,674,660	3,069,807	3,326,820	257,013

Significant Variances

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

Environmental Services

Recycling

- 2.6. At the end of Q1 the Suez contract is £30,000 overspent, likely to rise to £50,000 by the end of the contract at the end of September 2024. Savings anticipated to be achieved through the new recycling contract, once approved, should offset the year to date overspends.

Green Waste

- 2.7. Income is £95,000 below budget. The Waste team have launched a targeted marketing campaign on 2,000 new properties in developments in Witney and Carterton and we should have a clearer picture of the final income at the end of Q2 when green licences normally finish.

Trade Waste

- 2.8. Trade Waste is invoiced in April & September, income is £25,000 behind target for the first half of the year and there has been £29,000 of unbudgeted expenditure on bins & boxes.

Land, Legal & Property

Elmfield

- 2.9. When the 2024/25 budget was set, it was anticipated that Elmfield would be tenanted from Q2 2024. Unfortunately, this timeframe has slipped due to ongoing discussions around the capital works required to bring the building up to a letting standard. As an empty building, the Council bears the liability for Business Rates and therefore has incurred the full annual charge in April 2024. Once this liability has transferred to the tenants, once they are in occupation, the Council will receive a refund of any overpayment. As mentioned above, officers are working diligently to finalise the schedule of capital works and set a realistic timeframe for occupation.

Downs Road Depot

- 2.10. Reactive maintenance costs of £26,000 have been incurred for a number of small projects which, because the cost of each is less than £10,000, is not categorised as capital expenditure and therefore sits as a revenue cost. Projects include HGV charging points, a new electric shutter and external repairs to the building.

Planning & Strategic Housing

Development Management

- 2.11. Income from Planning applications is difficult to forecast as it is not consistent throughout the year and there is no discernible pattern over the longer term. At Q1 income is £76,000 below target, a 23% drop from the same period last year. The government increased Planning Application fees by 25% in December 2023, but we are yet to see any positive impact from this increase.
- 2.12. It could be that some projects may have been put on hold pending the outcome of the General Election and again we will have a clearer picture of this in future reports.
- 2.13. Major applications have a significant impact on our overall fee income but have an extended timeline and it is difficult to predict when exactly applications will be submitted. General economic conditions like interest rates, which have slowly started to fall, may increase planning application volumes as both individuals and developers are able to estimate their costs more confidently.

Development Management Appeals

- 2.14. External legal spend for Planning appeals has been a source of concern over the last year with an overspend in 2023/24 of £184,000. In response an additional £90,000 was included in the budget for the current financial year and at Q1 there is an underspend of £33,000. There are two appeals waiting to be heard, the costs for which will be reported in future budget monitoring reports.

- 2.15. A single Planning Inquiry can cost the Council up to £55,000 for significant sites and an average of £20,000-£30,000 for more standard sites as well as the requirement to pay the opponent's court costs for certain matters.

Investment Property

- 2.16. In response to challenging and volatile market conditions for our Investment Property portfolio in 2023/24 the 2024/25 budget setting process revised the base budget to reflect the current rate of voids and based on a detailed cashflow and taking account of service charges and business rates liability.
- 2.17. In Q1 Investment Property is £10,000 ahead of budget and a number of existing and new leases are under negotiation. Net income from Investment Property is budgeted to be £2.45m in 2024/25 with Marriotts, which is not an Investment Property, estimated to return a further £0.8m to the Council. The focus for Marriotts is on upgrading the landscaping and seating to encourage increased footfall and a local community feel. Marriotts is key to the economic development of the whole town, but it will take time to achieve full occupancy and for the total benefits to be seen.

Publica Review

- 2.18. Phase I of the transition of staff from Publica back to the Council was approved by full Council on 24 July 2024. A detailed transition cost model has forecast the additional employee costs to West Oxfordshire at £185,000 a year, with one off costs of between £207,000 and £301,000. This is in line with the estimates included in the 2024/25 budget and reserves set aside to meet one off costs.

Capital Programme Budget Monitoring

- 2.19. At the end of Q1 capital expenditure is £1.77m against an approved Capital Programme for the year of £11.28m, which includes slippage from 2023/24 of £4m for the decarbonisation of Carterton Leisure Centre, Agile Working, Electric Vehicle charging points and Waste Vehicle replacement.
- 2.20. The Agile Working programme is complete at Woodgreen and is now focussed on Elmfield. It is likely that the Programme as a whole will be underspent by the time it concludes, confirmation of which will be provided in future budget monitoring reports. Discussions are ongoing with tenants who wish to take over Elmfield in relation to the level of refit works necessary before the building can be handed over.
- 2.21. A lot of work has been undertaken by Officers to establish the viability of installing Solar PV on Council owned buildings, this includes establishing the financial viability of potential schemes and discussions with our tenants. Due to the pausing of the Carterton PSDS project, Officers are investigating the installation of additional solar PV and battery storage at Carterton Leisure Centre. A report will be taken to Executive later in the year with findings and recommendations.
- 2.22. The decarbonisation of Witney Leisure Centre is still at an exploratory stage, a business case will go forward to Executive once the viability of the scheme has been established.

- 2.23. Involved discussions have taken place between the Waste team, Finance and the Portfolio holders for the Environment, Climate and Finance regarding the best option for the Waste Vehicle replacement programme. A report will be going to the Executive in the Autumn with a proposal for the phase one replacement of the fleet taking into account the Council's climate aspirations and the financial viability of the proposal.
- 2.24. The Council were successful in their bid for funding from the Local Authority Housing Fund. Collaborating with Cottsway Housing Association and Miller Homes, the Council has facilitated the construction of 23 affordable home within the District.
- 2.25. Work is underway to develop an Asset Management Strategy for the Council's buildings, a portfolio valued at £69.8m at 31 March 2024. Integral to this strategy are building condition surveys which are currently work in progress. In advance of the condition surveys being completed, it has become apparent that there are urgent works which will need to be carried out in this financial year which are not included in the current approved Capital Programme. For example, Carterton Industrial Estate, empty due to the tenant going into liquidation, needs a replacement roof to prevent degradation to the fabric of the building and put it into a marketable condition to attract new tenants. Similarly, there are works required at Windrush Leisure Centre, Chawley Park and The Old Court. This work is estimated to cost circa £750,000 and a recommendation is included to seek Council approval for this addition to the capital programme.
- 2.26. An Asset Management Strategy will provide a rolling programme of planned maintenance which will be included in the ongoing Capital Programme through the annual budget setting process. This maintenance will keep our assets in a good state of repair and tenatable condition. Failure to maintain our buildings in a timely manner could result in a significant financial impact. If buildings are allowed to degrade pending repair, they will become less commercially viable. The Asset Management Strategy and Building Condition Survey will be brought to the 9 October 2024 Executive meeting.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1. Whilst it is early in the financial year there are some key areas of concern at the end of Q1 and these have been highlighted in the body of this report. That said, there are also some grounds for cautious optimism given the actions that have already been taken to mitigate some of these overspends.
- 3.2. All areas will be closely monitored and reported on in future quarterly Financial Performance Reports.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

These are set out within section 2 of the paper.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this paper.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1. Officers will continue to monitor budgets closely throughout the year to identify mitigating actions which will enable the overall budgetary position to be brought back in line with budget where possible.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

No direct equalities impact with regards to the content of this report.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

None arising from this report.

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

Annex A - Comparison of Q1 Budget Monitoring

	Q1 position		
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£
Democratic Services			
DRM001-Democratic Representation	84,898	83,232	(1,666)
DRM002-Support To Elected Bodies	120,504	108,787	(11,717)
ELE001-Registration of Electors	18,300	8,480	(9,820)
ELE002-District Elections	37,525	68,039	30,514
SUP001-Administration	121,751	121,934	183
Total - Democratic Services	382,978	403,531	20,554

ELE002 - the overspend is due to an overspend in the production and posting out of poll cards and postal voting packs, the cost of which all falls in Q1.

	Q1 position		
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£
Environmental & Regulatory Services			
BUC001-Building Control - Fee Earning Work	6,441	(583)	(7,024)
BUC002-Building Control - Non Fee Earning Work	886	882	(3)
EMP001-Emergency Planning	3,591	4,004	413
ESM001-Environment - Service Mgmt & Supp Serv	27,050	26,952	(98)
PSH002-Private Sector Housing-Condition of Dwellings	750	0	(750)
REG001-Environmental Health General	0	(4,649)	(4,649)
REG002-Licensing	9,080	12,028	2,948
REG009-Environmental Protection	58,286	57,956	(330)
REG011-Authorised Process	(3,000)	(9,057)	(6,057)
REG013-Pollution Control	31,599	40,320	8,721
REG016-Food Safety	37,861	37,531	(330)
REG021-Statutory Burials	1,250	(50)	(1,300)
STC011 - Abandoned Vehicles	0	(537)	(537)
TAC309-Other Trading Services - Markets	3,963	7,212	3,249
Total - Environmental & Regulatory Services	177,757	172,009	(5,748)

	Q1 position		
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement			
SUP003-Human Resources	50,418	49,147	(1,271)
HLD319 - New Initiatives	0	0	0
SUP009-Accountancy	97,637	96,268	(1,370)
SUP010-Internal Audit	32,069	32,844	775
SUP011-Creditors	11,040	10,088	(952)
SUP012-Debtors	15,483	13,905	(1,578)
SUP013-Payroll	14,858	14,141	(717)
SUP019-Health & Safety	9,056	9,229	173
SUP020-Training & Development	7,868	7,840	(29)
SUP033-Central Purchasing	10,303	10,266	(37)
SUP035-Insurances	2,642	2,633	(10)
Total - Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	1,022,924	1,017,910	(5,014)

	Q1 position		
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£
ICT, Change & Customer Services			
SUP002-Consultation, Policy & Research	43,619	42,526	(1,092)
SUP005-ICT	491,341	461,510	(29,831)
SUP006-Telephones	0	(1,001)	(1,001)
SUP008-Reception/Customer Services	159,210	159,572	362
TMR002-Street Furniture & Equipment	(4,316)	(4,337)	(21)
TOU002-Tourist/Visitor Information Centre	0	1,900	1,900
Total - ICT, Change & Customer Services	1,609,978	1,580,294	(29,684)

SUP005 -expenditure on software licences and maintenance is below budget in Q1, but is spread across the financial year, so the expectation is that this budget will be fully exhausted in 2024/25.

Q1 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Land, Legal & Property

ADB301-3 Welch Way (Town Centre Shop)	15,977	9,517	(6,460)
ADB302-Guildhall	2,544	(2,385)	(4,929)
ADB303-Woodgreen	124,195	129,377	5,181
ADB304-Elmfield	22,591	106,954	84,363
ADB305-Corporate Buildings	161,932	168,952	7,020
ADB306-Depot	(78,583)	(52,816)	25,767
FIE346-Marriotts	(194,120)	(198,117)	(3,997)
LLC001-Local Land Charges	(16,580)	(12,523)	4,057
SUP004-Legal	36,784	30,449	(6,335)
TAC303-Swain Court & Newman Court Ind Est Witney	(7,309)	(15,196)	(7,887)

Total - Land, Legal & Property

67,431	164,212	96,781
---------------	----------------	---------------

ADB304 - the overspend is due to the Business Rates liability for the year being charged in April. The budget is based on a tenant occupying the building in Q2 and therefore the business rates liability would pass to them. The timing of the tenancy has slipped due to ongoing discussions about the level of work required to bring the building up to a letting standard.

ADB306 - there is a £26k overspend on reactive maintenance which does not meet the criteria to be classed as capital expenditure.

Q1 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Leisure & Communities

CCR001-Community Safety (Crime Reduction)	(5,786)	(4,018)	1,768
CCR002-Building Safer Communities	(1,686)	3,688	5,374
CCR301 - Communities Revenue Grant	51,826	32,500	(19,326)
CCT001-CCTV	23,880	20,569	(3,311)
CSM001-Cultural Strategy	23,197	22,036	(1,160)
CUL001-Arts Development	12,088	4,401	(7,687)
ECD001-Economic Development	41,511	39,661	(1,850)
ECD010 – SPF Community and Place	(1,032,895)	(1,032,895)	0
REC001-Sports Development	17,081	14,405	(2,677)
REC002-Recreational Facilities Development	14,639	14,641	3
REC003-Play	53,504	57,952	4,448
REC301-Village Halls	3,919	3,905	(14)
REC302-Contract Management	(469,502)	(474,984)	(5,482)
SUP016-Finance - Performance Review	29,306	29,200	(106)
TOU001-Tourism Strategy and Promotion	44,949	43,138	(1,811)

Total - Leisure & Communities

(1,193,969)	(1,225,801)	(31,832)
--------------------	--------------------	-----------------

CCR301 - the allocation of grants falls predominantly in Q2 & Q3

Q1 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Environmental Services

CCC001-Climate Change	71,521	68,734	(2,787)
COR301-Policy Initiatives - Shopmobility	4,335	4,320	(16)
CPK001-Car Parks - Off Street	132,626	126,742	(4,974)
ENI002-Grounds Maintenance	162,628	167,266	4,638
ENI303-Landscape Maintenance	19,987	21,112	1,125
FLD001-Flood Defence and Land Drainage	51,540	65,465	13,925
REG004-Dog Warden	12,593	21,001	8,408
REG018-Pest Control	0	0	0
REG019-Public Conveniences	27,031	25,695	(1,336)
REG023-Environmental Strategy	21,546	21,148	(398)
RYC001-Recycling	655,766	716,350	60,584
RYC002-Green Waste	(1,342,026)	(1,240,359)	101,667
RYC003-Food Waste	259,870	264,020	4,150
STC001-Street Cleansing	0	0	0
STC004-Environmental Cleansing	264,806	273,154	8,348
TRW001-Trade Waste	(295,391)	(242,735)	52,656
TRW002-Clinical Waste	(125)	0	125
WST001-Household Waste	488,884	497,856	8,973
WST004-Bulky Household Waste	3,476	4,479	1,002
WST301-Env. Services Depot, Downs Rd, Witney	3,875	13,464	9,589

Total - Environmental Services

542,942	807,712	265,680
---------	---------	---------

FLD001 - Unbudgeted for ditch clearance works amounts to £13k in Q1.

RYC001 - the Suez contract is £30k overspent and recycling credits are £11k behind budget. The Suez contract expires at the end of Q2, savings from the new contract will offset current year overspends.

RYC002 - income is £95k behind target and is unlikely to improve significantly in the rest of the year, due to the seasonal nature of demand.

TRW001 - £29k of expenditure on bins is not budgeted for in 2024/25 and there is a £25k shortfall of income.

Q1 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Planning & Strategic Housing

DEV001-Development Control - Applications	(119,429)	(50,574)	68,855
DEV002-Development Control - Appeals	67,493	33,848	(33,645)
DEV003-Development Control - Enforcement	45,816	45,649	(166)
ENA001-Housing Enabling	28,865	30,761	1,895
ENI301-Landscape Initiatives	15,815	21,101	5,285
HLD315-Growth Board Project (Planning)	62,452	64,846	2,394
PLP001-Planning Policy	152,060	148,552	(3,508)
PLP003-Implementation	0	0	0
PLP004-Conservation	28,524	28,240	(284)
PSM001-Planning Service Mgmt & Support Serv	31,623	23,383	(8,240)

Total - Planning & Strategic Housing

313,220 345,806 32,587

DEV001 - fee income is £76k behind target, continuing the trend seen in 2023/24. It was hoped that the increase in Planning Fees introduced in December 2023 would improve the income position but this has not been the case year to date.

DEV002 - additional budget was provided in 2024/25 for the legal costs associated with Planning Appeals. It is not possible to predict the timing of Planning appeals but it is forecast that this budget will be fully utilised during the course of the year.

Q1 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

Retained Services

COR002-Chief Executive	89,900	82,262	(7,638)
COR003-Corporate Policy Making	19,582	19,319	(263)
COR004-Public Relations	5,869	(1,396)	(7,265)
COR005-Corporate Finance	136,235	134,276	(1,959)
COR006-Treasury Management	6,675	0	(6,675)
COR007-External Audit Fees	27,926	27,926	(0)
COR008-Bank Charges	19,625	33,252	13,627
COR012 - Publica Review	15,296	15,296	(0)
COR302-Publica Group	74,893	69,060	(5,832)
FIE341-Town Centre Properties	(102,013)	(109,565)	(7,552)
FIE342-Miscellaneous Properties	(91,732)	(87,394)	4,338
FIE343-Talisman	(322,059)	(331,605)	(9,546)
FIE344-Des Roches Square	(107,873)	(101,830)	6,042
FIE345-Gables at Elmfield	(12,534)	(14,475)	(1,941)
NDC001-Non Distributed Costs	191,500	202,749	11,249
TAC304-Witney Industrial Estate	(42,855)	(45,206)	(2,351)
TAC305-Carterton Industrial Estate	27,587	35,944	8,357
TAC306-Greystones Industrial Estate	(964)	(8,773)	(7,809)
TAC308-Other Trading Services - Fairs	(719)	0	719
Total - Retained Services	(65,661)	(80,162)	(14,500)

COR008 - the new contract charging mechanism came into force in May 2024 after protracted discussions with the supplier. Charges for the remainder of the year are forecast to be within budget.

	Q1 position		
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£
Revenues & Housing Support			
HBP001-Rent Allowances	99,208	88,897	(10,312)
HBP003-Local Housing Allowance	0	1	1
HBP005-Benefit Fraud Investigation	1,549	1,554	5
HOM001-Homelessness	111,016	106,336	(4,680)
HOM004-Refugees	0	0	0
HOM005-Homelessness Hostel Accomodation	(1,622)	(5,742)	(4,119)
HOM006 - The Old Court	20,762	18,224	(2,539)
HOM007-Afghan Resettlement Programme	56,331	56,331	(0)
HOM008-Homes for Ukraine	9,969	9,969	(0)
LTC001-Council Tax Collection	100,577	101,429	852
LTC002-Council Tax Support Administration	1,877	2,611	735
LTC011-NNDR Collection	29,693	31,111	1,419
PSH001-Private Sector Housing Grants	13,416	13,343	(74)
PSH004-Home Improvement Service	22,552	19,441	(3,110)
Total - Revenues & Housing Support	465,328	443,505	(21,823)

This page is intentionally left blank

Annex B

Capital Programme 2024/25

Scheme	Funded By	2024/25 Total Budget	Q1 Actual
Agile Working	Borrowing	1,447,068	64,002
Solar PV on Council Buildings	Borrowing	276,345	
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	Grant		7,758
Chipping Norton LC Repairs	Borrowing	150,000	
Ubico Fleet - Replace Vehicle Hire Costs	Borrowing	3,500,000	606,926
Update to Planning System (Idox)	Borrowing	150,000	
Update to Finance System (ABW)	Borrowing	25,000	
Electric vehicle charging points	Borrowing	200,000	
In Cab Technology	Borrowing	100,000	
CCTV - Upgrading	Capital Receipts	255,635	
Shop Mobility - Replacement stock	Capital Receipts	10,000	
Affordable Housing - Cottsway	Grant	212,125	635,880
Improvement Grants (DFG)	Grant	880,000	108,667
Carterton Leisure Centre PSDS Project	Grant	1,300,000	
UKSPF	Grant		
Witney Leisure Centre PSDS	Borrowing	1,874,000	
IT Provision - Systems & Strategy	Revenue Contribution	100,000	
Weighbridge at Bulking Station	Capital Receipts	25,000	
Council Buildings Maintenance Programme	Revenue Contribution	200,000	
IT Equipment - PCs, Copiers etc	Revenue Contribution	40,000	7,830
Community Grants Fund	Revenue Contribution	200,000	2,936
Play Parks	S106	50,000	
EVCP Woolgate	S106	167,000	
UK Rural Prosperity Fund	Grant		233,777
Carterton Connects Creative (Swinbrook s106)	S106	44,500	
Raleigh Crescent Play Area (s. 106)	S106	75,000	
Developer Capital Contributions	S106		98,957
		11,281,673	1,766,732

This page is intentionally left blank

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024
Subject	SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024-25 QUARTER ONE
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Alison Borrett – Senior Performance Analyst Email: alison.borrett@publicagroup.uk
Purpose	To provide details of the Council’s operational performance at the end of 2024-25 Quarter One (Q1).
Annexes	Annex A – Council Priorities Report Annex B – Corporate Plan Action Tracker Annex C – Performance Indicator Report
Recommendation	That the Executive resolves to: I. Note the 2024/25 Q1 service performance report.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Publica Directors, Assistant Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.

1. BACKGROUND

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

2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT

2.1 Progress on actions in the Corporate Plan for Q1 include:

- In September 2023, the Council reduced its customer services call centre hours to 9am-2pm, for a trial period of 6 months, focussing on peak times and boosting online services, as call volume dropped by 37% and online form usage rose by 350% over three years. Following the successful trial, the Executive resolved to make the reduced phone lines permanent in June.
- The Executive approved the draft CIL charging schedule in July, with an 8-week public consultation on the draft running from 2 August to 27 September 2024.
- An updated Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and Phase 1 Water Cycle Study have been commissioned to support the Local Plan evidence base, with the preferred option paper currently in preparation.
- The eHGV trial for refuse collection was undertaken in May and produced positive results, with climate change officers exploring funding options with Local Authorities and the Greater South East Net Zero Hub.
- Provisional sites for EV microhubs have been agreed upon at Ducklington, Brize Norton and Burwell Hall.
- As part of the Deer Park South Access Project, interpretation panels have been installed to enhance visitors' understanding of the area's natural features and heritage. Additionally, surfacing improvements have been made to the bridleway along the southern boundary of Deer Park South, improving accessibility and enjoyment for all users.
- The draft District Charter Markets Strategy is currently under development. A draft brief for an Expression of Interest is also being prepared, focussing on the management and operation of the Charter Markets in Chipping Norton and Witney, with the possibility of including additional markets at Marriotts.

- 2.2** The Council Priority highlight report is attached at Annex A with an overview of progress against all actions in the Corporate Plan is attached at Annex B.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 Overall, the Council's performance for the quarter has been largely positive, with notable progress in Collection Rates, Planning Determination Times, and Missed Bin Collections. Visits to the Leisure Centre, Gym Memberships, and Land Charges Response Times remain high. Additionally, Customer Satisfaction continues to be strong, with the Council topping the Gov Metric league table in June. However, the percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed is increasing, and the Number of Affordable Homes delivered is showing a negative trend.
- 3.2 A review of the targets for Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates Collection was conducted, as the previous 99% in-year collection target was recognised as unrealistic to achieve within year and more realistic over the debt's lifespan (indeed the taxbase calculation assumes 98.5%). Benchmarking was undertaken for all English Councils' previous years' collection rates, as well as the Council's specific similar Local Authorities, using the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Nearest Neighbours model. This benchmarking exercise demonstrated that a Council Tax Collection Rate of 98% and a Non-Domestic Rates Collection Rate of 98.5% would place the Council within the top quartile for both the Nearest Neighbours and all English Councils. Following agreement from the Portfolio Holder and the Section 151 Officer, the in-year collection targets have been amended. Additionally, regression analysis was conducted on previous years' collection rates for specific quarters to ensure the targets more accurately reflect whether the Council is on track.
- 3.3 Service performance above target:
- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (33.69% against a target of 33%)
 - Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates Collected (37.15% against a target of 33%)
 - Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims (18.85 days against a target of 20 days)
 - Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (2.51 days against a target of 5 days)
 - Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.14% against a target of 0.35%)
 - Customer Satisfaction (98.71% against a target of 90%)
 - Building Control Satisfaction (100% against a target of 90%)
 - Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (100% against a target of 70%)
 - Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (94.92% against a target of 65%)
 - Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (96.41% against a target of 80%)
 - Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (98.19% against a target of 90%)
 - Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales (100% against a target of 90%)
 - Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 90%)
 - Missed bins per 100,000 (85.59 against a target of 110)
 - Number of visits to the leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (4,949 memberships against a target of 4,800 memberships and 206,370 visits against a target of 197,500)

3.4 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (5.39 days against a target of 4 days)

Q1 commenced with the usual small backlog of work for changes in circumstances at the end of Q4 due to end-of-year processing, which the team has worked hard to reduce. Although the Council is currently above target for processing times, there has been an improvement compared to the same period last year, with processing times decreasing by approximately 2.5 days.

However, the reduction in HB Change applications means that any delay in assessing an application due to outstanding evidence has a more noticeable impact on the average processing days. Additionally, the managed migration of HB to Universal Credit commenced in April, with some minor glitches reported in the system. While the migration was planned in stages, some stages have been brought forward, which will further decrease the number of changes received and may potentially increase processing times.

Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (86.5% against a target of 90%)

In Q1, the Council answered 86.5% of FOI requests within 20 days, up from 79.78% in Q4, falling below the national target of 90%. Most FOI requests continue to be received by Development Management and Environmental, Welfare, and Revenue Services. To reduce the number of information requests, the Council is reviewing the information currently available on its website and aims to publish additional guidance and Frequently Asked Questions.

Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (42.31% against a target of 30%)

Between 1 April 2024 and 30 June 2024, thirteen appeals were decided, with eight supported, including a split decision, resulting in an allowance rate of 42.31%. Of these, six were Upland applications, with four supported, resulting in a 33.33% allowance rate. The remaining seven were Lowlands applications, with four supported, including a split decision, equating to a 50% allowance rate. As this metric is cumulative, it may decrease throughout the year depending on the number of appeal decisions received.

Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (48 against a target of 69)

During Q1, a total of forty-eight properties were delivered in West across Woodstock and Carterton comprising 36 for affordable rent and 12 for shared ownership. Properties delivered in Carterton include 10 homes acquired using Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) funding.

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, attributed to works required from statutory service providers and highway work scheduling, have impacted expected completions in Carterton and Enstone. Consequently, the delivery of these properties has been pushed back to later in the year.

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 592 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.

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

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 4.1 This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 4 September 2024. The draft minutes of that meeting will be circulated to all Members and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to the 11 September 2024 Executive meeting.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Contained in this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 None

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Contained in this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

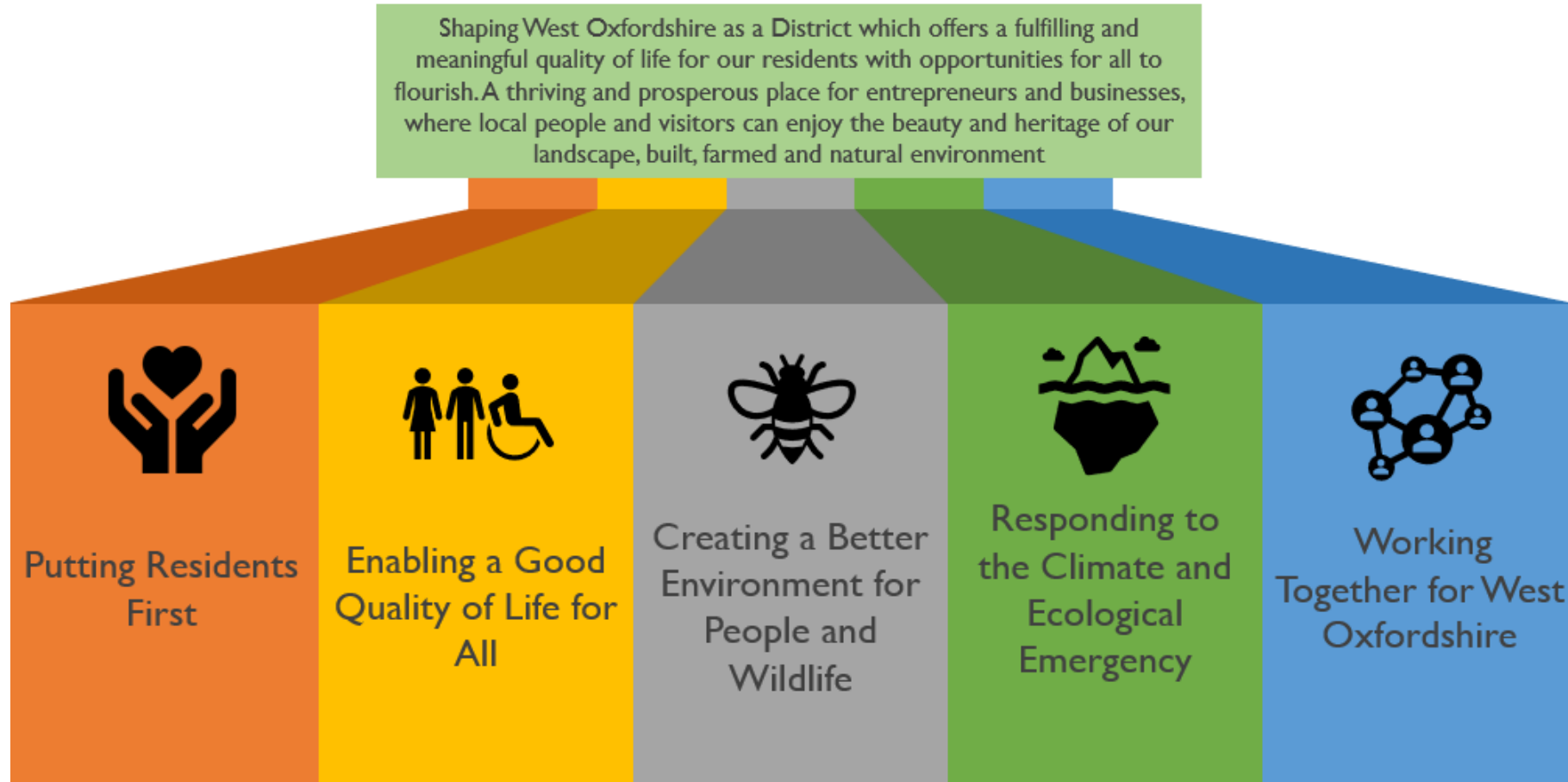


WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITIES REPORT
April 2024 – June 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 partnering with Oxfordshire County Council, the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, district and city councils, as well as town and parish councils and parish meetings, to develop a shared charter. This charter will commit to principles that support successful partnership working across all councils in Oxfordshire. Through a multi-organisational working group, we have collaboratively developed the Oxfordshire Councils Charter, which outlines our principles and commitments to achieving two main goals: stronger partnership working and enhanced local democracy. The Charter was crafted through an extensive three-stage engagement process, detailed in the Oxfordshire Councils Charter Engagement Report, with participation from 32 local councils in West Oxfordshire. Clear themes from this engagement have been incorporated into the Charter's aims. Endorsed by the Executive in June, the Charter is set to be launched at the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils Annual General Meeting on July 1, 2024.

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

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. A review of the consultation responses is underway by Officers with a Mid-Point Review of the Car Parking Strategy anticipated to go to the Executive in September.

Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All



Actions we are taking

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), introduced by the Government in 2008, aims to ensure fair and transparent contributions from developments towards essential infrastructure, such as schools and roads. In March 2023, the Council's Executive commissioned new viability evidence for a revised CIL charging schedule. Progress is underway as the Council moves towards adopting and implementing the CIL. Additional information has been provided to Dixon Searle Partnership, the appointed consultants, and discussions are ongoing regarding the development typologies to assess and the best approach for consulting with key stakeholders, including landowners and developers. An 8-week public consultation survey is scheduled to run from August 2 to September 27, 2024, to gather community input for a well-informed and collaborative CIL implementation. The draft CIL charging schedule was prepared and approved by the Executive in July. After the public consultation concludes, Officers will review the responses. Unless major concerns arise, the charging schedule will be submitted for independent examination later in the year.

The Strategic Housing Project at the Council is undergoing significant developments with a Housing Delivery Programme Manager appointed in April. 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 in Chipping Norton features eight 2- and 3-bedroom zero-carbon homes available through a discounted market sale, offering buyers the unique opportunity to custom-build their homes and influence design and specifications. Despite some delays in the project, the Executive approved a new delivery model proposal in November, which was jointly developed by Green Axis and Homes England. The legal agreements have been drafted and agreed upon by Legal Services, the housing team, and the developers.

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. Following the High Court ruling, the Planning Inspectorate has set a timeline for hearings based on the Council's submission of the revised Policy 2 (Net Zero) and related evidence. The Council has appointed consultants to assist with a revised viability assessment and sustainability appraisal, expected to be delivered by mid-September 2024. As a result, the Council plans to submit the documents to the Planning Inspectorate in October 2024, with hearings scheduled for February 2025.

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 Council 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. Additionally, the Environment Agency's 'Spheres of Influence' Project, which the Council is participating in as one of three national pilot areas, will influence local plan policies related to the water environment. Updated Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and Phase 1 Water Cycle Study are being commissioned as part of the Local Plan evidence base. The Council is also working closely with the Environment Agency on a more integrated approach to water management, which will be reflected in the emerging draft Local Plan.

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 aims to plant trees in non-woodland areas near residential communities as a lasting tribute to King Charles III's coronation. 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 received grants to start planting fruit trees, with grant claim submissions currently underway. The second round of funding opened in June 2024, with applications closing at the end of July. Evaluations will occur in August, and funding will be awarded to recipients, with the goal of completing all planting activities by March 2025.

The Deer Park South Access Project is progressing with infrastructure enhancements aimed at improving public access to the adjacent woodland. Key developments include the installation of two new bridges over Colwell Brook and completed footpath upgrades, including a new bench offering a scenic view of the site's balancing ponds. Local artist-collaborated nature trail brass rubbing posts, crafted with Windrush CofE Primary School students, have been installed by Ubico, adding to the trail's immersive experience. Interpretation panels, now installed, are designed to enhance visitors' understanding of the area's natural features and heritage. Schoolchildren from Windrush CofE Primary School have already visited and enjoyed the nature trail. Additionally, surfacing improvements have been made to the bridleway along the southern boundary of Deer Park South, and nature recovery officers will review land management and site access with Witney Woodland volunteers.



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 is progressing with various initiatives. Funding from the Local Carbon Skills Fund has been secured for heat decarbonisation plans at Elmfield Council Offices and Welch Way. The Windrush Leisure Centre has received £1.6 million from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 3c (PSDS 3c), with Council approval granted on March 11, 2024, and work commencing on April 1, 2024. Additionally, a successful bid to the Swimming Pool Support Fund will finance the installation of solar PV panels and shower flow restrictors at Windrush Leisure Centre. Solar PV panels and heat recovery systems will also be added to the air handling units at Chipping Norton Lido to boost energy efficiency. Heat decarbonisation plans for Elmfield, Welch Way, and Old Court House were finalised in March 2024, advancing the Council's sustainability efforts. The PSDS 3c design and build contract for Windrush Leisure Centre will be procured through the Pagabo framework, with a mini competition launched on June 28, 2024. A bid has been submitted under the Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund Phase 5 (LCSF 5) for initial design work for the decarbonisation of Chipping Norton Leisure Centre and additional Council-owned buildings in Chipping Norton, Witney, and Oxford.

The Executive approved the updated Carbon Action Plan for 2030 in March 2024, signalling a commitment to addressing climate change. The document is undergoing a redesign to enhance accessibility and readability before its publication on the website. A tender process has been initiated for establishing the carbon baseline, which will serve as the foundation for the new Climate Change Strategy. The scope of work for the carbon baseline has been revised, and consultants have been asked to submit revised costs. Meanwhile, work on the delivery of the Carbon Action Plan continues, and the drafting of the new Climate Change Strategy has begun.

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 a recently added library to encourage communities to share resources on nature recovery and climate action, with regular updates to keep information current. A new competition on retrofit measures is set to launch soon. The initiative also includes ongoing liaison with Oxfordshire County Council on climate engagement.

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.

Ubico, the District Council's waste partner, tested a zero-emission Dennis Eagle eCollect in West Oxfordshire, collecting over 94 tonnes of rubbish in two weeks to evaluate its performance in a large rural district. Transport emissions from the Council's waste services contribute around 40% of the authority's greenhouse gases. Reducing this figure is crucial for the Council's goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2030. The test vehicle, on loan from Dennis Eagle, features five lithium-ion battery packs to maximize payload. The District Council's fleet already includes three electric supervisor vans, three electric sweepers, and an electric car. The Council's updated Carbon Action Plan focuses on making its buildings, vehicles, and waste services more energy-efficient to achieve net zero by 2030, aligned with the Climate Change Strategy 2021-25.



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. The initiative has had eight projects crowdfunding, with four fully funded: Food Surplus Redistribution in Witney, Cotswolds Arts Through Schools, Get Set Gagingwell - The MAP Garden, and Cycles of Good. Round 3 of Westhive is underway, with a further creator workshop to be held on July 22.

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 guide Town and Parish Councils 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. 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. The guidance was also launched online on April 16, 2024, providing a broader audience with access to the resources virtually. The grand opening of Water Close in Asthall Leigh on May 23, 2024, marked another milestone in the initiative. Additionally, £2,000 was transferred to parish councils for long-term maintenance, using the underspend to further support sustained nature recovery efforts across the region.

Several community-focused initiatives are underway to enhance local well-being and support. The Food Action Plan benefits from £23.5k in funding, with an additional £40k+ from Household Support Fund 4 (HSF4) to strengthen the community food network. The Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) is being utilised for a cultural programme for young people in collaboration with Oxford Cultural Education Partners (OXCEP). A new local area coordination pilot in Chipping Norton, funded by Oxford County Council (OCC), will introduce a permanent coordinator to assist residents. Starting in March 2024, a Local Ward Profile in Witney, funded by Public Health, will develop a health profile to guide service delivery and identify local needs, with grants available for community groups. Additionally, £120k from COMF is allocated to address poor mental health, split between Service Level Agreement (SLA) grants and two Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations in West Oxfordshire. The Community Insight project will provide £25k for VCS groups in Witney. A bid for OCC Public Health funding aims to support 2-4 community-based health and nature recovery projects, and £10k from COMF will aid local groups offering mental health support to parents based on Youth Needs Assessment findings. Decisions on the allocation of Household Support Fund 5 (HSF5) funds are anticipated soon. These efforts collectively aim to boost community support, promote environmental sustainability, and improve overall health and well-being.

This page is intentionally left blank



Corporate Strategy Action Tracker

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

Our Focus	Actions	Quarter 1 Update	Start Date	Date Due	Status	Executive Member	Link Officer	Updates Provided by
Putting Residents First	<p>The Council will listen and act in the best interests of residents by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -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 	<p>Explore how the Council leads Youth Engagement, ensuring youth are engaged across the wide range of activity it undertakes.</p>	<p>After 2 rounds of advertising the Youth Dev Role a successful candidate has been identified - expected start 16th Sept. This role will engage with internal and external colleagues to secure greater engagement by young people and develop more opportunities.</p> <p>External funding for 2 years for a second Community Builder role has been secured to cover Carterton - this will strengthen our ability to hear from those seldom heard in our communities</p>		On Target	Rizvana Poole	Emmy-Lou Bossard / Heather McCulloch	Heather McCulloch
	<p>Customer Experience Improvement Programme</p>	<p>The arrangement for telephones to remain open 9 - 2 was agreed by Executive in June. Online services available for customers continues to increase with the uptake for our customers exceeding expectation. Open portal applications continue to rise so that our customers can self serve.</p>	01/07/2020	01/01/2024	On Target	All	Giles Hughes	Michelle Clifford

<p>1.2</p>	<p>The Council will act with outstanding levels of transparency and accountability, with high standards of governance and trustworthiness.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>The Modern.gov Xpress integration was successfully deployed at the local elections. The Audit and Governance work plan has been drafted, and the declarations at meetings functionality has been implemented.</p>	<p>01/05/2021</p>	<p>31/12/2023</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Andy Graham</p>	<p>Giles Hughes</p>	<p>Andrew Brown</p>
<p>1.3</p>	<p>The Council will actively manage Council budgets, delivering good levels of service through the wise and efficient use of funds available as well as enabling those budgets to grow so that the Council can take action towards the priorities of this Council Plan.</p>	<p>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.</p>				<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Alaric Smith</p>	<p>Ciaran O'Kane / Phil Martin</p>	<p>Ciaran O'Kane</p>
<p>1.4</p>	<p>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.</p>								
<p>2.1</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Adopt and implement CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy).</p>	<p>Viability report finalised. Draft charging schedule prepared. To be considered at O&S committee on 17 July and Executive on 22 July with a view to 6-week public consultation thereafter.</p>	<p>01/11/2019</p>	<p>31/08/2024</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Hugo Ashton</p>	<p>Giles Hughes / Charlie Jackson / Chris Hargraves</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves</p>
		<p>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.</p>	<p>Stage 3 of planning model recieved and reviewed by officers. Final report moved on Executive Forward Plan to September 2024 due to elections.</p>	<p>01/09/2023</p>	<p>05/06/2024</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Tim Sumner</p>	<p>Rachel Biles</p>	<p>Rachel Biles</p>
		<p>Explore opportunities for green investment for strategic development areas eg through the Carterton Masterplan and also through the Pan-Regional Partnership.</p>	<p>Final draft of 'Carterton Strategic Study' submitted. Opportunities to extend green active travel loop, greater investment in green public realm and green infrastructure. To be discussed further at Executive Away Day in particular how the recommendations can be realised in practical terms.</p>	<p>01/01/2023</p>	<p>31/08/2025</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Tim Sumner, Andrew Prosser</p>	<p>Philippa Lowe</p>	<p>Philippa Lowe</p>

Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All

<p>Explore how the Local Plan can address the issue of securing long term maintenance of green infrastructure on large SDA's.</p>	<p>Local Plan preferred option paper in preparation. To be shared with Officers and Local Plan Member working group in August ahead of refinement and formal consideration in October. Long-term maintenance of community infrastructure including Green Infrastructure to be included as a preferred policy option.</p>	31/08/2022	31/08/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Chris Hargraves	Chris Hargraves
<p>Consideration of community stewardship and maintenance of Strategic Development Areas – how do we enable this?</p>	<p>The Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) provides a potential approach to this issue by requiring the submission of a Community Management and Maintenance Plan (CMMP) to explore suitable options for the future management and maintenance of community assets. Potential to roll this approach out more widely through the new Local Plan 2041.</p>	31/08/2022	31/08/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Chris Hargraves	Chris Hargraves
<p>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.</p>	<p>Working with Bioregional and Space Syntax to complete a carbon assessment of Local Plan spatial options, including the accessibility of places by active travel. Districtwide carbon baseline and net zero pathways will consider green and active travel in consultation with OCC, which will feed into the Climate Change Strategy update.</p>			On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
<p>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.</p>	<p>Completed</p>	01/04/2023	15/11/2023	Complete	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	Charlie Jackson
<p>Strategic Housing Project: Assessing scope for investment and modelling.</p>	<p>Housing Delivery Programme Manager, Michael David, appointed in April. Workplan being drafted with opportunities for additionality being identified.</p>	01/04/2023		On Target	Alaric Smith, Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	Michael David
<p>Strategic Housing Project: Overview of modelling options and delivery. Proposed approach to the November Executive.</p>	<p>Completed</p>	01/04/2023	15/11/2023	Complete	Tim Sumner, Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	Charlie Jackson
<p>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).</p>	<p>Housing Delivery Programme Manager, Michael David, appointed in April. Workplan being drafted with opportunities for additionality being identified.</p>	01/04/2023		On Target	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	Michael David

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.

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.	Housing Delivery Programme Manager, Michael David, appointed in April. Workplan being drafted with opportunities for additionality being identified.	01/04/2023		On Target	Geoff Saul	Andrew Turner	Michael David
Further exploration of modular building – how, where and with whom including visits manufacturers. To understand options for delivery.	Housing Delivery Programme Manager, Michael David, appointed in April. Workplan being drafted with opportunities for additionality being identified.	01/04/2023		On Target	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes	Michael David
Emergency accommodation – Acquisition of - consider the balance – single/couple and family accommodation).	Oxford City have come back with some design options - Michael David now on boarded and working up scheme for business case assessment with Oxford City.			On Target	Geoff Saul	Frank Wilson / Jon Dearing	
Completion of housing development at Walterbush Road, Chipping Norton.	Legal documents and S106 have been drafted and agreed with Legal Services, the Housing team and the Developer.	01/10/2021	31/07/2023	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Geoff Saul	Andrew Turner	Andrew Turner
Deliver the Local Authority Housing Fund as a means to relieve pressures on short term accommodation and bridging hotels with a longer term of objective to see the housing being used for more general affordable purposes.		01/04/2023	31/09/2024	On Target	Geoff Saul	Jon Dearing	Jon Dearing

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

Work with partners to support a vibrant local economy which gives residents the opportunity to prosper and fulfil their ambitions through secure jobs and exciting careers, entrepreneurship and developing new skills to participate in and contribute to the local economy.

Work with Carterton Town Council and other relevant stakeholders to identify economic regeneration priorities for the town and immediate area following completion of the UKSPF funded Carterton Strategic/Master Plan.	The Carterton Strategic Study has now been completed by the consultant team. Discussions are now needed on how to take forward the potential actions and recommendations that have been identified. This will be the subject of discussion at the forthcoming Executive away day.			Not Scheduled to Start	Duncan Enright	Chris Hargraves	
Strategy and plan for reinvigorating the District's Charter Markets	Draft strategy currently developed and the draft brief for the Expression of interest being designed for the management and operation of the Charter Markets in Chipping Norton and Witney and potentially another for additional markets at Marriotts.			On Target	Duncan Enright	Emma Phillips	
Take an active role as member of Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and engagement with neighbouring LVEP's.	Climate team are advising on the green leaf scheme and webpages.			On Target	Duncan Enright	Chris Jackson	Chris Jackson
Set future project priorities for Council and Stakeholders to secure the long term viability of our Market Towns via enhancements inc wayfinding & signage, public realm and support for independent retailers and appropriate market promotions/attractions.	Engagement work started with key stakeholders to identify and prioritise enhancements working with established networks and steering groups. We have seen increased food events bring greater footfall to the main towns and are working on additional promotions that will bolster the independant traders also.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Duncan Enright	Sam Stronach	Sam Stronach

Support the retention of existing and development of new services and facilities that contribute to the local economy, community wellbeing and cohesion.

Oxfordshire County Council improvements to Witney Town Centre linked to Marriots Walk redevelopment where appropriate.	Proposed enhancements currently in pre-consultation phase. Will be pulling together an opportunity for Cllr Enright to feedback directly with OCC on the proposed Witney enhancements.			On Target	Duncan Enright	Sam Stronach	Sam Stronach
The commissioning of the Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (through Max Associates) to inform the development of a West Oxfordshire Leisure, Health and Wellbeing Strategy.				Not Scheduled to Start			
Guide the future delivery of Salt Cross new garden village and associated infrastructure to enable delivery of Salt Cross Science Park.	<p>Area Action Plan (AAP): The Planning Inspector has set a timeline for hearings based on WODC's submission of modified Policy 2 (Net Zero) and related evidence. The Council has appointed consultants to modify Policy 2, revise the viability assessment, and submit the sustainability appraisal from, As a result, the Council anticipates submitting to PINs in Oct 24, leading to hearings in Feb 25.</p> <p>Self Build/Community Led Housing Toolkit: The CoHo Hub's input on delivery advice is concluded and the housing team aims to expand the toolkit District-wide rather than just for Salt Cross.</p> <p>A40 Improvements Scheme: OCC presented a revised scheme to Homes England (HE), which goes to the board for approval in July. OCC held a developers forum with WODC and Eynsham developers. The grade-separated crossing/underpass is not part of the revised scheme.</p>	01/01/2018	31/12/2034	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Duncan Enright	Andrea Clenton	Andrea Clenton
Marriotts Walk – implementation of CBRE recommendations inc. securing new tenants, public realm improvements & making enhanced use of the square.	Progress in securing new tenants has been challenging with significant interest not yet translating to new tenancies. Approval given for Capex associated with fitting out the uncompleted unit adjacent to M & S food hall with tenant lined up.			On Target	Duncan Enright	Jasmine McWilliams	Andrew Turner
Development of the Carterton Strategic/Master Plan to regeneration the town and in doing so redressing balance between housing development with investment in the town centre, leisure and culture facilities, community space and business opportunities. Will seek to determine the best way to maximise the economic benefit of the RAF's largest airbase for the town and immediate area.	The final draft of the Carterton Strategic Study is now an opportunity to now consider the plan and allow for further discussion on the recommendations. Next steps will be to engage with key stakeholders who input into the study. Further discussion through the Executive Away day to determine next steps.	01/02/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Alaric Smith, Hugo Ashton, Geoff Saul, Tim Sumner	Philippa Lowe	Mikki Liddiat
Ubico Grounds Maintenance Contract – review contract with aim of securing both biodiversity enhancements and budgetary savings.		01/03/2025	01/03/2026	Not Scheduled to Start	Lidia Arciszewska	Bill Oddy	

Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife

3.1

<p>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.</p>	<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>Land management plans are under review. Chanida Fung has been appointed as Lead Nature Recovery Officer. Climate change and nature recovery officers are working on the grounds maintenance review with Bob Lightfoot.</p>	<p>01/02/2022</p>	<p>01/03/2026</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Lidia Arciszewska</p>	<p>Bill Oddy</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	
	<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>					<p>Not Scheduled to Start</p>	<p>Lidia Arciszewska</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves</p>	
	<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>Preparation of the Windrush in Witney funding bid included in the Wychwood Forest Trust SLA. Neil Clennell to provide an update on the project.</p>	<p>01/05/2022</p>	<p>01/03/2025</p>	<p>Off Target but Mitigation in Place</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	
	<p>Coronation Community Orchard Scheme</p>	<p>Second round of funding has been launched and application closes at the end of July. Submissions to be evaluated in August and funding to be awarded to recipients,</p>	<p>01/11/2023</p>	<p>21/03/2025</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser/Lidia Arciszewska</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Climate change and nature recovery officers engaging with the North East Cotswold Farmer Cluster on projects. Meeting held with a number of representatives of the farming and agricultural sector in April. Valuable feedback received which is being taken into account in drafting the Local Plan preferred options consultation paper.</p>			<p>Not Scheduled to Start</p>	<p>Lidia Arciszewska, Andrew Prosser</p>	<p>Chris Jackson / Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	
<p>Help people to connect with nature by improving understanding of and public access to green spaces and the countryside.</p>	<p>Deer Park South Access Project – Infrastructure improvements to enhance public access to woodland adjacent to strategic development area.</p>	<p>Both interpretation panels have been installed. Schoolchildren from Windrush CofE Primary School visited the site and enjoyed the nature trail. Surfacing improved on the bridleway along the southern boundary of Deer Park South. Nature recovery officers to review land management and access to the site with the Witney Woodland volunteers.</p>	<p>01/12/2022</p>	<p>31/05/2025</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Duncan Enright</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	
<p>The Council will be a progressive custodian of our environmental resources, supporting a</p>	<p>Be an active participant in the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and contribute to the production of the Local Nature Recovery</p>	<p>Officer group to convene with Local Nature Partnership - maintain relationship with LNP and work with partners to develop workstreams.</p>	<p>01/07/2022</p>	<p>01/07/2025</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Lidia Arciszewska, Duncan Enright</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	

3.4

healthy natural landscape and functioning ecosystem which is rich in wildlife and habitats that are enjoyed by and benefit all.

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.

Explore the potential for the Council to acquire land for Biodiversity Net Gain and nature-based carbon sequestration.

Nature based carbon sequestration project started with an initial review of the carbon offsetting market e.g. UK Woodland Carbon Code etc. Tatiana Bell appointed as the Nature Recovery Officer.
Consider acquisition of land for BNG and carbon sequestration as part of this project.

8/12/2024 31/03/2026

On Target

Andrew Prosser
Frank Wilson / Hannah Kenyon

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.

Updated Level I SFRA and Phase I Water Cycle Study being commissioned as part of the Local Plan evidence base. Officers also continue to engage with the Environment Agency in respect of their 'spheres of influence' project which is considering a more integrated and holistic approach to water management. This will be reflected in the emerging draft Local Plan accordingly.

01/06/2022 31/12/2024

On Target

Hugo Ashton
Chris Hargraves

Sam Stronach / Chris Hargraves

Page 101

Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Drive down carbon emissions from Council operations including leisure, waste and street cleansing and running of the Council's estate, and in so doing lead by example to inspire others to take action to collectively reduce the overall carbon emissions of the District.

Decarbonisation of council owned buildings, including leisure centres and sports pavilions – secure external PSDS funding and extend the MEES project to include the full decarbonisation of tenanted buildings.

PSDS 3c design and build contract for the decarbonisation of Windrush Leisure Centre will be procured through the Pagabo framework. A mini competition was launched on 28/06/24.
LCSF 5 bid submitted for some initial design work for the decarbonisation of Chipping Norton Leisure Centre, Horsefair, Old Print House, 21 Between Towns Road, Unit 1 Des Roches Square (still awaiting result).

Ongoing

Andrew Prosser, Dan Levy, Alaric Smith
Hannah Kenyon

Hannah Kenyon

PSDS 3b funded Carterton Leisure Centre decarbonisation - Carbon reduction through the replacement of the heating and hot water system of the building with a low-carbon alternative and increasing the amount of solar PV on site.

PSDS 3b Carterton Leisure Centre decarbonisation scheme on hold. Evaluating scheme cost and available funding for PSDS 4a application. Report being prepared for September Executive to review cost, funding opportunities and next steps.

31/10/22 31/03/25

Off Target

Andrew Prosser, Tim Sumner
Claire Locke

Claire Locke / Andrew Turner

Waste Vehicle Strategy - Supporting the Waste team on the development of the strategy to reduce emissions from the Council's waste vehicle fleet.

eHGV trail completed and results positive. Climate change officers researching funding options in consultation with other local authorities and the Greater South East Net Zero Hub. Meeting arranged for 15 July to discuss next round of EV vehicle procurement.

On Target

Lidia Arciszewska
Simon Anthony / Hannah Kenyon

Hannah Kenyon

Carbon Action Plan to 2030 and Climate Change Strategy to 2050 - Update of the Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change strategy to include scope 3 emissions, district carbon budgets, route maps to net zero, and actions.

Carbon Action Plan completed and continuing to work on its delivery. Scope of work revised for the carbon baseline and consultants have been asked to submit revised costs.
Started to draft the new Climate Change Strategy.

01/07/23 30/6/2024

On Target

Andrew Prosser
Hannah Kenyon

Hannah Kenyon

4.1

4.2

4.3

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>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>Management team have approved the use of the Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool (SIAT), formerly known as the Climate Impact Assessment Tool. Members to be briefed on the SIAT in Informal Executive.</p>	<p>01/02/2023</p>	<p>01/04/2024</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>
	<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>New PPAs are being agreed with the tenants at Unit 5 Talisman Business Park and Unit 2 Des Roches Square. Unit 6 did not generate sufficient ROI to proceed. Climate Change officers have submitted additional documents to Planning in support of the Woodgreen planning application. No prior approval is required for Elmfield. Climate Change officers are in discussion with the solar installer, GSM, and the Property and Estates team about implementation and coordinating installs with the wider refit.</p>	<p>01/08/2022</p>	<p>01/12/2023</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser</p>	<p>Andrew Turner/Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</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>Nature Recovery Plan has been uploaded on the Council website. Nature recovery officers are prioritising the delivery of particular workstreams.</p>	<p>01/03/2023</p>	<p>01/03/2024</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>
	<p>Consider how proactive should WODC be in facilitating retrofit for the ‘able to pay’ market.</p>	<p>Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA) bid was submitted with OCC and was unsuccessful. Hoping to shadow the winners to assist in developing districtwide retrofit strategy. Working on the CAPZero project team, as part of the SLA, to encourage retrofit at a local level. Explored solar bulk-buy with other Oxfordshire local authorities.</p>			<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>
<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>Greenlight – nature and online hub to facilitate community action for a greener future.</p>	<p>Greenlight content has been reviewed and updated. New competition to launch on retrofit measures. Liaising with OCC on climate engagement.</p>			<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>
	<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>01/07/2023</p>		<p>On Target</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser</p>	<p>Jasmine McWilliams</p>	<p>Jasmine McWilliams</p>
	<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>01/06/2023</p>	<p>01/03/2025</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon</p>

4.4		Encourage renewable energy generation at appropriate sites in the District, improving local energy and economic resilience and supporting the community benefits that this resilience will bring.	Explore opportunities with partners to encourage renewable energy within the District.	Worked on the Outline Business Case for additional Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) funding with OCC. FOP to approve funding on 30th July 2024. Drafting the consultant brief with OCC.			Ongoing	Andrew Prosser	Giles Hughes / Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
4.5		Work with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver on our joint commitment to active travel and public transport, including through improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and better public transport services.	Install EV charging points across the District.	Agreed provisional sites for a community microhub in West Oxon: Ducklington, Brize Norton and Burwell Hall.	26/05/2023	01/01/2025	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon
5.1		Target available Council grant budgets to proposals by other organisations that will deliver on Council priorities.	Enable delivery of agreed project interventions on Government approved Investment Plan under UKSPF and REPF.	Progressing well with coordinating activities and projects linked to the government interventions. Changes in government have led us to change some of our branding for promotion of some of our projects going forward.			On Target	Duncan Enright	Sam Stronach	Sam Stronach
			Successful implementation of new Grant Scheme: a) Crowdfunding, b) Community and Voluntary Sector Service Level Agreements and c) Youth initiatives.	a) Round 3 of Westhive underway with Creator workshop on 22nd July. Round 2 projects successfully pledging to WODC and UKSPF have been confirmed. b) Legal agreements for most SLA grant recipients are signed. Work has begun. Kick off meeting with all organisations was held on 11th July. c) Work with youth people is included in some SLA proposals. No specific projects led by Young people have come forward through Westhive. We anticipate this will change with arrival of Youth Dev lead.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Alaric Smith with Rizvana Poole, Andrew Prosser and Lidia Arciszewsk	Heather McCulloch	Heather McCulloch
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.	Guidance launched online on 16th April 2024. Grand opening of Water Close in Asthall Leigh on 23rd May 2024. £2k was transferred to parish councils for long term maintenance, using the underspend.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon	Hannah Kenyon

5.4

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

<p>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.</p>	<p>Community Grants</p>	<p>No expenditure on VCS as part of Food Action Plan to date. Community Insight (ward profile) will provide £25k of funding for VCS groups in the Witney area. Of the £120 of COMF funding towards MH support, £60k has been allocated to the SLA grant recipients and £60 has been awarded to 2 VCS organisations to work in West Oxfordshire over the next 2 years. A bid has been submitted to OCC Public Health to provide funds to 2-4 community based Health and Nature Recovery recovery projects in communities. £10k of COMF funding is to be allocated to 2-3 local groups to deliver mental health support to parents based on findings of the Youth Needs Assessment. Decisions on how HSF5 funds will be distributed are imminent.</p>	<p>01/12/2022</p>	<p>31/05/2025</p>	<p>On Target</p>	<p>Rizvana Poole</p>	<p>Heather McCulloch</p>	<p>Heather McCulloch</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>We await the arrival of the Youth Development Role in order to support and upskill colleagues internally in conducting more effective engagement with young people so that it becomes second nature. YDR will also consider how the YNA might be updated in the future.</p>			<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Rizvana Poole, Tim Sumner</p>	<p>Heather McCulloch</p>	<p>Heather McCulloch</p>
	<p>Have Your Say Events – focussed topic event for young people.</p>	<p>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.</p>			<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Rizvana Poole</p>	<p>Heather McCulloch</p>	<p>Heather McCulloch</p>
<p>Look to invest in the building of homes that meet the diverse housing needs of our residents at all stages of their lives, including for those seeking to downsize or affordable social housing.</p>								

5.5

5.6



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT:
April 2024 - June 2024

Summary Index

Page 106

Area	KPI Name	RAG	Page
Revenues, Benefits and Housing	Percentage of Council Tax Collected	Green	6
	Percentage of Non Domestic Rates collected	Green	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

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

Summary Index

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

A note on performance benchmarking

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

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

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

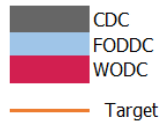
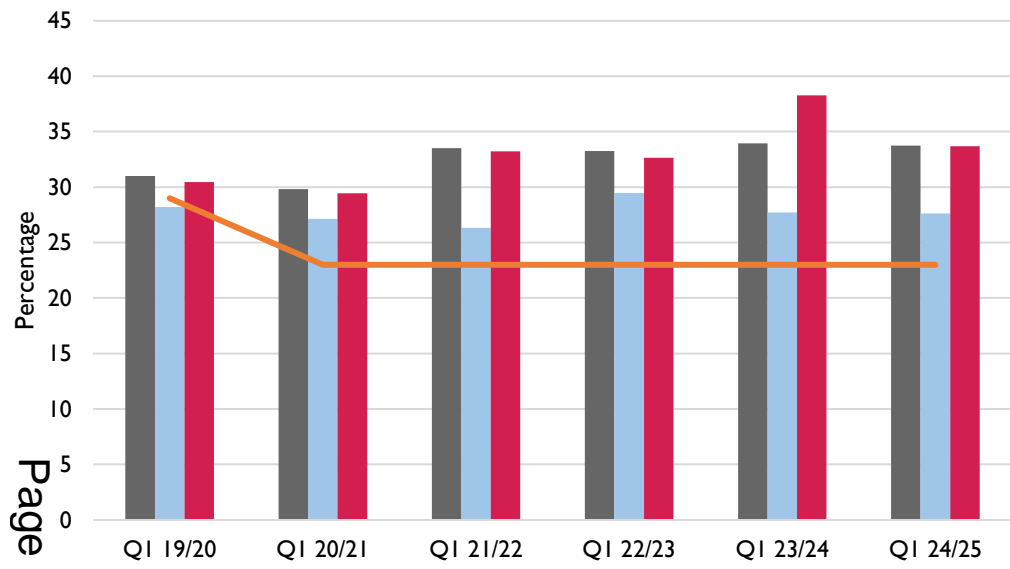
A RAG (red, amber, green) status has been applied to each KPI to provide a quick visual summary of the status of that KPI for the quarter. Additionally, RAG status has been added to the direction of travel for each metric to show how the performance against last quarter and the same quarter compared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

Overall Performance


Overall, the Council's performance for the quarter has been largely positive, with notable progress in Collection Rates, Planning Determination Times, and Missed Bin Collections. Visits to the Leisure Centre, Gym Memberships, and Land Charges Response Times remain high. Additionally, Customer Satisfaction continues to be strong, with the Council topping the Gov Metric league table in June. However, the percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed is increasing, and the Number of Affordable Homes delivered is showing a negative trend.

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 Year
Year 
Declined since last year.

2024-25 Q1 – Higher is Good

Target	33%
Actual	33.69%

2023-24 Collection Rate

Target	99%
Actual	98.05%

Page 110

How do we compare?

Benchmarking via Gov.uk Tables and Individual Council Websites using CIPFA Nearest Neighbours - Current Dataset is up to March '24 (Q4 23-24)

Q4 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	97.81	12/16	Third
Rushcliffe	99.02	1/16	Top
Horsham	98.36	3/16	Top
South Oxfordshire	97.94	6/16	Second
Stroud	97.66	14/16	Bottom
Hinckley and Bosworth	97.52	16/16	Bottom

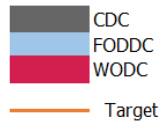
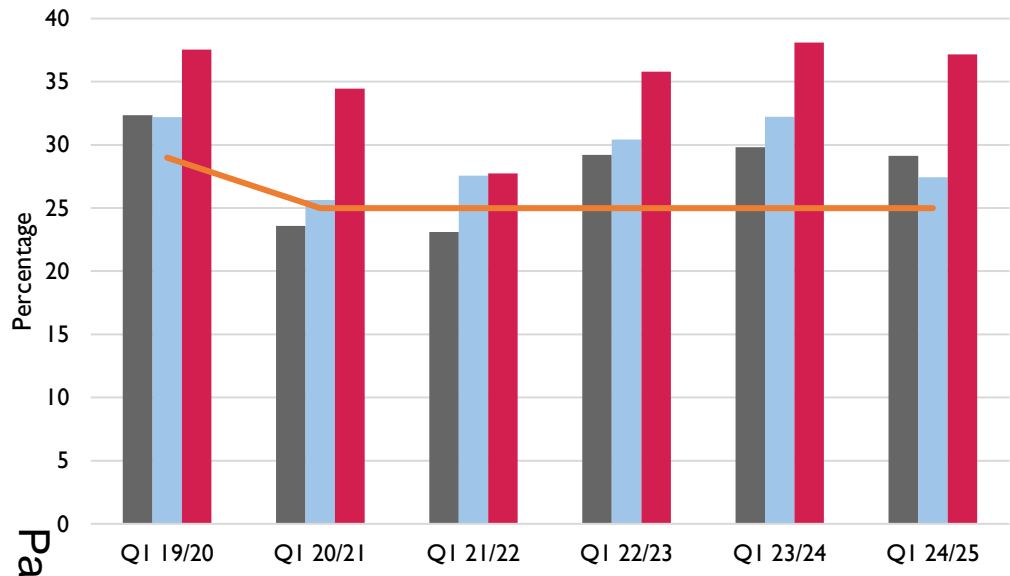
An audit of the Council Tax Services indicated that a significant sum of arrears had accumulated during challenging circumstances associated with the pandemic. Whilst the recovery of arrears had been suspended for a time, it has since been reinstated, and the current recovery cycle is up to date with 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	2023-2024	Total Outstanding
5.73%	8.98%	8.91%	19.33%	£5,946,845


By March 2024, authorities in England had collected £38.5 billion in council tax for 2023-24, along with an additional £907 million in aged debt. They achieved an average in-year collection rate of 95.9%, marking a 0.1 percentage point decrease from 2022-23 (source: gov.uk).

By the end of Q1, the Council observed a decrease in the amount collected compared to the same period last year. In previous years, the Q1 collection rates included Direct Debits due on 1st July, resulting in higher percentages. This year, those payments were not included, leading to a decrease in the collection percentage by approximately 4.5%. Despite this, the collection rates have surpassed pre-pandemic levels for the same period by around 3.3%.

Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected



Direction of Travel

Against last Year 
Slightly declined since last year.

2024-25 Q1 – Higher is Good

Target	33%
Actual	37.15%

2023-24 Collection Rate

Target	99%
Actual	97.62%

How do we compare?

Benchmarking via Gov.uk Tables and Individual Council Websites using CIPFA Nearest Neighbours - Current Dataset is up to March '24 (Q4 23-24)

Q4 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	97.89	6/16	Second
Lichfield	99.53	1/16	Top
Rushcliffe	98.74	3/16	Top
East Hampshire	97.32	9/16	Third
Stratford-on-Avon	96.44	14/16	Bottom
South Oxfordshire	93.92	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:

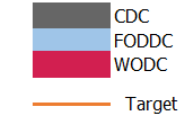
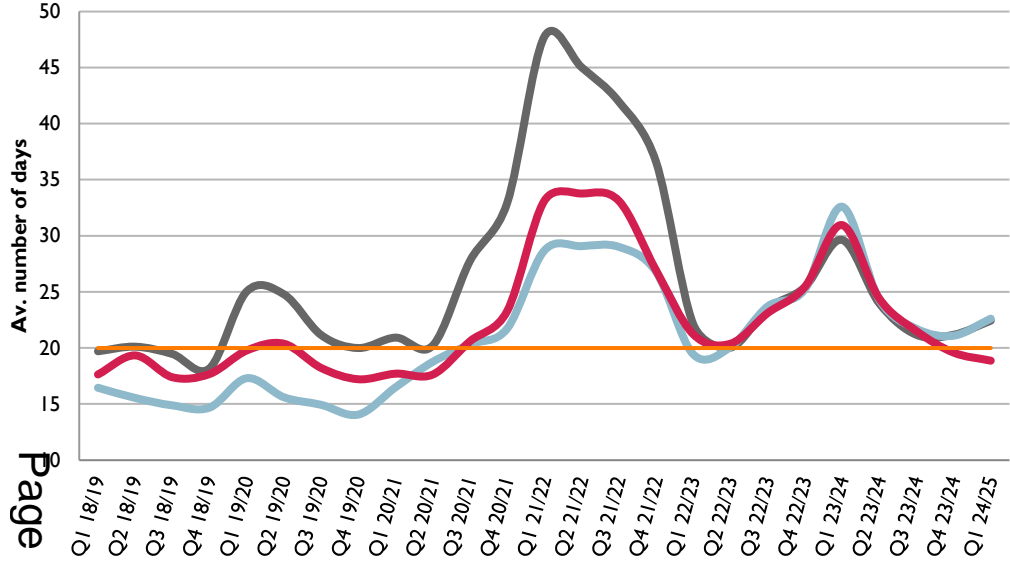
2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	Total Outstanding
12.90%	22.95%	8.17%	15.35%	£1,751,724

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.

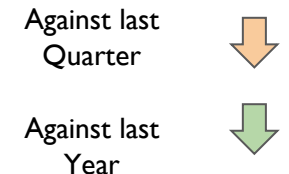
During Q1, the Council observed a slight decrease in the amount collected compared to the same period last year. In previous years, the Q1 collection rates included Direct Debits due on 1st July, resulting in higher percentages. This year, those payments were not included, leading to a decrease in the collection percentage by around 0.9%.

The service remains committed to supporting businesses, actively reaching out through reminders, phone calls, and emails to encourage dialogue with the Councils so that we can support them via manageable repayment plans. All in year recovery processes are up to date.

Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims



Direction of Travel



Improved since last quarter and last year

Q1 – Lower is Good

Target	20
Actual	18.85

Page 12

How do we compare?

Gov.uk produces tables to show a snapshot of the number of CTS claimants at the end of each financial year. The below table shows number of claimants at the end of March 2024 and the percentage change from March 2023 for each authority, plus the data for all authorities in England

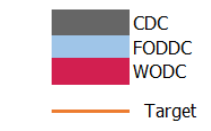
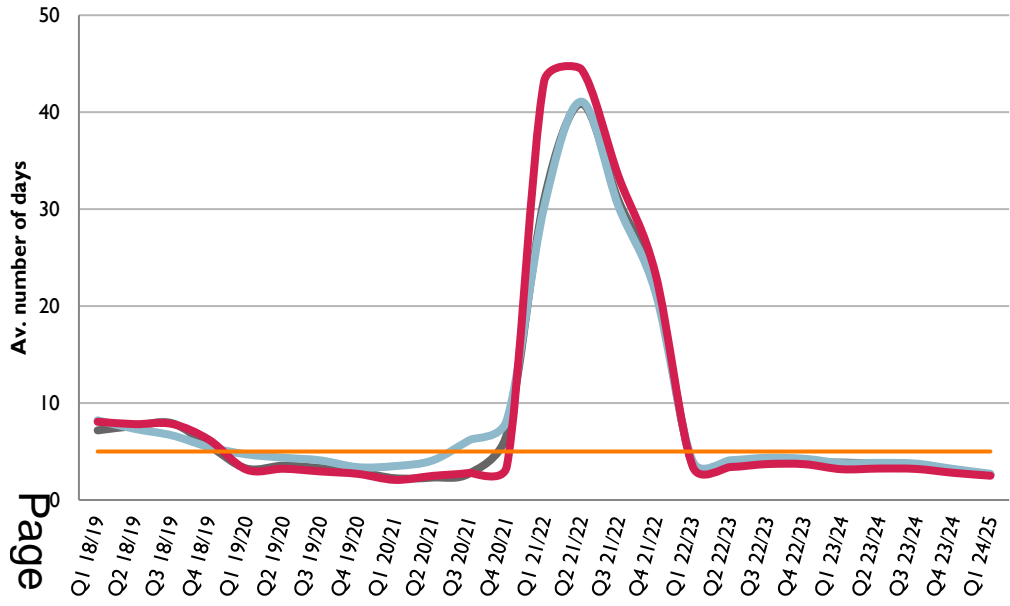
	Number of Claimants at end of March 2024	Percentage Change since March 2023	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank (Higher = less claimants)
West Oxfordshire	4,363	0.88	4/16
Harborough	2,955	1.65	1/16
South Oxfordshire	4,966	0.32	10/16
Stafford	6,783	5.11	16/16

During Q1, the average processing time for new Council Tax Support (CTS) claims was 18.85 days, remaining well within the 20-day target. This achievement is notable despite the typical small backlog of cases carried over from Q4 due to end-of-year processing, which is expected to be cleared in the coming weeks.

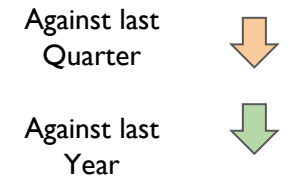
Compared to the same period last year, processing times have improved significantly, decreasing by approximately 12 days.

The automation of tasks received directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and customers has released capacity for officers to process manual claims, with options for further automation currently under discussion.

Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events



Direction of Travel



Improved since last quarter and last year

QI – Lower is Good

Target	5
Actual	2.51

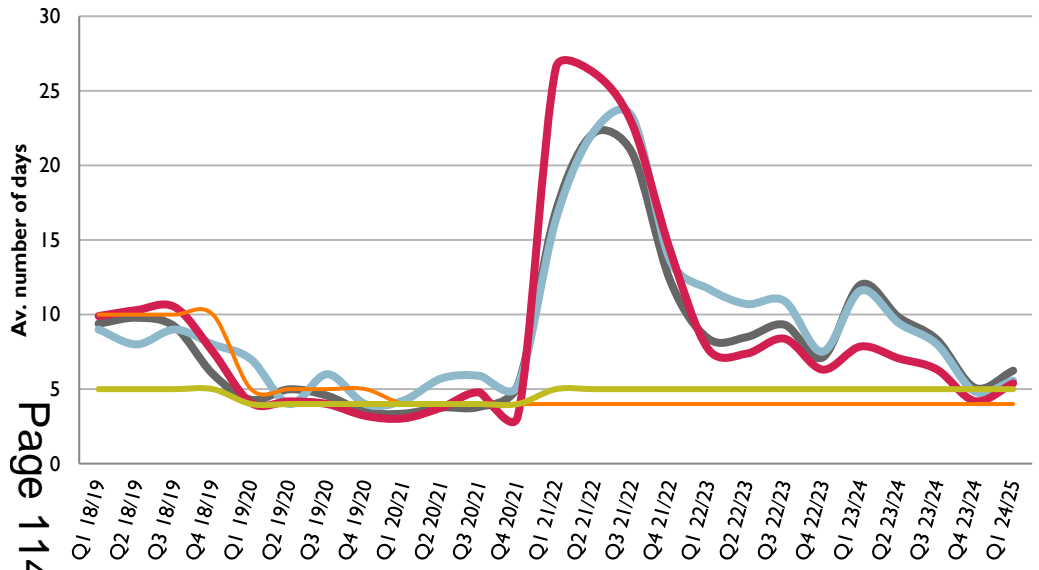
Page 113

How do we compare?

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

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.

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances



CDC
 FODDC
 WODC
 Target
 Shire Districts Mean

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter ↑
 Against last Year ↓

Increased since last quarter but improved since last year

QI – Lower is Good

Target	4
Actual	5.39

Page 114

How 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.](#)

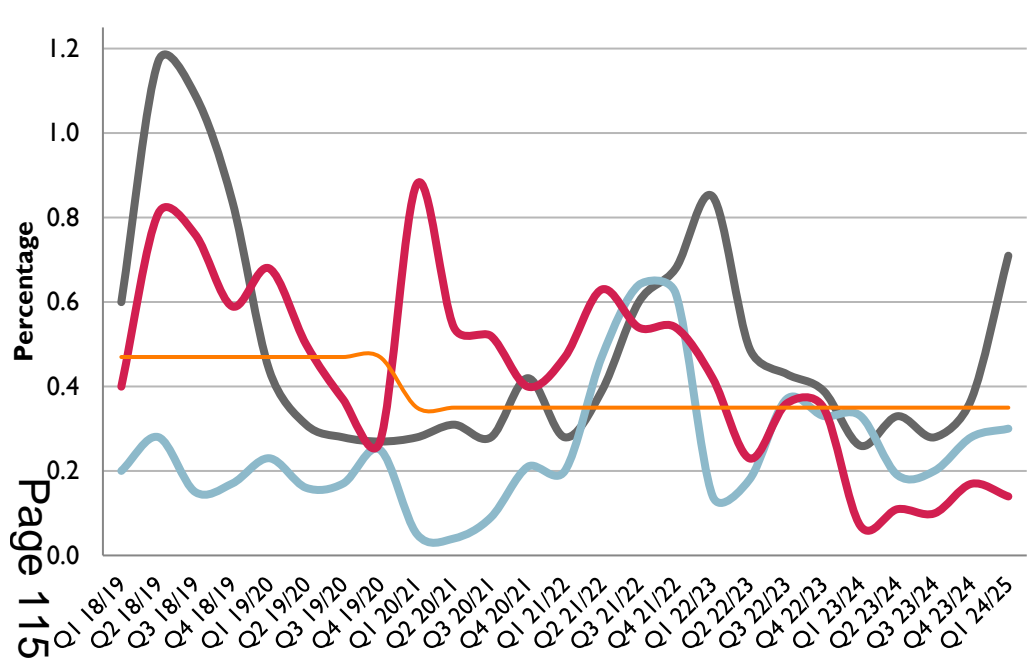
Q1 commenced with the usual small backlog of work for changes in circumstances at the end of Q4 due to end-of-year processing, which the team has worked hard to reduce. Although the Council is currently above target for processing times, there has been an improvement compared to the same period last year, with processing times decreasing by approximately 2.5 days.

It should be noted that the number of expected changes affecting Housing Benefit (HB) is reducing significantly, as can be seen by comparing the number of HB changes assessed to the number of Council Tax Support (CTS) changes assessed. The decrease in HB changes received amplifies the impact of delays in assessing an application due to outstanding evidence required for average processing days.


HB Changes – 1,198
 CTS Changes – 5,665


The managed migration of HB to Universal Credit commenced in April, with some minor glitches reported in the system. While the migration was planned in stages, some stages have been brought forward, which will further decrease the number of changes received and may potentially increase processing times.

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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Slightly improved since last quarter but increased since last year

QI – Lower is Good

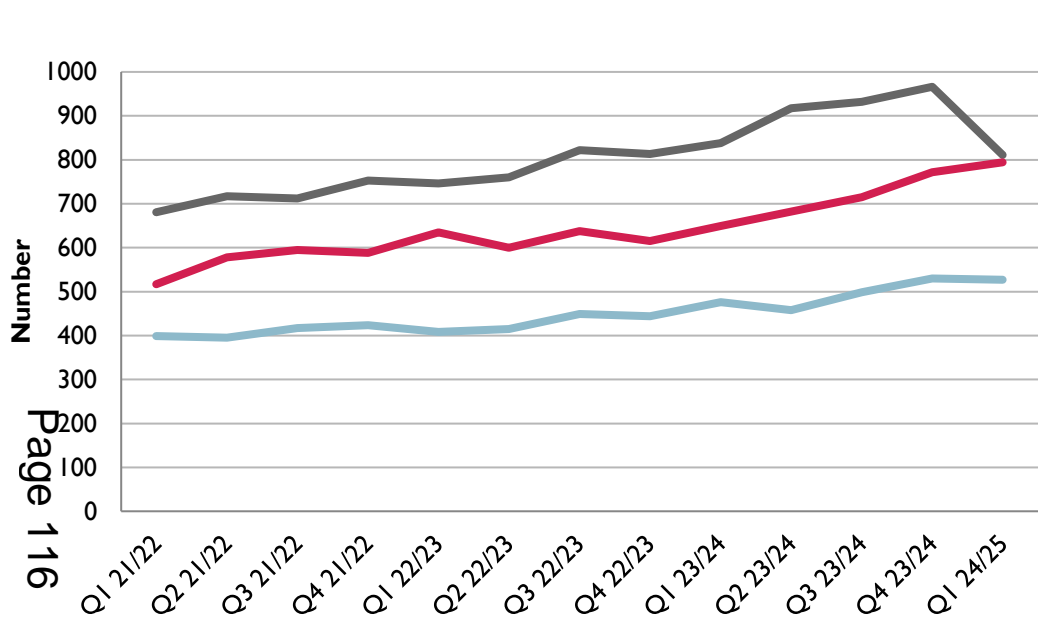
Target	0.35%
Actual	0.14%

How do we compare?


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


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.

(Snapshot) Long Term Empty Properties



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Increased since last quarter and last year

QI – Lower is Good

No Target

772

How do we compare?

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

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.

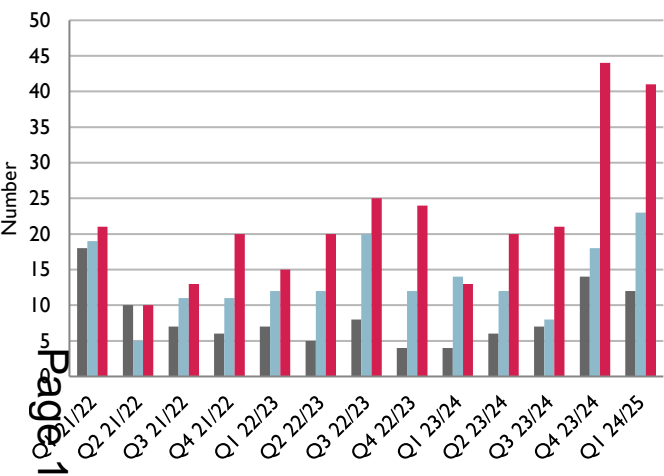
The service reports that properties are staying on the LTE list longer with most properties individually owned which have to be followed up individually which is resource intensive, and will not result in the removal of large numbers from the LTE list. A range of work is being undertaken to both understand the reasons why properties are coming onto the list so that they can be managed and reduced as well as ensuring that the data is up to date so that these properties are having the correct levy applied and charged for.

Maintaining registers of long-term empty properties can help monitor the situation, target interventions, and communicate with property owners more effectively.

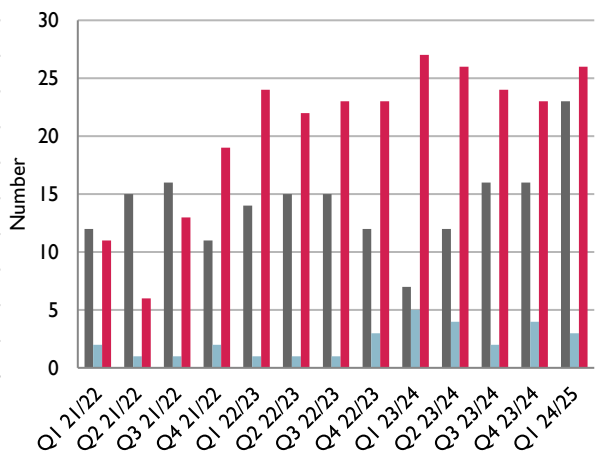
(Snapshot) Number of households in B&B/hotel-type accommodation & Hostels (LA owned or managed); and Number of successful 'Move On' into suitable independent/long-term accommodation from B&Bs/hotels/hostels

Page 117

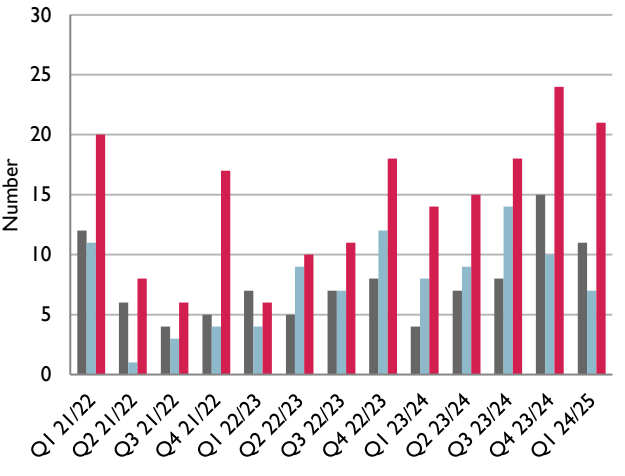
Households in B&B/hotel type accommodation



Households in hostels



Successful 'Move on' into suitable independent/LT accommodation



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	↑

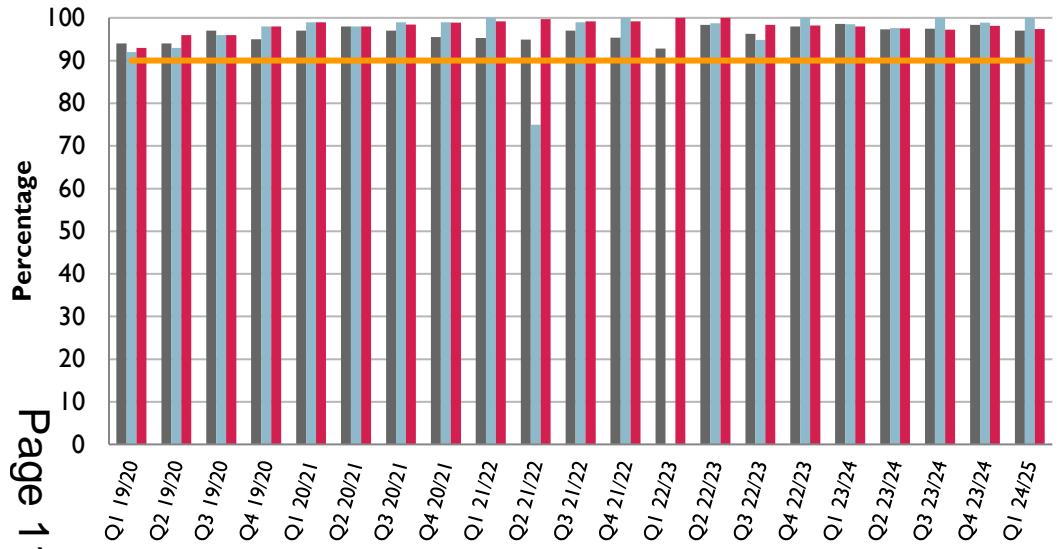
Homelessness continues to be a significant challenge for all three Councils, adding considerable pressure to Housing services, systems, and pathways. During Q1, there was a noticeable rise in homelessness applications. This increase is due to various factors, including heightened demands on the countywide support system. The situation is further complicated by several issues: an influx of individuals leaving refugee hotels, reduced capacity in adult homelessness pathways, and a shortage of affordable housing options outside the social rented sector. Additionally, uncertainties surrounding the general election, including potential policy changes like the abolishment of no-fault evictions, have further exacerbated the growing homelessness issue. This has led to increased competition for available social rented accommodations, resulting in longer stays for individuals transitioning from hostels and B&Bs.

The team persistently works towards preventing homelessness, successfully averting homelessness for 48 households during Q1—31 within the statutory 56-day period and 17 before statutory duties were triggered. It's important to note that these figures are approximations and have not yet been officially confirmed through the reporting system.


How do we compare?


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

Customer Satisfaction - Telephone



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Slightly decreased since last quarter and last year

QI – Higher is Good

Target 90%

Actual 97.42%

Page 118

How do we compare?

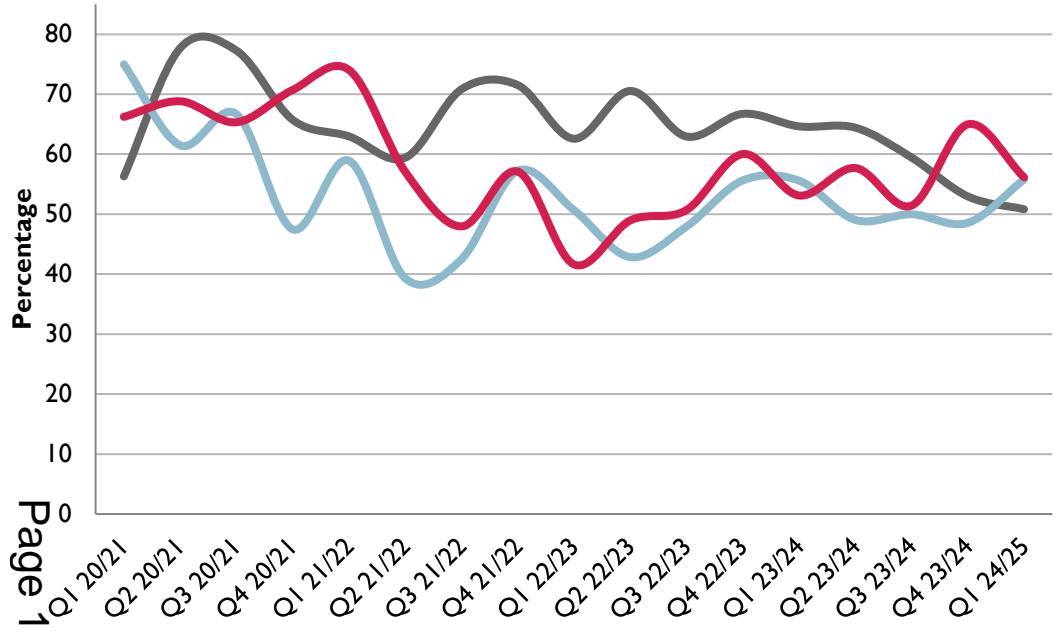
The Govmetric Channel Satisfaction Index is a monthly publication of the top performing councils across the core customer access channels. At least 100 customers need to be transferred to the survey to be included in the league table so even if satisfaction is high, it may not be included i.e. Forest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

Services provided via the telephone consistently yield high satisfaction.

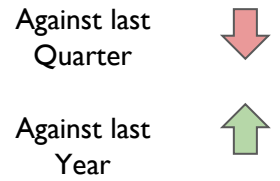
	April Rank	April Net Sat.	May Rank	May Net Sat.	June Rank	June Net Sat.
Cotswold	2	95%	1	96%	6	93%
Forest	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
West Oxfordshire	3	95%	6	91%	1	99%

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

Customer Satisfaction - Email



Direction of Travel



Declined since last quarter but increased since last year

Q1 - Higher is Good

No Target

56.12%

Page 119

572 residents responded to the survey, of which 321 were satisfied. This equates to a rate of 56.12% satisfaction for the quarter, down from 64.95% during Q4.

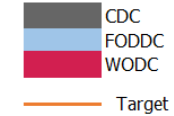
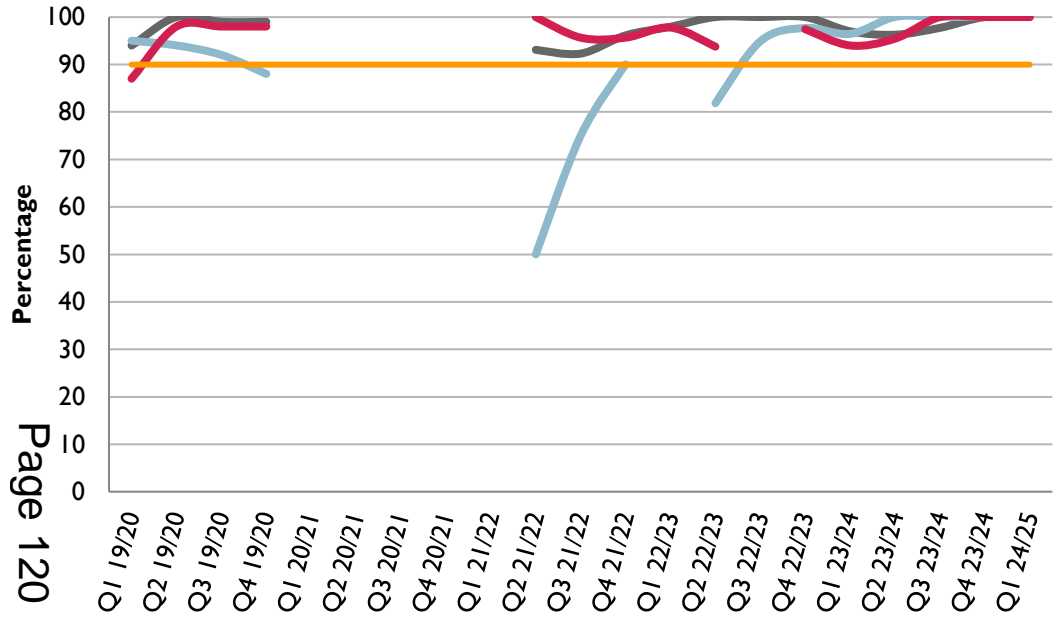
How do we compare?

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

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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter

Against last Year

Same as last quarter but improved since last year

Q1 - Higher is Good

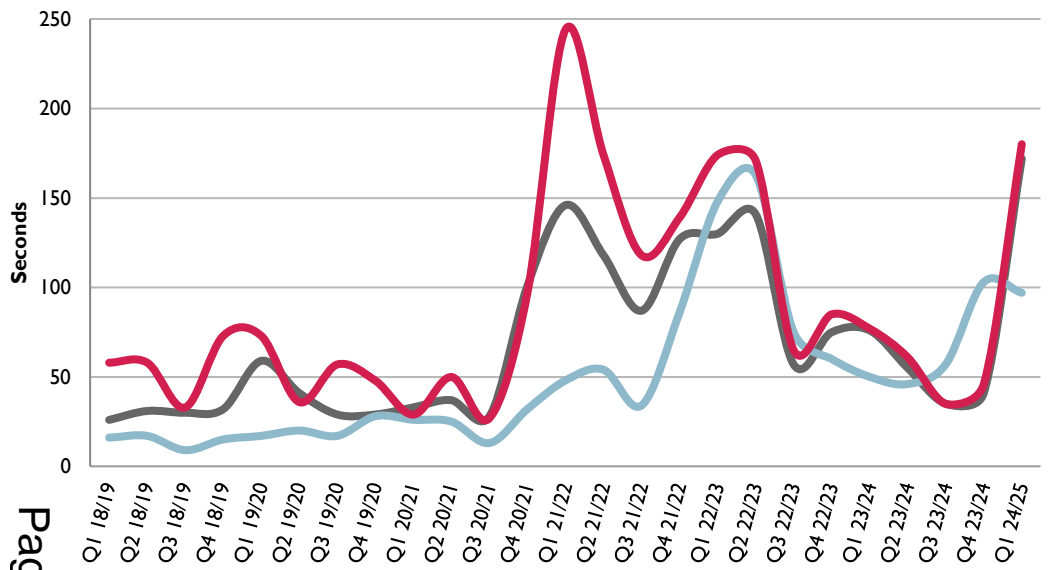
Target	90%
Actual	100%

How do we compare?

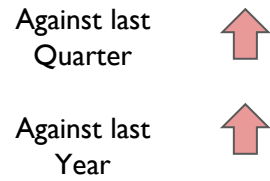
Benchmarking currently not available. The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

Customer Satisfaction from face to face interactions continues to be high, with a 100% satisfaction rate for the quarter, with all 14 individuals surveyed satisfied with the service.

Customer Call Handling - Average Waiting Time



Direction of Travel



Increased since last quarter and last year

Lower is Good

No Target

180 Seconds

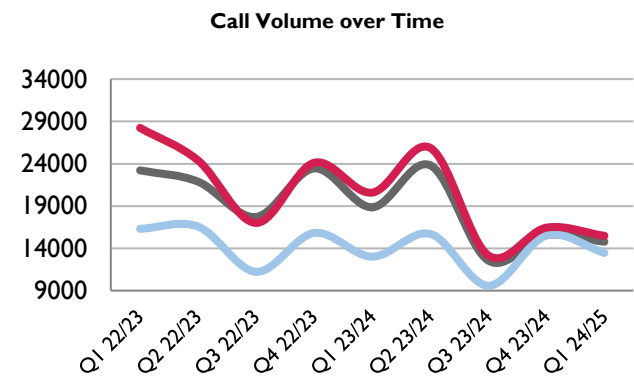
Page 121

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.

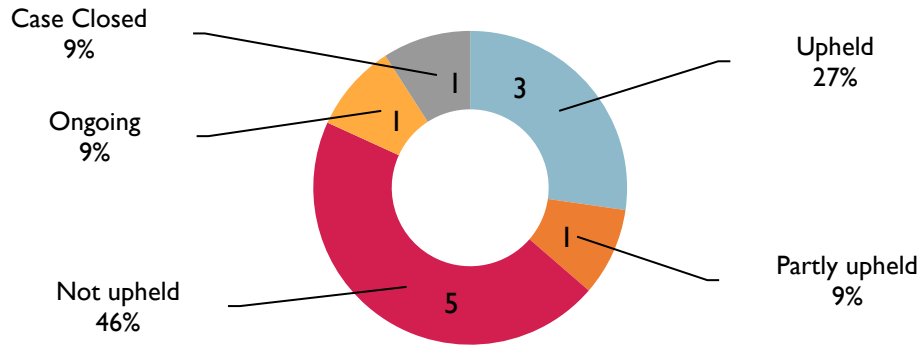
The average wait time at the Council has significantly increased compared to the last quarter, driven by several key factors. Among these is a notable surge in call volumes, particularly due to the General Election, which led to a substantial number of inquiries. Additionally, there was a marked increase in calls related to garden waste services and council tax, further burdening the system. Staff resourcing challenges compounded the problem, with the team experiencing vacancies equivalent to six full-time employees. These factors, together, resulted in much longer wait times. To address this, the service is actively recruiting to fill these vacancies.

The Council saw a decline of over 4,000 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 

Declined since last quarter and last year

Page 222

How do we compare?

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

During Q1, the Council experienced a decrease in complaints received from last quarter.

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

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

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

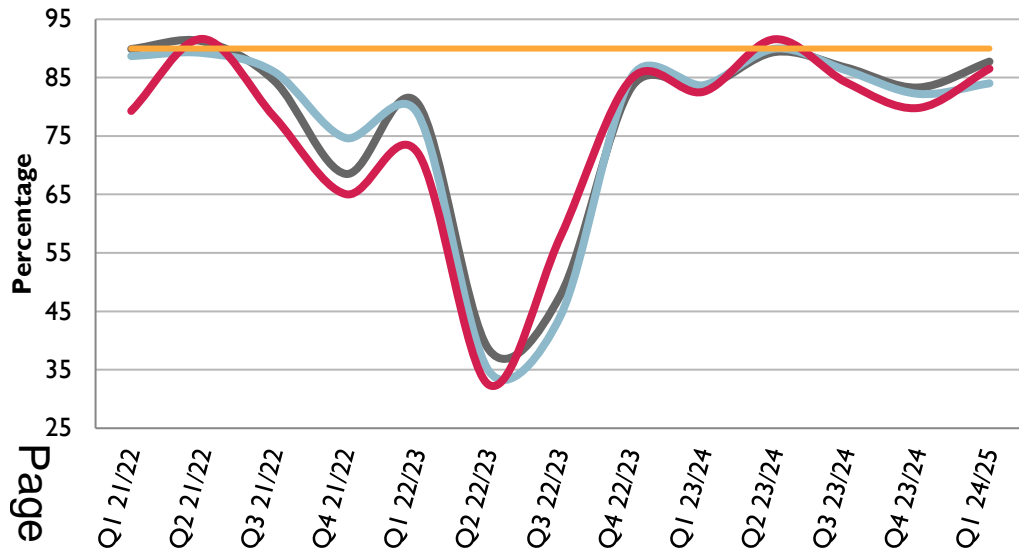
- Stage 1: Relevant service area responds to complaint within 10 working days
- Stage 2: Complaint is reviewed by Corporate Responsibility Team, response is signed off by relevant Business Manager, and sent to complainant within 10 working days
- Stage 3: Complaint is reviewed by relevant Business Manager,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

Complaints Upheld or Partially Upheld Breakdown

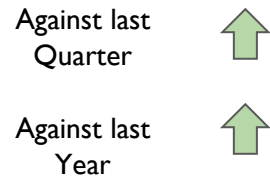
Service area	Description	Outcome/learning	Decision	Response time (days)
Flooding	Grant not issued despite meeting criteria	Dealt with by Service	Upheld	10
Waste	Lack of waste collections	Dealt with by Service	Upheld	8
ERS	Lack of communication	Dealt with by Service and apology offered	Partly Upheld	7
ERS	Issues with inspection and lack of communication	Dealt with by Service	Upheld	10+

Page 1 of 3

Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days



Direction of Travel



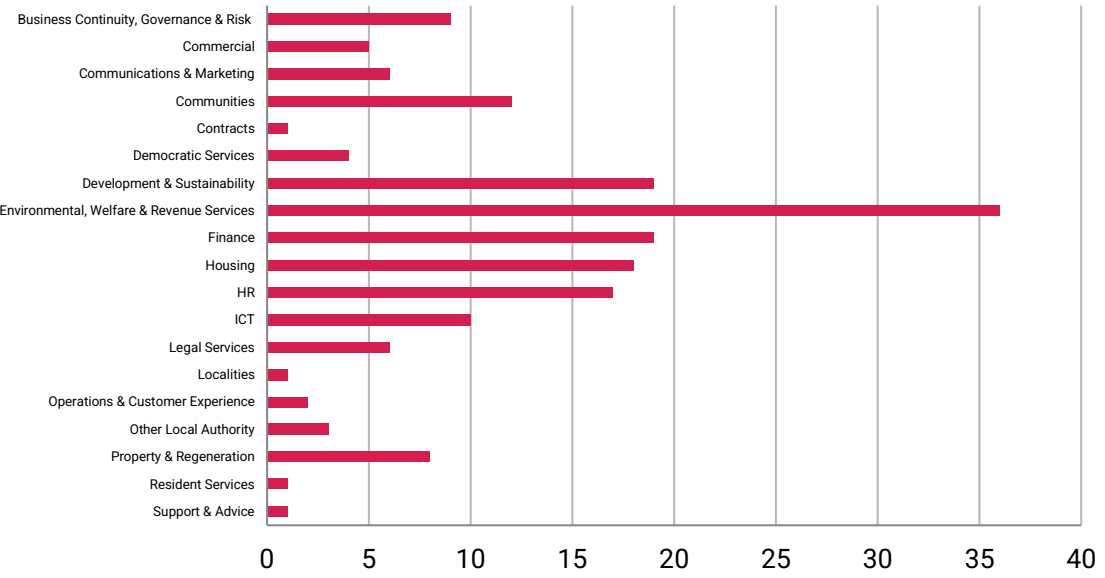
Improved since last quarter and last year

Q1 – Higher is Good

Target	90%
Actual	86.5%

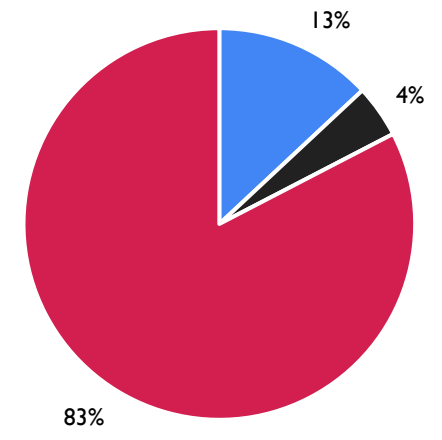
Page 124

Requests by Service Area

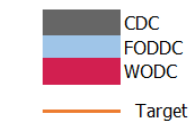
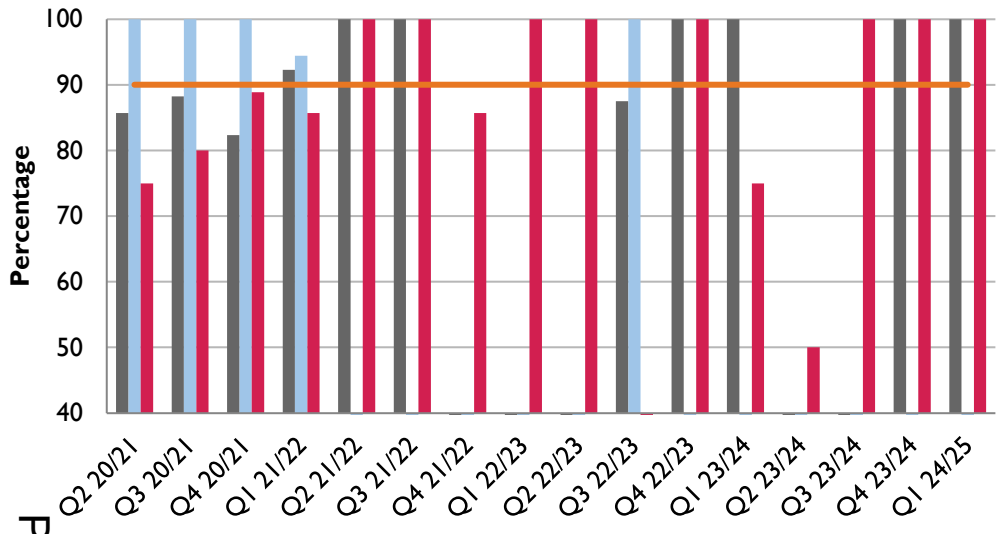


Reason FOI request was not Answered within 20 Days

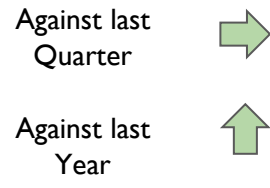
- Awaiting clarification from requester
- FOI admin backlog
- Service Area not provided Information in time



Building Control Satisfaction



Direction of Travel



Same as last quarter but improved since last year

Q1 – Higher is Good

Target	90%
Actual	100%

Page 125

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.

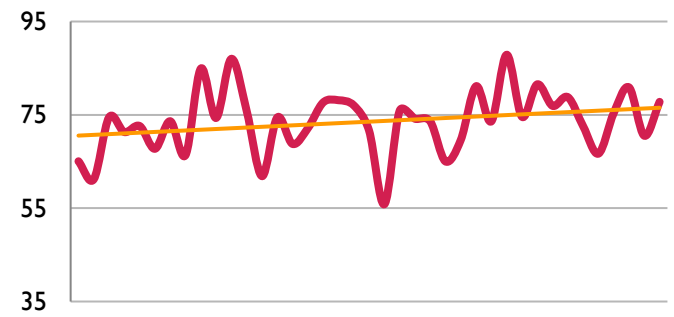
The data on satisfaction surveys still faces challenges with a low number of returns, ten surveys were received during Q1.

Due to legislative changes, Building Control has become a regulated activity. From 1st April, all individuals must hold specific qualifications or experience and register with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) as Registered Building Inspectors (RBIs). The team has been preparing for these changes, with many individuals undertaking courses and assessments. All team members, except one surveyor who is awaiting exam results, have passed and are now appointed as RBIs.

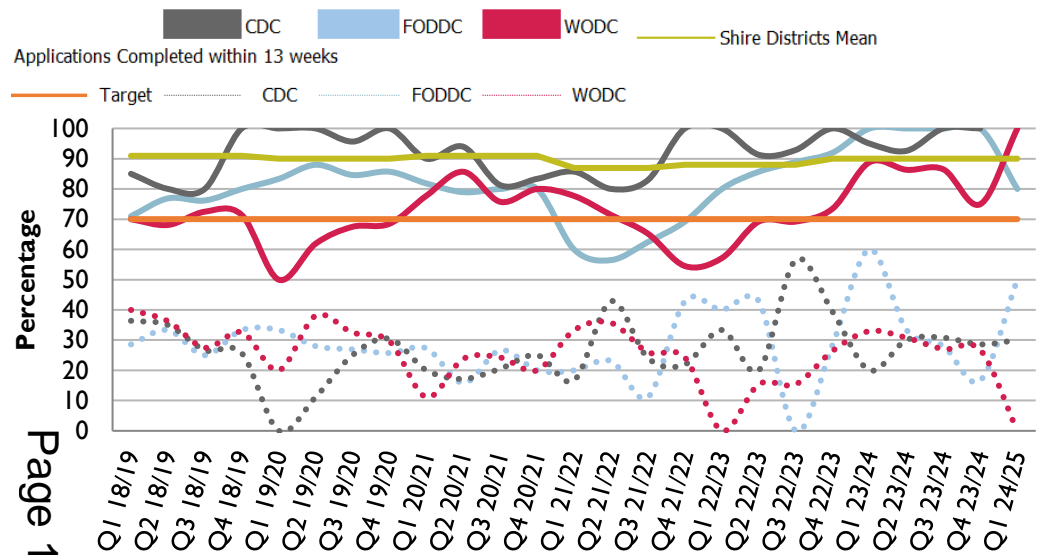
How do we compare?

Percentage of share in the market	April	May	June	Number of Apps for Quarter
Cotswold	61%	54%	41%	131
Forest	69%	63%	39%	88
West	81%	71%	78%	178


The below chart shows market share over time from April 2021




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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Improved since last quarter and last year

QI – Higher is Good

Target	70%
Actual	100%

Page 12

How do we compare?

Major Developments - % within 13 weeks or agreed time – LG Inform

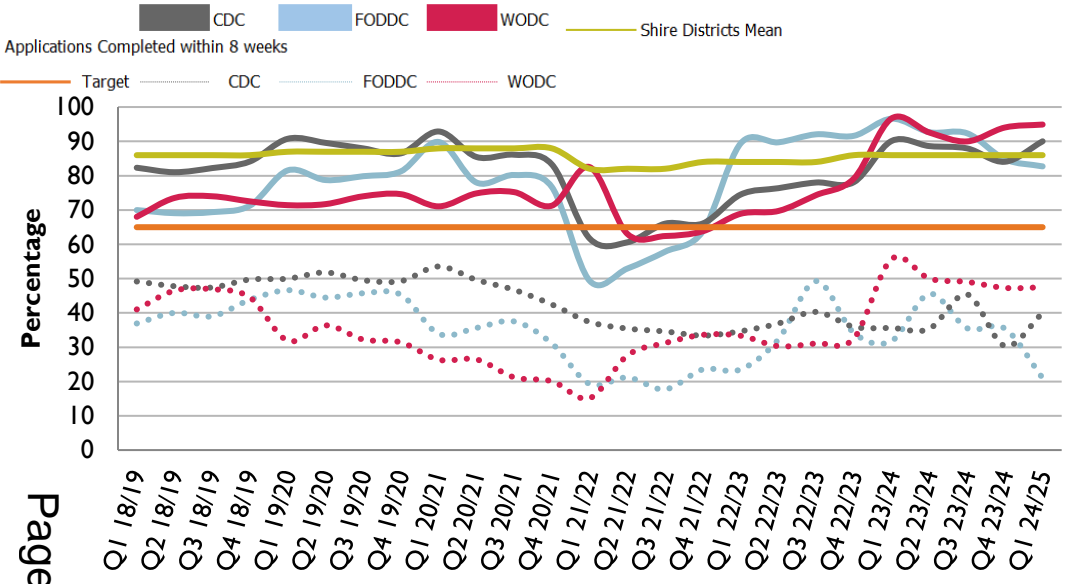
Q4 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	75	14/16	Bottom
East Cambridgeshire	100	1/16	Top
Rushcliffe	100	1/16	Top
Hinckley and Bosworth	90	10/16	Third
Test Valley	80	13/16	Bottom
Lichfield	67	16/16	Bottom

The service has performed very well processing Major applications within time, slightly increasing by 25% in comparison to last quarter, from 75% to 100% for Q1.


During Q1, four major applications were determined.


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

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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Improved since last quarter but slightly declined since last year

Q1 – Higher is Good

Target 65%

Actual 94.92%

Page 127

How do we compare?

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

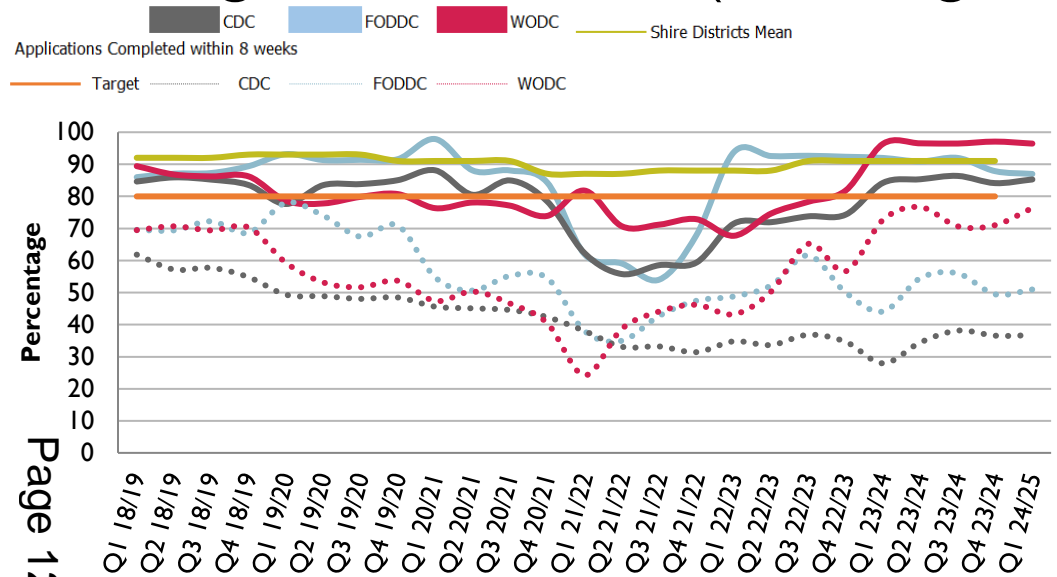
Q4 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	94	2/16	Top
Mid Sussex	98	1/16	Top
Horsham	90	5/16	Second
Harborough	83	10/16	Third
Lichfield	77	13/16	Bottom
East Hampshire	62	16/16	Bottom

The Council has continued to perform well in processing minor applications within the allotted timeframes, with a slight increase in the number of applications determined within the agreed timeframes compared to last quarter, despite resourcing challenges. However, it is anticipated that the number of applications determined within the timeframe may decrease over the next quarter.



59 minor applications were determined in Q1.

The Development Management Improvement Plan, initiated following the PAS report, remains actively pursued, with significant progress achieved on many key recommendations. Work is underway to create a concise householder application report template.

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



Direction of Travel

- Against last Quarter 
- Against last Year 

Slightly decreased since last quarter but slightly improved since last year

Q1 – Higher is Good

Target	80%
Actual	96.41%

Page 128

How do we compare?

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

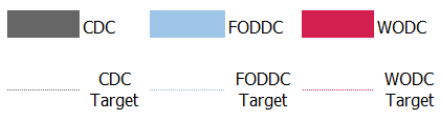
Q4 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	97	3/16	Top
Mid Sussex	99	1/16	Top
Horsham	96	5/16	Second
Stroud	90	12/16	Third
Rushcliffe	89	13/16	Bottom
Stafford	80	16/16	Bottom

Determination times for other applications have decreased slightly by 0.62% since last quarter but have improved marginally by 0.05% compared to the same period last year.

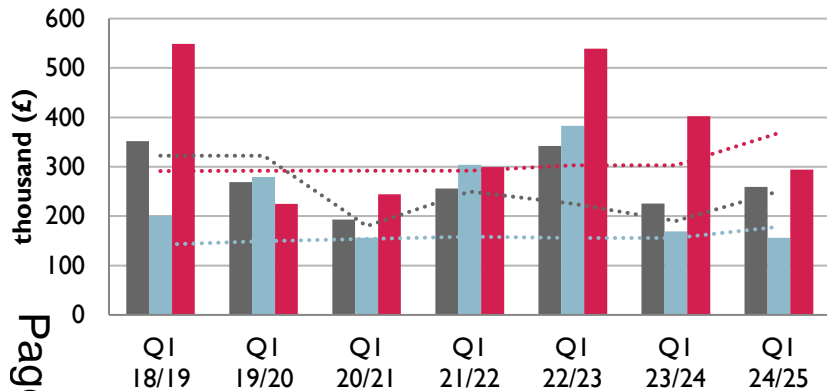
In Q1, 195 other applications were determined.

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

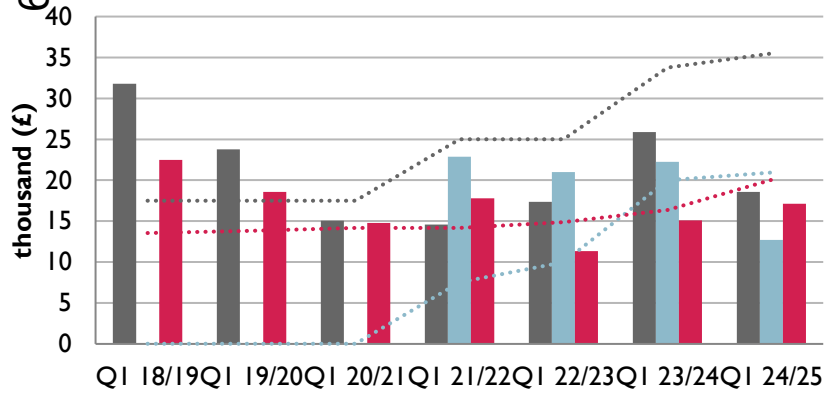
Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (including AEOT)



Total planning income



Pre-application income



Direction of Travel

Q1 – Higher is Good

Total Planning Income		
Against last Quarter	↓	Total Planning Income (£)
Against last Year	↓	Target 368,494
		Actual 294,065
Pre-Application Income		
Against last Quarter	↑	Pre-Application Income (£)
Against last Year	↑	Target 20,044
		Actual 17,105

Total Income decreased since last quarter and last year
 Pre-App Income increased since last quarter and last year

By the end of Q1, planning income for the Council fell short of its target. The service reported a lower number of Major and Minor applications, which typically generate higher fees. This decline may be linked to the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain for these application types.

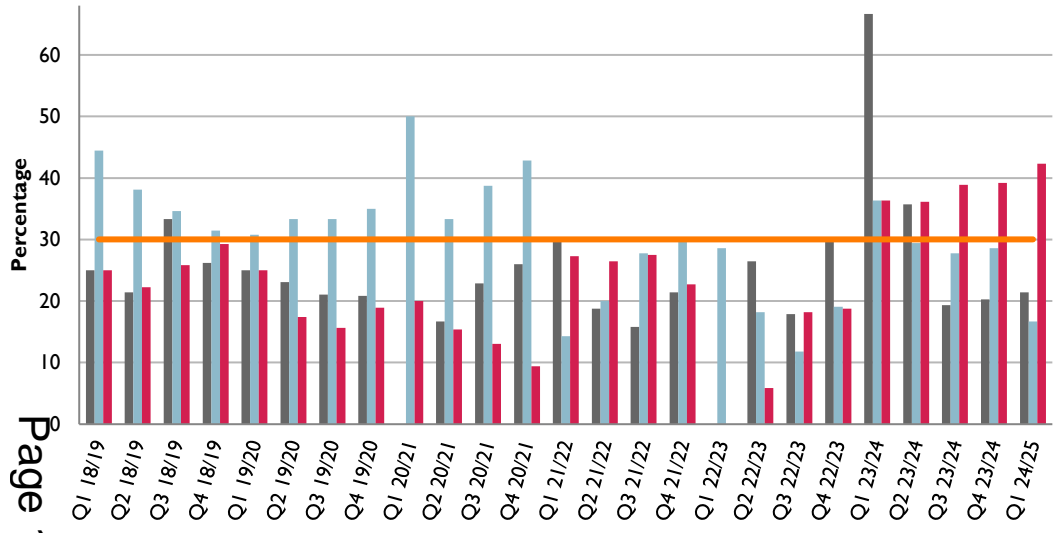
Despite an increase in pre-application fees, the Council did not meet its target. However, pre-application income has increased by 13% compared to the same period last year and by 64% since last quarter.

How do we compare?

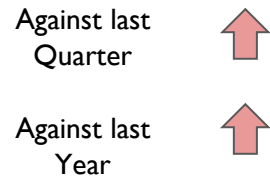
Planning Advisory Service (PAS) planned to benchmark back in 2021. No data is available in the public domain.

Page 129

Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative)



Direction of Travel



Increased since last year and last quarter

QI – Lower is Good

Target	30%
Actual	42.31%

Page 130

How do we compare?

Percentage of planning appeals allowed – LG Inform

Q4 23-24 Benchmark	%	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	33	7/16	Second
East Hampshire	0	1/16	Top
Test Valley	25	6/16	Second
Horsham	38	9/16	Third
South Oxfordshire	50	14/16	Bottom
Hinckley and Bosworth	83	16/16	Bottom

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

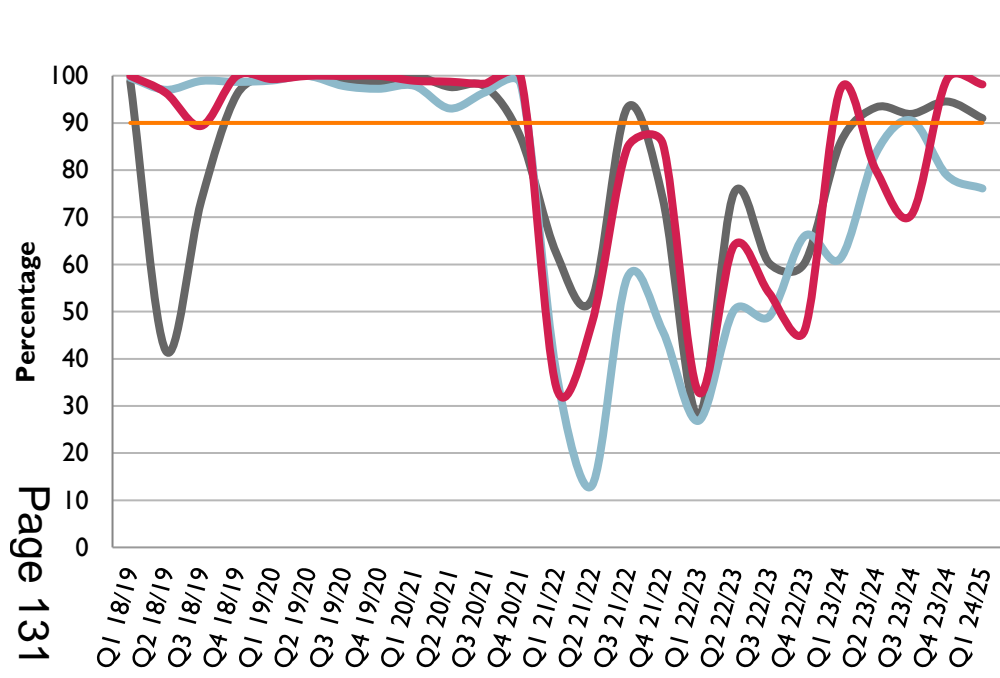
Between 1 April 2024 and 30 June 2024, thirteen appeals were decided, with eight supported, including a split decision. Of the thirteen appeals determined this quarter, six were Upland applications, with four supported, resulting in a 33.33% allowance rate. Seven applications were related to Lowlands, with four supported, including a split decision, equating to a 50% allowance rate.

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


	Decided	Allowed	% Allowed
Uplands	6	2	33.33%
Lowlands	7	3.5	50%


As this metric is cumulative, it may well reduce throughout the year depending on how many appeals are received.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Slightly increased since last year but slightly decreased since last quarter

Q1 – Higher is Good

Target	90%
Actual	98.19%

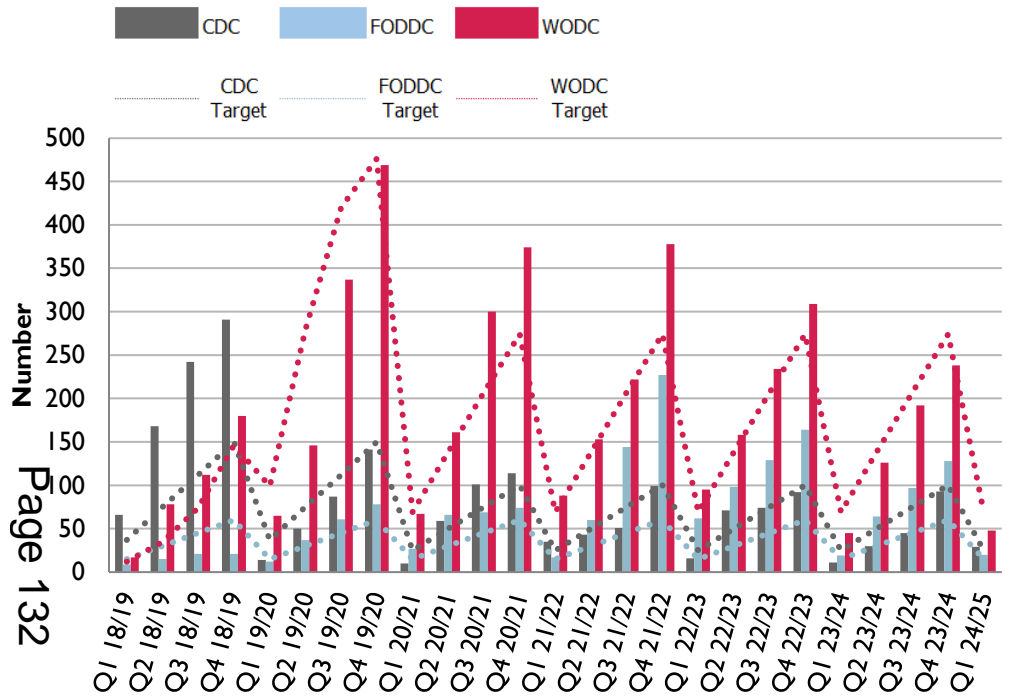
How do we compare?

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



During Q1, the Council exceeded its target for completing land charge searches within 10 days.

Efforts to strengthen relationships with the answering teams have improved communication and workload management. This enhanced collaboration has enabled team members to address tasks more efficiently, ultimately boosting overall productivity.

Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative)



Direction of Travel

- Against last Quarter 
- Against last Year 

Slightly increased since last year and last quarter

Q1 – Higher is Good

Target	69
Actual	48

How do we compare?

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

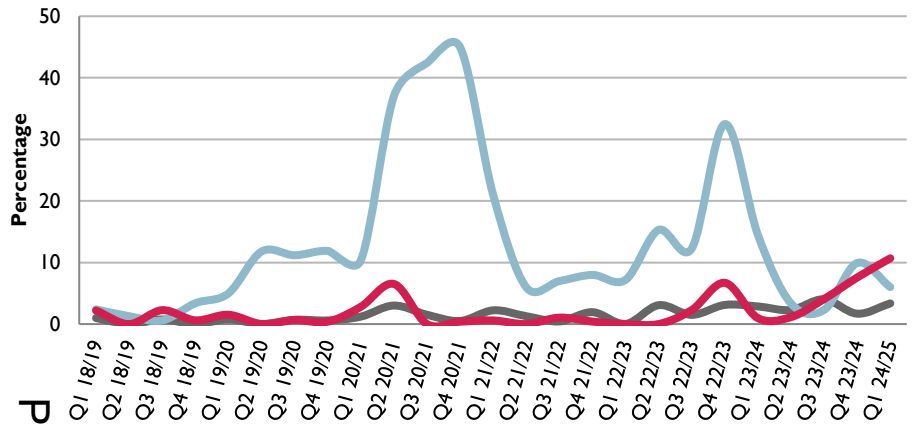
During Q1, a total of forty-eight properties were delivered in West across Woodstock and Carterton comprising 36 for affordable rent and 12 for shared ownership. Properties delivered in Carterton include 10 homes acquired using Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) funding. Handover delays, attributed to works required from statutory service providers and highway work scheduling, have affected the expected completions in Carterton and Enstone, pushing delivery back to later in the year.

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

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)




CDC
FODDC
WODC


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
135

Percentage Enforcement Action
10.66%

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

How do we compare?

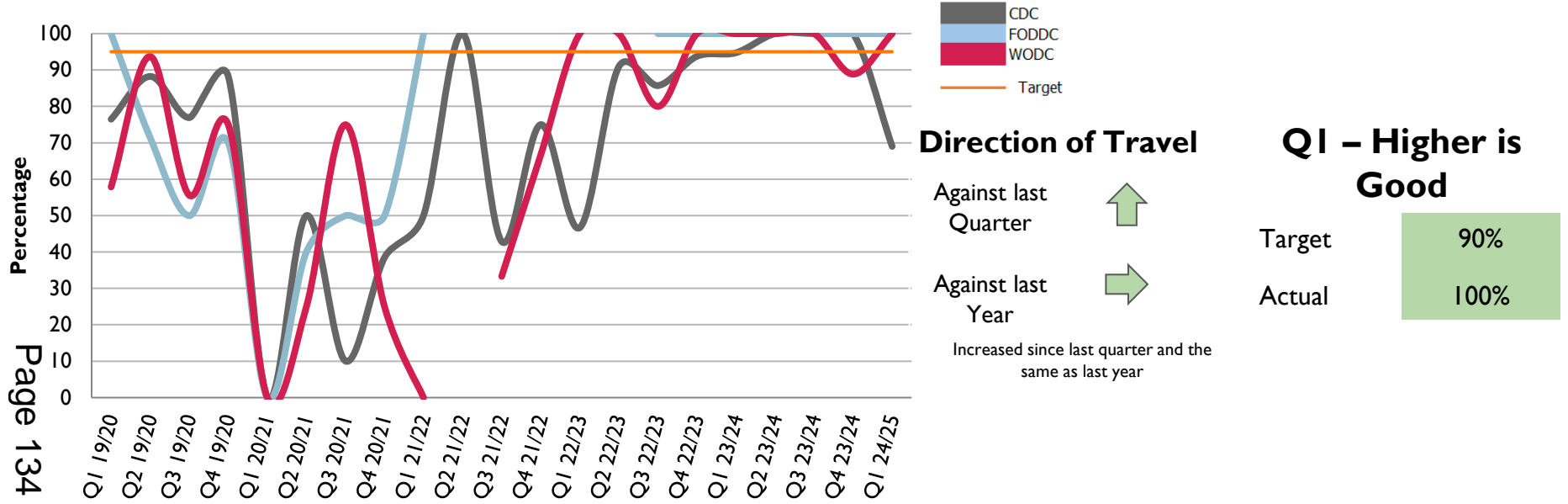
Number of Fly Tips reported for year 2022-23 for Local Authorities in England – gov.uk. The latest dataset available is 2022-23.

	Total Fly Tips	Total Enforcement Actions	Total FPNs	% FPNs per Fly Tip	CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Rank	Quartile
West	1150	53	14	1.22	6/16	Second
Horsham	1212	287	65	5.36	1/16	Top
Tewkesbury	655	29	1	0.15	10/16	Third
Stroud	859	11	0	0	16/16	Bottom

In Q1, there was a notable decrease in the number of fly-tipping incidents reported, while the percentage of enforcement actions experienced an increase of around 3%.

To combat fly-tipping, the Council has installed new surveillance cameras in rural hotspots. Funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley and the Home Office's Safer Streets initiative, this project adds 20 cameras to the four currently shared with a neighboring authorities. These specialized cameras use invisible 'No Glow' night vision LEDs to address rural crime, including fly-tipping.

Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales



How do we compare?

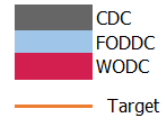
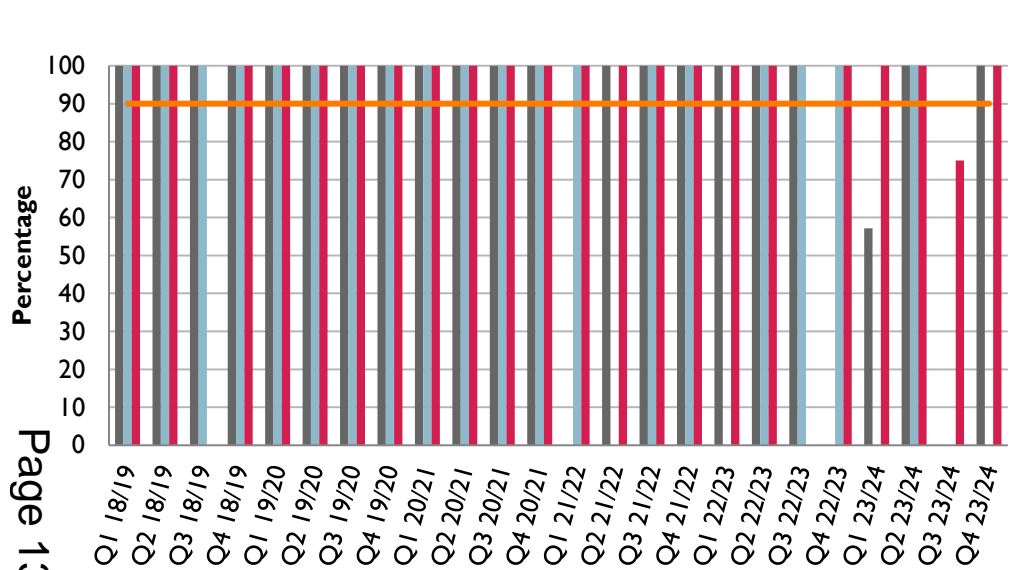
APSE performance networks are introducing benchmarking for environmental sectors for 2023-24

The Council conducted eight inspections during Q1, all of which were completed within the timescale.

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 →
- Same as last quarter and last year

QI – Higher is Good

Target	90%
Actual	100%

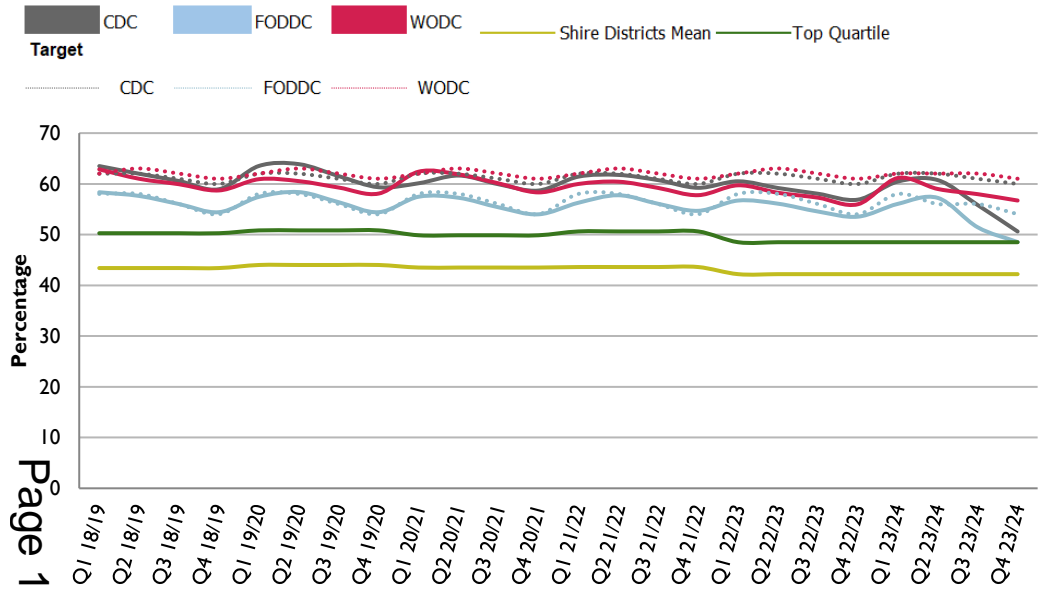
Page 135

How do we compare?

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

One notification was received during Q1 which was assessed within one working day.

Percentage of household waste recycled



Direction of Travel

Against last
Quarter

Against last
Year

Q1 – Higher is Good

Target 62%

Actual Awaiting Data

Page 136

How do we compare?

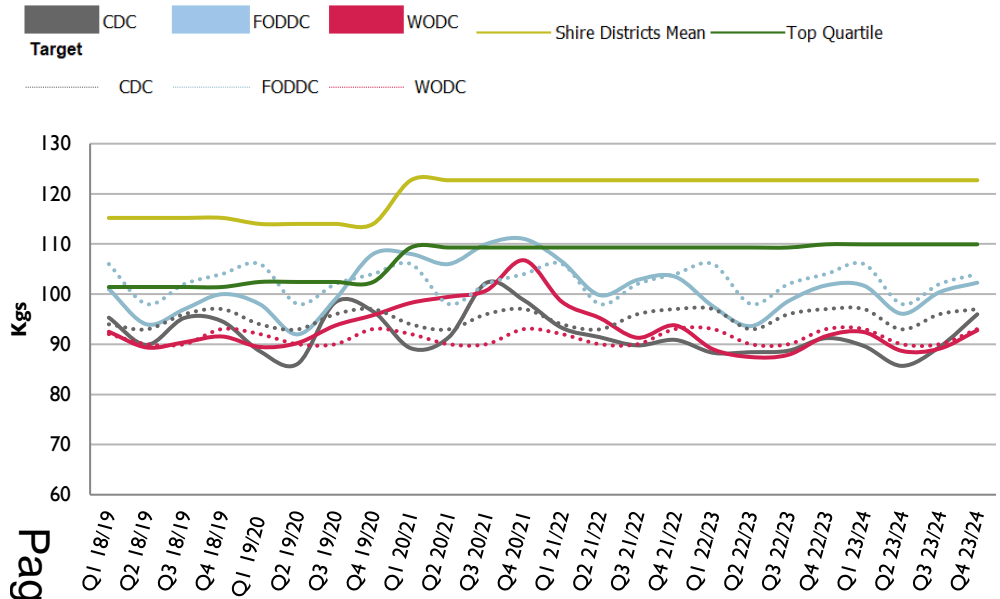
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting

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

The team is currently awaiting the recycling rates for June from Oxfordshire County Council. The recycling rates for April and May stand at 57.99%, which is approximately 3% higher than the same period last year.

Notes: The quarterly recycling targets are profiled to account for seasonal differences. The combined recycling data is also presented cumulatively which will flatten out some of these differences.

Residual Household Waste per Household (kg)



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter

Against last Year

Q1 – Lower is Good

Target 93

Actual Awaiting Data

How do we compare?

Residual household waste per household (kg/household)

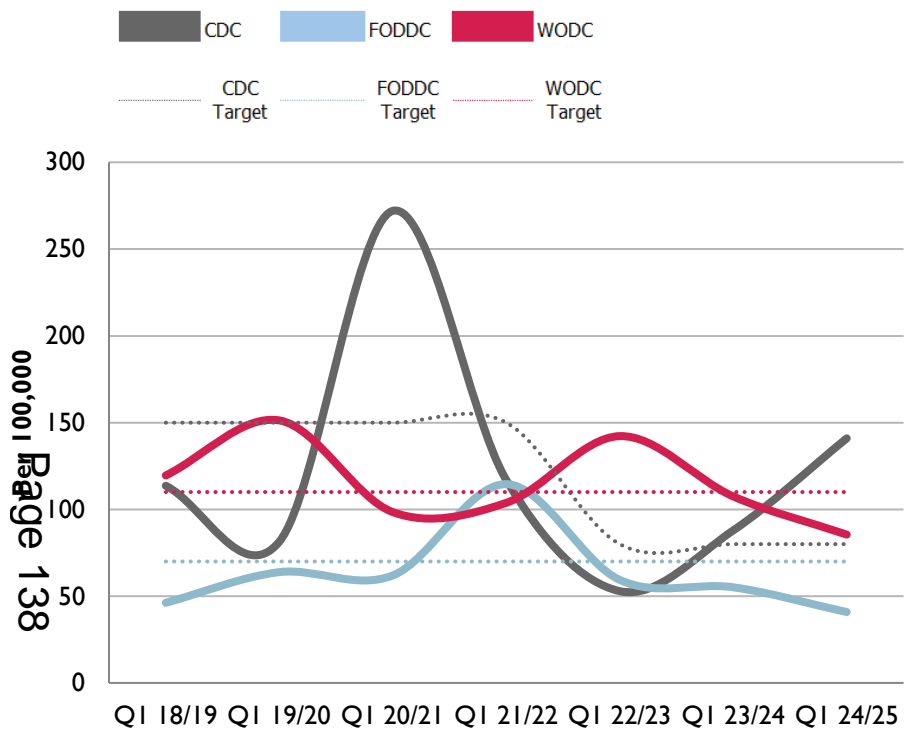
Q4 22-23 Benchmark	Kg	CIPFA Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	85.56	4/16	Top
Stroud	76.83	1/16	Top
Tewkesbury	104.61	7/16	Second
Rushcliffe	114.93	11/16	Third
Lichfield	117.41	14/16	Bottom
Bromsgrove	126.69	16/16	Bottom

The team is currently awaiting the data for June from Oxfordshire County Council. The pattern of residual waste throughout the year is cyclical and targets are profiled according. We typically see an increase in Q3 due to the Christmas period.


In general, the Council is experiencing a lower presentation of all types of waste.


Based on the data available, the residual waste per household is lower than or in line with the comparative period of the previous year.

Missed bins per 100,000



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Slightly increased since last quarter but decreased since last year

Q1 – Lower is Good

Target	110
Actual	85.59

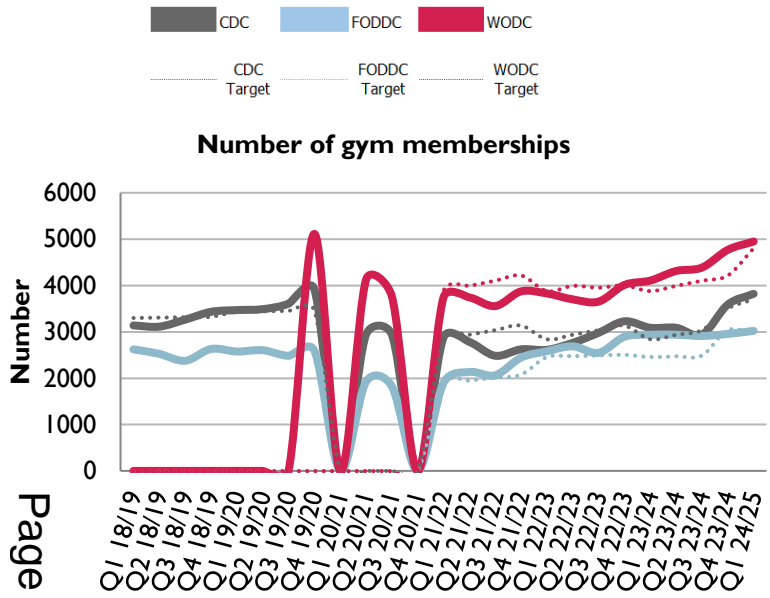
How do we compare?

The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

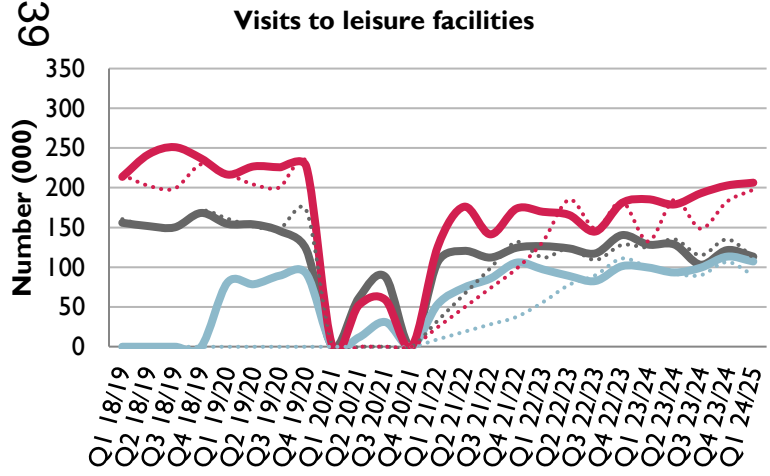
In Q1, the number missed bins per 100,000 collections stayed below target but did see a slight increase of around 5%.. In comparison to the corresponding period last year, the number of missed bins per 100,000 collections decreased by roughly 25%.

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.

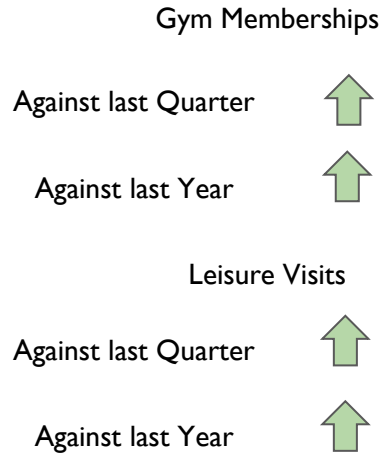
Number of visits to the leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships



Page 139



Direction of Travel



Gym Memberships - Improved since last quarter and last year
Leisure Visits - Improved since last quarter and last year

Q1 - Higher is Good

Gym Memberships	
Target	4,800
Actual	4,949

Leisure Visits	
Target	197,500
Actual	206,370

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 4.5%. During Q1, gym memberships also rose compared to both the previous quarter and the same period last year.


Learn to Swim participation figures have remained steady but experienced a slight decline across all three sites. This trend is attributed to the national shortage of swim instructors and the backlog reduction resulting from the COVID-19 facility closures.

How do we compare?

The Data & Performance Team will investigate options.

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

This page is intentionally left blank

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>STORAGE OF NON-MOTOR VEHICLES AND STRUCTURES ON THE PUBLIC HIGHWAY POLICY</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Lidia Arciszewska – Executive Member for Environment Email: lidia.arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Jon Dearing – Interim Executive Director Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Mandy Fathers – Business Manager for Environmental, Welfare and Revenues Email: mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary</p>	<p>To consider and approve a new Policy in respect of the enforcement of Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway Policy Annex B – Equality Impact Assessment</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Approve the Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway Policy, set out in Annex A.
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<p>Putting Residents First</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>Executive Member for Environment, Chief Executive, Director of Governance, Chief Finance Officer, Interim Head of Legal Services, Interim Executive Director, Interim Managing Director (Publica)</p>

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report sets out a new Policy in respect of the enforcement of the Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures left on the Public Highway. The storage on non-moving structures for unlimited period of time, on the public highway prevents its use by other motor vehicle users and causes inconvenience and frustration to West Oxfordshire residents.
- 1.2 Opportunities for roadside parking are reduced for residents, which are subject to road fund licence, insurance and MOT costs. Non-motor vehicles such as caravans and trailers are not subject to these legal requirements, and therefore it is unreasonable for them to have the same rights to use the public highway as motor vehicles. Such storage is therefore deemed to be an unreasonable use of the public highway.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The Council currently assesses abandoned non-motor vehicles and structures under the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978, and carries out removal when necessary; however, when an owner has come forward to claim their property, that legislation no longer applies. This Policy therefore seeks to address the issue of non-motor vehicles and structures stored indefinitely on the public highways, and which have identified owners and not falling into the category of being abandoned.
- 2.2 The Policy will apply to boundaries within the West Oxfordshire District, including the adopted highway and any land owned by the Council.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications. All work will be carried out within established resource. There is no cost to the Council for the removal of such non-motor vehicles. The Council has a third-party contractor who retrieves its costs through scrap metal rewards.
- 3.2 If a vehicle is removed by the Police they will retrieve any costs from the registered owner, if known.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no legal implications in respect of this Policy.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 There are none associated with this report.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none associated with this report.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

8.1 None.

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway Policy

Version Control: VI May 2024

Contents

Page(s)

Introduction	3
Definitions	3 - 4
Scope of Policy	5
Legislation	5 -6
Fixed Penalty Notice	6
Conditions of the Policy	6 – 7
Disclaimer	7
Procedure Map	8

I. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy focuses on the issues surrounding the use of the public highway as a storage facility for non-motor vehicles and structures (NMVS) such as caravans and trailers for example.
- 1.2 The storage of NMVS for unlimited periods of time on the public highway prevents its use by others motor vehicles and causes inconvenience and frustration to West Oxfordshire residents.
- 1.3 Opportunities for parking are reduced for residents' vehicles, which are subject to road fund licence, insurance, and MOT costs. NMVS such as caravans and trailers are not subject to these legal requirements, and therefore it is unreasonable for them to have the same rights to use the public highway as motor vehicles. Therefore, storage of non-motor vehicles is deemed by the Council to be an unreasonable use of the public highway.
- 1.4 The Council currently assesses abandoned non-motor vehicles and structures under Section 6 of the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 and carries out removals when necessary. However, once an owner has come forward to claim his or her property that legislation is no longer applicable. This policy seeks to address the issue of NMVS stored indefinitely on the public highway, and which have identified owners, therefore not falling into the category of being abandoned.
- 1.5 NMVS can attract unwanted attention and vandalism. This in turn affects the streets aesthetically and the perception of West Oxfordshire as a result. Rubbish can build up around non-motor vehicles and structures as road sweepers are unable to reach the road surface to cleanse. In extreme cases, the storage of these structures in the residential streets could attract disease and vermin. Residents who report non-motorised vehicles and structures in place for long periods of time often express feelings of intimidation, particularly when groups congregate around caravans, trailers, etc. at night.

2. Definitions

The Council – means West Oxfordshire District Council.

Policy – means the Storage of Non-Motor Vehicles on the Public Highway (Caravans, Trailers, Boats etc. Policy and Procedures) of May 2024.

Motor vehicle - defined in section 185(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and section 136(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 as a *mechanically propelled vehicle intended or adapted for use on roads*.

Non-motor vehicles and structures (NMVS) – means caravans, trailers, boats, horseboxes and any other vehicles and structures that are not defined under the Road Traffic Act 1988 as a motor vehicle. A vehicle or structure that cannot move by independent means.

Public Highway and Road - has the same meaning as Section 192(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988: any highway and any other road to which the public has access and includes bridges over which a road passes.

Caravan - as defined in section 66(7) of the LGFA 1988 by reference to Part I of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. That Act, as amended, by S.13 of The Caravan Sites Act 1968:

Caravan means any structure designed or adapted for human habitation which is capable of being moved from one place to another (whether by being towed, or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer) and any motor vehicle so designed or adapted, but does not include:-

- 1) any railway rolling stock which is for the time being on rails forming part of a railway system, or
- 2) any tent, or
- 3) a structure designed or adapted for human habitation which:
 - a) is composed of not more than two sections separately constructed and designed to be assembled on a site by means of bolts, clamps or other devices: and
 - b) when assembled, is physically capable of being moved by road from one place to another (whether by being towed or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer), if its dimensions when assembled exceed any of the prescribed limits.

Trailer - means every vehicle without motive power designed to be drawn by another vehicle. Trailer includes, but is not limited to, the following types of trailers:

- Balance trailers.
- Bus trailers.
- Commercial bus trailers.
- Farm trailers.
- Pole trailers.
- Semitrailers.
- Travel trailers.
- Truck trailers.
- Self-supporting trailers.
- Special use trailers.

Notice – an official notice attached to a NMVS requiring its removal within 28 days and containing necessary information for the owner.

Owner – relates to the owner of a NMVS.

3. Scope of the Policy

- 3.1 The Policy is designed to deal with non-motor vehicles and structures being stored on the public highway. It applies to the boundaries within the West Oxfordshire District including the adopted public highway and any land owned by the Council.
- 3.2 The Policy recommends that Section of the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978 be used to facilitate the issue of a Notice of Removal and take subsequent enforcement action.
- 3.3 The Policy shall be enforced from the date of its adoption and shall remain in force until formally revoked or superseded.

4. Legislation – Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978

4.1 Section 2: Penalty for unauthorised dumping.

(1) Any person who, without lawful authority,

(a) abandons on any land in the open air, or on any other land forming part of a highway, a motor vehicle or anything which formed part of a motor vehicle and was removed from it in the course of dismantling the vehicle on the land; or

(b) abandons on any such land anything other than a motor vehicle, being a thing which he has brought to the land for the purpose of abandoning it there,

shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of an amount not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale (£2500) or imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or both.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) above, a person who leaves anything on any land in such circumstances or for such a period that he may reasonably be assumed to have abandoned it or to have brought it to the land for the purpose of abandoning it there shall be deemed to have abandoned it there or, as the case may be, to have brought it to the land for that purpose unless the contrary is shown.

Case Law

In *R v Welwyn Hatfield DC Ex p. Brinkley (1982) 80 L.G.R 727*, it was held on the true construction of this section that a caravan was capable of being a structure and of causing an obstruction. The setting up of a structure depended on the degree of permanence involved.

4.2 **Fixed Penalty Notices** - As an alternative to prosecution, offences under section 2 (1) (a) may also be dealt with by fine of £200. For NMVS, such offences would be classed as Fly-tips and the Council has the authority to issue FPNs of up to £1,000 for such offences.

4.3 **Section 6: Removal and disposal etc. of other refuse.**

(1) Where it appears to a local authority that anything in their area, other than a motor vehicle, is abandoned without lawful authority on any land in the open air or on any other land forming part of a highway, the authority may if they think fit, subject to subsection (2) below, remove the thing.

(2) A local authority shall not be entitled to exercise their powers under subsection (1) above as respects a thing situated on land appearing to the authority to be occupied by any person unless the authority has given him notice that they propose to remove the thing and he has failed to object to the proposal within the prescribed period.

(3) Section 76 of the Public Health Act 1936 (which relates to the deposit and disposal of refuse) shall, with the exception of subsection (3)(a) of that section, apply to any thing removed in pursuance of subsection (1) above as it applies to other refuse.

(4) Subject to subsection (5) below, a local authority by whom anything is removed in pursuance of subsection (1) above shall be entitled to recover the cost of removing and disposing of it from—

(a) any person by whom it was put in the place from which it was so removed,
or

(b) any person convicted of an offence under section 2(1) above in consequence of the putting of the thing in that place.

5. **Conditions of the Policy**

5.1 Under Section 6 of the Refuse Disposal (Amenity) Act 1978, the Council has authority to give notice to a NMVS in contravention of the Policy, requiring removal of the NMVS.

5.2 The Council has authority under Section 6 of the Refuse (Amenity) Act 1978 to remove the NMVS on expiration of the Notice when the owner or responsible person fails to comply with the requirements of the notice.

5.3 In respect of the above, the policy holds the following conditions:

- i. Persons must provide evidence of ownership before a NMVS will be returned. This can be in the form of:
 - Caravan Registration & Identification Scheme (CRiS) document
 - Insurance document
 - Purchase invoice or receipt

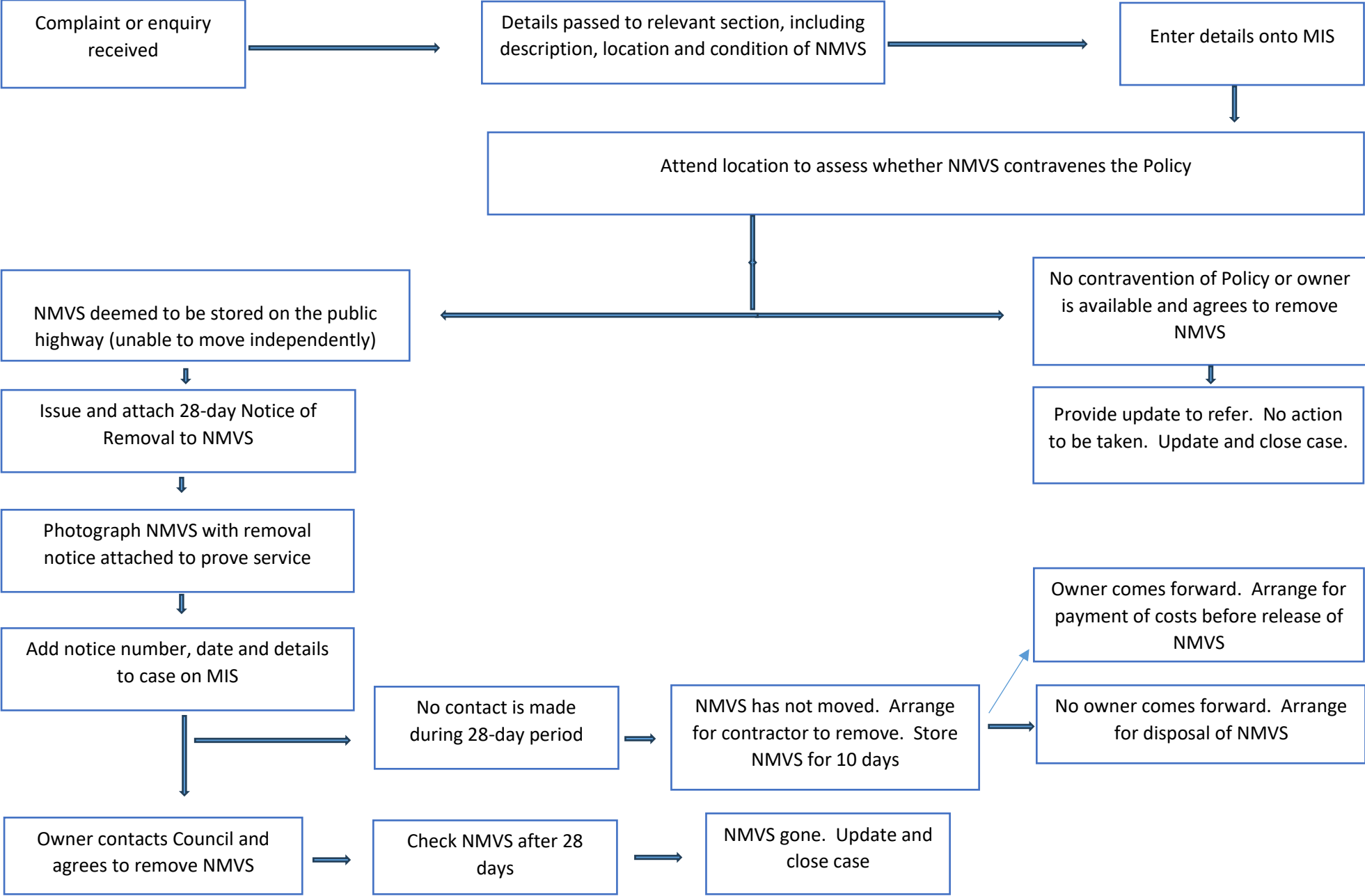
- Any other official form of ownership that links the NMVS to the person claiming to be the owner.

5.4 After 10 days' storage of a removed NMVS and either (a) no contact from the owner and/or (b) failure to reimburse the Council for removal and storage costs, the Council has no further obligation to store the NVMS. The NVMS may then be destroyed.

5.5 A NMVS can be required to be removed from the public highway notwithstanding that it is attached to a motorised vehicle.

6. Disclaimer

6.1 Provided the policy and procedures have been followed correctly, the Council shall not be responsible for compensating any person or persons following the destruction of a NMVS and its contents.



Example of Non-Motor vehicle or structure (NVMS) which can be removed from the highway



This page is intentionally left blank

Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form

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

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

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

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

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Mandy Fathers	
Date of assessment: 29.05.2024	Telephone: 01285 623571 Email: mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk

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

Storage on Non-Motor Vehicles and Structures on the Public Highway Policy

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

To implement a new policy in respect of the removal of non-motor vehicles

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

Section(s) 143, 320 and 321 of the Highways Act 1980
--

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 within Gloucestershire	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other Local Authority policies
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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

N/A

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

N/A

If NO please outline any planned activities

N/A

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

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	✓
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input 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 people of different age groups, but it is not specific to age	
Age – Old People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all ages	
Disability			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people with disabilities but is not specific to disability	
Sex – Male			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Sex – Female			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all races, but it is not specific to race	
Religion or Belief			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all religions, but it is not specific to religion	

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

Page 158

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)


Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
Implement Policy	Philip Measures	Jack Graham	Following council call-in procedures

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:	Mandy Fathers	Date:	29.05.24
Line Manager:		Date:	29.5.24
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:	Cheryl Sloan	Date:	30/05/24

This page is intentionally left blank

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>ALLOCATION OF S106 MONIES TO WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL TO DESIGN, BUILD AND OPERATE A NEW THIRD GENERATION (3G) PITCH AT WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All Witney wards and catchment wards</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Tim Sumner – Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects Email: tim.sumner@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Andy Barge – Assistant Director, Communities Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Rachel Biles – Strategic Projects Lead (Leisure) Email: rachel.biles@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To obtain approval to release S106 funding to Witney Town Council for the design, build and operation of a new third generation (3G) pitch with sports lighting at West Witney Sports Grounds, Witney.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Nil</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve that West Witney Sports Ground is the preferred location for a new 3G pitch, and approves a Section 106 funding spend on the project to be transferred to Witney Town Council to design, build and operate the facility; 2. Delegate authority to Assistant Director for Communities, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Executive Members for Leisure & Major Projects and Finance, to finalise the legal agreement for terms of transfer.

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	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Executive Members, WODC Legal Department, Sport England, Witney Town Council, Sporting National Governing Bodies (NGBs) (namely: Oxfordshire Football Association, England Hockey, Rugby Football Union, English Cricket Board and the Lawn Tennis Association), and Wood Green School.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Witney is reaching a critical point in terms of its outdoor leisure facilities. The growth of the town has resulted in increased strain on existing grass and artificial turf pitches, meaning a lot are overmarked and overplayed. This demand for access to pitches is scheduled increase further, with future developments in the town.
- 1.2** The Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (reviewed Jun 2024) identifies that there is a shortfall of at least one full sized 3G pitch for affiliated football training in the Witney analysis area. This is exacerbated by a shortfall of five adult 11v11 grass pitches up to 2031.
- 1.3** Section 106 (s106) funding has been collected through various developments in the town to help support and provide the required leisure infrastructure, including notable sums from the loss of the old Witney Town Football Club stadium site, which is allocated to provide a new 3G artificial turf pitch with sports lighting, to support the development of grassroots football in Witney.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1** Over the years, multiple discussions have taken place to determine the optimum location for a new 3G pitch facility. Most recently officers have worked with Wood Green School with a view to siting the 3G pitch there. However, due to protracted delays in receiving the school's business case, officers reconsidered potential locations again, working with Sport England and the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport to produce a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis for four possible locations. Witney Town Council and Woodgreen School were also consulted on sites in their ownership.
- 2.2** The four potential sites analysed were; Wood Green School, Madley Park Playing Fields, Burwell Recreation Ground and West Witney Sports Ground.
- 2.3** One of the biggest weaknesses for three of the sites (Woodgreen School, Madley Park Playing Fields and Burwell Recreation Ground) is insufficient parking to meet the required demand from a new 3G. This coupled with a lack of suitable and adequate ancillary facilities, was a drawback given that the facility will be used for competitive fixtures therefore the supporting infrastructure is essential. Also, two of the locations (Madley Park Playing Fields and Burwell Recreation Ground) are likely to become targets for vandalism and anti-social behaviour, as would be located at unmanned sites.
- 2.4** Of the four sites West Witney Sports Ground was deemed the most appropriate site as all the ancillary facilities are already in place. This site is owned and operated by Witney Town Council. The Town Council currently has plans to enhance and reconfigure the existing club house facilities and is willing to take on full operation and maintenance of the 3G facility going forward. It is a multi-sports facility, which is model that Sport England is supporting, which could open opportunities for funding in the future.

s106 contributions and indicative project costs

- 2.5** As mentioned in 1.3 the allocation of s106 contributions has been accumulated from the following developments, all of which have now been received:

Planning Application no.	Development Location	Amount	s106 Agreement	Expiry Date
16/01450/OUT	Curbridge	£941,336	Towards the provision of grassroots football development in Witney	8 July 2029
16/01450/OUT	Curbridge	£22,801	Towards either the provision of a spectator stand for a football pitch(s) in Witney or the surrounding area or the improvement of football facilities in Witney or the surrounding area	10 Dec 2031
20/02452/FUL	Curbridge	£37,964	Towards Sport and Recreation facilities within the catchment of the site.	29 Sept 2032

- 2.6** Based on the above there is an allocation of £1,002,101 s106 funding to support the development of a new 3G pitch, with the largest contribution due to expire in July 2029.
- 2.7** The Oxfordshire FA have advised that a minimum sized 3G pitch is 99m x 54m (this includes the required 3m run off) to be Football Association compliant and be suitable for competitive fixtures. The latest Sport England Facility costs are indicating that a facility of this size could cost up to £1.2m. Investigations into addressing the funding shortfall is underway, with the potential to approach the Football Foundation if the project was part of a wider scheme.

Legal Agreement Conditions

- 2.8** The transfer of the s106 contributions to Witney Town Council would be subject to the appropriate agreement being put in place with the following terms and conditions:
- a. Witney Town Council to establish a funding strategy for the project, and that the top up funding required is secured.
 - b. The pitch is designed in line with the FA standards as set out in the FA guidance for 3G football Turf Pitch Design Principles and Layout.
 - c. The pitch is constructed to FIFA Quality Concept for Football Turf – Quality accreditation or equivalent.
 - d. The pitch should be tested every 3 years in accordance with the FA performance criteria and be registered and remain on the FA Register for 3G football turf pitches for the lifespan of the surface in line with FA guidance.
 - e. The operational management is the full responsibility of Witney Town Council along with all repairs and maintenance of the facility. Sport England and FA also recommends that a carpet replacement fund be put in place for long term

sustainability to fund future repair and eventual surface replacement at the end of surface lifespan to cover surface replacement when required.

- f. Protected community use (non-commercial) on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursday at peak times (6-9pm) via community use agreements to secure access for local sports club.
- g. Encourage greater transfer of match play demand from grass pitches to the 3G where possible, ensuring a match play rate (less than hire rate) on Saturdays and Sundays.

Operational management and conditions associated with the 3G pitch.

- 2.9** Witney Town Council have expressed that they would take on the future management and operation of the 3G facility and are fully aware of the ongoing financial commitment to the Town Council for maintenance and the requirement to establish a pitch replacement fund for the carpet replacement at the end of life, as set out in 2.8.e.

Timescales.

- 2.10** Whilst it is understood that all parties would be keen to push ahead with the 3G works once authorisation from the Executive has been reached, expectations around timeframes do need to be understood and managed. WODC would transfer the s106 monies to Witney Town Council for them to design and build the 3G facility once the final funding strategy was established and secured. While every effort will be made to expedite this project, the likely timeframe from endorsement by the Executive to a fully operational 3G pitch is anticipated to take up to 2-3 years.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1** Sport England, NGBs of sport and Witney Town Council are all supportive of Leisure Officers recommendation that the 3G pitch be located at West Witney Sports Ground and that s106 contributions be transferred to Witney Town Council to design, build and operate the new 3G pitch facility.


4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

- 4.1** We are required to spend the s106 funds by the expiry dates detailed in s106 agreements, or risk having the funds returned to the developers. The largest sum of s106 funds is required to be spent by 8 July 2029.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Any commitment of s106 funding needs to adhere to the conditions set out in the relevant s106 agreements. A commitment to this site for funding purposes does not absolve the Town Council of the need to secure planning permission and does not fetter the discretion of the local planning authority to determine the resultant application as it sees fit.

(END)

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024
Subject	CARTERTON LEISURE CENTRE DECARBONISATION
Wards Affected	Carterton North East
Accountable Member	Councillor Andrew Prosser – Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery email: andrew.prosser@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Claire Locke – Assistant Director, Property and Regeneration email: claire.locke@publicagroup.uk
Report Author	Claire Locke – Assistant Director, Property and Regeneration email: claire.locke@publicagroup.uk
Purpose	To review opportunities to apply for funding and deliver the decarbonisation of Carterton Leisure Centre.
Annexes	Nil
Recommendations	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the review of costs contained within this report and proceed with the preparation of a business case for solar PV and battery storage at Carterton Leisure Centre. 2. Agree that an application for Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme or other grant funding should be made with the agreement of the Director of Finance, if grant terms are subsequently published which provide funding which would mean the Council would not have an ongoing revenue deficit.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO

Consultees/ Consultation	GLL – Leisure provider at Carterton Leisure Centre
-----------------------------	--

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In April 2024, the Council reluctantly took the decision to pause the project to decarbonise Carterton Leisure Centre. The project had been allocated funding from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) to install air source heat pumps and solar PV at Carterton Leisure Centre. Unfortunately, the Investment Grade Proposal indicated that the Council would need to invest around £3.3M in capital funding and would not get a full return on this investment. The level of ongoing subsidy each year would be just under £130,000 and therefore is not an affordable long-term commitment.
- 1.2 The Council therefore paused the project to review opportunities to reduce the capital investment required by the Council. Salix, the grant fund administrators, were informed that the Council would not be able to deliver the project within the PSDS 3b funding period, which required completion by March 2025.
- 1.3 Officers have been reviewing opportunities to reduce costs or increase funding to enable a viable scheme to be recommended to Executive and Full Council. Unfortunately, no opportunities to significantly reduce costs have been identified and there remains an ongoing inflationary cost pressure. Whilst the detailed terms of the next round of PSDS 4a funding have not been released, the information provided to date suggests the Council could not secure significantly more funding than it received in the last funding round. No other routes of funding for this project have been identified. It is therefore highly unlikely that this project could be financially viable even if the full PSDS allocation was received. The Council is reluctant to reapply for grant funding if it is not confident it could take forward an affordable scheme. Doing so risks reputational damage with Salix, and it is highly likely Salix would seek proof that the funding gap would be met by the Council as it is aware that affordability halted the last project.
- 1.4 At this point in time there is not an affordable option to deliver decarbonisation at Carterton Leisure Centre. This may change in the future, particularly as it is not yet known what funding streams the new Labour Government may introduce. The cost of heat pumps may also reduce over time as demand increases. Delivery of the full decarbonisation scheme can be reviewed if any circumstances change which may render the scheme affordable to the Council.
- 1.5 An alternative to the wider decarbonisation scheme would be the installation of rooftop solar PV to maximise on-site energy generation. It is likely that a business case for this would be viable. The recommendation is therefore that this option is fully explored and costed with a business case brought to Executive and Full Council if required.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In November 2022, Cabinet received a report which explained that the Council had been forced to withdraw from PSDS 3a due to time delays associated with Scottish and Southern energy (SSE) installing a new sub-station.
- 2.2 The Council then secured funding in the next funding round PSDS 3b with the delivery of the Project planned over two financial years April 2023 – March 2025. In January 2023, Executive considered an option appraisal and agreed in principle to proceed with a scheme

to install air source heat pumps and rooftop solar PV. In February 2023, via a Delegated Decision, the Chief Executive agreed to proceed with commissioning an Investment Grade Proposal (IGP). Contractors Kier were appointed, via the Scape Framework, on a 'Design and Build' basis to undertake the detailed design and costing that would form the IGP, with a view to entering into contract with them for the build phase, if the scheme was approved by Full Council. At that stage, the feasibility study set out a total capital cost estimated as £2.698M, with £1.607M grant funding and the remaining £1.091M needing to be funded by the Council. The Council's capital contribution was not agreed at that stage as the decision to proceed with any investment would be based on affordability of a fully designed and costed scheme.

- 2.3 Due to grid constraints, the scheme was revised early in 2024 and the upgrade in supply needed was agreed by the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) Scottish and Southern Electricity Network (SSEN). However, the quotations obtained by Kier for each element of the build were far higher than originally estimated. The capital cost of the scheme was estimated as £4.6M, which meant the Council would have to fund in excess of £3.3M and would not fully recover its investment in the scheme through a reduction in utility costs. The modelled revenue reduction would be £142,000/year. However, the annual capital finance costs would be £271,803. This means the net loss to the Council from its capital investment and the cost of borrowing equated to £129,356 every year. Based on this ongoing revenue burden the scheme was deemed unaffordable and the project was paused.
- 2.4 Prior to this, the Council had instructed SSEN to proceed with the supply upgrade and were informed by Salix this was an eligible expense, which could be funded from the allocated PSDS 3b funding. Salix were aware at the time that there was an Executive decision pending, on the affordability of the scheme. When Executive took the decision in April 2024 to pause the scheme, Salix were notified and advised officers that the order with SSEN should be cancelled and any costs which could be reclaimed should then be repaid to Salix. Cancelling this order means that the relatively small amount of additional supply available in the area could be obtained by someone else, which would then mean the PSDS scheme at the leisure centre would not be feasible until at least 2030 when a larger grid infrastructure upgrade is planned in the area. However, there was too much financial risk associated with this for the Council to bear the cost as there is so much uncertainty that the full decarbonisation scheme would be affordable.
- 2.5 Whilst any funding that can be reclaimed from SSEN must be repaid to Salix, no other costs incurred by the Council in the preparation of the scheme have to be repaid.
- 2.6 The next round of PSDS funding should be launched in early autumn, unless the new Government make any changes.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Council could apply for PSDS 4a funding but this is not recommended as no affordable option for delivery of the decarbonisation project has been identified.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Council is firmly committed to the decarbonisation of its buildings and its currently focussed on a programme of decarbonisation of its leisure centres. However, no amendment to design or alternative funding has been identified which would offer an affordable solution for the installation of air source heat pumps and solar PV at Carterton Leisure Centre.
- 4.2 As an alternative the Council could explore installation of solar PV with battery storage only. The Council has embarked on a project to install solar PV on buildings it occupies and commercial buildings it leases to reduce its own carbon footprint and provide green energy to its tenants. The installation of solar PV for Carterton Leisure Centre should provide a viable business case even without grant funding being available. It is therefore proposed that this is fully explored and costed, with a business case being brought back to Executive.
- 4.3 If the Government launch a new funding regime which offers a viable and affordable opportunity for the Council to decarbonise Carterton Leisure Centre, then the Council will proceed with an application to support the installation of heat pumps and any other eligible measures.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There is some uncertainty regarding the terms of the next funding round and there is also potential for the scheme to be amended, ceased or replaced under the new Government. Based on current information, the maximum PSDS 4a grant is likely to be around £2m. This will be dependent on the site life, updated costs, for example like-for-like replacement of the boilers, and any changes in building energy use over the last couple of years (as the amount of displaced gas is what determines the grant amount). The Council's Leisure Provider, GLL has made a number of energy efficiency improvements to Carterton Leisure Centre which will have reduced gas consumption. Whilst this is great news, it is likely to reduce the overall amount of grant the Council can access. Officers best estimate is that the maximum funding available would be in the region of £1.5M.
- 5.2 Due to delays by Kier in issuing the tender packages, bidders had limited time to submit quotes. These quotes will no longer stand as contractors will normally only hold their prices for a maximum of 3 months. Whilst retendering and offering bidders a longer period to tender may attract some more competitive prices, any benefits achieved are likely to be cancelled out by increasing inflation which will see costs increase. It is therefore considered unlikely that the Council will receive a lower overall cost estimate for the scheme. It is considered more likely that overall costs will increase.
- 5.3 Kier have provided a fee estimate of just under £42,000 to revisit the current IGP, seeking updated proposals from their supply chain and managing the resubmission of a new IGP. It should be noted that with continuing inflationary increase the capital cost of the scheme will have increased since the estimates were obtained in December 2023. There are limited ways in which the scheme can be amended to reduce capital costs. One option would be to remove the solar PV and battery storage; however, this has been discounted. This would

save an estimated £837,000 in capital costs, however this would significantly increase the ongoing revenue costs for the electricity needed for the heat pumps. The scheme is only viable if revenue cost savings are generated which are higher than the cost of borrowing to fund the initial scheme. The solar PV was added as the original design did not include maximised on-site electricity generation and was not viable as it did not reduce the ongoing revenue costs of powering the leisure centre.

- 5.4 The table below compares the business case compiled in April 2024 with a best-case estimate for delivery in 2025. This assumes no capital build cost increases. The amount of WODC funding has decreased as the IGP has already been funded from the previous PSDS 3b scheme and the grant funding could be around £1.5M which is higher than the amount the Council could access if it had continued in April 2024.

Summary of costs – considered best case scenario

Cost	April 2024 Business case	Estimated business case 2025 delivery
IGP costs Note: Bulk of IGP costs already paid from PSDS 3b	£0.3M	£0.04M
Total build cost including contingency (10%)	£4.3M	£4.3M
Grant funding (estimate)	-£1.3M	-£1.5M
WODC funding required	£3.3M	£2.84M
Annual revenue cost of capital	£262,602	£227,081
Average Annual Energy cost saving	-£142,447	-£142,447
Additional revenue cost (annual for 25 years)	£120,155	£84,634

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council is in contract with GLL for the provision of leisure management and services. Any changes affecting that contract, such as a change in heating system must be agreed by GLL. Contractual changes would usually be set out and agreed formally via a contract variation.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The capital costs and calculated revenue return are not guaranteed so costs could increase.
 7.2 If the Council decides to apply for the next round of PSDS funding it may not be successful in its application, particularly if Salix seek confirmation at the application stage that the Council can meet the funding gap.
 7.3 Proceeding with a grant application, when the Council does not have an affordable scheme, risks wasting staff and Member time and damaging the Council’s reputation with Salix.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 There are no equalities impacts resulting from this report.


9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The proposed decarbonisation scheme would save an estimated 61 tCO₂e/year, which is a reduction of 15%. Installation of solar PV and battery storage only would save in the region of 49 tCO₂/yr (this figure includes current solar PV).
- 9.2 The proposed solar PV installation will form part of a Strategy to decarbonise all the Councils buildings. Solar PV is currently being planned for a number of the Councils buildings which are leased to tenants enabling them to buy green electricity. Broader decarbonisation of buildings with a particular focus on leisure buildings is also being driven forward.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

(END)

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024
Subject	WITNEY AND CHIPPING NORTON AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN
Wards Affected	Chipping Norton, Witney Central, Witney North & Witney East
Accountable Member	Councillor Lidia Arciszewska – Executive Member for Environment Email: lidia.arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Jon Dearing – Interim Executive Director Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk
Report Author	Susan McPherson – Senior Officer Email: susan.mcpherson@publicagroup.uk
Purpose	To approve the Witney and Chipping Norton Air Quality Action Plan, prior to publishing on the District Council's website.
Annexes (published separately in a supplement pack)	Annex A – Witney and Chipping Norton Air Quality Action Plan Annex B – Defra Appraisal Annex C – Defra Comments & Ricardo Responses to Draft Plan
Recommendation	That the Executive resolves to: I. Approve the Witney and Chipping Norton Air Quality Action Plan.
Corporate Priorities	<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
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/	Consultation was carried out during the preparation stages of the plan.

Consultation	This is detailed in Section 4 of the Air Quality Action Plan
--------------	--

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- I.1** This Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) has been produced as part of our statutory duties required by the Local Air Quality Management framework. It outlines the action we will take to improve air quality in Witney, Chipping Norton, and the wider West Oxfordshire District between 2023 – 2028.
- I.2** Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equality issues because areas with poor air quality are also often the less affluent areas^{1,2}.
- I.3** The annual health cost to society of the impacts of particulate matter alone in the UK is estimated to be around £16 billion³. West Oxfordshire District Council is committed to reducing the exposure of people in Witney and Chipping Norton to poor air quality to improve health.
- I.4** We have developed actions that can be considered under 10 broad topics:
- Alternatives to private vehicle use
 - Freight and delivery management
 - Policy guidance and development control
 - Promoting low emission plant
 - Promoting low emission transport
 - Promoting travel alternatives
 - Public information e.g. on issues such as anti-idling, wood burning stoves etc.
 - Traffic management
 - Transport planning and infrastructure
 - Vehicle fleet efficiency

Witney

- I.5** In Witney, our priorities are:
1. Bringing the Witney Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) into compliance with the Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) annual mean Air Quality Objective (AQO)
 2. Managing PM_{2.5} exposure in Witney
 3. Improving accessibility into and around Witney by alternatives to private car – i.e. walking, cycling and public transport

Chipping Norton

- I.6** In Chipping Norton, our priorities are:

¹ Environmental equity, air quality, socioeconomic status and respiratory health, 2010

² Air quality and social deprivation in the UK: an environmental inequalities analysis, 2006

³ Defra. Abatement cost guidance for valuing changes in air quality, May 2013

1. Bringing the Chipping Norton Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) into compliance with the NO₂ annual mean Air Quality Objective (AQO)
2. Managing PM_{2.5} exposure in Chipping Norton
3. Improve accessibility into and around Chipping Norton by alternatives to private car – i.e. walking, cycling and public transport

1.7 In this AQAP we outline how we plan to effectively tackle air quality issues within our control.

1.8 Finally, following approval of the final plan by Defra, we are now seeking Executive approval, in order to publish the document on the WODC website.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The AQMAs in Witney and Chipping Norton were both declared in 2005 as NO₂ concentrations in both locations were above the national objective of 40µg/m³. This was a consequence of similar issues in both towns, namely traffic congestion and street canyons.

2.2 Traffic congestion results in idling or slow moving traffic, where engines are running inefficiently, producing large amounts of NO₂. This is made worse by the presence of street canyons, where continuous buildings either side of a road trap air pollutants causing them to build up, resulting in high concentrations of this pollutant (please refer to section 2.2 of the AQAP (Annex A) for further information).

2.3 Local authorities who have declared an AQMA are required to produce an AQAP, which demonstrates how the local authority, with its air quality partners, e.g. county council, national highways, will improve air quality in these areas.

3. PLAN PREPARATION

3.1 The plan was prepared by experienced air quality consultants, Ricardo. Ricardo has extensive experience with the local air quality management, undertaking air quality work for central and local government, as well as delivering extensive training on air quality management through the EMAQ+ platform.

3.2 To develop the plan, Ricardo carried out the following:

- A review of national, regional, and local planning and policy,
- Source apportionment
- Modelling of scenarios
- Facilitation of stakeholder and steering group engagement
- Compilation of measures which will reduce NO₂ concentrations

4. THE DRAFT PLAN

4.1 Following the completion of the items listed in section 3.2 above, a draft plan was compiled and circulated to the statutory consultees, steering group, and the general public for

comment. The public consultation also included a questionnaire. The outcome of this consultation is summarised in Appendix A of the AQAP (Annex A).

- 4.2 In general the plan was favourably received; however, it was clear that there is frustration within the public regarding poor public transport services and active travel provision.
- 4.3 The draft plan was simultaneously submitted to Defra (also a statutory consultee) for approval. The draft was approved by Defra; however, a number of queries were raised during this appraisal, all of which were addressed by Ricardo – please refer to Annex C.
- 4.4 Following the consultation period, all comments were considered and the final version of the plan compiled.
- 4.5 It should be noted that the initially both towns had dedicated AQAPs, however on the request of Defra, which was also echoed by a number of other consultees, the two plans were merged into one, covering both towns and removing a significant amount of duplication.

5. THE FINAL PLAN

- 5.1 The final plan was submitted to Defra for approval on May 21st, 2024, and approved on 13th June 2024. The associated appraisal document is presented in Annex B.
- 5.2 The plan will now be subject to an annual review, where the progress of measures will be updated and, if applicable, new measures added.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 The AQAP is a statutory obligation. Consequently, there are no alternative options to the plan presented.

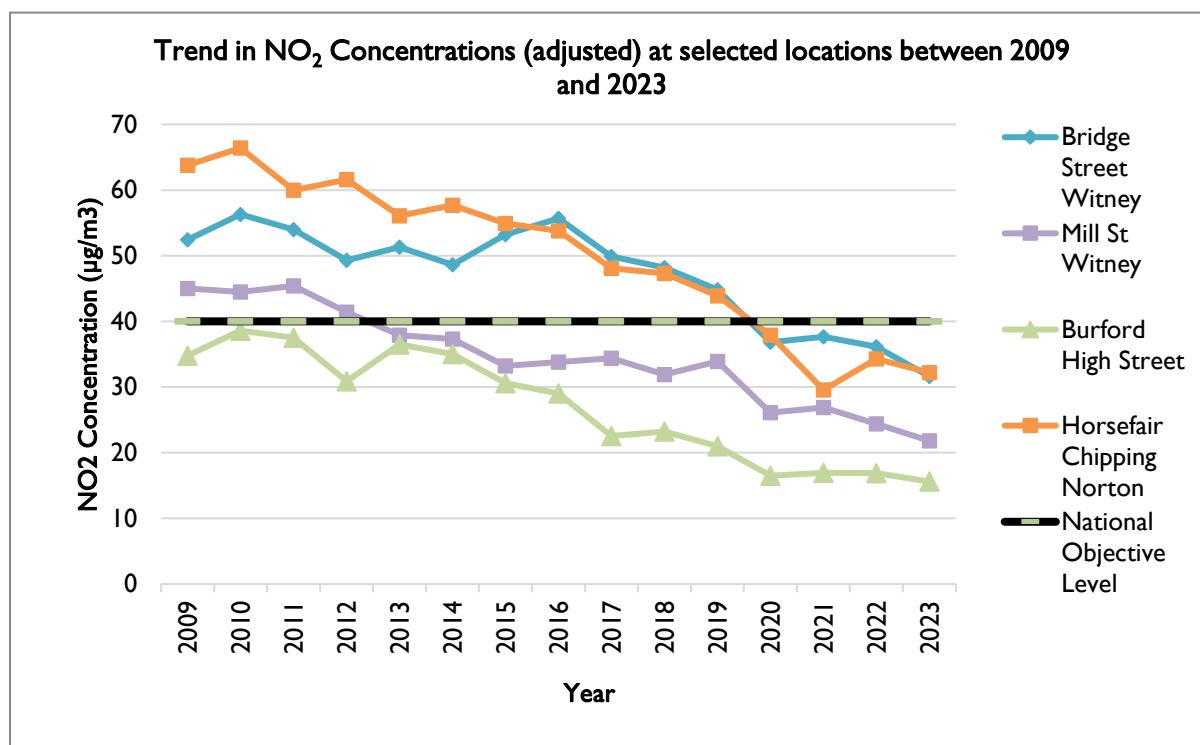
7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The AQAP presented forms a comprehensive document detailing NO₂ pollution in the Witney and Chipping Norton AQMAs, and listing measures in place or in the pipeline which will improve air quality in these locations. Many of the measures are already in place in county or district policies and strategies, many of which are further supported by Neighbourhood Plans.
- 7.2 Approval of the AQAP by the executive, will demonstrate the council's commitment to reducing air pollution within both these towns.

8. AIR QUALITY UPDATE 2024

- 8.1 Since the commissioning of the AQAP in 2022, air quality in both towns has remained below the UK objective. The Covid pandemic saw concentrations of NO₂ fall significantly across the UK, following the sharp decrease in vehicle usage. Since the removal of all restrictions towards the end of 2021, there has been a slight increase in NO₂ concentrations across the district, but these have never returned to pre-pandemic levels. This is illustrated in Figure I.

Figure 1 Trend in NO₂ Concentrations (adjusted) at selected locations between 2009 and 2023



- 8.2** Predictions based on raw 2024 data collected to date, suggests the annual average NO₂ concentration for the current year will be lower than 2023. If this is proven to be the case, it is likely Defra will be expecting revocation of these AQMAs in 2025 or 2026. Revocation of an AQMA is expected when concentrations of NO₂ have been no higher than 36µg/m³ for three consecutive years.
- 8.3** The continuing downward trend in NO₂ concentrations we are seeing across the district, is thought to be due to a combination of factors, including the continuing popularity of working from home and an increase in uptake of low emission and ultra-low emission vehicles.
- 8.4** Following the publishing of the Environment Act 2021, local authorities who do not have a designated AQMA, are required to put in place a local air quality strategy. Consequently, should both the AQMAs in West Oxfordshire be revoked in the next couple of years, this AQAP will form the basis of West Oxfordshire’s Air Quality Strategy.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** Approval of the AQAP has no financial implications. In addition, as most of the measures listed are already policy/strategy items, the cost of implementing these measures will be the responsibility of the respective policy/strategy holders.
- 9.2** There are a small number of measures which fall outside policy and strategy, e.g. public awareness campaigns, and town council projects. The cost of implementing these measures

will be either covered by existing budgets, or via third party funding. They will not incur additional costs to WODC.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Council is meeting its statutory obligations for air quality management. There are no legal implications associated with the approval of the AQAP.

11. RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 A risk assessment is not applicable to this submission.

12. EQUALITIES IMPACT

12.1 There are no equality implications associated with the approval of the AQAP.


13. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The AQAP sets out measures to improve air quality in Witney and Chipping Norton. As poor air quality in these locations is related to road transport, the majority of measures listed relate to either reducing the number of vehicles on the road or increasing the number of low emission vehicles. Similarly, road transport is a major contributor to climate change, and consequently any measure which improves air quality by reducing traffic emissions, will also have a positive impact on climate change.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>DRY MIXED RECYCLING BULKING AND HAULAGE CONTRACT</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Lidia Arciszewska – Executive Member for Environment email: lidia.arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Bill Oddy – Assistant Director, Commercial Development email: bill.oddy@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Simon Anthony – Business Manager, Environmental Services email: simon.anthony@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To seek approval to enter into a contract with N+P Group for bulking, haulage and processing of recycling collected as part of the residential kerbside and business waste collections.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Exempt Annex A – Financial Assessment</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree to enter into a Dry Mixed Recycling Bulking and Haulage Contract with N+P for 2 years from 1 October 2024; 2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Commercial Development, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and the Director of Finance, to award a Glass Recycling Bulking and Haulage Contract with the preferred bidder for up to 2 years from 1 October 2024, following a procurement exercise.
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>YES</p>

Exempt	Annex A – Financial Assessment
Consultees/ Consultation	None

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Council has a statutory duty Under Section 45A(3) of Environmental Protection Act 1990 to collect at least two recyclable materials from residential householder in the district. The Council fulfils and exceeds this requirement by collecting paper, card, glass, cans and plastic, as well as other peripheral materials from all domestic residential properties in West Oxfordshire. Under agreements between the Council and Oxfordshire County Council, responsibility has been devolved to West Oxfordshire District Council to arrange disposal of material collected has part of kerbside recycling collections. The Council are paid recycling credits (financial compensation) from the County Council for any tonne of material recycled.
- 1.2** Since 2020 the council has contracted with Suez for haulage and recycling of kerbside collected material. On 30th September 2024 this contract will finish and there is no option to extend it. Suez have been informed that 30th September 2024 will be the last day of this contract.
- 1.3** The Council collects material in a twin stream process. This means glass is collected separately on collection vehicles from other recycling materials which are collected mixed, this includes paper, cardboard, plastic and cans. This paper considers disposal management of the mixed recyclable material which is referred as dry mixed recyclables (DMR) and separate management of glass which is collected separately from DMR.

2. MAIN POINTS

Dry Mixed Recyclables

- 2.1** In late 2023 the Council's Environment Team began initial investigations into opportunities for a future contract for DMR. As part of this work the opportunity arose to be named on a similar contract with Oxford Direct Services (ODS) who were procuring DMR collected by Oxford City Council. Being named on ODS' procurement documents (as well as Cherwell District Council) did not commit the Council to contract with ODS' preferred supplier, although it did give the Council freedom to enter into a contract if the conditions were favourable. This approach was taken to The Publica Procurement Board in December 2023 and was considered an acceptable approach.
- 2.2** Between January – May 2024 ODS undertook procurement of DMR with the Council's DMR tonnage included as a potential element could be included at the Council's discretion.
- 2.3** Following this procurement N+P Group were preferred bidder. In summary N+P will collect recyclable material from the Council's depot in Witney and process the DMR in their Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) in Kent. N+P then separate DMR into constituent parts including steel and aluminium, HDPE, PET plastic etc and then sell to market. N+P 'net' off income from material from processing and haulage costs and invoice the Council accordingly. Although material prices will fluctuate throughout the life of this contract, this contract will be a cost to the Council. It should be noted that this contract is subject to the usual basket of indices including fuel, average weekly earnings and inflation, these are reviewed each year.

- 2.4 As well as standard materials the Council collects at the kerbside, this contract can also process clean flexible plastic (e.g. bubble wrap and carrier bags) and plant pots. Although glass is separated at the kerbside this contract does allow for the processing of glass, although at a much lower rate than a rate that could secured for separately collected glass elsewhere.

Glass Recycling

- 2.5 As the Council collects glass separately from other dry mixed recyclables and ODS collects glass with all other recyclables the N+P contract does not provide preferable economic returns for WODC in terms of disposal of glass. Under the N+P contract, which handles glass with all other recyclables the contract offers approximately £20 per tonne, from initial soft market testing separately collected glass could achieve at least £80 per tonne. The Council generates approximately 1,000 tonnes of glass a year, this could therefore generate circa £80,000pa.
- 2.6 A procurement exercise is currently underway for all glass, all Oxfordshire local authorities are named on the procurement should they wish to be part of the contract at a later date. The procurement exercise is due to conclude in late August 2024, therefore delegated authority is being requested to award the contract which would provisionally be for up to 2 years and be conterminous with the N+P contract.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Council could hold its own procurement exercise for the Council's DMR only. This option would lose the economies of scale generated by the current proposed contract and would be unlikely to achieve bids which are as financially beneficial to the Council. Given the timescales, the market would be aware of time pressure the Council would be under and this could further elevate the price.
- 3.2 For glass recycling, the Council could recycle glass through the N+P contract although this would mean approximately £60,000pa loss of a potential income.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Following a rigorous procurement exercise, the Council has the opportunity to appoint a contractor to provide a recycling bulking, processing and haulage contract at a significantly lower cost than the current supplier, this is outlined in Annex A. This contract has the required flexibility as it has a short initial term of two years should the Council wish to review its collection service. The contract offers the opportunity to recycle additional material.
- 4.2 Following a further procurement exercise the Council will be in a position to award a contract for glass recycling which could achieve additional income and efficiencies.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The anticipated annual cost of the contract with N+P is outlined in Annex A and which is within the budget envelope. In addition, the anticipated income of the glass recycling contract is between £50,000 and £90,000. The full financial benefit of the new contracts will not be fully realised until 2025/26 as the current contract does not expire until the end of September and therefore part year costs will still be incurred in the current financial year 2024/25. A full financial breakdown is within Annex A.

5.2 Financial Risks

Market Volatility

5.3 Whilst some elements of the contract price will give the Council a reasonable level of certainty over the life of the contract, other elements of the contract are variable and heavily dependent on the recycling market.

5.4 The recycling market is volatile and driven by forces that are outside of the Council's control such as changes in legislation, war and conflicts, disposable income and oil prices. The table below shows the movement in the average price across the previous 12 months for three of the most prevalent recycling materials within The Councils dry recycling collection:

	Average Market Price Per Tonne											Movement		Average	
	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	£s	%	Market Price
Mixed Paper	£33.50	£33.50	£34.50	£40.00	£48.00	£41.00	£34.50	£22.50	£22.50	£28.50	£44.00	£52.50	£19.00	56.72%	£36.25
Cardboard	£85.00	£81.00	£81.50	£82.50	£88.50	£81.50	£79.50	£69.50	£73.00	£80.00	£92.50	£105.00	£20.00	23.53%	£83.29
Glass	£1.50	£1.50	£1.50	£5.00	£10.00	£20.00	£20.00	£23.00	£24.00	£24.00	£25.00	£20.00	£18.50	1233.33%	£14.63

Source: Lets Recycle

5.5 Whilst the above table shows increases in market prices overall, it is clear that there are in year opportunities that have occurred. The structure of the contract with N+P will allow the Council to benefit from any favourable movements in market prices.

Contamination Tolerance

5.6 The contract is based on the composition of the Councils dry recycling waste which includes a tolerance limit for contamination. Any contaminated waste will be disposed of via landfill or energy from waste plants where available. This not only has a negative impact on the recycling rate but also on the financial cost. Contamination rates will continue to be closely monitored with the collection operators to ensure that this risk is minimised.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Legal services have supported preparation of the contract which is ready for signing and sealing following approval.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Government is planning to bring changes in future years which may impact on value derived from this contract. An Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme could put pressure on local authorities to improve material capture, or review collection arrangements with a view to becoming more efficient. There are a significant number of unknowns with EPR and as this contract has a two-year initial term contract there is flexibility in the future to adjust or re-procure as needed. The contract also contains a change in law clause which gives the council an opportunity to negotiate contract terms if required.
- 7.2 The risks identified with the recommended approach as detailed in the main body of the report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 Not Applicable

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The new provider is approximately 22 miles further away than the current facility which will mean DMR loads have further to travel, and therefore there will be increased Carbon emissions. This impact can be offset by recycling the additional materials outlined in the report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

(END)

By virtue of
Regulation 21(1)(A) of the Local Authorities (Executive
Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England)
Regulations 2000.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank