

Tuesday, 8 July 2025

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## COUNCIL

You are summoned to a meeting of the Council which will be held in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 16 July 2025 at 2.00 pm.**



Giles Hughes  
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Council

Councillors: Andrew Coles (Chair), Carl Rylett (Vice-Chair), Elizabeth Poskitt, Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Thomas Ashby, Hugo Ashton, Mike Baggaley, Andrew Beaney, Michael Brooker, Adam Clements, David Cooper, Julian Cooper, Sandra Cosier, Steve Cosier, Rachel Crouch, Jane Doughty, Genny Early, Duncan Enright, Roger Faulkner, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, David Jackson, Edward James, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Paul Marsh, Martin McBride, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Rosie Pearson, Andrew Prosser, Nigel Ridpath, Geoff Saul, Sandra Simpson, Alaric Smith, Ruth Smith, Tim Sumner, Sarah Veasey, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray

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.
2. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 16)**  
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2025.
3. **Declarations of Interest**  
To receive any declarations from Members of Council on any items to be considered at the meeting.
4. **Receipt of Announcements**  
To receive any announcements from The Chair, Leader, Members of the Executive, Head of Paid Service, Director of Finance or Director of Governance.
5. **Participation of the Public**  
To receive any submissions from members of the public, in accordance with the Council's [Public Participation Rules](#).

The deadline for submission is 2.00pm, two clear working days before the meeting.

6. **Questions by Members**  
The following questions have been submitted by Members of Council to Members of the Executive, in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules (Constitution Part 5A, Rule 12).

Written responses will be circulated to Members and published on the Council's website at least one working day prior to the meeting. A Member submitting a question is entitled to ask one supplementary question at the meeting which must arise directly from the question or the response to it.

The supplementary questions and answers will be detailed in the minutes of the meeting.

**Question 1: From Councillor Jane Doughty to Councillor Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy**

The Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) that is planned for the Raleigh Crescent Recreation Area on Deer Park will rejuvenate the local area for young people. It will provide a new, vibrant, and welcoming space for young people, allowing them to enjoy themselves in the local area. Will the Executive Member confirm their support for this new MUGA and state the progress made so far.

**Question 2: From Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance**

There are reports of poor maintenance and even pests (moths)/nuisance insects in the Hexagon Business Centre on the New Yatt Road. Can the Executive Member confirm how much the Council is paying on maintenance, cleaning and pest control?

**Question 3: From Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment**

There are issues with trees all over Witney, with the Tree Management currently is not fit for purpose. When will the Executive Member invite other members to support in the review of the Tree Management Policy

**Question 4: From Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy**

Please can the Executive Member outline all progress that has been made so far on 3G Pitch Project for West Witney Sports and Social Club, and the Adventure Play Area Project for Windrush Place.

**Question 5: From Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive for Planning**

With 450 homes planned for the Land North of the Burford Road, West of Dry Lane and potentially up-to 900 homes planned on the East of Dry Lane (running up to Kingfisher Meadow), Witney is about to grow significantly. Please can the Executive Member confirm what the Council is doing to ensure that all developers on these schemes work together to bring the best benefits to both Witney and Curbridge?

Dry Lane will need significant upgrades, Witney is in desperate need of a new leisure centre, sports pitches, Doctors Surgeries and more, and Curbridge Parish Council have submitted a list of requirements the village needs – therefore, what is the Council doing to ensure that Witney and Curbridge get a fair deal?

**Question 6: From Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council**

How much has WODC spent so far on LGR including "Two councils" print and digital media?

**Question 7: From Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council**

Will members get a free vote and opportunity to debate the merits of each of the three proposed new local government options in Oxfordshire?

**Question 8: From Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council**

Is the Council Chamber available for hire yet?

## **Recommendations from the Executive**

### **7. Appointments to Outside Bodies (Pages 17 - 24)**

#### Purpose

To provide a list of appointments to Outside Bodies for the civic year 2025/26.

#### Recommendation

That Council resolves to:

1. Note the appointments to outside bodies as set out in Annex A;

### **8. 2024/25 Quarterly Finance Review Q4 (Pages 25 - 48)**

#### Purpose

To report the financial performance of the Council in 2024/25

#### Recommendations

Subject to the resolutions of the Executive on 9 July, Council is recommended to resolve to:

1. Agree to carry forward the capital budget of £4,951,242.
2. Approve the transfers to and between Earmarked Reserves as detailed in the report.

### **9. Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 3c Windrush Leisure Centre (Pages 49 - 56)**

#### Purpose

To present the business case for the decarbonisation of Windrush Leisure Centre.

#### Recommendation

Subject to the resolutions of the Executive on 9 July, Council is recommended to resolve to:

1. Allocate an additional council contribution of £340,683 towards the project in addition to the £224,866 already included within the capital programme.

### **10. Carterton Units 1-3 and Station Lane Roofing Project (Pages 57 - 60)**

#### Purpose

To request allocation of funding for the re-roofing of investment and service properties that form part of the Capital Expenditure Budget for 2025/26 and the rationale for undertaking these works.

To seek approval of these costs so that officers can proceed with the works with external contractors.

#### Recommendation

Subject to the resolutions of the Executive on 9 July, Council is recommended to resolve to:

1. Allocates the total cost detailed in Annex A to the project from the Investment Properties Programme.
2. Delegate authority to Director of Finance (SI51) in consultation with Executive Member for Finance to approve the final cost of the projects

## Reports from Officers

### 11. **Review of Members' Allowances Scheme (Pages 61 - 72)**

#### Purpose

To consider recommendations made to Council by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

#### Recommendation

That the Council considers the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel, which are to;

1. Agree to introduce a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) set at 0.25x of the Basic Allowance f(BA) for the position of Vice-Chair of Council, backdated to 21 May 2025.
2. Retain the existing Co-optees' Allowance (£75 for up to four hours and £150 for more than four hours but less than 24 hours for eligible meetings and other duties as in 5.1 of the Members Allowance Scheme 2023-2027) for Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee.
3. Agree that the Co-Optees' Allowance for Independent Persons who are consulted on standards matters, will be set at a flat rate of £1000 a year, backdated to 1 April 2025.
4. Note that the next meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel will be in 2026, ahead of the next full review in 2027.

### 12. **Motions on Notice**

No motions were received before the deadline of 12pm, Monday 7 July 2025.

### 13. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

If Council wishes to exclude the press and the 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 Council to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Council may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

### 14. **Exempt Annex A to Item 10 Carterton Units 1-3 and Station Lane Roofing Project (Pages 73 - 86)**

### 15. **Options for Investment Property in Witney (Pages 87 - 96)**

#### Purpose

To request Executive to consider officer recommendation to dispose of the property in Witney on the open market for the reasons set out in the report.

#### Recommendations

That Council resolves to:

1. Agree that the property should be disposed of on the open market
2. Delegate Authority is to the Director of Finance in consultation with the

Executive Member for Finance to approve the final terms of sale including the sale price.

(END)

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the Council

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB  
at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 21 May 2025**

### PRESENT

Councillors: Elizabeth Poskitt (Chair), Andrew Coles (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Thomas Ashby, Hugo Ashton, Mike Baggaley, Andrew Beaney, Michael Brooker, Adam Clements, Julian Cooper, Steve Cosier, Rachel Crouch, Jane Doughty, Genny Early, Roger Faulkner, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, David Jackson, Edward James, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Paul Marsh, Martin McBride, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Rosie Pearson, Andrew Prosser, Nigel Ridpath, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Sandra Simpson, Alaric Smith, Ruth Smith, Tim Sumner, Sarah Veasey, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive Officer), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Jon Dearing (Interim Executive Director), Phil Martin (Director of Place), Bill Oddy (Assistant Director for Commercial Development) and Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer)

#### **CL.I Election of Chair for 2025/26**

Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, the Chair of the Council for 2024/25 civic year, opened the meeting. Before beginning the official business of the meeting, the Council held a minute's silence for firefighters Jennie Logan and Martyn Sadler, and Dave Chester, who were killed in a fire that took place at the Bicester Motion site the previous Thursday evening.

The purpose of the item was to elect a Councillor, other than a Member of the Executive, to be the Chair of Council.

Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt proposed that Councillor Andrew Coles be elected Chair.

Councillor Joy Aitman seconded the proposal. There were no other nominations.

The proposal was put to a vote and unanimously agreed.

Resolved That Council:

- I. Elect Councillor Andrew Coles as Chair of the Council for a term of office extending to the start of the Annual Council meeting in May 2026.

Councillor Poskitt handed the Chains of Office to Councillor Coles and congratulated him on his appointment. Councillor Poskitt thanked Councillor Coles for his support, being the outgoing chair for the previous year. Councillor Pokitt stated that Cllr Coles was a thoughtful, sensible, organised person.

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Councillor Coles read aloud and signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

#### **CL.2 Appointment of Vice-Chair for 2025/26**

The purpose of the item was to appoint a Councillor, other than a Member of the Executive or the Chair of the Council, to be the Vice-Chair of Council.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Councillor Carl Rylett be appointed Chair.

Councillor Joy Aitman seconded the proposal. There were no other nominations.

Resolved that Council:

- I. Appoint Councillor Carl Rylett as Vice-Chair of the Council for a term of office extending to the start of the Annual Council meeting in May 2026.

Councillor Coles presented Councillor Carl Rylett with the chains of office. Councillor Rylett read aloud and signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

#### **CL.3 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Sandra Cosier, Duncan Enright, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh and David Cooper

#### **CL.4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **CL.5 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March were considered.

Councillor Cosier queried whether his attendance had been marked incorrectly at the last Council meeting.

There were no further comments on the minutes.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed accepting the minutes and Councillor Alaric Smith seconded this.

Resolved that Council:

Approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March as an accurate record of the meeting.



#### **CL.6 Receipt of Announcements**

The Chair made the following announcements;

- Members would be asked to review and update their register of interest and were asked to look out for an email from Democratic Services.
- Data protection training would be rolled out to Councillors; all Councillors were encouraged to complete this.
- Planning Training would take place later that afternoon after the full Council and Committee meetings. All members were encouraged to attend.
- The Chair welcomed Councillor Martin McBride, who had experienced a period of ill health, back to the Chamber.
- Charlie Maynard had resigned his seat as Councillor for Standlake, Aston & Stanton Harcourt following his election as MP for Witney. A by-election had been held and Councillor Sandra Cosier had been elected.
- The agenda would be re-ordered so that item 11 would be taken before item 10.
- The Chair announced that he would be supporting Dementia Oxfordshire, part of Age UK Oxfordshire, and Oxfordshire Wildlife Rescue during his term of office.

The Leader made the following announcements;

- He joined the Chair in welcoming Councillor Sandra Cosier as the new member for Standlake Aston & Stanton Harcourt.
- The Council would be establishing two new working groups; the Carterton Area Strategy Working Group and the Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution Working Group.

There were no further announcements.

#### **CL.7 Vote of thanks to the Chair and Vice-Chair 2024/25**

The Chair paid tribute to Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, who had served as Chair for the 2024/25 civic year, and presented her with a medal for her service.

Councillor Poskitt reflected on her year as Chair highlighting the diverse experiences that came with the role. She expressed gratitude for the support received from colleagues, officers, and volunteers, especially in fundraising efforts for her chosen charities. She also thanked officers Ella Gray and Mandy Smith for their support and Cllr Coles for his support as Vice-Chair.

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Andrew Coles thanked Cllr Poskitt for her chairing, highlighting a calm nature, steely determination and great work on fundraising for charities, with a passion demonstrated for causes she supported.

Councillors Andy Graham, Joy Aitman, Michelle Mead, Rosie Pearson and Liz Leffman all also thanked Councillor Poskitt.

#### **CL.8 Report of the Leader**

The purpose of the item was to receive a verbal report from the Leader covering:

- The appointment of the Deputy Leader;
- The appointment of Executive Members and the allocation of portfolio responsibilities;
- The appointment of an Executive Member to the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee;
- The appointment of a substitute member to the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee;
- Confirmation that the Executive Scheme of Delegation is as set out in Parts 3D and 4 of the Constitution.

In introducing the item, Councillor Andy Graham thanked the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Green Party alliance, describing it as a collaborative and resilient partnership.

The Leader announced;

- The appointment of the Deputy Leader (Cllr Duncan Enright);
- The appointment of Executive Members and the allocation of portfolio responsibilities, which were contained in full in the supplement to the agenda pack and are included as an Annex to these minutes. Cllr Graham highlighted that arts had been added to Cllr Rachel Crouch's portfolio, and that Cllr Tim Sumner had kept their Leisure portfolio, but had also had the Carterton Area strategy added to it.
  - Duncan Enright - Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development
  - Alaric Smith - Executive Member for Finance
  - Hugo Ashton - Executive Member for Planning
  - Rachel Crouch - Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities
  - Geoff Saul - Executive Member for Housing and Social Care
  - Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment
  - Andrew Prosser - Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery
  - Tim Sumner - Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy
  - The appointment of an Executive Member to the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee (Cllr Graham);

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- The appointment of a substitute member to the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee, which could be a named Executive Member or any Executive Members (Cllr Enright);
- Confirmation that the Executive Scheme of Delegation is as set out in Parts 3D and 4 of the Constitution;

Councillor Graham proposed accepting the recommendations.

These were seconded by Councillor Saul.

The recommendation to note the report was voted on and agreed unanimously.

Council resolved to: Note the report

#### **CL.9 Report on special urgency key decisions**

The purpose of the item was to receive a report from the Leader on key decisions taken under special urgency rules within the last year.

The Leader presented the report and explained that in exceptional circumstances the Council is required to take decisions without advertising it for the required statutory period. One such decision had been taken which related to a grant from Sports England funding for Carterton Leisure Centre.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed accepting the recommendation, and Councillor Tim Sumner seconded this.

The recommendation to note the urgent decision was voted on and agreed unanimously.

Council resolved to:

- I. Note the report

#### **CL.10 Appointment of Members to the Council's Committees, including Substitute Members**

The purpose of the report was to establish the Council's committees for the 2025/26 Civic Year and appoint members to committees and working groups:

- To establish the Council's committees as defined in Part 3C of the Council's Constitution, for the Civic Year 2025/26;
- To establish the allocation of seats to political groups based on political proportionality;
- To appoint members to the Council's committees, working groups and external committees for the Civic Year 2025/26.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report and stated that a Local Government Reorganisation working group would be established to support and oversee the work in this area.

The full list of appointments considered by the Council are included as an Annex to these minutes.

The following additional nominations to Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish groups were put forward by the respective group leaders.

- Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group nominated Councillors David Melvin and Elizabeth Poskitt to the Public Conveniences Task and Finish Group, Councillors Andy Goodwin and Mike Baggaley to the Leisure Task and Finish group and Councillors Sandra Cosier and Alistair Wray to the Waste Transformation Task and Finish Group
- Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Conservative Group, nominated Councillor Jane Doughty to the Leisure Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed accepting the recommendations. Councillor Joy Aitman seconded the recommendations.

The recommendations were voted on and agreed unanimously.

Council Resolved to:

1. Agree to establish the Council's Committees as defined in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, for the Civic Year 2025/26;
2. Determine that, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the Act"), the Council shall continue to apply the political balance provisions under the Act to committees as shown in Annex A;
3. Appoint councillors to serve on the Council's committees, working groups and external committees, as set out in the annex to these minutes for a term of office expiring at the next Annual Meeting of the Council;
4. Note the arrangements for substitute members set out in part 5 of the report;
5. Agree the terms of reference for the Carterton Area Strategy Working Group;
6. Agree the terms of reference for the Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution Working Group;
7. Agree the updated terms of reference for the Local Plan Cross Party Working Group.

## **CL.II Constitution Working Group Recommendations**

The purpose of the item was to present the Council with recommendations arising from a meeting of the Constitution Working Group held on 26 March 2025 and to also agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions and to adopt the Council's Constitution, as amended, as is required at the Annual Council meeting.

Councillor Alaric Smith introduced the report.

In response to a question, officers explained that the purpose of removing the telephone contact from the public speaking rules on the Council website was because the telephone lines closed at 2pm. Members asked that this be kept in but clarified.

It was asked that the heading be amended to "All other Committees (Except Planning)".

The Community Governance Review (CGR) Policy was discussed, and whether a policy should be put in place regardless of Local Government Reorganisation. The Head of Democratic and Electoral Services explained that the advice of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England was to take forward any CGRs at this point or after Local Government Reorganisation. The Constitution Working Group had agreed that it was therefore not a good use of Officer time to look at a policy, as any parishes or towns would still have a mechanism to request CGRs without a policy in place and the Council would consider any such requests on a case by case basis.

In summing up, Councillor Alaric Smith stated that the matter could be referred back to the Constitution Working Group for further consideration.

Councillor Joy Aitman seconded the recommendations.

The recommendations were voted on and agreed unanimously.

That Council resolves to:

1. Adopt the Council's Constitution and agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions, as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution.
2. Note that the Director of Governance adopted the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in consultation with the Chair of the Constitution Working Group, following the delegation agreed at the 19 March 2025 Council meeting.
3. Agree to amend the number of seats on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within Part 3C of the Constitution to 15 members (from 24) and the quorum to 4 members (from 6).

4. Note that the Constitution Working Group endorsed the Officer recommendation for further Overview and Scrutiny training for Members.
5. Agree with the Constitution Working Group that the 'full transparency' electronic voting option will be used at meetings of Full Council (with immediate effect), and (from 22 May 2025) Development Control Committee and planning sub-committees.
6. Agree that the Council will not develop a policy for community governance reviews at the current time in view of local government reorganisation.
7. Agree the revised public speaking rules at Annex A, which seek to align the public speaking rules for different meetings, as far as practicable.

#### **CL.12 Partnerships report**

The purpose of the report was to enable the Leader to provide an update to Council on his portfolio responsibility for Strategic Partnerships.

Councillor Andy Graham introduced the report and proposed accepting the recommendations. Councillor Graham provided an update on the Council's key strategic partnerships. He highlighted the following;

- The Future Oxfordshire Partnership was now called the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee.
- The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor would be replacing the Oxfordshire to Cambridgeshire Pan-Regional Partnership.
- The Oxfordshire Migration Partnership, led by Phil Martin, continued to do vital work, particularly in supporting Afghan refugees.
- The Oxfordshire Waste and Environment Services Transformation Programme was a major initiative involving Cherwell, Oxford City, and the County Council. It aimed to transform how waste and recycling services are delivered.
- The Publica transition programme was now in its second phase, and a further update was expected in the summer.

It was asked what a silver group of officers meant, as this was mentioned in the report. The Chief Executive explained that in regard to the Council's emergency planning responsibilities, this was the tactical tier of command and control through which the response to an emergency was managed.

Councillor Geoff Saul seconded the recommendations and commended efforts of the Leader and officers in enabling work.

Council Resolved to:

- I. Note the contents of the Strategic Partnership Update.

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The recommendations were voted on and agreed unanimously.

**CL.13 Dates of Future Meetings**


The next meeting would be on 16 July at 2pm.

The Meeting closed at 3.15 pm

CHAIR

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 <p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>	<p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p><b>EXECUTIVE – 11 JUNE 2025</b> <b>COUNCIL – 16 JULY 2025</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES</b></p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Andrew Brown – Head of Democratic and Electoral Services. Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk">andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk</a></p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Ana Prelici – Senior Democratic Services Officer Email: <a href="mailto:ana.prelici@westoxon.gov.uk">ana.prelici@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To provide a list of appointments to Outside Bodies for the civic year 2025/26.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Appointments to Outside Bodies</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the appointments to outside bodies as set out in Annex A;</li> <li>2. Recommend to Council to note the appointments to outside bodies as set out in Annex A;</li> </ol>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting Residents First</li> <li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees</p>	<p>N/A</p>

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** This report sets out the appointments to outside bodies for the 2025/26 civic year.
- 1.2** Appointments to most outside bodies are a responsibility of the Leader of the Council, who makes such appointments annually following the Annual Council meeting.
- 1.3** The appointments for 2025/26 have been confirmed by the Leader and are included in Annex A to this report. Executive and Council are asked to note the report.
- 1.4** The Council has produced guidance for members who are appointed to outside bodies. This includes guidance on Members' responsibilities on different types of outside bodies, dealing with interests, and issues of bias and predetermination. The guidance will be circulated to the members appointed to outside bodies.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1** Members may be appointed to a wide range of outside bodies. Most appointments are made by the Leader. Members may also be appointed directly by the outside body itself to serve in a private capacity (for instance as a member of the community) rather than as an elected member of the Council, or they may be serving as a member of that body before being elected as a Councillor.
- 2.2** Many of the appointments reflect specific Executive responsibilities so it may be the wish of the Leader to appoint to these in accordance with Executive roles.

## **3. REVIEW PROCESS**

- 3.1** To inform the Leader's appointments to Outside Bodies, a review was carried out at the end of 2024/25. A survey was circulated to outside bodies seeking the following information:
  - Contact details
  - Purpose of outside bodies
  - Type of organisation
  - Role and duties of appointed member
  - Whether the appointment of a WODC member is a constitutional requirement, and how the requirement came about
  - Whether the organisation required a WODC member going forward
  - Attendance at meetings
- 3.2** The results of the survey were shared with the Leader and these were used to refine and inform the appointments for 2025/26.

## **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1** The Leader is free to make such appointments as they consider appropriate in respect of executive functions.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1** Travel and subsistence allowances will be payable in respect of the majority of appointments made, if claimed. Provision for this is included in the Council's budget.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1** The Council's Constitution (Part 3C) includes the following as a responsibility of full Council:

*To appoint or nominate individuals to outside bodies in respect of non-Executive Functions and revoke or withdraw such appointment or nomination where there is no Group Leader consensus on the decision to be taken. To note the Leader's appointments to outside bodies in respect of Executive Functions, as advised.*

- 6.2** Legal implications for members appointed to outside bodies are covered in the guidance document. For example, any member appointed as a director of a company will owe a fiduciary duty to the company.

## **7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1** Guidance has been produced for Members who are appointed to serve on outside bodies by outlining their responsibilities and obligations in that role. The guidance, appended at does not attempt to provide definitive answers to every particular set of circumstances but rather to provide a framework against which Members can exercise judgement when faced with potential conflicts.

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 8.1** None.

## **9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1** There may be climate change implications arising from car travel to meetings of the outside bodies.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

(END)

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## Outside Bodies Appointments

### Appointment by office

Outside Body	Number of reps	Reps 2024/25	Reps 2025/26
LGA General Assembly	1	Andy Graham Sub: Duncan Enright	Andy Graham Sub: Duncan Enright
Oxfordshire Environment Partnership	1	Andy Graham Sub: Duncan Enright	Andy Graham Sub: Duncan Enright
Oxfordshire Leaders Group	1	Andy Graham Sub: Duncan Enright	Andy Graham Sub: Duncan Enright
Oxfordshire Partnership Board	1	Andy Graham Sub: Duncan Enright	Andy Graham Sub: Duncan Enright
South East England Councils (SEEC)	1	Andy Graham Sub: Duncan Enright	Andy Graham Sub: Duncan Enright
West Oxfordshire Local Advisory Board (GLL Better) (Appointment by Office)	1	Tim Sumner	Tim Sumner
South West Audit Partnership Board - Member Representative	1	Carl Rylett	Carl Rylett

### Appointments by Leader


Outside Body	Number of reps	Reps 2024/25	Reps 2025/26
Burford School Foundation	1	Andrew Beaney	Andrew Beaney
Burford Traffic Advisory Comm	2	Hugo Ashton 1 x vacancy	Hugo Ashton 1 x vacancy
Blue Plaques Group	1	Elizabeth Poskitt	Elizabeth Poskitt
Charlbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee	2	Andy Graham Liz Leffman	Andy Graham Liz Leffman

Chipping Norton Theatre - Council of Management	1	Nigel Ridpath/Mike Baggaley	Nigel Ridpath
Chipping Norton Traffic Advisory Committee	2	Geoff Saul Mike Baggaley	Geoff Saul Mike Baggaley
Cotswold National Landscape	1	Rosie Pearson	Rosie Pearson
Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils	1	Joy Aitman	Joy Aitman
Oxfordshire Food Network	1	Rachel Crouch	Rachel Crouch
Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board	1	Rachel Crouch	Rachel Crouch
Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board	1	Rachel Crouch	Rachel Crouch
Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1	Elizabeth Poskitt	Elizabeth Poskitt
Oxfordshire Resource and Waste Partnership	1	Lidia Arciszewska	Lidia Arciszewska
PATROL Parking and Traffic Regulations Outside London Joint Committee	1	Lidia Arciszewska	Lidia Arciszewska
South West Audit Partnership Board - Member Representative	1	Carl Rylett	Carl Rylett
Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel	1	Geoff Saul	Geoff Saul
Traffic Penalty Tribunal Joint Committee	1	Alaric Smith	Alaric Smith
Volunteer Link-Up	1	David Melvin	David Melvin
West Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership	2	Sandra Simpson Geoff Saul	Sandra Simpson Geoff Saul
Witney Educational Foundation (4 year term of office as Trustee)	1	Duncan Enright	Duncan Enright
Witney Traffic Advisory Committee	2	Mike Brooker Ruth Smith	Mike Brooker Andrew Prosser
Oxford Airport Consultative Committee	2	Tim Sumner	Tim Sumner
Oxfordshire Buildings Trust	1	Elizabeth Poskitt	Elizabeth Poskitt
Woodstock Traffic Advisory Committee	2	Julian Cooper	Julian Cooper

		Elizabeth Poskitt	Elizabeth Poskitt
World Heritage UK	I	Steve Cosier	Steve Cosier

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 <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
<b>Name and date of Committee</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE – 9 JULY 2025 COUNCIL – 16 JULY 2025</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25 YEAR END</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Accountable member</b>	Cllr Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance Email: <a href="mailto:alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk">alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Accountable officer</b>	Madhu Richards Director of Finance Email: <a href="mailto:madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk">madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report author</b>	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant Email: <a href="mailto:georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk">georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Summary/Purpose</b>	To report the financial performance of the Council in 2024/25
<b>Annexes</b>	Annex A – Revenue Outturn Annex B – Capital Outturn and Capital Slippage
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the 2024/25 financial performance.</li> <li>2. Recommend to Council to carry forward the capital budget of £4,951,242.</li> <li>3. Recommend to Council to approve the transfers to and between Earmarked Reserves as detailed in the report.</li> </ol>
<b>Corporate priorities</b>	Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt</b>	No
<b>Consultees/ Consultation</b>	None

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- I.1** In February 2024, the Council set a balanced budget with a contribution to general fund reserves of £5,107. The in-year quarterly reporting has consistently forecast a cost of service overspend, mitigated by an overachievement of interest on Treasury Management investment activities.
- I.2** At year end the overspend on cost of services is £247,274. This is driven by pressure on some fee generating services, the loss of Housing Benefit subsidy related to homeless clients in temporary emergency accommodation i.e. B&Bs and Hotels and longer than budgeted for timelines in Investment & Regeneration Properties to negotiate new leases. Conversely there are also significant underspends in the Publica contract, Leisure, and ICT.
- I.3** Combined with the funding elements of the revenue account i.e. Retained Business Rates, Interest on external borrowing, Minimum Revenue Provision (the charge that must be made to revenue to pay off the principal amount of borrowing taken out to fund the capital programme, similar to depreciation in the private sector) and Government Grants, the final outturn position is a contribution to general fund reserves of £6,345.
- I.4** There is an additional £625,889 of treasury management investment income where the Council has benefited from higher than expected interest rates for the full financial year in both our Money Market accounts and our Pooled funds. Predictions that interest rates would begin to fall in the Autumn of 2024 have proven to be overly optimistic, due to the need for the Bank of England to curb inflation.
- I.5** Throughout the year it has been reported that the Leisure contract would be underspent for the year due to a prudent income contingency of £200,000 included in the base budget. The contract sum increases annually by CPI inflation which has been higher than expected, increasing income and therefore the underspend by £274,337 for a total variance of £474,337.
- I.6** Publica returned a net refund to the Council of £426,000 relating to Phase 1 of the Publica Review, early delivery against savings targets and a slightly higher employee turnover position. This one off saving has been transferred to earmarked reserves to help fund the one off and enduring costs of the Publica Review. The Publica Transition Phase 2 go live date of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 will impact on the revenue budget in future years and this will be built into the 2026/27 budget process.
- I.7** The Capital Programme for the year was approved at £12.03m (including an in year addition of £750,000 for Investment Property repairs) and expenditure at year end is £6.4m. The first phase of the replacement of the Waste Vehicle fleet was budgeted to be funded by external borrowing with the resulting interest costs and MRP (Minimum Revenue Provision) included in the 2024/25 budget. The Waste Vehicle replacement will now be incorporated into the County wide Waste Transformation Programme, due to report on this aspect of the programme in Q2 of 2025/26.
- I.8** The lower level of capital expenditure was due to the slippage of major projects such as Waste Vehicle replacement, Investment Property repairs and Witney Leisure Centre

decarbonisation. Investment Property repairs were subject to a tender exercise and the complex technical specification of the works has delayed projects into Q1 of 2025/26. Witney Leisure Centre decarbonisation will be the subject of a report going to the Executive in July 2025.

- I.9** The reduced capital expenditure meant that the Council did not need to take out external borrowing in the year, saving £79,100 in budgeted interest costs and correspondingly, without additional assets, the MRP is £107,427 below budget.
- I.10** The budget for 2025/26 assumes a lower rate of interest returns for Treasury Management investments which should reduce the variance throughout the year. Capital slippage, if agreed, will increase the Capital Programme to £16.165m with a corresponding increase in MRP.

There are a number of budget variances identified in the report across a range of service areas, commentary for the most significant of these is set out below. A full list of variances by cost centre is listed in Annex A.

These figures are subject to External Audit review; however no material change is expected from what is being reported here.

# WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - Budget Monitoring

## Revenue Budget Monitoring 2024/25 - 1st April to 31st March 2025

Service Area	Quarter 4			
	Original Budget 2024/25	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£	£
Democratic and Committee Services	1,233,712	1,420,838	1,447,795	26,957
Environmental & Regulatory Services	726,038	715,808	715,463	(345)
Environmental Services	8,760,388	8,632,936	8,744,462	111,526
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	1,089,327	1,116,545	1,128,245	11,700
ICT, Change & Customer Services	2,309,350	1,965,523	1,810,289	(155,234)
Land, Legal & Property	396,355	494,581	718,154	223,573
Leisure & Communities	227,208	301,951	(188,219)	(490,170)
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,061,472	1,391,333	1,243,962	(147,371)
Revenues & Housing Support	1,345,917	722,552	1,254,242	531,690
Investment Property and Retained Services	(318,880)	(426,295)	(291,347)	134,948
<b>Total cost of services</b>	<b>16,830,887</b>	<b>16,335,771</b>	<b>16,583,046</b>	<b>247,274</b>
Plus:				
Investment income receipts	(1,156,230)	(1,156,230)	(1,782,119)	(625,889)
<b>Cost of services before financing:</b>	<b>15,674,657</b>	<b>15,179,541</b>	<b>14,800,926</b>	<b>(378,615)</b>
General Government Grants	(3,108,880)	(3,140,628)	(3,039,040)	101,588
Retained Business Rates	(5,106,380)	(5,136,109)	(5,339,126)	(203,017)
Interest Payable	79,100	79,100	0	(79,100)
MRP	626,616	626,616	519,189	(107,427)
Revenue Contribution to Capital	540,100	540,100	546,997	6,897
Earmarked Reserves	(871,720)	(242,119)	429,866	671,985
Disposal of fixed assets	0	0	(13,549)	(13,549)
Capital Charges	(1,731,690)	(1,804,698)	(1,804,698)	0
Council Tax	(6,106,910)	(6,106,910)	(6,106,910)	0
Budgeted Contribution to General Fund	5,107	5,107	0	(5,107)
<b>Contribution to General Fund</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(6,345)</b>	<b>(6,345)</b>

## **2. FINANCIAL REPORTING – REVENUE**

### **Environmental and Regulatory Services**

#### **2.1 Markets**

Throughout the year it has been reported that Market income has struggled. At year end income is £29,000 below target, a worsening of the forecast made in Q3 as income has weakened. Markets have been taken over by the Economic Development team who have run a tender process to find a professional market operator to run and improve the market offering across the District. The tender process closed on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, the results of which will be reported in Q1.

### **ICT, Change & Customer Services**

#### **2.2 ICT**

West Oxfordshire function as the procurement hub for ICT licences and maintenance agreements across the Publica partnership Councils plus Ubico. This arrangement provides buying power when negotiating software purchases and renewals. During 2024/25 the ICT team have streamlined licence requirements and have delivered significant savings across the Publica partnership Councils. West Oxfordshire has achieved an underspend of £144,464. Many of our contracts run over three years, it is therefore possible that the expenditure in 2025/26 will also be below budget. This will be reforecast from Q2.

### **Land, Legal and Property**

#### **2.3 Elmfield**

At the time of setting the 2024/25 budget it was envisaged that Elmfield would be tenanted from Q2 2024. Unfortunately, this timeframe slipped due to discussions around the capital works required to bring the building up to a letting standard. The year end position is an overspend of £97,200. As an empty building, the Council held the liability for Business Rates and incurred an additional cost of £60,000. The remainder of the overspend relates to maintenance costs (£14,000) and utilities (£23,000), some of which was for usage before the 2024/25 financial year but not invoiced by the supplier until months after the event. The tenant started occupation of the whole building in February 2025 and has successfully rented out the space to local people wanting either individual or small scale office space and support.

#### **2.4 Depot**

The Station Lane Depot is £49,642 overspent, relating to additional repairs and maintenance costs that do not meet the criteria to be classified as capital expenditure e.g. repairing the electric security shutter, roof repairs, fire door compliance, boiler repairs and emergency lighting replacement.

## **2.5 Marriotts**

Marriotts was purchased by the Council in January 2023 for regeneration and to support a vibrant High Street in Witney and serve the whole District. This move away from commercial investments was a departure for the Council in comparison with the portfolio of investment properties that has been built up over the last 15 years but demonstrates the Council's commitment to develop the local economy.

A commercial agent manages lettings and it has become apparent in the current market conditions that retail lettings are not achieved at speed. The budget for 2024/25 made certain assumptions about the timing of new tenants taking up occupation of vacant units, which has proven to be overly optimistic. When a unit is vacant, the Council not only suffers a loss of rental income but also takes on the liability for Business Rates and Service Charges.

Of the £159,821 overspend for the year, £58,069 relates to underachievement of income and £101,752 relates to Business Rates, Service Charges and legal work on tenancy agreements. As the purchase was funded through internal borrowing and capital receipts, the Council does not carry any borrowing costs for the acquisition.

Overall this year Marriotts made a net contribution to the Council's finances of £465,689.

## **2.6 Legal**

In May 2024, the Council signed up to a new Legal Shared Services agreement with Cotswold District Council and Forest of Dean District Council. The shared service offers advantages in terms of shared knowledge and resilience and the new SLA arrangement fairly apportions the cost of the service across the Councils based on the amount of resource each Council consumes. For the 2024/25 financial year there is an underspend of £42,017, a variance from a vacant post that was held all year and a post that became vacant mid-way through the period.

## **Leisure & Communities**

## **2.7 Leisure Contract**

As reported in year, there is a contingency included in the base budget that is not now required and results in an underspend of £200,000. In addition to this, the higher level of CPI inflation across 2024/25 has created additional contract income of £116,315 and the reduction in bad debt provision has resulted in an overall underspend of £474,337. The contingency has been removed in the 2025/26 budget and it is expected that reporting will show only a modest variance in Q1.

## **Environmental Services**

### **2.8 Flood Defence & Land Drainage**

During the year additional de-silting and clearance work was undertaken to ameliorate the risk of flooding at four key sites in Witney and high risk sites in Bampton and Carterton. This work has resulted in an overspend of £25,334. Additional budget has been provided for 2025/26 and a review of potential flood amelioration will be undertaken to identify any potential capital improvement work the Council should consider.

### **2.9 Dog Warden**

This is a statutory service and is not income generating, therefore 100% of the cost is borne by the Council. Stray dogs are collected and transported to kennels. The cost charged to the Council had not been increased for several years, but a substantial rise, in recognition of fuel, food, vets costs etc took effect in January 2025. The overspend for 2024/25 is £35,508 with an increase included for 2025/26 to cover inflationary increases.

### **2.10 Public Conveniences**

Public convenience income has been reducing year on year since the Covid pandemic. In 2024/25 income stands at 43% of pre pandemic levels. During the same period, contract cleaning costs have increased by 18% and the cost of cash collection is now £7,500 per year. Both these elements have resulted in an overspend of £27,591. The net cost of providing and maintaining Public Conveniences is £226,128 per annum.

### **2.11 Recycling**

Recycling is £11,038 underspent for 2024/25, a significant improvement from the £434,665 overspend reported for 2023/24. The most notable positive is the switch to a new supplier to process Dry Mixed Recycling on 1st September 2024. The result is an underspend of £125,000, compared with an overspend of £243,000 for 2023/24. Conversely, recycling credits are £44,000 behind target and there have been £70,000 of additional Ubico contract costs. The boxes bought in year have been transferred to capital per paragraph 2.17. The 2025/26 budget includes a reduction in recycling credits of £75,000 linked to the potential impact of regulatory changes on the use of the waste incinerator by Oxfordshire County Council.

## **2.12 Green Waste**

Income for the year is £64,000 behind target, but there was an error in the base budget of £40,995 too much in budgeted income. This error has been corrected for 2025/26 and the licence fee has been increased by £2.50 or £82,500 for the year. The expenditure on bins and boxes reported in Q2 and Q3 has been transferred to capital per paragraph 2.16.

## **2.13 Trade Waste**

Trade Waste performance in 2024/25 has been very positive. The Waste Team have been proactive in making sure that any trade waste bin in use in the District is correctly charged for and any bins that are no longer subject to a contract are removed. This was achieved by an officer going out on rounds with Ubico to check contracts and bins in real time. This action, combined with direct debit payments for the service has resulted in a significant amount of additional income and an underspend of £110,619.

## **2.14 Household Waste**

The year end position is an overspend of £25,272 an improvement from the £80,240 overspend reported for 2023/24. It is made up of a £10,000 contribution to staffing costs of the Oxfordshire Resources & Waste Partnership and an overspend on replacement bins and boxes.

## **2.15 Bulky Waste**

Income generated from the Bulky Waste service has increased by 12% compared to 2023/24, turning a modest overspend last year into a £10,116 underspend against the 2024/25 budget. Fees were increased for 2025/26 as part of the budget setting process and so far in 2025/26 income levels are consistent with 2024/25.

## **2.16 Bins and Boxes**

In the year, expenditure on recycling, waste and green bins and boxes in the amount of £139,353 was transferred from revenue to capital and funded through available S106 monies collected to provide additional waste containers across the District.

## **2.17 Downs Road Depot**

The Depot has an overspend of £53,569 made up of reactive maintenance which does not meet the criteria to be recognised as capital expenditure and £18,807 stamp duty and fees payable on the renewal of the underletting agreement. The Council has a headlease for the site and sublets to Ubico to operate as a Waste Depot.



## **Planning & Strategic Housing**

### **2.18 Development Management**

Throughout the year quarterly monitoring reported that Development Management income was significantly behind budget. Over the first 3 quarters of the year income averaged £91,940 a month against a budget of £116,150 and the end of year forecast was an overspend of £145,000. During Q4, average income increased to £194,778 per month, due to the receipt of two major applications. The service has ended the year with an overspend of £6,882 which is due to a disappointing performance for Pre Application advice.

The volatility of planning application income has always made it difficult to predict and budget for. The 2025/26 budget was set against the backdrop of significant pressure on income as reported in Q3 and was reduced by £123,000, which now looks pessimistic.

### **2.19 Development Management Appeals**

External legal spend on Planning Appeals is £79,498 underspent. It is difficult to predict when appeals will be settled therefore the budget for 2025/26 has been set at the same level as 2024/25.

## **Retained Services**

### **2.20 External Audit**

External Audit fees are set by an independent third party – Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). The scale fee for the 2024/25 financial year was published in November 2024 and it raised the fee by 9.5%. The Council has two external auditors – one for the Statement of Accounts and one for the Benefits system. A combination of these costs for 2024/25, as audits become more detailed due to changing Audit guidelines, has meant an overspend of £61,946. The budget for 2025/26 included an increase of £20,000, as the scale fee had not been published. Clearly this budget will be overspent in 2025/26 and will be reported in quarterly monitoring.

### **2.21 Bank Charges**

Bank and credit card charges have been reported as underspent since Q2 due to a £54,000 refund relating to prior financial years and the start of a new contract for credit card processing bringing costs back within the original budget envelope for the year in 2024/25. As a consequence of the refund, the final position for the year is an underspend of £72,155.

## **2.22 Investment Property**

The Investment Property portfolio has had a mixed year in 2024/25, with the overall outturn, excluding Carterton Industrial Estate, being an underspend of £29,597. Town Centre Properties and Talisman have returned an underspend due to increased rental income and service charges for the Town Centre properties and a partially unused income contingency creating a £20,000 underspend at Talisman. This contingency has been removed in 2025/26.

Conversely, Between Towns Road and Des Roches have returned an overspend. In the case of Between Towns Road, this overspend results from security costs and Business Rates liability and for Des Roches the overspend comes from utility costs and contract cleaning when landlord works were undertaken mid-year.

## **2.23 Carterton Industrial Estate**

Units 1-3 are currently vacant and major repairs to the roof are required before the building can be tenanted. The overspend for the year is £136,572. This is made up of Business Rates liability of £76,795, £26,000 to keep the vacant units secure, £10,000 for small repairs and £24,000 for professional fees for the condition surveys and specialist consultancy on the technical specification needed before going out to tender for the roof repairs. The tender process is now complete and work is anticipated to begin in Q2, to be taken to the Executive in July, with a tenant already in place to take over Units 1 & 2 and interest shown in Unit 3.

## **2.24 Non Distributed Costs**

There are two elements to the pension contribution the Council makes for employees. Firstly, there is the amount paid monthly through payroll which is balanced by a secondary cash element paid direct to the LGPS that keeps the payroll contribution at a steady rate and funds historic pension liability. The primary contribution of 17.6% has not changed in the last five years, but the secondary cash contribution this year is higher than the budget and is £47,951 overspent at year end, as reported in quarterly budget monitoring and the Q3 forecast of outturn. The pension scheme triennial revaluation takes place in 2025 with consideration being given to increasing the primary contribution to compensate for the removal of the secondary contribution entirely.

## **Revenues & Housing Support**

### **2.24 Housing Benefits**

There are currently 82 households in temporary accommodation across the District. Over the course of the year this number has averaged 80, compared to an average of 60 households during 2022/23. Capacity in Council owned properties is for 22 single people with the remaining households in Bed & Breakfast or Hotel accommodation.

The reliance on Bed & Breakfast and Hotels to house an average of 60 clients cost the Council £787,152 in lost Housing Benefit Subsidy in 2024/25, partially offset by Housing Benefit overpayment income and a small reduction in the contribution to Bad Debt to bring the outturn position to an overspend of £489,887.

For temporary accommodation not owned by the Council, we are only able to claw back around 27% of the average weekly cost we pay out. The 2025/26 Capital Programme includes £3m to buy more temporary accommodation to relieve this unsustainable pressure on revenue. Additionally purchasing property allows the Council to provide high quality accommodation in areas with good transport links and makes it easier to provide the wide ranging support necessary to support clients.

### **3. FUNDING**

#### **3.1 Retained Business Rates and Pooling**

The accounting arrangements for Business Rates are complex and statute requires recognition of items charged in one financial year to be resolved in the following year i.e. the deficit arising in 2024/25 (the shortfall in collectable rates vs expected due to the Govt's reliefs) will be repaid to the Collection Fund in 2025/26. This deficit has therefore been budgeted for in 2025/26 and will be funded by the Business Rates deficit earmarked reserve set up specifically for this repayment.

As the Billing Authority the Council collects 100% of the 'payable' income but distributes 50% of the 'budgeted' income (regardless of whether the actual cash collected has reduced significantly due to Govt reliefs) to Central Government and 10% to the County Council on a monthly basis.

The table below shows the calculation of the budgeted Business Rate income for the Council vs the Actual.

	<b>Budget 2024/25</b>	<b>Actual 2024/25</b>	
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	
Total BR Income	44.645	44.494	Expected vs Collectable
WODC share	17.858	17.858	WODC receive 40%. 50% goes to the Govt with 10% going to the County, fixed through NNDR 1 at Budget Setting. Uncollectable income compensated by S31 Grant.
Less Tariff	-14.339	-14.339	This is a Govt specified adjustment to reduce our collected rates to the baseline funding level they determine.
Deficit Payable	-0.724	-0.724	Fixed at Budget Setting
S31 Grant	5.494	5.562	Grant received to compensate for lost business rates income due to Central Gov policy.
Renewables	0.298	0.310	Income retained by WODC for renewable energy schemes
BR Income	8.587	8.667	
Less Levy	-2.654	-1.650	The budgeted figure is reduced by the Gain achieved from being a member of a Business Rates Pool.
<b>Net Business Rates</b>	<b>5.933</b>	<b>7.017</b>	
Movement to Reserves	-0.826	-1.678	S31 grant transferred to Budget Deficit Reserve to fund the 35% reduction in Business Rates income from 2026/27
<b>Retained Income</b>	<b>5.107</b>	<b>5.339</b>	

#### 4. TRANSFER TO EARMARKED RESERVES

- 4.1 The table below shows the proposed movements to earmarked reserves. After the proposed movements to earmarked reserves, the final outturn position will be a £6,345 surplus which will go to the General Fund.

	Transfers		
Reserve	To	From	
	£	£	
Planning Skills Delivery	99,600		Planning Skills Delivery Grant to be spent in 2025/26
Afghan Resettlement	233,367		Afghan Resettlement Grant to be spent in 2025/26
UKSPF	202,987		UKSPF grant to be spent in 2025/26
Homelessness Projects	160,000		Surplus created due to expenditure funded through Homelessness Prevention Grant also budgeted for
Budget Deficit	426,642		Publica refund ref 2024/25 contract sum
Budget Deficit	852,130		Transfer of S31 Grant to fund loss of Business Rates income from 2026/27
Budget Deficit		62,500	Funding for Westhive
Budget Deficit		70,000	Funding for Grants with agreed Service Level Agreements
New Burdens		64,141	Funding for Finance Backfill for vacant Senior Accountant and the Waste Transformation Project
Project Contingency		46,659	Consultancy work for Waste Transformation Project
Total	<b>1,974,726</b>	<b>243,300</b>	

## 5. FINANCIAL REPORTING - CAPITAL

- 5.1 The capital programme approved by Council as part of the budget for 2024/25 totalled £11,281,673 with an additional £750,000 for Investment Property repairs approved in the year. At year end £6,349,405 had been spent against this budget.
- 5.2 The majority of the underspend, £4,951,242, is requested to be carried forward into 2025/26 as slippage as it concerns timing differences in the delivery of Windrush Leisure Centre PSDS, the Waste Fleet Replacement and Investment Property repairs, all of which are either underway or scheduled to be completed by Q3 of 2025/26.
- 5.3 A full breakdown of the schemes for the year and expenditure at 31st March is attached at Annex B.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The net cost of service outturn position for 2024/25 is in line with the forecast reported in Q3 at £247,274 overspent. Better than anticipated interest returns from Treasury Management investments, reduced payments of MRP and external interest costs linked to the slippage in the Capital Programme and achieving a higher level of retained Business Rates allowed for higher than budgeted transfers to the Budget Deficit Earmarked Reserve. This reserve was set up to mitigate the impact of the Business Rates reset which will be introduced on 1st April 2026, uncertainty around Government funding and the revenue impact of the end of the Leisure Contract in 2027.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1** The Council set a balanced budget for 2025/26 with a contribution to General Fund of £91,280, in large part due to an additional £1.055m of retained Business Rates and £2.33m Extended Producer Waste grant which the Council has treated as a one off grant given the lack of certainty over any future payments.
- 7.2** The consultation on the reset of Business Rates went live in April 2025 and the details published by the Government make it apparent that this Council is estimated to lose £3.1m of income, potentially phased over a three year transition period. Combined with the estimated £2.4m loss associated with the end of the Leisure Contract in 2027, the Council will be reliant on the General Fund and Earmarked Reserve balances to set a balanced budget over the life of the existing MTFS. A budget deficit reserve was set up using general fund surpluses and transfers from existing reserves in 2023/24 to fund this income gap and has a current balance of £3,634,690.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1** None

## **9. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1** Not applicable

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 10.1** None

## **11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1** None

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

## Annex A - Comparison of Q4 Budget Monitoring

Q4 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

### Democratic Services

DRM001-Democratic Representation	247,102	244,076	(3,026)
DRM002-Support To Elected Bodies	485,426	492,339	6,913
ELE001-Registration of Electors	156,038	188,315	32,277
ELE002-District Elections	75,700	75,700	0
HLD309 - Newspapers	0	(84)	(84)
SUP001-Administration	456,572	447,449	(9,123)

### Total - Democratic Services

<b>1,420,838</b>	<b>1,447,795</b>	<b>26,957</b>
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ELE001 - The overspend relates to the cost of printing and posting out poll cards and electoral registration forms. Additional budget has been included in 2025/26 to cover ongoing costs.

Q4 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

### Environmental & Regulatory Services

BUC001-Building Control - Fee Earning Work	163,621	152,923	(10,698)
BUC002-Building Control - Non Fee Earning Work	3,066	3,066	0
EMP001-Emergency Planning	13,485	10,024	(3,461)
ESM001-Environment - Service Mgmt & Supp Svcs	93,776	93,742	(34)
PSH002-Private Sector Housing-Condition of Dwellings	3,000	(2,315)	(5,315)
REG002-Licensing	2,572	(6,184)	(8,756)
REG009-Environmental Protection	202,846	199,309	(3,537)
REG010-Noise Control	440	304	(136)
REG011-Authorised Process	(11,890)	(9,039)	2,851
REG013-Pollution Control	109,486	115,499	6,013
REG016-Food Safety	132,293	130,969	(1,324)
REG021-Statutory Burials	5,000	(193)	(5,193)
TAC309-Other Trading Services - Markets	(1,887)	27,357	29,244

### Total - Environmental & Regulatory Services

<b>715,808</b>	<b>715,463</b>	<b>(345)</b>
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BUC001 - Income is £17,000 above budget, with IT maintenance, subscriptions and employee costs £7,000 overspent

TAC309 - Income is £29,000 behind target. The Economic Development team are tendering for an external contractor to take over the management of the markets to improve the offering in the District.

Q4 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

#### Finance, Human Resources & Procurement

SUP003-Human Resources	178,635	187,886	9,251
HLD319 - New Initiatives	9,473	9,473	(0)
SUP009-Accountancy	477,515	474,124	(3,391)
SUP010-Internal Audit	198,809	201,900	3,091
SUP011-Creditors	39,851	38,599	(1,252)
SUP012-Debtors	55,565	57,259	1,694
SUP013-Payroll	53,266	53,546	280
SUP019-Health & Safety	31,358	32,049	691
SUP020-Training & Development	27,246	27,790	544
SUP033-Central Purchasing	35,677	36,469	792
SUP035-Insurances	9,150	9,150	0

#### Total - Finance, Human Resources & Procurement

1,116,545	1,128,245	11,700
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Q4 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

#### ICT, Change & Customer Services

SUP002-Consultation, Policy & Research	152,532	148,475	(4,057)
SUP005-ICT	1,271,085	1,126,621	(144,464)
SUP008-Reception/Customer Services	559,080	552,083	(6,997)
SUP014-Cashiers	110	208	98
TMR001-Street Naming & Numbering	0	68	68
TMR002-Street Furniture & Equipment	(17,284)	(17,167)	117

#### Total - ICT, Change & Customer Services

1,965,523	1,810,289	(155,234)
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SUP005 - The underspend is in the renewal of software licences & software maintenance agreements. Throughout the year ICT have rationalised the number of software licences and managed to reduce the overall cost to the Council.

	Q4 position		
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£
<b>Land, Legal &amp; Property</b>			
ADB301-3 Welch Way (Town Centre Shop)	16,183	4,869	(11,314)
ADB302-Guildhall	11,686	(6,884)	(18,570)
ADB303-Woodgreen	188,476	199,920	11,444
ADB304-Elmfield	29,229	126,509	97,280
ADB305-Corporate Buildings	605,195	601,942	(3,253)
ADB306-Depot	(8,503)	41,139	49,642
FIE346-Marriotts	(625,510)	(465,689)	159,821
LLC001-Local Land Charges	(53,020)	(58,874)	(5,854)
SUP004-Legal	351,610	309,593	(42,017)
TAC303-Swain Court & Newman Court Ind Est Witney	(20,765)	(34,371)	(13,606)
<b>Total - Land, Legal &amp; Property</b>	<b>494,581</b>	<b>718,154</b>	<b>223,573</b>

ADB301 - The Town Centre shop became a fully operational building in August 2024, with Revenues & Benefits staff occupying the first floor that used to be let out commercially. This change of use resulted in a refund of Business Rates.

ADB302- there is a £12,000 overachievement of income due to a backdated service charge to Chipping Norton Town Council and a £7,000 underspend in utilities. The budget for 2025/26 has been adjusted to take the current utility costs into account.

ADB303 - the overspend is due to work done in the year to optimise the sound/microphone system in the Council Chamber. This work does not meet the criteria to be recognised as capital expenditure.

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 tenant began occupation of the building on 12th February 2025, leaving an overspend of £60,000. The remaining overspend is due to utilities and repairs and maintenance work carried out that does not meet the criteria to be classified as capital expenditure.

ADB306- the overspend is due to a £10,000 reduction in rental income and £38,000 of repairs and maintenance charges that do not meet the criteria to be recognised as capital expenditure.

FIE346 - the 2024/25 budget was based on certain assumptions about the timing of when vacant units would be occupied. The actual timing of new tenants moving into units has taken longer than originally anticipated. The result is a significant overspend on the business rates and service charges on units that have been empty and a £58,000 underachievement of rental income.

SUP004 - shared service costs are underspent due to vacancies and an updated split of costs with Forest of Dean and Cotswold.

TAC303- the majority of the underspend relates to repairs and maintenance with the remainder being for utilities

Q4 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

#### Leisure & Communities

CCR001-Community Safety (Crime Reduction)	92,703	90,212	(2,491)
CCR002-Building Safer Communities	(6,462)	(13,416)	(6,954)
CCR301 - Communities Revenue Grant	281,320	297,917	16,597
COV023-COMF	97,373	97,373	0
CCT001-CCTV	106,105	109,813	3,708
CSM001-Cultural Strategy	81,453	77,137	(4,316)
CUL001-Arts Development	43,079	35,394	(7,685)
ECD001-Economic Development	204,554	198,295	(6,259)
ECD010 – SPF Community and Place	(202,987)	(202,987)	0
REC001-Sports Development	125,471	118,105	(7,366)
REC002-Recreational Facilities Development	51,349	59,706	8,357
REC003-Play	31,657	32,700	1,043
REC301-Village Halls	13,681	13,647	(34)
REC302-Contract Management	(934,710)	(1,409,047)	(474,337)
SUP016-Finance - Performance Review	101,810	101,708	(102)
TOU001-Tourism Strategy and Promotion	215,555	205,223	(10,332)

#### Total - Leisure & Communities

301,951	(188,219)	(490,170)
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CCR301 - the base revenue budget for Community Grants is not correct, producing an overspend. This error has been corrected in 2025/26.

REC302 - the budget includes an income contingency against the contract sum of £200,000, which shows as an underspend. Income for the year is £274,000 higher than budget due to the rate of CPI inflation.

TOU001 - there is a £6,000 underspend for IT maintenance and other underspends relating to printing and marketing costs. The service was part of the Phase 1 transfer back to the Council and operates as a shared service with Cotswold District Council as the employing authority.

Q4 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

#### Environmental Services

CCC001-Climate Change	276,089	286,654	10,565
COR301-Policy Initiatives - Shopmobility	15,012	18,222	3,210
CPK001-Car Parks - Off Street	468,063	469,167	1,104
ENI002-Grounds Maintenance	622,512	626,247	3,735
ENI303-Landscape Maintenance	13,869	30,888	17,019
FLD001-Flood Defence and Land Drainage	165,008	190,342	25,334
REG004-Dog Warden	82,262	117,770	35,508
REG019-Public Conveniences	198,537	226,128	27,591
REG023-Environmental Strategy	89,266	83,888	(5,378)
RYC001-Recycling	2,736,693	2,725,655	(11,038)
RYC002-Green Waste	(452,355)	(407,030)	45,325
RYC003-Food Waste	1,039,481	1,040,288	807
STC004-Environmental Cleansing	1,059,223	1,060,257	1,034
STC011 - Abandoned Vehicles	215,079	213,582	(1,497)
TRW001-Trade Waste	74,250	(36,369)	(110,619)
TRW002-Clinical Waste	(500)	(468)	32
WST001-Household Waste	1,997,672	2,022,944	25,272
WST004-Bulky Household Waste	13,700	3,655	(10,045)
WST301-Env. Services Depot, Downs Rd, Witney	19,075	72,644	53,569

#### Total - Environmental Services

<b>8,632,936</b>	<b>8,744,462</b>	<b>111,526</b>
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ENI303 - the overspend relates to reactive maintenance i.e. replacing a footbridge at Madley Brook, Hyde Bridge and some local subsidence work

FLD001- there is £13,000 of unbudgeted expenditure for desilting & clearing drainage ditches and £10,000 additional costs from Ubico for flooding prevention work. The budget has been reviewed for 2025/26

REG004- expenditure represents boarding fees for stray dogs. Costs of kennelling have increased by 10% for 2025/26 following several years of no inflationary increase. Additional budget has been included for 2025/26.

REG019 - the income budget is £22,000 below target, reflecting a sharp decline in usage and cleaning costs are £13,000 overspent due to an inflationary rise in the contract sum mid year.

RYC001- the switch to a new supplier to process Dry Mixed Recyclates on 1st September 2024 has led to an underspend of £125,000. This has been offset by a £44,000 underachievement of Recycling Credits and £70,000 of additional Ubico contract costs. The boxes bought in year have been transferred to capital and funded from available S106 contributions.

RYC002- green waste licence income is £64,000 behind target for the year, the budget has been reviewed for 2025/26. Boxes bought in year have been transferred to capital and funded from available S106 contributions.

TRW001- income is £115,000 ahead of budget, achieved through a forensic review of the bin contracts by the Waste Team.

WST001- Replacement containers are £11,000 overspent and there has been £10,000 of unbudgeted expenditure for the WODC contribution to the Oxfordshire Resources & Waste Partnership for the year.

WST004 - income has exceeded target by £10,000.

WST301 - there is an overspend of £33,000 relating to reactive repairs & maintenance and £19,000 Stamp Duty paid on the completion of a new underletting agreement.

Q4 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

#### Planning & Strategic Housing

DEV001-Development Control - Applications	(180,101)	(173,219)	6,882
DEV002-Development Control - Appeals	214,390	134,892	(79,498)
DEV003-Development Control - Enforcement	163,416	157,018	(6,398)
ENA001-Housing Enabling	162,459	152,603	(9,856)
ENI301-Landscape Initiatives	52,926	58,329	5,403
HLD315-Growth Board Project (Planning)	149,607	130,294	(19,313)
PLP001-Planning Policy	659,595	652,742	(6,853)
PLP004-Conservation	131,758	129,802	(1,956)
PSM001-Planning Service Mgmt & Support Svcs	37,283	1,500	(35,783)
<b>Total - Planning &amp; Strategic Housing</b>	<b>1,391,333</b>	<b>1,243,962</b>	<b>(147,371)</b>

DEV002 - legal costs relating to planning inquiries are underspent but there are inquiries outstanding which have not yet been finalised which will now fall in 2025/26.

HLD315 - the underspend stems from professional fees not required in the year.

PSM001- underspends include £11,000 on printing, £15,000 in professional fees, £5,000 on subscriptions and £3,000 on IT licences. Work will be carried out in 2025/26 on the Digital Planning Improvement project, for which the Council has received £99,000 of government funding.

Q4 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

#### Retained Services

COR002-Chief Executive	504,887	501,951	(2,936)
COR003-Corporate Policy Making	68,899	74,467	5,568
COR004-Public Relations	86,306	82,520	(3,786)
COR005-Corporate Finance	527,174	522,453	(4,721)
COR006-Treasury Management	26,700	20,250	(6,450)
COR007-External Audit Fees	189,375	251,321	61,946
COR008-Bank Charges	78,500	6,345	(72,155)
COR012 - Publica Review	345,270	345,271	1
COR302-Publica Group	(402,072)	(407,450)	(5,378)
FIE341-Town Centre Properties	(410,701)	(452,185)	(41,484)
FIE342-Miscellaneous Properties	(125,645)	(88,021)	37,624
FIE343-Talisman	(1,284,120)	(1,312,542)	(28,422)
FIE344-Des Roches Square	(431,490)	(415,405)	16,085
FIE345-Gables at Elmfield	(50,135)	(57,899)	(7,764)
NDC001-Non Distributed Costs (Pensions)	766,000	813,951	47,951
SUP018-Press and Communications	61,495	66,727	5,232
TAC304-Witney Industrial Estate	(187,243)	(186,212)	1,031
TAC305-Carterton Industrial Estate	(176,425)	(39,853)	136,572
TAC306-Greystones Industrial Estate	(10,195)	(16,863)	(6,668)
TAC308-Other Trading Services - Fairs	(2,875)	(2,859)	16

#### Total - Retained Services

(426,295) (291,347) 134,948

COR007 - external audit fees are set by a central body - the PSAA. The cost of the 2024/25 audit is not confirmed until mid way through the budget setting cycle for the following year. In this instance the fees have increased. There has also been an increase in the costs for our Housing Benefit audit, which is undertaken by a different audit firm.

COR008 - Bank charges have been refunded to the Council from our bank, producing an underspend that we have carried all year.

FIE341- Service charges of £8,000 have been raised relating to the prior financial year and there is an additional £29,000 of income from Woolgate turnover. This figure moves every year and is not known until the end of the year and is therefore difficult to budget for.

FIE342- additional expenditure relates to Between Towns Road with the majority of the overspend coming from Business Rates liability and security costs.

FIE343 - there is an £8,000 underspend in reactive repairs and a £20,000 surplus created by the income contingency against the rent for the year and the actual rent recognised. The income contingency has been removed in 2025/26.

FIE344 - there is a £12,000 overspend for utilities and £4,000 for contract cleaning.

NDC001 - the adverse variance for secondary pension contributions has been reported in each quarterly budget monitoring report. The budget has been adjusted for 2025/26.

TAC305 - Business Rates liability of £76,000 is unbudgeted. Units 1-3 are currently vacant and major repairs to the roof are required before the building can be tenanted. There is an additional spend of £26,000 to keep the vacant units secure, £10,000 for small repairs and £24,000 of professional fees for the condition surveys and specialist specification work that was needed before going out to tender for the roof repairs.

Q4 position		
Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
£	£	£

#### Revenues & Housing Support

HBP001-Rent Allowances	508,760	998,647	489,887
HBP005-Benefit Fraud Investigation	6,196	5,414	(782)
HOM001-Homelessness	266,833	261,198	(5,635)
HOM002-Homelessness Grants	0	5,000	5,000
HOM004-Refugees	19,207	19,207	0
HOM005-Homelessness Hostel Accommodation	6,367	14,997	8,630
HOM006 - The Old Court	(16,345)	(14,660)	1,685
HOM007-Afghan Resettlement Programme	(233,367)	(233,367)	0
HOM008-Homes for Ukraine	53,666	53,202	(464)
LTC001-Council Tax Collection	175,668	172,986	(2,682)
LTC002-Council Tax Support Administration	7,507	7,042	(465)
LTC011-NNDR Collection	(71,174)	(72,331)	(1,157)
PSH001-Private Sector Housing Grants	47,460	47,053	(407)
PSH004-Home Improvement Service	(48,226)	(10,145)	38,081
<b>Total - Revenues &amp; Housing Support</b>	<b>722,522</b>	<b>1,254,242</b>	<b>531,690</b>

HBP001 - the overspend is the net cost to the Council of Temporary Emergency Accommodation and the resulting loss of Housing Benefit Subsidy.


PSH004 - the cost of hiring external contractors to undertake minor repairs work is overspent, demonstrating how much inflation has impacted these kind of services over the last 12 months. Levels of expenditure are expected to remain at a similar level in 2025/26.

## Capital Programme 2024/25

Scheme	Funded By	2024/25 Total Budget	In Year Additions	Q4 Actual	Slippage	2025/26 Budget	2025/26 Budget Plus Slippage	
Agile Working	Borrowing	1,447,068		760,695				a
Solar PV on Council Buildings	Borrowing	276,345		87,747				
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	Grant			166,845				
Asset Repairs	Borrowing	0	750,000	0	750,000	750,000	1,500,000	b
Chipping Norton LC Repairs	Borrowing	150,000		131,548				
Ubico Fleet - Replace Vehicle Hire Costs	Borrowing	3,500,000		1,278,734	2,221,266	2,500,000	4,721,266	c
Replacement Sweepers	Borrowing					850,000	850,000	
Update to Planning System (Idox)	Borrowing	150,000		0				
Update to Finance System (ABW)	Borrowing	25,000		0				
Electric vehicle charging points	Borrowing	200,000		48,350				
In Cab Technology	Borrowing	100,000		0	100,000		100,000	
Witney ATP Refurbishment	Revenue Contribution	0		74,310		200,000	200,000	d
Purchase of Temporary Accommodation	Capital Receipts					3,000,000	3,000,000	e
CCTV - Upgrading	Capital Receipts	255,635		0	255,635		255,635	f
Shop Mobility - Replacement stock	Capital Receipts	10,000		0				
Affordable Housing - Cottsway	Grant	212,125		635,880				
Improvement Grants (DFG)	Grant	880,000		942,800		880,000	880,000	
Carterton Leisure Centre PSDS Project	Grant	1,300,000		0				
Windrush Place Public Art	Borrowing			18,529				
Chipping Norton Creative	Borrowing			10,000				
Witney Leisure Centre PSDS	Grant/Borrowing	1,874,000		289,159	1,584,841		1,584,841	g
Chipping Norton Leisure Centre PSDS	Grant/Borrowing					2,643,926	2,643,926	h
IT Provision - Systems & Strategy	Revenue Contribution	100,000		12,648		100,000	100,000	
Weighbridge at Bulking Station	Capital Receipts	25,000		0				
Council Buildings Maintenance Programme	Revenue Contribution	200,000		52,083		250,000	250,000	
IT Equipment - PCs, Copiers etc	Revenue Contribution	40,000		76,825		40,000	40,000	
Community Grants Fund	Revenue Contribution	200,000		22,028				
Purchase of Waste Bins	S106			139,353				
Play Parks	S106	50,000		50,466				
Kilkenny Car Park Extension	S106			161,528				
EVCP Woolgate	S106	167,000		164,815				
UK Rural Prosperity Fund	Grant			516,845				
Carterton Connects Creative (Swinbrook s106)	S106	44,500		5,000	39,500		39,500	
Raleigh Crescent Play Area (s. 106)	S106	75,000		74,999				
Developer Capital Contributions	S106			628,218				
		11,281,673	750,000	6,349,405	4,951,242	11,213,926	16,165,168	

- a. The Agile working programme, which started in 2022/23 has been completed at Elmfield and the Town Centre Shop and the internal works at Woodgreen. Urgent external repair works to Woodgreen are currently being undertaken to the chimneys and fascias to prevent damage to the fabric of the building through water ingress. This work is the conclusion of the Agile Working programme.
- b. The Executive approved an additional £750,000 to the Capital Programme in Q2 of 2024/25 for repair works to the Council's Investment Property and The Old Courthouse. Some of the works have slipped due to the length of time needed to finalise the technical specification of the works i.e. the Old Courthouse roof and Carterton Industrial Estate roof. Work at the Old Court is underway and is expected to be complete in Q2 2025/26. This extensive work has replaced parts of the roof structure that had been damaged by water ingress, improved the insulation and also replaced the guttering and fascias. The work at Carterton Industrial Estate has been through a formal tender process and the final technical specification is now being finalised with the contractor. Work is expected to start in Q2 of 2025/26.
- c. During 2024/25 Ubico has taken delivery of four new Waste Lorries, 3 electric supervisor vans, a waste vehicle specifically for narrow access and 3 cage tippers. The purchase of any further vehicles is on pause until a report comes before the Council from the Waste Transformation Project in Q2 2025/26 regarding the rationalisation of waste vehicles County wide.
- d. Not included in the capital programme was the cost of refurbishment works to Witney ATP following flood damage. This work was funded through internal borrowing. The planned replacement of the playing surface is scheduled for 2025/26 and will be funded through the budgeted revenue contribution to capital expenditure.
- e. A number of properties with potential to become temporary accommodation have been viewed and assessed by the Homelessness team over the course of the year. The Council have been successful in having an offer accepted on a property in North Leigh which should complete in Q2 2025/26, consisting of four 2 bedroom flats for use as family accommodation. A second property which would house 6 single people in Witney is currently being assessed for its suitability.
- f. An order for the upgraded CCTV system was placed in May 2025 within the amount available in the Capital Programme.
- g. A report requesting approval for the Witney PSDS project to move to the construction phase will be considered by the Executive in July. The majority of the cost for the decarbonisation of the leisure centre is funded through a grant, with an estimated contribution of £565,549 from the Council. The installation of Air Source Heat pumps to replace the existing gas boilers would reduce the Council's carbon emissions by an estimated 8.8%.
- h. The PSDS project for Chipping Norton leisure centre is currently in the investigation stage and will incorporate lessons learned from the Witney PSDS project.



 <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
<b>Name and date of Committee</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE – 9 JULY 2025 COUNCIL – 16 JULY 2025</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>WINDRUSH LEISURE CENTRE DECARBONISATION</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	Witney wards
<b>Accountable member</b>	Cllr Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.prosser@westoxon.uk">andrew.prosser@westoxon.uk</a>
<b>Accountable officer</b>	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager Email: <a href="mailto:hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk">hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report author</b>	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager Email: <a href="mailto:hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk">hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Summary/Purpose</b>	To present the business case for the decarbonisation of Windrush Leisure Centre.
<b>Annexes</b>	None
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agree to progress to the construction phase of the Windrush Leisure Centre decarbonisation scheme.</li> <li>2. Recommend to Council to allocate an additional council contribution of £340,683 towards the project in addition to the £224,866 already included within the capital programme.</li> <li>3. Request Officers to bring forward a works programme for the activities identified in the recent condition survey for the Windrush Leisure Centre.</li> </ol>
<b>Corporate priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting Residents First</li> <li>• A Good Quality of Life for All</li> <li>• A Better Environment for People and Wildlife</li> <li>• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency</li> <li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
<b>Key Decision</b>	YES

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	GLL are aware that the Council is working on the decarbonisation of the Leisure Centre.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council has been progressing the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) Phase 3c funded project at Windrush Leisure Centre to remove a reliance on gas fired heating and to replace this system with Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs). The Investment Grade Proposal (IGP) has been completed and includes the detailed decarbonisation design and costs. Approval is sought to proceed to the construction phase and allocate additional council funding to the project.
- 1.2 The scheme will save 255.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per annum and reduce the Council's total annual carbon emissions by 8.8%. The lifetime carbon savings are 5,106 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.
- 1.3 It is estimated that the scheme will save around £7,800 per annum in operational energy costs albeit offset by additional operating and capital financing costs totalling £32,800 per annum giving rise to a Council revenue budget pressure of £25,000 per annum.
- 1.4 The total capital cost of the decarbonisation scheme is estimated to be £2,175,914 with a Council contribution of £565,549, which includes an additional allocation of £340,683 from Council resources in 2025/26, over and above the £224,866 client contribution agreed as a condition of accepting the Salix Grant Offer. Grant funding from Salix received and spent on the project in 2024/25 totalled £430,069. The remaining expenditure of £1,745,845 is allocated to the 2025/26 financial year.
- 1.5 The project must be delivered and be operational by 31 March 2026 to secure the remaining £1,180,296 of PSDS grant funding.
- 1.6 A comprehensive condition survey of the Leisure Centre has been conducted, the recommendations from which will form part of a Building Maintenance Programme which will be coming forward to the Executive in September to approve a capital programme for Leisure assets for a rolling five-year period.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A PSDS Phase 3c application was made to Salix Finance in October 2023. The application included a RIBA Stage 2 design that was prepared by Arthian Ltd (formerly GEP Environmental Ltd).
- 2.2 On 13 December 2023, the Council resolved to delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Executive Members for Finance and Climate Change to:
  - a) Accept the grant funding, if awarded to the Council, and earmark the required client contribution of £224,866 in the 2024/25 budget.
  - b) Note that project risks have been identified and that project gateways will be used where any decision relates to capital spend.
- 2.3 The Council was awarded the full grant funding from Salix on 16 February 2024, totalling £1,649,013, with a 12% council contribution of £224,866.

- 2.4 Pick Everard was commissioned to undertake a cost evaluation of the project costs included in the grant application. The evaluation provided evidence that the scheme was financially viable to proceed with the detailed design.
- 2.5 On 1 March 2024, the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Director of Finance and the Executive Members for Finance and Climate Change, accepted the grant funding with a client contribution of £224,866.
- 2.6 The Pagabo Construction Framework was used to tender for the two-year design and build contract. Alternative Heat was awarded the contract.
- 2.7 The Council has since installed rooftop solar panels, funded by Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund (SPSF).

### **3. MAIN POINTS**

- 3.1 Following the completion of a detailed design, Alternative Heat produced an IGP for the construction stage of the project. The decarbonisation scheme consists of nine ASHPs housed within an acoustic enclosure located in the Leisure Centre car park. A further two air source heat pumps will be located on the roof along with two new Air Handling Units (AHUs) that will replace the existing units serving the pool and wet changing areas.
- 3.2 The decarbonisation scheme has been technically reviewed by Arthian, who prepared the initial heat decarbonisation plan, which was included in the PSDS grant application. Arthian is satisfied that the design is robust and operationally sound. The design has also been shared with and accepted by Salix.
- 3.3 A new incoming electricity supply has been secured to power the ASHPs. The existing electricity supply will remain in place, reducing the amount of downtime that will be incurred by the works.
- 3.4 A full planning application has been submitted for the proposed scheme and is due to be determined at the Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committee in July.

### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Do not install Air Source Heat Pumps with the inherent risks of doing so identified in this report.
- 4.2 The Council can take a more ambitious approach to decarbonisation by using the most energy efficient options when replacing not only the gas boilers in five years, but all essential plant and machinery. For example, replacing the radiators with infrared radiant panels would save anywhere between 25% and 40% of energy consumption and deliver the corresponding carbon saving. Replacing the Air Handling Units in 2025/26 with the highest efficiency heat recovery options, variable speed fans and improved controls would also deliver significant energy and carbon savings.
- 4.3 The Council could decide to reject the Salix grant and allocate the funding requested for the PSDS project on alternative and equivalent energy savings measures through the planned replacement of Plant and Machinery identified in the Building Maintenance Programme, to be brought to the Executive in September.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Council approve the decarbonisation scheme as it will result in an 8.8% reduction in the Council's carbon emissions, contributing to not only the Council's 2030 carbon neutral target but the 2050 districtwide net zero target.
- 5.2 It is recommended that the Council considers this project as part of the wider Asset Management Strategy of the Leisure Centres.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The total project value included in the PSDS application was £1,873,879. This comprised a grant award of £1,649,013 and a mandatory 12% client contribution from the Council of £224,866.
- 6.2 The capital cost of the scheme is currently forecast at £2,175,914. Grant funding of £430,069 from Salix was received and spent on the project in 2024/25.
- 6.3 The remaining estimated cost of the project is £1,745,845 made up of £1,180,296 of grant funding and a funding request from the Council's resources of £565,549. The PSDS grant funding is time-limited and must be spent by 31 March 2026. A summary of costs and financing (split between years 1 and 2 of the project) is set out in the table below.

	(Year 1) 2024/25 £	(Year 2) 2025/26 £	Total £
Project costs	430,068	1,745,845	2,175,914
PSDS grant	-430,068	-1,180,296	-1,610,364
<b>Council contribution</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>565,549</b>	<b>565,549</b>

- 6.4 Delivery of the project is forecast to create an annual revenue budget pressure of around £25,000 per annum to the Council, primarily due to higher maintenance costs associated with operating an ASHP system compared to operating a gas boiler system. The additional costs cannot be passed onto the Operator (GLL) as the decision to change heating systems is not under their control and under the terms of the leisure contract, the Council must take on the utility risk under these circumstances.
- 6.5 There are also additional capital financing costs associated with the Council's contribution to the capital cost of the project. The additional cost of £25,000 per annum is net of a forecast energy cost saving of around £7,800 per annum.
- 6.6 As a condition of accepting the PSDS grant, the Council agreed to contribute 12% of the total project cost. The Council must be able to demonstrate that this has been paid as part of the evidence that Salix require upon completion. The total Council contribution of 12% is therefore £565,549, an increase of £340,683.
- 6.7 The capital estimates include the following allowances:
- a) A £290,000 provision for project costs.
  - b) £26,000 to remove the original gas boiler that was decommissioned over 20 years ago and has remained in place. Although its removal is not required for the PSDS installation, it is appropriate from a building maintenance perspective to address this issue whilst a contractor is engaged and on-site to deliver the wider PSDS scheme.

- c) A £21,000 provision to cover GLL loss of income in case the pool must be closed to members of the public during installation.

**6.8** The recent installation of solar PV is not included in the financial assessment of the scheme as it was installed separately to the scheme which is the subject of this report. Solar energy is already contributing to the centre's electricity demand and will continue to do so after the new heating system is installed.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**7.1** The first stage for the provision of design services was let via a Pre-construction Services Agreement in accordance with the NEC 4 Professional Services Contract. The second stage Construction Contract will be awarded using the NEC Engineering and Construction Contract Option A.

**7.2** Legal advice for both stages has been provided by specialist lawyers.

## **8. RISKS**

**8.1** A full project risk register has been maintained throughout the design stage, and this will continue to be regularly reviewed and updated during the construction stage.

**8.2** At this stage, the key risks are:

- 1) Disruption to the operations of GLL and leisure centre users during the works may lead to unplanned closures of the swimming pool and the need to compensate GLL for loss of income. The contract with Alternative Heat includes a delay damages clause which allows the Council to recover these costs from the Contractor if this happens beyond the agreed closure period of seven days.
- 2) Removal of the gas boiler system entirely will result in no backup heating system for the building. If the ASHP fails due to ambient temperatures falling below operational limits for a considerable period, this could lead to unplanned closures of the swimming pool and the need to compensate GLL for loss of income. This is an ongoing but unlikely risk, which depends on the extremity of weather conditions. It is a similar risk to a significant gas or electricity outage.
- 3) Any increases in energy costs because of the decarbonisation will be passed to the Council, however the energy costs to operate the centre after the decarbonisation are predicted to be lower than current costs, by £7,800. There are, however, additional costs of £25,000 per year for maintenance of the new ASHP system and debt financing costs.
- 4) Backlog maintenance issues have been identified in the building condition survey, which relate to both the building fabric and mechanical and electrical equipment. There is a risk that, during the decarbonisation works, unknown faults within the existing M&E systems are discovered, as the current condition in some areas remains unknown.
- 5) The recent condition survey highlighted key items of plant that would need to be replaced in the next five years. These include the end-of-life gas boilers (replacement in five years) and the AHUs (replacement in one year) to the Pool and Wet Change

areas that are in poor condition and inefficient. However, these will be replaced as part of the PSDS project if it proceeds.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**9.1** None.

## **10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

**10.1** The Leisure Centre emits 419tCO<sub>2</sub>e, which is 14.7% of the Council's total emissions.

**10.2** The Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and committed to becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030. The Carbon Action Plan 2024-2030 sets out actions and a pathway for the Council to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

**10.3** The decarbonisation of the Leisure Centre is critical to reducing carbon from council activities, achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 without significant carbon offsets.

**10.4** The scheme will result in an annual carbon reduction of 255.3tCO<sub>2</sub>e, which is a 39% carbon reduction in annual emissions from the Leisure Centre and 8.8% carbon reduction in the Council's total annual emissions. After the decarbonisation, the Leisure Centre will represent 5.6% of the Council's total annual emissions.

**10.5** The carbon reduction will also contribute to the 2050 districtwide net zero target.


## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**11.1** None.

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 <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
<b>Name and date of Committee</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE – 9 JULY 2025 COUNCIL – 16 JULY 2025</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>CARTERTON UNITS 1-3 AND STATION LANE ROOFING PROJECTS</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Accountable member</b>	Executive Member for Finance Alaric Smith Email: <a href="mailto:alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk">alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Accountable officer</b>	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance (S151) Email: <a href="mailto:madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk">madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report author</b>	Barry Bodin-Jones, Lead Project Manager Email: <a href="mailto:barry.bodin-jones@westoxon.gov.uk">barry.bodin-jones@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Summary/Purpose</b>	To request allocation of funding for the re-roofing of investment and service properties that form part of the Capital Expenditure Budget for 2025/26 and the rationale for undertaking these works.  To seek approval of these costs so that officers can proceed with the works with external contractors.
<b>Annexes</b>	Exempt Annex A – Detailed Financial Cost Breakdown and Projected Income from the Investment Properties
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	That the Executive <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recommends to Council that the total cost detailed in Annex A is allocated to the project from the Investment Properties Programme.</li> <li>2. Recommends to Council that delegated authority be given to Director of Finance (S151) in consultation with Executive Member for Finance to approve the final cost of the projects</li> </ol>
<b>Corporate priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>YES</b>

Exempt	NO (Annex A only Exempt)
Consultees/ Consultation	Director of Finance, Interim Executive Director Publica, Executive Members

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** These projects are included in the 2025/2026 Capital Expenditure Budget for Investment Properties Programme as these locations need significant roofing upgrades as existing roofs have failed. The works are critical to ensure that the buildings are watertight and in a lettable condition.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** The Council acquired the Headleases of Plots 1-3 on 14th July 2021, already being the freehold owner. A 5-year lease was simultaneously granted. At the time the business case included planned works to the roofs at the site (£698,500).
- 2.2** The projects are included in the 2025/2026 Capital Expenditure Budget for Investment Properties Programme as these locations need significant roofing upgrades to avoid further degradation of the building structures themselves as well as the Council's obligation as landlords to keep the buildings in a good working order for current tenants and for the purposes of attracting new tenants for revenue income generation.
- 2.3** Some of the current roofing structures are asbestos based and are not environmentally friendly both in terms of their material make up nor in terms of their sustainability credentials. The existing roofs have failed, and the works are critical to ensure that the buildings are watertight.
- 2.4** A tender process has been undertaken with a Framework selected due to the scale and complexity of the work that needs to be carried out, including controlled asbestos removal. Detailed negotiations have taken place with the main contractor with the assistance of a consultant who was able to advise on technical matters outside of the scope and knowledge of officers ensuring that every aspect of the proposed Schemes of Works is appropriately addressed and costed. This due diligence exercise has sought to ensure value for money for the Council, as tendering for all these works together provides economies of scale in terms of cost, project management and timescales.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1** An alternative option could be that WODC does not proceed with carrying out any of these works, however this option would not be recommended by officers as WODC as a landlord has specific legal obligations with regards to maintaining the buildings in an

appropriate manner for tenants use and furthermore, could result in a significant loss of rental income for WODC.

- 3.2 Sub-standard rental properties will reduce income and increase void periods if they are not kept in a marketable condition. Equally, the market value of the property drops to significantly less than the purchase price where there are outstanding maintenance issues, as understandably the cost of immediate repairs will be taken into account by any potential purchaser. Therefore the alternative option of sale now ahead of the works is not recommended.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There has been provision made within the 2025/2026 Capital Expenditure Budget for Investment Properties Programme to undertake the essential roofing and associate upgrades for these identified buildings.
- 4.2 Detailed financial information can be found in Exempt Annex A in relation to the project costs and the projected income that is generated from these investment properties which highlights the justifications for undertaking the roofing projects.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Under the approved Heads of Terms for the letting of Units 1-2 there would be a legal obligation for the landlord to undertake the roof replacement and associated repairs. This obligation would be included in an Agreement for Lease. The necessary works will be undertaken by contractors under an appropriate form of construction contract.

#### **6. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1 There is a risk that tenants could seek alternative accommodation. Terms have been agreed with the tenants and the works will form part of the new lease agreements enabling leases to be completed swiftly on approval of funding and the works to follow therefore future income secured.
- 6.2 In any event the works would be required to achieve a new letting.

#### **7. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 7.1 None envisaged as a result of this decision.

#### **8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**


- 8.1 Undertaking the roofing projects links into several climate and ecological emergency priorities including:

- The roofs will be watertight, and further insulation will also be integral to the majority of the roof systems, reducing the carbon footprint of the buildings through improved insulation and minimising heat loss.
- Materials that can be re-used will be and those that cannot will be recycled. It is stipulated in the procurement tender that recycling is prioritised with minimal site waste going to landfill
- Due to the dangerous nature of asbestos, there is a legal obligation to remove and dispose of it in the right way. The main contractors will be employing specialist asbestos removal sub-contractors to undertake this element of the works.
- Local specialist sub-contractors will be employed, helping to ensure emissions are kept to a minimum, reducing any impact on air quality and supporting the local economy.

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **9.1 Exempt 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 Lease of Units 1-2 Phase 3 Carterton Industrial Estate Delegated Authority Report**

(END)

 <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
<b>Name and Date of Committee</b>	<b>COUNCIL – 16 JULY 2025</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL</b>
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All
<b>Accountable Member</b>	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Accountable Officer</b>	Andrew Brown – Democratic Services Business Manager. Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.brown@westoxon.gov.uk">andrew.brown@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report Author</b>	Ana Prelici – Senior Democratic Services Officer. Email: <a href="mailto:ana.prelici@westoxon.gov.uk">ana.prelici@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Purpose</b>	To consider recommendations made to Council by the Independent Remuneration Panel.
<b>Annexes</b>	Annex A - Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>That the Council considers the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel, which are to;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agree to introduce a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) set at 0.25x of the Basic Allowance f(BA) for the position of Vice-Chair of Council, backdated to 21 May 2025.</li> <li>2. Retain the existing Co-optees' Allowance (£75 for up to four hours and £150 for more than four hours but less than 24 hours for eligible meetings and other duties as in 5.1 of the Members Allowance Scheme 2023-2027) for Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee.</li> <li>3. Agree that the Co-Optees' Allowance for Independent Persons who are consulted on standards matters, will be set at a flat rate of £1000 a year, backdated to 1 April 2025.</li> </ol>

	4. Note that the next meeting of the Independent Remuneration Panel will be in 2026, ahead of the next full review in 2027.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Independent Remuneration Panel. Director of Governance and Regulatory Services. Director of Finance

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.** West Oxfordshire District Council's (the Council's) Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) conducted a midpoint, "light touch" review of its Members' Allowances Scheme, originally adopted in 2023 and valid until April 2027 (the Scheme). This review, carried out by the IRP in January 2025, focused on three key areas: the Vice-Chair's allowance, Co-optees' allowance, and ICT provision.
- 3.** The IRP recommend introducing an SRA for the Vice-Chair of Council at 0.25 times the BA, backdated to 21 May 2025. It also advised retaining the current Co-optees' Allowance structure and proposed a new flat-rate annual payment of £1,000 for Independent Persons involved in standards matters, backdated to 1 April 2025.

## **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1** Members of the Council are paid an allowance in recognition of their work, which is intended to partially compensate them for their time. As the role of a Councillor is a public service rather than a form of employment, the allowance is not intended to be set at the level of a salary.
- 4.2** By law, the Council is required to appoint an IRP, which recommends the level of allowances payable for Councillors over a specific timeframe. The IRP is made up of at least three persons who are suitably skilled members of the public and who are also independent of the Council.
- 4.3** The Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require local authorities to appoint Independent Remuneration Panels to consider and make recommendations on their Allowances Schemes. The Government's "Guidance on Consolidated Regulations on Local Authority Allowances" outlines the main statutory provisions and gives non-statutory guidance.
- 4.4** The IRP is required to recommend the levels of the BA (paid to all councillors), SRAs, and travel, subsistence, co-optees' and dependent carer allowances. The Council is required to have regard to these recommendations.
- 4.5** The current Scheme was adopted by Full Council on 22 March 2023 and remains in place until 1 April 2027. When the Council resolved to adopt this scheme, it committed to undertake a midpoint review of the scheme.
- 4.6** The Council's IRP met on 27 January 2025 to carry out this review.
- 4.7** Members were invited to make representations to the IRP to inform the review and the IRP focused the following specific areas;
  - Vice-Chair's allowance
  - Co-optees' allowance
  - ICT allowances
- 4.8** As the next comprehensive review is due in 2026 ahead of the adoption of a new scheme in 2027, the IRP did not focus in detail on other areas of the Scheme or the levels of SRA.

## **5. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1** The IRP considered a report from the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services and benchmarking data from other South-East Councils, provided by South East Employers. The report of the IRP , highlights the issues discussed and the recommendations resulting from this.
- 5.2** The IRP made the following recommendations, which are explained in detail in the report at Annex A;
  - 5.2.1** That Council agrees to introduce an SRA set at 0.25x the BA for the position of Vice-Chair of Council, backdated to 21 May 2025.
  - 5.2.2** That the existing Co-optees' Allowance (£75 for up to four hours and £150 for more than four hours but less than 24 hours for eligible meetings and other duties as in 5.1 of the Scheme) be retained for Independent Members on the Audit and Governance Committee.
  - 5.2.3** That Independent Persons who are consulted on standards matters be paid a co-optees' allowance set at a flat rate of £1000 a year, backdated to 1 April 2025.
- 5.3** Upon a suggestion from a Member to do so, the IRP discussed whether an ICT allowance should be introduced. The IRP did not make a recommendation to the Council on this and suggest that options for supporting members with ICT could be re-considered at a future review.
- 5.4** The IRP also suggested that their recommendations on Vice-Chair's Allowance and Co-optee's Allowance be reviewed after they have been in place for at least 12 months to ensure that the amount that is being paid is appropriate.
- 5.5** As the current Scheme's expiry date is 2027, the next review is due to be carried out in 2026. It is suggested that the details within ICT allowances, Vice-Chair's Allowances and Co-optee's Allowances are next reviewed at this point.

## **6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 6.1** Council is required to "have regard" to the recommendations of the IRP but may choose to not agree the recommendations with reasons, therefore not making alterations to the current Scheme.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1** 0.25x the Basic Allowance is £1,418.75, this is subject to the uplift for 2025/26, which has not yet been agreed. This will be funded from the budget for Members allowances.
- 7.2** The change in expenditure for Co-optees Allowances will be covered from the existing Members allowance budget.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1** The Council is required by The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to make a scheme for the allowances to be paid to Members before the beginning of each year. A scheme must include provisions for paying a basic allowance,



special responsibility allowances, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling and subsistence allowance and co-optees' allowance. A scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index but may not rely on an index for a period of more than four years.

## **9. RISK ASSESSMENT**

**9.1** There are no risks associated with this report.

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**10.1** There are no equality impacts associated with this report.

## **11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

**11.1** There are no climate or ecological impacts associated with this report.

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**12.1** None.

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## **Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, July 2025**

The current Members' allowances scheme was adopted by Full Council in 2023 and remains in place until 1 April 2027. When the Council resolved to adopt this scheme, it committed to undertake a midpoint review on the scheme. West Oxfordshire District Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) met on 27 January 2025 to carry out this review.

Members of the Council were invited to make representations to the Independent Remuneration Panel prior to the meeting and one such representation was made, which related to ICT allowances.

The basic allowance paid to all members is indexed on a flat rate (based on officers' pay increases). The Panel considered this effective, and the Panel has not proposed changes to the value of the basic allowance or the index used to uplift its value annually.

The Panel considered a report from the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services and allowances data for the South East England Region. In doing so, the Panel focused on the following specific areas;

- Vice-Chair of Council's allowance
- Co-optees' allowance
- ICT allowances

As this was intended to be a midpoint review, it was not considered appropriate to carry out a comprehensive review of the scheme at this time. The Panel therefore did not focus in detail on other areas of the scheme or the levels of special responsibility allowances.

### **Vice-Chair's allowance**

The officer report highlighted that some members have certain roles on the Council which attract a special responsibility allowance (SRA). SRAs are paid in addition to the basic allowance in recognition of the additional roles that these members undertake and the extra time, commitment and responsibility that comes with these roles. SRAs are calculated as multiples of the basic allowance and will therefore increase in proportion to the basic allowance when uplifts are applied to the basic allowance.

The report stated that following a change in the structure of a Committee, Council agreed that the Vice-Chair of a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee be paid a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) of 0.5x the basic allowance, reducing to 0.25x basic allowance if there is more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Vice-Chair's role involves presiding at meetings in the absence of the Chair and assisting with leading the function and supporting the smooth running of the Committee. While no other Committee Vice-Chair position currently attracts an SRA, the IRP considered whether the Vice-Chair of Council should be paid an SRA in recognition of this role.

The Vice-Chair of Council is responsible for presiding at full Council meetings in the absence of the Chair and supporting the Chair in presiding at full Council meetings. These meetings have increased in complexity recently with the introduction of webcasting and electronic voting. This has resulted in an increase of tasks for the Chair eg. ensuring the correct use of desk microphones and that all members have voted. While officers can support the Chair in preparing for a meeting, it is often most appropriate for the Vice-Chair to support the work at the meeting, as full Council is a member-led forum. In addition, the Vice-Chair of Council is expected to attend pre-meetings ahead of full-Council meetings and will support or deputise for the Chair at a range of civic events that take place throughout the year. The Vice-Chair is invited to approximately 20-25% of civic events on behalf of the Council.

The IRP considered this report as well as the benchmarking information from South East Employers, which showed that 50 of the 68 local authorities paid an allowance to their Vice-Chair of Council. It also was recognised that having the Vice-Chair take a more active role increased resilience for the Council.

The Panel agreed that, considering the workload associated with the role of Vice-Chair of Council, the Vice-Chair should be paid an SRA of 0.25x the basic allowance. It is suggested that this be revisited after a reasonable operational period, to review if this amount remains appropriate considering the Vice-Chair's responsibilities.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That Council agrees to introduce an SRA set at 0.25x the basic allowance for the position of Vice-Chair of Council, backdated to 21 May 2025.

## **Co-optees' allowances**

The officer's report highlighted that the Regulations provide that councils may pay allowances to Co-opted Members i.e. members of committees who are not elected members.

The Council currently has two independent members of its Audit and Governance Committee and three Independent Persons who are consulted by the Monitoring Officer on matters related to standards and the conduct of Members and act as co-opted members at standards hearings. Having at least one Independent Person on Standards is a requirement of the Localism Act 2011, and having Independent Members on Audit is considered good practice by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). To provide resilience in the positions of Independent Persons and Independent Members, the Council has in the last two years been through an open recruitment process and appointed additional co-optees so that conflicts of interest and unavailability have not resulted in standards matters being unable to proceed.

The Council currently allows co-opted Members to claim a co-optees' allowance of £75 for up to four hours and £150 for more than four hours but less than 24 hours for eligible meetings and other duties as in 5.1 of the scheme. This figure has been in place for at least 6 years and has not had any uplifts applied to it during this time.

The Panel considered whether it would be appropriate to amend the way that these allowances are paid out to co-optees, which would make it a simpler process for our co-optees to claim and officers to administer. Administering the existing scheme involves keeping a manual record of meeting attendance and instructing payroll to make payments on an ad hoc (quarterly) basis. As well as being easier to administer, the Panel believed that a flat scheme would ensure auditability and avoid internal control issues.

The Panel agreed that a flat rate scheme would be a reasonable model and noted that this was operated at most other councils in the South East region. As a fixed rate payment would not be pro-rata to the work undertaken, the Panel felt it was important that the amount should be reasonable to the co-optees' overall workload. In discussion, it was noted that Independent Persons (IPs) who were consulted on standards matters have a higher workload than those who sit on the Audit and Governance Committee. While it was felt that the latter should be incentivised to

attend meetings, this was less relevant for IPs on standards, who are expected to make contributions outside of meetings e.g. by reviewing sometimes complex materials related to standards complaints and corresponding with officers over email as well as at formal meetings. For this reason, the Panel agreed that the existing attendance-based scheme should be retained for Independent Members on the Audit and Governance Committee, but that a flat-rate scheme should be put in place for IPs who are consulted on standards matters.

The Panel consulted with the IPs to seek their feedback on the proposed changes before making the final recommendations to Council. The comments from the IPs are summarised as follows;

- A move to a standard level of expenses for IPs would be advantageous for the Council in terms of budgeting, payroll transactions and administration efficiency and was supported by IPs.
- While this would mean a flat rate regardless of workload, IPs did not consider this problematic on balance.
- As the figure has not been uplifted in a number of years, it was suggested that the IRP may wish to review this at a future point. An alternative way of operating the scheme could be directly paying a smaller base rate, plus a low rate per case claimable by the IPs directly.
- All the IPs stated that the proposed changes would not discourage them from continuing their roles. It was also considered that a flat rate may make the role more attractive if advertised in future.

As the most recent payment made to co-optees was in April 2025 for duties undertaken up to 31 March 2025 it is considered to backdate the payment to the IPs to the start of the current financial year, 1 April 2025.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

2. That the existing co-optees' allowance (£75 for up to four hours and £150 for more than four hours but less than 24 hours for eligible meetings and other duties as in 5.1 of the scheme) be retained for Independent Members on the Audit and Governance Committee.
3. That Independent Persons who are consulted on standards matters be paid a flat rate of £1000 a year, backdated to 1 April 2025.

## **ICT Allowances**

One Member submitted a representation requesting the Panel review the Council's approach to ICT provision. The Council does not currently provide Councillors with council-issued devices or an allowance to purchase their own.

The Panel considered this representation and noted that part of the role of a member takes place online (e.g. email, accessing meeting papers digitally) and thought it would be reasonable for members to be provided with either council-issued devices or an allowance to cover the cost of purchasing a device. It was noted that most councils in the South East of England region do not pay an ICT allowance or provide devices, and of the ones who do, most provide devices instead of paying an additional allowance (the Regulations governing members' allowances do not include provision for ICT allowances).

The Panel suggested that the Council could explore the option of providing members with Council-issued devices. The IRP did not make a recommendation to the Council on this and suggest that it could be re-considered at a future review.

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