WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Tuesday, 24 June 2025

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will be held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 2 July 2025 at 5.30 pm.**

Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Genny Early (Vice-Chair), Adam Clements, Steve Cosier, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Paul Marsh, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, Ruth Smith, Mark Walker, 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 and Temporary Appointments**
To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments. The quorum for the Committee is four members.

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

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 5 - 42)
To approve the minutes of the Committee meeting held 4 June 2025.

4. **Chair's announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5. **Report back on recommendations**
For the Committee to note the Executive's response to any recommendations arising from the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

6. **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 submissions is 2.00pm, two clear working days before the meeting.

7. **Car Parking Strategy**
Report to follow

Purpose
Pre-decision scrutiny of an Executive report seeking agreement of a revised car parking strategy 2016 – 2031.

Recommendation
That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves to:
1. Note the report and agree any recommendations it wishes to submit to the Executive.

8. **Climate Change Strategy** (Pages 43 - 62)
Purpose
Pre-decision scrutiny of an Executive report seeking approval of the West Oxfordshire Climate Change Strategy 2025-2028.

Recommendation
That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves to:
1. Note the report and agree any recommendations it wishes to submit to the Executive.

9. **2024/25 Quarterly Finance Review Q4** (Pages 63 - 86)
Purpose
Pre-decision scrutiny of an Executive report detailing the financial performance of the Council in 2024/25.

Recommendation
That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves to:

1. Note the report and agree any recommendations it wishes to submit to the Executive.

10. **Committee Work Programme** (Pages 87 - 94)
Purpose:
For the Committee to review and note its work programme.

Recommendation:
That the Committee notes and comments on the work programme.

11. **Executive Work Programme** (Pages 95 - 104)
Purpose:
To give the Committee the opportunity to comment on the Executive Work Programme.

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

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Held in the Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB at 5.30 pm on **Wednesday, 4 June 2025**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Genny Early (Vice-Chair), Adam Clements, Steve Cosier, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Paul Marsh, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, Ruth Smith and Alistair Wray

Officers: Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Alison Borrett (Senior Performance Analyst), Chris Hargraves (Head of Planning), Andrew Thomson (Planning Policy Manager), Andrew Turner (Business Manager - Assets and Council Priorities) and Gemma Moreing (Business Information and Performance Lead)

Other Councillors in attendance: Geoff Saul, Andy Graham, Hugo Ashton, Duncan Enright and Alaric Smith

8 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

Apologies were noted from Councillors Mark Walker and Alex Wilson.

9 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2025. Head of Democratic and Electoral Services explained that the start and finish times had been corrected and the names of proposers and seconders added.

With those amendments, approval of the minutes were proposed by Councillor Cosier, seconded by Councillor Wray and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED: The Committee APPROVED the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2025.

11 Chair's announcements

The Chair drew the Committee’s attention to the exempt report at agenda item 12 and explained that the Committee would need to resolve to enter into private session for consideration of that item.

12 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

13 Report back on recommendations

There were no recommendations arising from the previous committee meeting.

14 2024/25 Quarterly Service Review Q4

The Leader of the Council introduced the report detailing the Council's operational performance at the end of 2024-25 Quarter Four (Q4) and highlighted the following key points:

- A Youth Development Officer had been in post since February and was engaging with external organisations.
- The Draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule Examination would be taking place on 10 June 2025 and the Council aimed to implement CIL by August.
- A revised Net Zero policy for the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) had been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.
- Round 4 of the Westhive funding allocations would be announced publicly on Monday. The had been a large number of applications and a diverse range of community projects would be funded.

The Senior Performance Analyst highlighted the indicators that were above target, including planning application timescales of all types, customer satisfaction, missed bins and leisure visits. Processing times for Council Tax claims and changes of circumstances were below target following a Christmas backlog and increased contacts. The number of affordable homes delivered was also below target at 198 for the year. The target was 274 and 218 were now expected as some schemes had slipped into the next reporting year.

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- Officers had been working with Ubico to improve processed and reduce the number of missed bin collections, with a focus on repeated missed collections.
- The Youth Development Officer post was very welcome and was already making a positive impact.
- There was some concern about the reduction in the recycling rate although it was recognised that this was a national trend and that the Council's target of 62% was very ambitious.
- Options such as curb-side collection could potentially make a difference to the recycling rate but the Council may not wish to do that.
- The current leisure visits KPI was written into the KPI and was uplifted annually. Leisure usage would be expected to increase due to population from but benchmarking was difficult, particularly with private sector providers.

- The increased number of Westhive applications was welcome.
- The Committee would welcome an update on Carterton Leisure Centre decarbonisation in a future report.

In response to a question, the Leader of the Council offered to report back with more detail on the aims and objectives of the Youth Development Officer post.

The Leader also agreed to follow up with the Communications Team about whether the Council could do more through its communications activities to increase the recycling rate.

The Senior Performance Analyst agreed to:

- Take away a suggestion that there could be more information about funding contributions on the Westhive website and to come back with a written response.
- Provide a written response on the timescales for the markets tender.
- Provide a written update on the Windrush application for Lottery funding.

The Chair thanked the Leader and the Senior Performance Analyst for their report and attendance.

RESOLVED: The Committee NOTED the report.

15 **West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041**

The Executive Member for Planning introduced the Local Plan 2041 Preferred Policy Options Consultation Paper report, stating that site allocations would be considered in the coming months. This was not a draft Local Plan, rather a set of policies on which the Council wanted to receive feedback from members, the public, town and parish councils, site promoters and others. The Local Plan Working Group had considered the proposals over a series of meetings and there had been two all-member briefing sessions held. The Executive Member extended his thanks to the planning team during what had been a particularly busy period.

The Committee considered the report page by page, asked questions and made a number of suggestions.

The Committee's list of suggestions is included as an annex to these minutes.

The Executive Member thanked the Committee for its input and said that the preferred sites would be coming forward to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive in August or September 2025.

The Committee thanked the Executive Member, officers and the Local Plan Working Group for all their work.

RESOLVED: The Committee

1. NOTED the report.
2. RECOMMENDED to the Executive to include the suggested amendments contained within the Annex be included in the final version West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041.

16 Committee Work Programme

The Committee noted that the membership of the Leisure Task and Finish Group did not include a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Stuart McCarroll was appointed as Chair of the Leisure Task and Finish Group.

The Committee asked to invite the Youth Development Officer to the September meeting.

The Head of Democratic and Electoral Services agreed to look at the timeline for the Public Conveniences Task and Finish Group.

17 Executive Work Programme

Councillor Cosier suggested that the Executive Member for Environment should be notified of the Environment Agency's new flooding maps.

18 Exclusion of Press and Public

The Committee resolved to exclude the press and the public from the meeting in accordance with 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, with the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighing the public interest in disclosing the information.

19 Knights Court Business Case

The Committee considered a report on the next steps regarding a council owned asset that was under review. The report was considered in private session. The Executive Member for Finance and the Business Manager for Assets and Council Priorities presented the report and answered questions.

The Committee welcomed the report.

RESOLVED: The Committee NOTED the report.

The Meeting closed at 8.34 pm

CHAIR

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 – Preferred Policy Options

Schedule of Proposed Changes

<u>10 June 2025</u>

1. Introduction

1.1 The District Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan covering the period to 2041. The emerging plan is currently at the Regulation 18 plan preparation stage with a consultation on ‘Preferred Policy Options’ due to take place in June 2025.

1.2 The draft Preferred Policy Options consultation paper was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 June 2025, during which a number of comments were made on the text and draft policies of the document and how they might be strengthened and improved.

1.3 A number of committee members have also since followed up with further comments in writing.

1.4 The purpose of this schedule is to outline a number of proposed changes to the Local Plan preferred policy options paper as currently drafted and published for consideration by the Executive.

1.5 Table 1 proposes a number of changes in response to the comments arising from Overview and Scrutiny committee and Table 2 proposes a number of further changes in response to comments from Members and Officers outwith that process.

1.6 The proposed changes are of a minor nature and are intended to strengthen and clarify the Council’s proposed approach. More substantive issues raised will be addressed as the emerging draft plan moves to the next stage of preparation.

1.7 For ease of reference, the proposed changes are set out in tabular form with text additions shown in **<u>bold underline</u>** and deleted text ~~struck through~~.

1.8 Subject to the agreement of the Executive, the proposed changes will be incorporated into the Local Plan preferred policy options paper prior to public consultation commencing.

Table 1 – Proposed Changes Arising from Comments made by Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 4 June 2025

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Foreword	Amend fourth paragraph to refer to 'education' rather than schools as follows: 'We know this is all happening at a particularly challenging time. National planning policy has changed recently, which means we now need to plan for a much higher number of new homes. At the same time, our local infrastructure - roads, **education,** ~~schools,~~ healthcare - is already under pressure. The A40 continues to be a real pinch point, and many of our sewage treatment works are either at or near capacity. These are serious issues, and they can't be ignored'.
District Profile	Amend reference to healthcare to include dentist provision, clarify that the text is referring to Council-owned leisure centres and add reference to the Windrush Valley in relation to the natural environment as follows: '**In terms of primary healthcare, the** ~~The~~ district is served by eight GP practices **as well as a number of public and private dental practices. In terms of secondary care, there are** ~~and~~ community hospitals in Witney and Chipping Norton. Although deprivation decreased between 2015 and 2019, access to housing and services remains a concern, particularly in parts of Chipping Norton, Witney Central, and Witney East'. 'The district is home to four **Council-owned** leisure centres, floodlit astroturf pitches, and two outdoor heated swimming pools'. 'The ~~region~~ **District** includes 29 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, four National Nature Reserves, and the internationally significant Cassington Meadows Special Area of Conservation. The Wychwood Forest, the least developed area in Oxfordshire, is a notable feature of the district's 6,584 hectares of woodland. **The Windrush Valley plays a vital role in terms of natural flood management and has significant historical and cultural value as well as providing important recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.**

Core Objective 2	Amend third bullet point to refer to distribution of healthy food also; 'Establishing a healthier food environment by enabling better food choices and encouraging local growth**, distribution** and consumption of healthy food'.
Core Objective 3	Amend second bullet point to refer to resilient and connected habitats and ecosystems. Also add reference to preventing habitat loss and fragmentation and working towards targets of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as follows; Promoting ~~**biodiversity**~~ **Nature Recovery** by supporting resilient **and connected** habitats and ecosystems, investing in natural capital, and achieving measurable net gains in biodiversity **in accordance with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire.**
Core Objective 3	Amend bullet point 4 to refer to soil as well as biodiversity; 'Protecting the District's environmental assets by preventing pollution and minimising its impacts on local amenity, health, landscape character, **soil resources** and biodiversity'.
Core Objective 6	Insert reference to small businesses as follows: 'Providing a balanced portfolio of high-quality employment land to meet diverse needs**, including large and smaller businesses** and **to** ensure flexibility'.

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Core Policy 1 – Climate Change	Strengthen text in relation to Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) so that developers are required to address the long-term implications of climate change rather than ‘explore’ as follows: ‘~~Explores~~ **Assesses** the long-term implications of climate change on the development and its surrounding environment, including the potential impacts on infrastructure, natural resources, and local communities’.
Core Policy 5 – Supporting Economic Growth and Job Creation	Amend policy title to refer to Economic Growth and Local Prosperity; Core Policy 5 – Supporting Economic Growth and ~~**Job Creation**~~ **Local Prosperity**
Core Policy 6 - Delivering Infrastructure In-Step with New Development	Amend policy to strengthen approach in relation to the use of Grampian conditions and also to cross refer to the District-wide IDP as follows: ‘All major developments, including those on allocated sites, must be accompanied by a comprehensive, site-specific Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The IDP should **complement and draw information from the Council’s District-wide IDP,** clearly identify the range of infrastructure necessary to support the development and must:’ ‘To ensure that development is adequately supported by necessary infrastructure, the Council will~~, where appropriate,~~ use planning mechanisms such as Grampian conditions or planning obligations. These mechanisms will ensure that’. Additional paragraph to be inserted as follows: **Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is acceptable wastewater capacity and surface drainage both on and off the site to protect new and existing residents.**

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Core Policy 7 – Water Environment	Amend policy to refer to consideration of sustainable drainage both on and off-site, to strengthen the wording around water supply and to include reference to consideration of the height of the water table as follows: 'SuDS must be incorporated into all developments to manage surface water runoff in a sustainable manner. Systems should: - Mimic natural hydrological processes, providing multiple benefits such as reducing flood risk, improving water quality, and supporting biodiversity. - Be designed to be multifunctional, creating aesthetically pleasing and ecologically rich landscapes while also providing recreational and educational value where appropriate. - Be accompanied by robust long-term maintenance plans to ensure their continued function and effectiveness. **- Consider any off-site enhancements that may be necessary'.** 'Development must ~~consider~~ **address** both water supply and demand, ensuring water efficiency and resilience to future supply challenges'. 'Developments must be designed to mitigate water-related risks **including relevant consideration of the height of the water table**, enhance water quality, and promote water conservation in line with the environmental objectives of the District. Insert additional paragraph as follows; '**Demonstrate compliance through a water efficiency assessment'** To include general reference to the water table under the 'Local Water Management Strategy' section of Policy CP 7: 'Major developments must be accompanied by a site-specific water management strategy that outlines the integrated measures being taken to address water use, flood risk, water efficiency,

	and water quality. This strategy should also detail how long-term maintenance and monitoring of water infrastructure **<u>including impacts on the water table</u>** will be managed, ensuring its resilience and effectiveness'.
Core Policy 8 - High Quality and Sustainable Design	Add walking alongside reference to cycling as follows: 'Developments should incorporate renewable energy technologies, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), and provisions for sustainable transport, such as **<u>walking and</u>** cycling and electric vehicle infrastructure'.
Core Policy 9 – Healthy Place Shaping	Amend policy to include reference to the provision of healthcare facilities and also to strengthen the requirement for early engagement in the planning process, as follows: 'Supporting access to healthy food options, **<u>the provision of new and enhanced</u>** healthcare, and essential services'. Developers ~~are encouraged to~~ **<u>must</u>** engage early in the planning process with health and well-being stakeholders, including the local public health team, healthcare providers, and community representatives, to ensure that health considerations are fully integrated into the design and delivery of the development.
Core Policy 10 – Sustainable Transport	Amend policy to more fully emphasise the importance of public transport solutions being integrated with other modes as follows: 'Development proposals must demonstrate how they minimise the need to travel and offer a genuine choice of transport modes **<u>including the integration of multi-modes of travel</u>**'. Amend policy to strengthen requirements for accessibility and inclusive transport; All development proposals **~~will be required to address the needs~~** **<u>must provide for the needs</u>** of people with disabilities and reduced mobility. Designs must adhere to inclusive transport principles, ensuring barrier-free access for all users.

	Amend low carbon transport infrastructure section of policy to refer to green mobility solutions; Developments must provide **green mobility solutions, including** safe, accessible, and convenient locations for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.
Core Policy 11 – Historic Environment	Amend reference in criterion a) to areas at greatest risk, in criterion b) from ‘seek’ to ‘pursue’ or similar, and in criterion c) from protect and promote to ‘preserve, enhance and promote’ as follows: a) Prepare, update and adopt conservation area appraisals and management plans, prioritising those **areas at greatest risk from** ~~where~~ development pressure ~~is greatest~~ or where the conservation area is most sensitive to change; b) ~~Seek~~ **Pursue** opportunities for heritage-led regeneration where appropriate; c) **Preserve, enhance** ~~Protect~~ and promote appreciation of the District’s archaeological resources; and Also to more strongly emphasise the importance of education in relation to recording and advancing understanding of a heritage asset’s significance, as follows: ‘This should be done in a manner suitable to the asset’s importance and the impact of the development. The results of such studies must be published and made publicly accessible **in order to enhance awareness and understanding**’. Include reference to heritage, education and conservation efforts when referring to minimisation of unavoidable harm; ‘Any changes to or loss of physical fabric, features, or remains should be investigated, recorded, and the results made publicly available **to support heritage, education and conservation efforts**.’

Core Policy 12 – Natural Environment	Amend policy to refer to native wildflower meadows, to refer to development having to ‘prevent’ harm rather than ‘avoid’ harm to important habitats, species and ecological networks, and to refer to the establishment of ecological corridors and their re-connection in instances of fragmentation, as follows: ‘Support nature recovery by implementing specific measures to restore biodiversity in areas of ecological decline, including but not limited to planting **native** wildflower meadows, establishing woodlands and hedgerows and creating wetlands’. All major development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they: - ~~Avoid~~ **Prevent** harm to important habitats, species, and ecological networks, including those identified as part of the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. - ~~Provide~~ **Establish** ecological corridors and/or networks that ~~link~~ **re-connect** fragmented habitats, allowing wildlife to move freely between important sites and habitats, both within the development and extending beyond to the surrounding landscape. Strengthen policy wording so that development expands and develops ecological networks rather than contributing to their creation; ‘~~- Contribute to the creation of~~ **Expand and develop existing and new** ecological networks by creating and restoring natural habitats and improving connectivity for species listed in the LNRS. Amend requirements for new development section of policy to read; ‘~~Ensure~~ **Implement** sustainable management practices for **continuous** natural areas, such as ongoing maintenance, monitoring, and adaptive management, to ensure long-term benefits for biodiversity and ecosystem health’.

	Amend Protection of Local Wildlife Sites section to read; - Development will ~~**be expected to**~~ avoid loss, deterioration or harm to locally important wildlife and geological sites.
Policy PL2 – Oxford Green Belt	Amend policy to strengthen requirement for development proposals to prioritise the re-development of previously developed land, as follows: Development within the Green Belt must follow a sequential approach: Priority 1: Previously Developed (Brownfield) Land – Proposals ~~should~~ **must, wherever possible,** prioritise the redevelopment of previously developed land.
Policy PL5 - Carterton – Witney – Oxford Rail Corridor (CWORC)	Strengthen policy by removing references to 'potential' and 'long-term', as follows: 'A corridor of land is identified extending from Carterton to Yarnton to safeguard the ~~potential~~ **future** delivery of a ~~long-term~~ rail solution for West Oxfordshire. This corridor is intended to support sustainable transport infrastructure and improve connectivity across the region'. 'Within the identified corridor, proposals for new development must demonstrate that they will not hinder or prejudice the delivery of the ~~long-term~~ rail solution, including associated infrastructure'. 'Development within the identified corridor will be required to make proportionate financial and/or in-kind contributions towards the delivery of the ~~long-term~~ rail solution, including but not limited to feasibility studies, infrastructure works, and station facilities'. 'This policy seeks to balance strategic transport aspirations with sustainable development, ensuring that future growth supports and aligns with ~~long-term~~ infrastructure objectives'.
Policy WIT2 – Witney Town Centre	Amend policy in relation to flexible re-use to also include reference to healthcare and youth facilities, and also to refer to public transport, alongside active travel, as follows:

	3. Encourage flexible and adaptive reuse of vacant units to respond to market trends and changing consumer behaviours, including the potential for mixed-use schemes (e.g., co-working, community, **healthcare,** residential, pop-ups**, youth facilities** or cultural uses) where consistent with town centre function and amenity. 8. Promote active and sustainable travel **including public transport**, supported by public realm investment and the implementation of the Oxfordshire County Council-funded High Street and Market Square improvement scheme.
Policy CA1 – A Strategy for Carterton	Strengthen reference to allotment garden provision, as follows: ‘- Supporting the provision of high-quality public open space, biodiversity enhancements, **community growing space** and accessible natural green space in conjunction with new development’.

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Paragraph 7.3.3	Typographical error; Carterton has
Policy CN1 – A Strategy for Chipping Norton	Amend policy to more fully emphasise the importance of, and extent to which, the design of new properties can influence the ability to work at home and also to include reference the District Council working with the Town Council, as follows: ii. Facilitating the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, creative and cultural industries, green tech businesses, and remote working opportunities through provision of flexible, modern workspace **<u>and new residential properties designed with home and hybrid working in mind</u>**; **<u>The Council will work proactively with the Town Council, landowners and other partners to deliver coordinated and sustainable growth in Chipping Norton in accordance with this strategy.</u>**
Policy BAM1 – A Strategy for Bampton	Strengthen the importance of Neighbourhood Planning, as follows: 'The Council will work in partnership with Bampton Parish Council, the local community, infrastructure providers, and stakeholders to guide future change in a way that is balanced, inclusive, and resilient **<u>including through the potential preparation of any future Neighbourhood Plan</u>**'.

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Policy CHA1 – A Strategy for Charlbury	Amend policy to remove unnecessary repetition of references to transport and to reflect the likelihood of additional car parking capacity being found, as follows: ~~- Supporting reliable and frequent public transport services and maintaining access to the railway station as a key regional connection;~~ ~~- Supporting increased use of the railway station by supporting integrated public transport services and proposals to increase car parking capacity.~~ **<u>- Supporting reliable and frequent public transport services, maintaining access to the railway station as a key regional connection, and encouraging increased use through integrated transport services.</u>**
Policy EYN1 – A Strategy for Eynsham	Amend policy to refer to education alongside skills and also to more fully emphasise the importance of connectivity between the West Eynsham SDA and Eynsham, as follows: '- Maintaining and enhancing community facilities including **~~schools~~** **<u>education</u>**, healthcare, cultural venues, and open spaces; '- Improving access to local services and ensuring that new development is integrated into **<u>and well-connected with</u>** the wider village structure; '- Creating safe, direct routes for walking, cycling, and mobility users across Eynsham **<u>including effective integration with the West Eynsham SDA</u>** and to Salt Cross and Oxford; '- Enabling flexible and accessible employment space suited to local skills**<u>, education</u>** and enterprise needs.
Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	**Proposed Change**

Paragraph 7.11.35	Consider rewording to reduce ambiguity; Woodstock boasts ~~**high**~~ **an attractive** environmental quality underpinned by its architectural heritage, clean streets, and ~~**attractive**~~ **distinctive** shop frontages.
Paragraph 7.12.1	Add a comma after Charlbury in relation to list of Tier 2 settlements, as follows: **Tier 2 – Service Centres** *Bampton, Burford, Charlbury, Eynsham, Long Hanborough, Woodstock, Salt Cross Garden Village (new)*
Policy RA1 – Rural Area Strategy	Proposed re-wording for paragraph 1 of RA1; The rural areas of West Oxfordshire, comprising Tier 3 Villages and Tier 4 Small Villages, Hamlets, and Open Countryside, will be supported to evolve in a way that **prioritises local need** ~~**that is locally responsive**~~, environmental~~**ly**~~ **sustainability** ~~**responsible**~~, and **protects** community-**integrity** ~~**focused**~~. Amend policy to refer to 'prioritising' young households rather than 'particularly' and also refer to scale, as follows: 'Development in the rural areas will be supported where it: a) Meets demonstrable local needs, including: - Affordable and appropriately sized homes for local people, ~~particularly~~ **prioritising** young households and older residents wishing to downsize'; 'b) Reflects the scale, character, and function of the settlement, by: - Being proportionate in size **and scale** and sensitively located relative to the existing built form';

Policy DM1 - Key Principles for New Development	Strengthen wording of first paragraph of DM1 as follows' 'All new development proposals will be ~~expected~~ **required** to adhere to the following key principles to ensure that they contribute positively to the sustainability, character, and quality of the local area'. Amend bullet point 2 to refer to innovative design, as follows: '2. **Integration with the Built Form and Local Character** Development proposals must relate well to the existing built form, respecting the architectural styles, materials, and layouts that define local character and vernacular. Design should respond **innovatively and** sensitively to the distinctiveness of the area and maintain its identity; this is especially important in historic places such as Conservation Areas'. Also, to amend bullet point 8 to refer to the importance of local transport, as follows: '8. **Safe Vehicular and Pedestrian Access** Development must ensure the provision of safe, convenient, and inclusive access for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists. Proposals should demonstrate how they integrate with **and relate to,** the existing **local** transport network and avoid adverse impacts on road safety or traffic congestion.

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	**Proposed Change**
Policy DM2 – Green Infrastructure	Amend policy such that it is clear, consideration will be given to the proportion of green infrastructure on a 'sliding scale' according to site size, as follows: '**Green Infrastructure in Strategic Sites** For strategic development sites of more than 300 homes, around 50% of the site area should contribute to the overall green infrastructure network. This includes communal open spaces, parks, green corridors, water features, and other multi-functional green and blue spaces. **<u>For smaller, non-strategic proposals, an appropriate proportion of green infrastructure will be required having regard to the overall site size and the extent of the developable area'.</u>**
Policy DM3 – Sport, Recreation and Play	Consider revising policy section to encourage standalone provision of facilities in fist instance before considering shared use **5. Maximising Shared and Community Use** The Council will support and encourage shared use of school and private sport/recreation facilities, including through secured community access agreements, to increase public access and value **<u>where the delivery of standalone facilities is unviable or would not represent the optimum use of existing assets.</u>**
Policy DM4 – A Healthy Food Environment	Amend policy to refer to the issue of soil and soil pollution, as follows: '**Allotments and Community Gardens:** All new residential developments of 50 or more units must include dedicated spaces for community gardens or allotments. The design of these spaces should be integrated into the development's layout, ensuring easy access for all residents, including those with mobility issues. These spaces should support sustainable food production, **<u>use healthy, uncontaminated soil,</u>** promote biodiversity, and be adaptable to different types of growing (e.g., vegetable patches, fruit trees, communal gardening spaces). And:

	'**Edible Planting in Public Spaces**: Public realm areas, such as parks, streets, and squares, should incorporate edible planting, such as fruit trees, herb gardens, or edible shrubs, where appropriate. These areas should be designed with public access and food-growing opportunities in mind, providing a sustainable source of fresh produce and creating opportunities for community engagement and food education. **Soil quality, water availability and potential contamination should be considered when selecting sites for edible planting and they** ~~They~~ should ~~also~~ be designed with biodiversity in mind, incorporating habitats and/or features for wildlife such as orchards, hedgerows wildflowers, companion planting and shelter for pollinators.
Policy DM6 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development	Add reference to dual land strategies (e.g. use of pollinator friendly plants and solar panels, and to community benefits, as follows: 'Development proposals will be supported where they: a) Maximise the potential for the deployment, re-powering and life extension of renewable and low carbon energy technologies in appropriate locations; b) Avoid unacceptable adverse impacts on the intrinsic character and beauty of the District, its biodiversity, the significance of its heritage assets and the special qualities of its towns, villages and countryside; c) Contribute positively to the decentralisation and diversification of energy supply; ~~and~~ d) Facilitate co-location of energy generation with potential heat customers and suppliers where viable~~.~~**; and** **e) Explore opportunities for dual land use strategies, such as combining renewable energy with food production, biodiversity enhancement, or community access where feasible'.** 'The following principles apply: a) **Solar Energy**: Commercial-scale solar developments will be supported in 'more suitable' areas, subject to the protection of high-grade agricultural land and biodiversity. In relation to Grade 3 agricultural land, applicants will be expected to confirm whether the land is Grade 3a or 3b. **Proposals that**

	incorporate dual land use - such as agrovoltaics or pollinator-friendly planting - will be particularly encouraged. Proposals in areas identified as 'less suitable' will need to be robustly justified, including with reference to the criteria used to identify the 'more suitable' areas'. **'5. Community-Led and Local Benefit Schemes** West Oxfordshire District Council places particular value on community-led renewable energy developments. Proposals that are initiated by, or demonstrably benefit, local communities (including through an agreed financial payment or equivalent) will be strongly supported, including those which contribute to local energy resilience, affordability, **dual land use** and democratic ownership'. **'6. Development Management Criteria** All proposals for renewable and low carbon energy development must: a) Give significant weight to the environmental, social, ~~and~~ economic **and community** benefits of renewable and low carbon energy generation';
Policy DM7 - Policy DM7 - Retrofitting for Energy Efficiency, Carbon Reduction and Climate Resilience	Amend policy to address non-heritage buildings in Conservation Areas, as follows: 'Heritage and Traditional Buildings a) For traditional or heritage buildings, a sensitive and informed retrofit approach is required. Proposals must demonstrate: i. A whole building assessment that considers heritage significance, current energy performance, climate risks, and long-term use ii. Measures to minimise harm to heritage value through careful material selection, design, and sequencing of works iii. Input from appropriate professionals, including heritage, conservation, and energy experts where needed iv. Compliance with necessary consents (e.g. Listed Building Consent, works affecting TPOs) **v. For non-designated buildings within Conservation Areas, proposals must demonstrate an approach that respects the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a whole, while still maximising energy performance improvements where possible.**

Policy DM8 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Nature Recovery	Add reference to swift and bee bricks, and strengthen requirement for major development to join the Great Crested Newt District Licencing scheme, as follows: '<u>Biodiversity Enhancement</u> The design of new developments must be informed by an Ecological Impact Assessment to ensure that adequate impact assessment and mitigation, compensation and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement are incorporated. Development proposals should avoid fragmentation of habitats and, where possible, integrate enhancements for species into the built environment (e.g., bird and bat boxes, hedgehog highways, <u>**swift and**</u> bee bricks, pollinator-planting and green walls)'. 'All major developments will be required to ~~consider joining~~ <u>**join**</u> the District Licensing Scheme for great crested news via NatureSpace where ponds within 500 metres of the site will be affected either directly or indirectly as a result of the proposal in any of the impact risk zones'.
Policy DM9 - Waste and the Circular Economy	Delete reference to landfill, as follows: '3) Measures to reduce the use of single-use materials and <u>**minimise**</u> construction waste <u>**requiring**</u> disposal<u>**.**</u> ~~to landfill.~~ 5) Disposal: Waste ~~sent to landfill~~ <u>**requiring final disposal**</u> should be minimised to the greatest extent possible<u>**, with preference given to energy recovery where appropriate**</u>.

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Policy DM10 - Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character through New Development	Amend policy to refer to 'will' and not 'may', as follows: '**Landscaping and Planting:** High-quality landscaping should be integrated into the design of new developments to enhance the local character, mitigate the impact of built structures, and create a harmonious transition between the built and natural environment. This ~~may~~ **will** include planting native species, retaining existing trees and hedgerows **where relevant**, and providing green infrastructure to enhance biodiversity.
Policy DM11	Consider additional wording for policy to ensure that new planting does not undermine other aims of green infrastructure delivery; **Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity:** The provision of new trees and hedgerows must be considered as part of the broader green infrastructure strategy for the development. This includes ensuring that planting schemes: - Increase connectivity between habitats, creating wildlife corridors and linking with existing natural features and - Enhance biodiversity by planting a variety of native species that support local wildlife. **-Do not inhibit pedestrian and cycle connectivity in development**
Policy DM12 – Light Pollution and Dark Skies	Add reference to colour temperature limits in relation to dark skies, as follows: '1.2 Lighting Design and Specification **Use of Appropriate Lighting**: External lighting should be appropriate to the nature and use of the development and should minimise light levels in areas that do not require illumination. All lighting should be designed to prevent skyglow (the brightening of the night sky over urban areas) and to limit spill into adjacent areas. **Energy-Efficient and Low-Impact Lighting**: Developers should use energy-efficient lighting solutions and consideration should be given to the use of automatic controls to enable lighting to be switched off or dimmed when it is not needed, particularly in **sensitive** areas with low human activity at night (e.g., in rural or residential areas).

	<u>Colour Temperature: All external lighting should use lamps with a correlated colour temperature (CCT) of 3000 Kelvin or lower, particularly in or near designated dark sky areas, wildlife-sensitive zones, and rural locations. Warmer light sources reduce skyglow and are less disruptive to wildlife and human circadian rhythms.</u>
Paragraph 8.4.49	Add reference to the potential use of other technologies such as hydrogen, as follows: ‘At the same time, West Oxfordshire includes a wide range of towns, villages and more rural areas and it is important that parking requirements reflect this diversity. The policy supports more sustainable travel in locations where it’s realistic, while ensuring safe and appropriate levels of parking are still provided where needed. It also responds to emerging needs around EV infrastructure and inclusive design, helping to future-proof new developments and support the delivery of healthy, accessible and well-connected places. **<u>This includes consideration of other low-emission technologies, ensuring flexibility as transport systems evolve’.</u>**
Policy DM26 – Windfall housing development on unallocated sites	Suggest adding reference to Neighbourhood Plans as follows; **<u>Policy DM26 - Windfall Housing Development on Unallocated Sites</u>** **Overview** Windfall housing developments on unallocated sites will be positively supported, provided they are consistent with the overall spatial strategy of the Local Plan and other relevant policies, including the general development principles outlined in Policy DM1 **<u>and made Neighbourhood Development Plans</u>**.

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	**Proposed Change**
Policy DM30 – Custom and Self-Build Housing	Add reference to agricultural land quality, as follows: '***Overview*** This policy supports the delivery of custom and self-build housing in West Oxfordshire to diversify the housing market, increase housing choice, and meet identified needs. Proposals will be approved in suitable, sustainable locations subject to compliance with other relevant policies of this Plan. **Where development is proposed on greenfield land, particular regard should be given to the quality of agricultural land, with avoidance of the best and most versatile land (Grades 1–3a) wherever possible'.**
Paragraphs 8.5.59 – 8.5.68	Insert new paragraph to reflect the overall findings of the latest Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), as follows: **The most recent gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment for West Oxfordshire (2024) identifies a residual need for 28 pitches for gypsies and travellers in the period 2023/24 – 2041/42, including 2 pitches in the short-term to 2027/28 and 26 pitches in the longer-term. For travelling showpeople, the evidence suggests a total need for 8 plots, including 4 in the short term to 2027/28 and 4 in the longer term to 2041/42.**

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Policy DM32 – Travelling Communities	Amend policy to refer to the possibility of strategic sites making provision ‘off-site’, as follows: ‘Strategic sites that do not include such provision will only be permitted if clear evidence shows that there is no identified need, or if a well-reasoned rationale demonstrates that the site is unsuitable for this purpose. **<u>In such cases, consideration may be given to meeting the need through an off-site proposal, provided it delivers equivalent benefit, meets the identified need in full, and is secured through appropriate mechanisms such as planning obligations.</u>** Proposals that actively incorporate accommodation for travelling communities will be viewed favourably in the overall planning balance’.
General	Add a ‘glossary of terms’ including in relation to green infrastructure.

Table 2 – Further Proposed Changes arising from other comments made by Officers and Members

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Foreword	Amend as follows: It's not a final **set of policies** ~~plan~~ just yet, but it's an important milestone, and your feedback will help us shape the full draft we plan to publish for consultation later this year. We're also looking to protect the ~~long-term~~ potential for a rail link **to provide a service** between Carterton, Witney, Eynsham and Oxford - something that could make a huge difference to how people travel across the district. But ambition only works if it's grounded in reality. ~~The~~ **Our** plan's policies need to be achievable - capable of being delivered without making development unviable or putting too much strain on what we already have.
Paragraph 1.8	Amend as follows: 1.8 This document is not a full draft of the Local Plan. Instead, it outlines the Council's current thinking on the plan's overall structure and direction. **It will be followed by a focused consultation on potential development sites building on the overall spatial strategy outlined in this document.**
Objective 5	Amend as follows: • Maximising the efficient use of the District's existing housing stock including empty homes and leveraging the opportunities presented by the re-use of previously developed land and buildings. Enabling the delivery of a ~~continual~~ **continuous** supply of high quality and sustainable new homes to meet identified housing needs over the period 2025 – 2041.
Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	**Proposed Change**

Paragraph 5.149	Amend as follows: 5.149 Proposals that cause harm to designated heritage assets will only be permitted if there is clear and convincing justification with significant public benefits. Where **harm or** loss occurs, appropriate recording and dissemination of findings are required. This approach balances conservation with responsible development, ensuring West Oxfordshire's historic environment remains a valued and protected part of the District's future growth.
Core Policy 7 – Water Environment	Amend as follows: ~~Development must consider both water supply and demand, ensuring water efficiency and resilience to future supply challenges.~~ **All new developments must incorporate suitable measures that address both water supply and demand to increase efficiency and build resilience for future demand.** Proposals for new dwellings must meet a target of no more than 90 litres per person per day of water use. This can be achieved through:
Core Policy 12 – Natural Environment	Amend as follows: **Integration with the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** In order to align with the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), development proposals should: - **Support** ~~Consult~~ the LNRS to ensure that projects are aligned with the District's priority areas for nature recovery. - Where appropriate, ~~collaborate~~ **reflect the results of collaboration** with local conservation groups, landowners, and stakeholders to support nature-based solutions.
Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	**Proposed Change**
Paragraph 6.43	Amend as follows:

	6.43 The policy seeks to safeguard a broad corridor of land from Carterton to Yarnton for the ~~potential~~ delivery of a ~~long-term~~ rail ~~solution~~ service **to Oxford** ~~in West Oxfordshire~~.
Paragraph 6.48	Amend as follows: 6.48 The A40 is a vital transport corridor but suffers from chronic congestion due to high levels of car dependency and volumes of traffic. Without significant improvements to alternative transport options, planned housing and employment growth will exacerbate this issue, leading to further delays, economic inefficiencies, and reduced quality of life for residents. Developing a ~~long-term~~ rail solution provides a viable alternative to car travel, helping to ease the burden on the A40 and improve overall traffic flow.
Paragraph 6.50	Amend as follows: 6.50 The policy is also needed to ensure that land critical for delivering a rail solution is safeguarded, preventing short-term development decisions from obstructing long**er**-term transport goals. This forward-thinking approach is essential to creating a resilient and sustainable transport system capable of accommodating future growth while reducing environmental impacts.
Paragraph 6.52	Amend as follows: 6.52 Our preferred approach is to proactively safeguard a strategic land corridor from Carterton to Yarnton for a ~~potential long-term~~ rail solution, ensuring that future development within this corridor does not obstruct its delivery.

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Witney in 2041 – A Draft Vision	Amend as follows: **Low-Carbon Transport and Infrastructure Investment** With investment in low-carbon transport, modern infrastructure **<u>including a restored rail link to Oxford</u>**, and accessible services, Witney will reduce its dependency on car travel, easing congestion and improving air quality. Growth will be shaped sensitively around the town's landscape and heritage, ensuring the character of both Witney and surrounding villages is respected.
Strategic Objectives for Witney	Amend as follows: **3. Addressing Congestion and Improving Connectivity** • Reduce traffic congestion through strategic infrastructure investments including the West End Link and **<u>rail and road</u>** improvements to the A40 corridor.
Policy WIT1 – A Strategy for Witney	Amend as follows: **d) Enhancing sustainable transport connectivity by:** i. Aligning with the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and Witney's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP); ii. Facilitating the delivery of strategic walking and cycling routes, mobility hubs, and secure cycle parking; iii. Supporting enhancements to public transport, including the provision of zero-emission buses and improved links to Oxford and key destinations, **<u>and re-building the railway line to Oxford</u>**; iv. Enabling the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and support for shared mobility solutions.

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Paragraph 7.2.20	Amend as follows: **~~Promoting a 24-Hour Economy~~** **Promoting a Vibrant Night-Time Economy**
Paragraph 7.2.29	Amend as follows: 7.2.29 Progress with the North Witney SDA has been slower, ~~largely a result of previous land assembly difficulties. However,~~ **however** a comprehensive outline planning has ~~now~~ been submitted (24/00482/OUT) which covers the majority of the site and includes an illustrative masterplan for the whole site.
Paragraph 7.2.30	Amend as follows: 7.2.30 The application is for a residential-led, mixed-use development ~~including a new primary school, community space/retail, open space and a new northern distributor road. The information submitted with the application indicates that the site is capable of~~ accommodating up to 1,250 new homes.
Paragraph 7.2.31	Amend as follows: 7.2.31 Without prejudice to the current outline application which is pending determination, for the purposes of this preferred options paper it has been assumed **for now** that 1,250 new homes will be provided at North Witney in the period up to 2041. This is in order to help identify the assumed 'residual' number of new homes that will need to be met through new site allocations (c. 6,500).

Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	Proposed Change
Paragraph 7.5.4	Amend as follows: 7.5.4 Levels of deprivation are low and employment levels are high, with over a third of the working-age population working from or mainly from home. Car usage for commuting is high, and public transport usage is comparatively low, **<u>reflecting the poor services available</u>**.
Paragraph 7.5.5	Amend as follows: 7.5.5 Bampton is served by the Pulhams No. 19 bus route, providing hourly services to Carterton and Witney six days a week. There are no Sunday services, and train access is limited, with the nearest station with an hourly service being Hanborough **<u>14 miles</u>** ~~some distance~~ away.
Bampton – Key Issues for the Local Plan to address	Amend as follows: Infrastructure and Facilities • Although Bampton has a good range of community facilities, these are likely to need enhancement to support a growing and changing population. • **<u>Bampton's sewage treatment works are under capacity and lead to frequent spills</u>** • The plan should consider: o The capacity of the primary school and GP services. o Support for youth facilities, public spaces, and recreational provision. o Long-term sustainability of key assets such as the library and arts/cultural facilities.
Paragraph 7.6.8	Amend as follows: 7.6.8 The town centre encompasses just under 10,000 square metres of retail floorspace, largely composed of independent, boutique retailers specialising in **<u>art,</u>** antiques, homewares, crafts, and fashion. A low retail vacancy rate and rising footfall illustrate its commercial vitality.
Document Section/Paragraph/Policy	**Proposed Change**

Eynsham in 2041 – A Draft Vision	Amend as follows: **A Sustainable, Green and Low-Carbon Place to Live** Eynsham's future will be shaped by sustainability and climate resilience. Development will respond positively to the challenges of climate change by promoting high energy standards, biodiversity enhancement, and excellent public and active transport links, **<u>with access to a railway station in the Salt Cross Garden Village</u>**. A balanced mix of homes, services, and green infrastructure will ensure the village remains inclusive and adaptable to future needs.
Policy DM26 – Windfall Housing Development on Unallocated Sites	Amend as follows: **Overview** Windfall housing developments on unallocated sites will be ~~positively~~ supported, provided they are consistent with the overall spatial strategy of the Local Plan and other relevant policies, including the general development principles outlined in Policy DM1. **Windfall Development at Tier 1 Principal Towns, Tier 2 Service Centres, and Tier 3 Villages** Within the Cotswolds National Landscape **<u>and Tier 3 Villages</u>**, evidence of specific local housing need will be required, such as needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or affordable housing needs specific to a settlement. **Windfall Development in Tier 4 Small Villages, Hamlets, and Open Countryside** A more restrictive approach will apply to windfall developments in Tier 4 areas, in line with the overall spatial strategy (Policy CP3). In these areas, new dwellings will only be permitted in the following circumstances: ~~- The proposal complies with the general development principles set out in Policy DM1 and does not conflict with other relevant development plan policies.~~

Policy DM28 – Affordable Housing	Amend as follows: Developments that involve the re-use or redevelopment of vacant **domestic** buildings will benefit from a reduced affordable housing contribution, equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of the buildings.
Appendices	Insert appendix summarising alternative policy options that have been considered (where applicable).

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and Date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 9 JULY 2025**
Subject	**CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2025-2030**
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Andrew Prosser – Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery Email: andrew.prosser@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Hannah Kenyon – Climate Change Manager Email: hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Hannah Kenyon – Climate Change Manager Email: hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	To approve the West Oxfordshire Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030
Annexes	Annex A – West Oxfordshire Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030
Recommendation	That the Executive resolves to: 1. Approve the West Oxfordshire Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030 to achieve districtwide net zero by 2050 and climate resilience.
Corporate Priorities	• Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Officers and partner organisations have been consulted on the Strategy.

1. BACKGOUND

1.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 requires the UK to reduce emissions by at least 100% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels.

1.2 West Oxfordshire District Council declared a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency in 2019 and approved the Climate Change Strategy 2021-2025.

1.3 Addressing climate change and accelerating nature recovery are key priorities in the Council Plan 2023-27.

1.4 The Council has committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. The Carbon Action Plan 2024-2030 includes a carbon baseline, pathways and actions to achieve this target.

1.5 The West Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Plan 2024-2030 sets out nature recovery actions, with strong synergies between climate and nature.

1.6 Local Government Reorganisation and devolution has the potential to impact on the delivery of this strategy. Projects will either be completed or be at an appropriate stage by 2028 to handover to the new unitary and strategic authorities.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1 The Climate Change Strategy sets out actions to progress over the next five years to achieve districtwide net zero by 2050 and build climate resilience, highlighting where there is greatest opportunity to influence change and reduce climate impact. The priority is to minimise carbon emissions then offset any residual emissions by verified means.

2.2 Everyone playing their part and partnership working are key to effective project delivery.

2.3 It is a high ambition pathway which is reliant on external factors, for example the availability of funding, national policy, and progress in technological innovations in key areas, as well as embedding carbon reduction across multiple stakeholders.

2.4 The Strategy will be monitored and reported on annually.

2.5 As well as carbon reduction and climate resilience, actions will also deliver co-benefits, for example accelerating nature recovery, improving water and air quality, increasing thermal comfort, and upskilling.

2.6 The Strategy also highlights key achievements and how challenges have been overcome.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 The Council does not adopt the Strategy. This risks not fulfilling the Council's commitment to facilitate districtwide net zero and climate resilience as there will be no approved strategy in place.

3.2 The Strategy could be scaled down from its current level of ambition to smaller projects and a shorter timeframe. This also risks not making sufficient progress in carbon reduction to achieve net zero by 2050.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The Strategy prioritises actions over the next five years that will help to achieve districtwide net zero by 2050 and climate resilience.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The resourcing required for each project will be worked up as part of the initial viability assessment and will feed into annual budget discussions. External funding will be secured where possible.

5.2 A Climate Change Officer has been recruited to provide long-term support in delivering the Strategy.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 Some actions do not have funding allocated to them for delivery. There is a risk that not all the actions will be completed, as some resources are yet to be secured.

7.2 There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not facilitate the achievement of districtwide net zero and climate resilience.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 Adopting and implementing the Strategy for the Council will support carbon reduction and improve the climate for all.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATION

9.1 The Strategy will help to address climate change.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

(END)

West Oxfordshire Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030

Foreword

In West Oxfordshire, we are already experiencing the effects of climate change - from heatwaves and drought to flash flooding and severe storms –along with the socio-economic and environmental impacts from these extreme weather events. The most vulnerable in our communities at greatest risk. We must act now to reduce these impacts, so our communities are better protected, and future generations can enjoy the wonderful natural world we live in. How we respond to the climate and ecological emergency today will define our legacy.

By working together to cut carbon emissions, we can achieve net zero by 2050 – through sharing knowledge and collaborating on climate projects and policies. This is not a challenge any one person or organisation can tackle alone. Everyone has a role to play – at the local, regional, national, and global level.

At the same time, our communities must build resilience to the impacts of climate change by adapting to the changes we can no longer avoid. This is through developing community resilience plans, implementing natural flood management, or fitting awnings and shading to keep buildings cooler during extreme heat. Every action, big or small, contributes to a stronger, more prepared community.

Embracing change is essential – and change can bring real benefits. Responding to climate change presents opportunities to create warmer, more energy efficient homes, generate green jobs, and create greener, more vibrant spaces. These changes not only help the environment but also enhance quality of life and can drive sustainable economic growth.

By setting a clear course for action, this strategy reaffirms that Oxfordshire is at the forefront of climate leadership.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader, and Councillor Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action, and Nature Recovery

1 Introduction

1.1 This Strategy sets out actions over the next five years in progressing towards districtwide net zero before 2050 and for our communities in West Oxfordshire to become more resilient to climate impacts through collaboration and partnership working. The Strategy includes a climate context, carbon baseline, pathways, and priority actions.

1.2 It is vital that collective climate action continues, whereby climate insights and best practice are shared to foster a culture of learning and to accelerate progress.

1.3 Each priority action includes measures which enable monitoring and reporting. A project tracker will be updated regularly, and progress will be reviewed and reported on annually by the Council. The Strategy is a live document and actions may be added, reprioritised, and refocused as part of an annual review process. This will take account of the changing legislative and regulatory environment, as well as local government reorganisation and devolution. The projects will either be completed or be at an appropriate stage by 2028 to handover to the new unitary and strategic authorities.

1.4 The Strategy updates and supersedes the Climate Change Strategy 2021-25.

2 Definitions

Carbon neutral: Refers to the use of offsets (not specifically GGRs) to balance out residual emissions.

Embodied carbon: Refers to the GHG emissions associated with the manufacturing, transportation, use and disposal of building materials used in construction. Embodied carbon is therefore an upstream emissions consideration and is categorised as Scope 3.

Net zero: Reducing emissions as close to zero as possible, with any residual being removed from the atmosphere with Greenhouse Gas Removals (GGRs). Net zero can refer both to all greenhouse gases (GHGs) or carbon dioxide (CO2) alone.

3 Vision

3.1 The Strategy supports achievement of the following vision:

- Clean and local renewable energy is commonplace, providing communities with energy independence and resilience.
- Retrofit is a continuous programme of activity and is helping to reduce energy consumption, addressing fuel poverty, and improving health.
- Growth and new development are designed to the highest standards of energy performance and environmental sustainability.
- Active forms of travel including cycling and walking are widely adopted, and ultra-low emission transport infrastructure is equipped to meet rising demand.

- Nature recovery solutions play a crucial role in mitigating climate change and enhancing reliance from its impacts.
- Grassroots activities by local organisations and communities are supported, with everyone feeling they can work collectively to make a difference, taking climate action at home, at work and as part of their local community.
- Partnership working accelerates climate action.

4 UK

4.1 The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change which pledges to keep temperatures "well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C".

4.2 The UK Climate Change Act 2008 was amended in 2019 to include a legally binding net-zero target by 2050. The Act requires at least a 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 compared to 1990 levels and sets carbon budgets for five-year periods. The Climate Change Committee advises the government on these budgets and monitors' progress.

4.3 The UK Government's approach is underpinned by the Net Zero Strategy 2021 alongside sector specific strategies, for example the Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021 and Clean Power Action Plan 2030.

4.4 Over 300 local authorities have declared a climate emergency and nearly two thirds of councils in England aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.

5 Oxfordshire

5.1 The Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PAZCO) report, commissioned by the Oxfordshire Enterprise, outlines an ambitious net zero pathway, 'Oxfordshire Leading the Way'. It relies on widespread culture and behavioural changes combined with high deployment of new local electricity generation using solar PV.

5.2 The Oxfordshire Net Zero Route Map and Action Plan outlines a pathway for the county to achieve net zero by 2050 and identifies net zero actions that should be taken forward collaboratively by Oxfordshire authorities, partner organisations and stakeholders. The actions were grouped by sector and these included road transport, energy supply, domestic, and industrial and commerce.

5.3 The Oxfordshire Climate Change Adaptation Route Map puts forward actions to better manage, prepare for and respond to severe weather events and increasing likelihood and severity of these in the future. It aims to build climate resilience in our natural environment, people, infrastructure, buildings, and businesses to minimise the impacts of climate change.

6 West Oxfordshire

6.1 West Oxfordshire District Council declared a Climate Change and Ecological Emergency in 2019 and approved a Climate Change Strategy in 2021.

6.2 Addressing climate change and accelerating nature recovery are key priorities in the Council Plan 2023-27.

6.3 There remains strong local support for climate action. The most recent Youth Needs Assessment and Local Plan consultation had climate change as a top concern that needs addressing.

6.4 The Council has committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. The Carbon Action 2024-2030 includes the carbon baseline, pathways, and actions to achieve this target.

6.5 The West Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Plan 2024-2030 sets out nature recovery actions, and aims to “radically enhance nature, its positive impact on our climate and the priority it’s given, helping to make West Oxfordshire a place where people and nature thrive”.

7 Achievements and Challenges

7.1 Good progress has been made on carbon reduction over the last five years in West Oxfordshire and beyond. West Oxfordshire District Council was ranked the highest performing rural district council in the UK in the 2025 UK Council Climate Action Scorecards. These are the highlights:

Energy planning

- Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Planning countywide energy modelling.
- Community Action Plan for Zero Carbon Energy assessments and retrofits.

Decarbonisation

- Better Housing and Better Heath energy advice service.
- Home Upgrade Grant 2 and Sustainable Warmth Grant funding for energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating for low-income households.
- Cost of living support programme to assist the most vulnerable with energy.
- Carbon training for small and medium businesses and the Climate Action Fund grants which led to carbon reduction of over 46tCO2e.
- Council’s carbon emissions have significantly declined.
- Waste Environmental Services Programme to transform waste services across Oxfordshire.

- West Oxfordshire Food Strategy includes actions to build a healthy, fair, and sustainable food system.
- Witney LCWIP, and plans underway for Carterton and Eynsham, to identify and improve cycling and walking routes.
- EV car clubs in Eynsham and Witney.
- Park and Charge Oxfordshire installed electric vehicle charging points in five car parks and additional chargers are in Woodford Way with 76 in total.

Planning

- Salt Cross Area Action Plan exemplary net zero policy.
- Net Zero Carbon Toolkit provides a practical, easy to follow guide to help plan a net zero housing project.
- Sustainability Standards Checklist requires planning applications to include climate change considerations.

Climate resilience

- Climate Change Adaptation Route Map for Oxfordshire to minimise the impact of climate change on Oxfordshire.

Other

- Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool to embed climate considerations in Council decisions.
- Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy to accelerate nature recovery to help wildlife to flourish, improve the quality of our air and water, and mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- Coronation Community Orchards Scheme to facilitate community food growing.

7.2 There have been many challenges that have been overcome. These include:

- Changing behaviour through leading with co-benefits, for example warmer homes
- External grant funding and public-private partnerships to fund capital projects.
- Technological innovation through working with experts
- More renewable energy generation through locally owned solar arrays and rooftop

8 West Oxfordshire's Emissions

8.1 The data used to produce the baseline emissions profile originated from the UK Local Authority Greenhouse Gas Emissions Statistics (2005 – 2022).[1] This dataset provides emissions data from the UK national greenhouse gas inventory that has been

[1] UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics - GOV.UK

disaggregated at the local authority level. The chart below shows current sources of GHG emissions in West Oxfordshire.

8.2 As of 2022, total emissions were 596 ktCO_2e. Transport (193 ktCO_2e) was the highest emitting sector in West Oxfordshire in 2022, making up 32% of total emissions. The A40 and A420 are major commuting and freight routes, contributing to vehicle-related emissions.

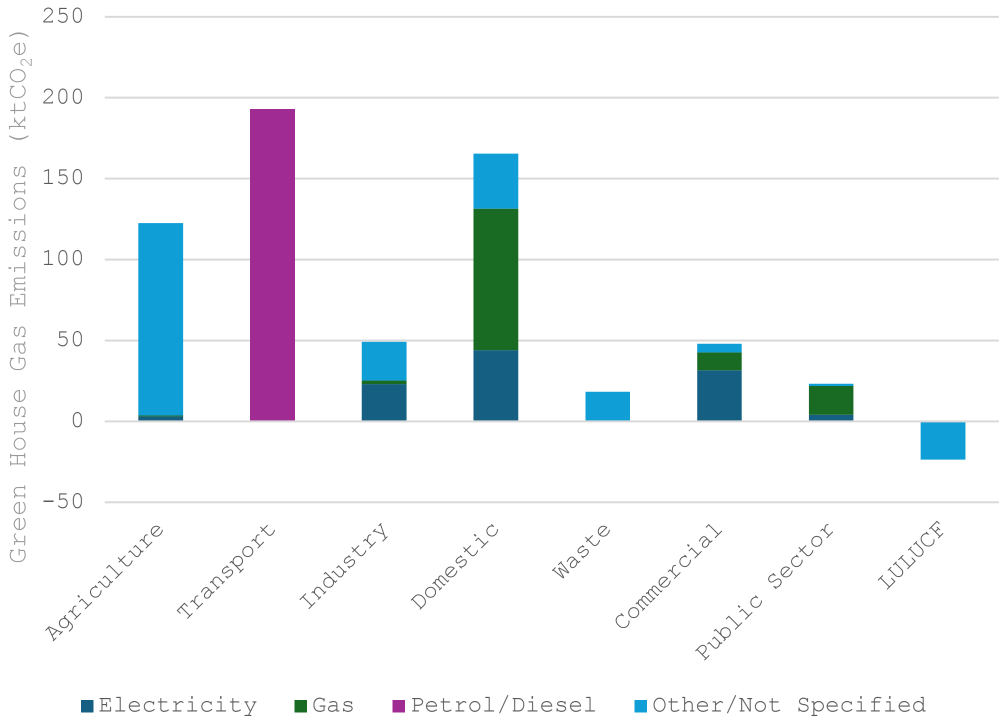
8.3 The domestic sector (165 ktCO_2e, 27% of total emissions) is also a significant contributor, with emissions resulting from energy consumption for heating, lighting, and appliances. The third highest emitting sector is agriculture where emissions relating to livestock, fertiliser use and energy consumption for running buildings and machinery make up 21% of total emissions (122 ktCO_2e). Industrial emissions (49 ktCO_2e) make up 8% of the total and the commercial sector also makes up 8% (47.98 ktCO_2e) with heating, lighting and operational energy use contributing to carbon output.

8.4 Waste emissions (18 ktCO_2e, 3% of the total) result from the processing of waste produced in West Oxfordshire, including methane emissions from landfill and emissions associated with wastewater processing. The land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector (-24 ktCO_2e) acts as a small carbon sink, equivalent to a circa 4% reduction in total emissions.

8.5 Official statistics on regional renewable electricity data show that the total renewable energy capacity in West Oxfordshire was 82MW in 2023, and that this generated about 78GWh of electricity. For context, total electricity consumption in the district was significantly higher in 2022 at almost 500GWh.[2] Installed renewable capacity in West Oxfordshire is dominated by photovoltaics which provided 97% of the total capacity in 2023, with the rest being provided by landfill gas.[3]

Figure 1 Baseline GHG inventory for West Oxfordshire, 2022

[2] Total final energy consumption at regional and local authority level: 2005 to 2022 - GOV.UK
[3] Regional Renewable Statistics - GOV.UK



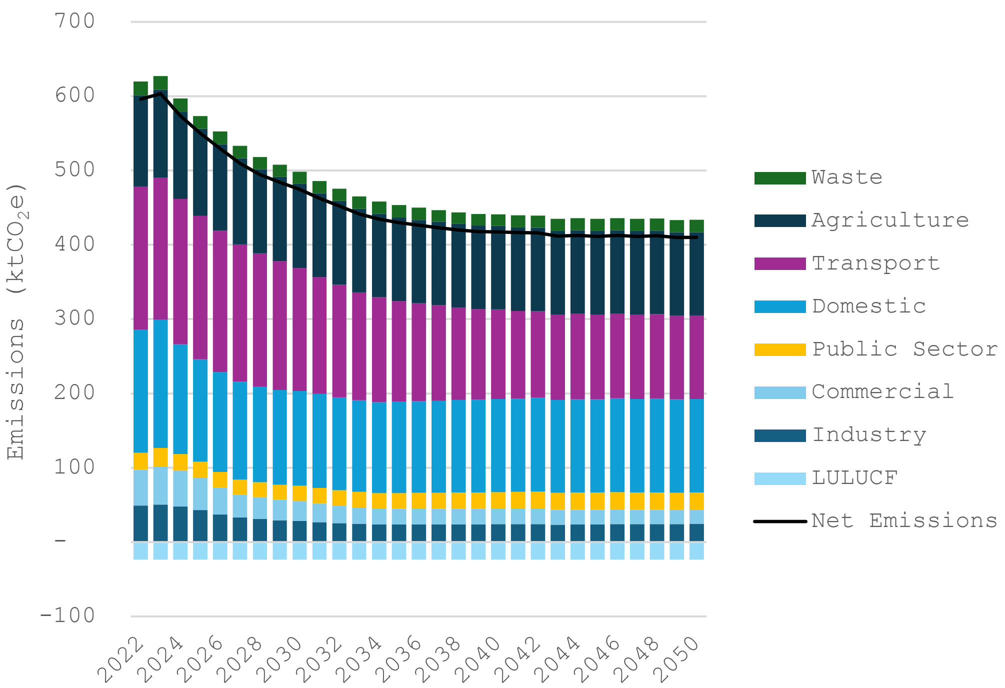
9 Net Zero Pathway

9.1 The emissions pathways have been developed to show a Business as Usual (BAU) and net zero pathway.

9.2 The BAU scenario is a forward trajectory of emissions from each source and sub-sector in the baseline, based on the DESNZ Energy and Emissions Projections (EEP) from November 2023, which accounts for variables such as population and GDP growth, energy use, fuel prices and committed government policies.

9.3 Under the BAU scenario, over 400ktCO_2e emissions would remain in 2050.

Figure 2 BAU emissions pathway



9.4 Using currently available technologies, if funding and practicalities were no obstacles, approximately 70-80% reduction in area wide emissions could be achieved. The timescales for when this would be achievable are based on how fast measures can be implemented.

9.5 The remaining 20-30% of emissions will rely on a combination of technological improvements, most notably carbon capture, and significant changes in agricultural practices and land management, which would need to be supported by a large-scale shift in dietary habits.

9.6 It is theoretically possible to achieve higher levels of demand reduction, but this just means that the impact of fuel switching and supplying renewable energy will reduce, so the residual emissions will remain roughly the same.

9.7 The scale of impact is due both to the impact of the individual measure on a given sector, and the proportion of baseline emissions that sector originally accounted for. So, for example, domestic buildings currently account for around 28% of total emissions, which places a limit on the overall % reduction you can get from measures in the buildings sector.

9.8 Residual emissions in 2050 are expected to include approximately:

- 20-30 ktCO2e from industry, which will mostly be due to high temperature applications where it is currently unclear whether these can be electrified. Potentially this could be reduced through use of green hydrogen or another zero-emission energy source.
- 10-20 ktCO2e from waste, which will need to be mitigated through some sort of carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology being fitted to waste incinerators.

- 80-100 ktCO2e from agriculture – uncertain as it will rely on adoption of major changes in agricultural practices and dietary changes.
- 15-25 ktCO2e from transport, mostly comprising HGV fuel use, unless this can be replaced with EVs, green hydrogen, fuel cell technology, etc.

9.9 Those emissions add up to around 140 ktCO2e but the net amount is slightly lower due to carbon sequestration from the Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry (LULUCF) sector.

10 Climate Actions

10.1 The Strategy presents a set of priority actions over the next five years to achieve carbon reduction and greater climate resilience. There are also many cross-cutting principles to create an enabling environment for climate action. These include:

Climate awareness, accounting, and plan making

- Increase awareness of climate mitigation, climate impacts and adaptation.
- Residents, businesses, and organisations to understand their carbon footprint and how to build their resilience to a changing climate.
- Take action to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change.

Community empowerment and stewardship

- Community-led initiatives deliver climate action by leveraging local knowledge, upscaling, and shared ownership of renewable resources.
- Involvement of local communities in decision-making related to climate mitigation and adaptation to ensure solutions are tailored to specific needs and contexts.

Partnership working

- Strong partnerships between stakeholders can accelerate change and drive climate action.
- Work collectively to be effective, taking climate action at home, at work and as a community.

Sharing knowledge

- Local case studies and best practice is shared on how climate action can be taken to address climate change.
- Use good examples in preparing and implementing climate plans.
- Learn from specialists and local environmental groups on how to increase biodiversity, accelerate nature recovery and build natural capital.
- Climate Action Network continues as a channel to disseminate information on climate action, local projects, and initiatives. A quarterly bulletin on climate news, community projects and way to get involved in climate work is circulated by the Council.

Low carbon choices

- Residents, communities, and businesses to make low carbon choices through considering green travel, local food etc. to drive carbon reduction and build climate resilience.

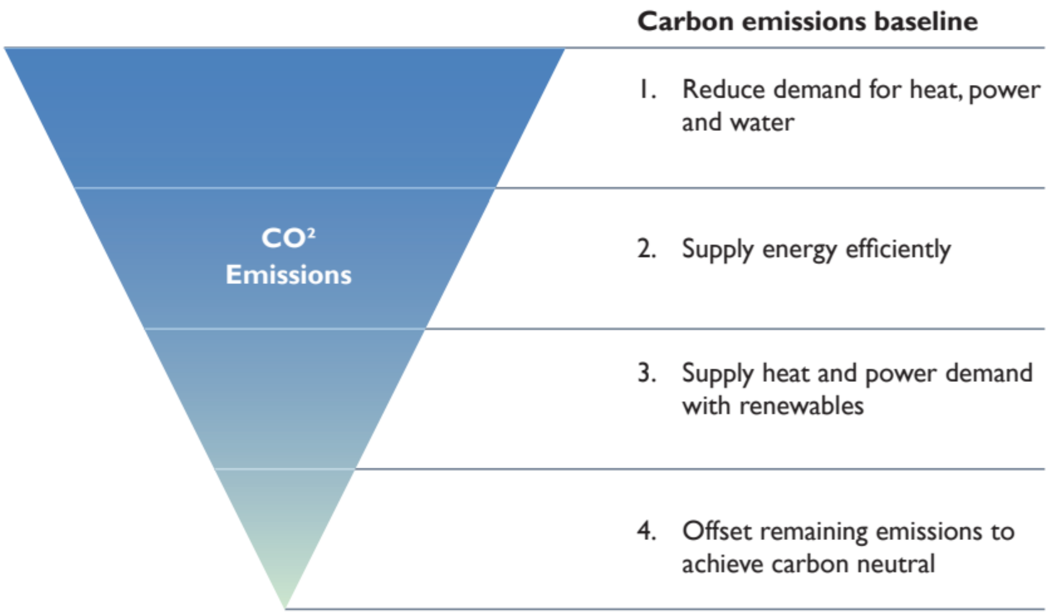
Support the most vulnerable

- Fuel poor households to use support services like Better Housing Better Health to increase energy efficiency, thermal comfort and improve health outcomes.
- Using the Healthy place shaping approach to empower communities through community groups, schools, and businesses to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

Follow the energy hierarchy

- Residents, businesses, and organisations to follow the energy hierarchy:
- Reduce energy demand.
- Install energy efficiency measures.
- Install low carbon heating systems and solar PV.
- Carbon offset.

Figure 3 Energy hierarchy



Co-benefits

- Maximise climate action co-benefits:
- Environmental – Improved air quality, biodiversity protection, water conservations.
- Health – Fewer respiratory and cardiovascular diseases from improved air quality and improved energy efficiency of homes. More active lifestyles from transitioning away from cars to cycling and walking.

- Social – Greater social equity, stronger community resilience and improved quality of life.
- Economic – Job creation in green skills, energy savings from improved buildings.
- Security – Energy security from generating energy through renewables, disaster risk reduction (community prepared, better land use and infrastructure planning).

National lobbying

- Seek to influence national government on climate action.

10.2 The priority actions in the Strategy are split into five themes:

- Energy planning
- Decarbonisation
- Planning
- Carbon sequestration
- Climate resilience

10.3 Further information on the projects can be found on the Council's website.

Table 1 Climate Priority Actions

Actions	Aim	Measure(s)	Partnerships	Potential Funders	Timescale
Energy planning					
1. Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Planning (OxLAEP)	Identify the most appropriate place-based and cost-effective options to deliver net zero, optimising infrastructure investment plans to deliver a net zero carbon energy system that can support the electrification of heat and transport and the upscale of renewable generation. The approach will also enable targeted demand reduction programmes.	Local area energy plans and pipeline of investible projects	Oxfordshire authorities, other stakeholders	Repurposed Homes England funding, Oxfordshire authorities	2025-2030
2. Community Action Plan for Zero-Carbon Energy (CAPZero)	Make progress towards the achievement of a zero-carbon energy system in the Eynsham Primary Substation Area before 2050 and develop a comprehensive model to accelerate CAPZeros in other substation areas.	Carbon reduction and delivery model	WODC, Low Carbon Hub, parish councils, community groups, other stakeholders	WODC, Low Carbon Hub	2025-2030
Decarbonisation					
3. Oxfordshire Retrofit Strategy	Develop and implement a retrofit strategy to accelerate energy efficiency, building decarbonisation across sectors, removal of fossil fuels, and wider carbon reduction.	Carbon reduction	Oxfordshire authorities, other stakeholders	Oxfordshire authorities	2025-2030
4. Energy advice, grant schemes and funding opportunities	Better Housing, Better Health provides energy advice. Secure and distribute energy grant funding to those who need it.	Carbon reduction and thermal comfort	Oxfordshire authorities, National Energy Foundation	Oxfordshire authorities	2025-2030

5. Green skills training	Increase green skills through training courses, for example understanding domestic retrofit, and installation and maintenance of heat pumps.	Number of qualifications	WODC, Enterprise Oxfordshire, Abingdon, and Witney College	Enterprise Oxfordshire, Abingdon, and Witney College	2025-2030
6. Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards	Investigate and enforce reported breaches of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for privately rented homes.	Number of MEES breaches investigated and enforced	WODC	WODC	2005-2030
7. West Oxfordshire Food Action Plan	Implement the actions in the strategy and action plan that minimise carbon reduction.	Agreed metrics	WODC, Good Food Oxfordshire, other stakeholders	WODC	2025-2030
8. Waste management	Manage waste in line with the waste hierarchy and the circular economy principles through facilitating waste prevention, reuse, recycling, recovery, and disposal.	Waste tonnage	Oxfordshire authorities	Oxfordshire authorities	2025-2030
9. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs)	Develop and implement LCWIPs to support active and sustainable travel.	Number of improvements to cycling and walking routes	WODC, OCC, town and parish councils, other stakeholders	WODC, OCC	2025-2030
10. Oxfordshire Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (OxLEVI) project	Install publicly available electric vehicle charge points (EVCPs) to support the uptake of electric vehicles (EV).	Number of EV chargers installed	Oxfordshire authorities, town and parish councils	Office of Zero Emissions Vehicles (OZEV), Oxfordshire authorities	2025-2030
11. EV freight and routes	Consider freight routes, support EV infrastructure, and encourage the EV fleet transition.	Carbon reduction	WODC, OCC	WODC, OCC	2025-2030
12. Electric taxis	Encourage the transition to EV taxis.	Number of EV taxis	WODC	WODC	2025-2030

Planning					
13. Salt Cross Area Action Plan	Exemplary net zero policy in the Salt Cross Area Action Plan.	Adoption of exemplary policy	WODC, other stakeholders	WODC	2025-2030
14. Local Plan	Minimise the carbon impact of spatial strategy. Exemplary energy, climate, agriculture, food, and waste policies in the Local Plan, for example largescale renewables, and green design guidance.	Adoption of exemplary policies and guidance	WODC, other stakeholders	WODC	2025-2030
Carbon sequestration					
15. Oxfordshire carbon market	Continue to explore the development of an Oxfordshire carbon market through researching carbon codes, sequestration potential and offsetting. Consideration of nature-based solutions and negative emissions technologies.	Carbon credits sold in Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire authorities, Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership, other landowners	Innovate UK, Oxfordshire authorities, Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership	2025-2030
Climate resilience					
16. Climate Change Adaptation Route Map for Oxfordshire	Deliver priority actions in the route map to build community resilience to climate impacts.	Success measures to be agreed	Oxfordshire authorities, town and parish councils, community groups, other stakeholders	Various	2025-2030
17. West Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Plan	Prepare and implement a districtwide climate adaptation plan to build resilience within communities to climate impacts e.g. flooding, heatwaves, storms.	Number of actions completed	WODC, town and parish councils, community groups, other stakeholders	Various	2025-2030
18. Community resilience plans	Develop and implement community resilience plans and/or extend community emergency plans.	Number of plans completed	Town and parish councils, community groups	Town and parish councils, community groups	2025-2030

Air quality					
19. Air Quality Strategy	Monitor Air Quality Management Areas. Prepare and implement an Air Quality Strategy in 2026/27 to improve air quality.	Air Quality Index (AQI)	WODC, OCC	WODC, OCC	2025-2030

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

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 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.

1.2 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.

1.3 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.

1.4 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.

1.5 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.

1.6 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 1st July 2025 will impact on the revenue budget in future years and this will be built into the 2026/27 budget process.

1.7 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.

1.8 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.

1.9 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.

1.10 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

	Quarter 4			
	Original Budget 2024/25 £	Current Budget £	Actual Exp £	Variance (under) / over spend £
Service Area				
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
Total cost of services	**16,830,887**	**16,335,771**	**16,583,046**	**247,274**
Plus:				
Investment income receipts	(1,156,230)	(1,156,230)	(1,782,119)	(625,889)
Cost of services before financing:	**15,674,657**	**15,179,541**	**14,800,926**	**(378,615)**
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)
Contribution to General Fund	**0**	**0**	**(6,345)**	**(6,345)**

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 22nd 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 is 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.

	Budget 2024/25	Actual 2024/25	
	£m	£m	
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.
Net Business Rates	**5.933**	**7.017**	
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
Retained Income	**5.107**	**5.339**	

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	**1,974,726**	**243,300**	

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	**1,420,838**	**1,447,795**	**26,957**

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	**715,808**	**715,463**	**(345)**

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**

	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)**

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 £
Land, Legal & Property			
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)
Total - Land, Legal & Property	**494,581**	**718,154**	**223,573**

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)**

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	**8,632,936**	**8,744,462**	**111,526**

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)
Total - Planning & Strategic Housing	**1,391,333**	**1,243,962**	**(147,371)**

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
Total - Revenues & Housing Support	**722,522**	**1,254,242**	**531,690**

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.

ANNEX B

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.

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
1 JULY 2025 – 28 MAY 2026

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Overview and Scrutiny Activities

The Committee may undertake its functions through the following types of activities:

- Holding the Executive to account as a critical friend
- Pre-decision scrutiny of Executive decisions before they are taken
- Considering any "call-in" of an Executive decision that has been made but not yet implemented
- Contributing to policy development
- Undertaking task and finish reviews to explore particular issues in depth
- Scrutiny of the Council's annual budget proposals
- Performance review and monitoring
- Being a convener and engaging with external organisations
- Scrutiny of the Council's crime and disorder functions

Work Plan

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

Timeliness: Is it timely to consider this issue?

Organisational priority: Is it a Council priority?

Public Interest: Is it of significant public interest?

Influence: Can Scrutiny have meaningful influence?

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

Principles of good scrutiny

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny has developed four principles of good scrutiny which are reflected in statutory guidance:

- Provide constructive "critical friend" challenge
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- Drive improvement in public services

Current and planned working groups

Title	Purpose	Membership	Status	Target completion date
Leisure	To consider the leisure management options appraisal before it is presented to the Executive, with particular focus on the evaluation criteria.	1.Cllr Stuart McCarroll (Chair) 2.Cllr Joy Aitman 3.Cllr Mike Baggaley 4.Cllr Jane Doughty 5.Cllr Andy Goodwin 6.Cllr Sandra Simpson	Planned – to be established in June	September 2025
Public Conveniences	To consider any emerging proposals for the future of the Council's public conveniences facilities.	1.Cllr Genny Early (Lead Member) 2.Cllr Andrew Coles 3.Cllr Ed James 4.Cllr David Melvin 5.Cllr Elizabeth Poskitt	Planned	TBC
Waste transformation	To consider any proposals for transforming waste services within the district following phase two of the Publica transition.	1. Cllr Ruth Smith (Chair) 2. Cllr Thomas Ashby 3.Cllr Sandra Cosier 4.Cllr Sandra Simpson 5.Cllr Alistair Wray	Planned	March 2026

Item	Executive Member	Lead Officer	Report commissioned by
2 July 2025			
Climate Change Strategy	Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
Car Parking Strategy	Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy	Susan Hughes, Business Manager for Support and Advice Susan.Hughes@publicagroup.uk	Executive
2024/25 Quarterly Finance Review Q4	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
3 September 2025			
Responding to the Youth Needs Assessment	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Planning	Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery.	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive

2025/26 Quarterly Finance Review Q1	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q1	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk	Executive
8 October 2025			
Local Government Reorganisation	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
5 November 2025			
Supporting mental health initiatives	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr Rachel Crouch		Overview and Scrutiny Committee
10 December 2025			
Local Plan Annual Monitoring 2024/25	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Andrew Thomson, Planning Policy Manager Andrew.Thomson@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
2025/26 Quarterly Finance Review Q2	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive

2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q2	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk	Executive
7 January 2026			
Draft Budget 2026/27 version 2	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
4 February 2026			
Community Grants Update	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
West Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Plan	Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Melanie Dodd, Senior Biodiversity Officer Melanie.Dodd@publicagroup.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
4 March 2026			
Community Safety Partnership	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Procurement and Contract Management Strategy	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Ciaran Okane, Senior Business Partner - Procurement Ciaran.Okane@publicagroup.uk	Executive

2025/26 Quarterly Finance Review Q3	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q3	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk	Executive
20 May 2026 - Annual Council day			
Additional topics, to be scheduled			
Promoting Rural Exception Sites	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves, Head of Planning chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME
INCORPORATING NOTICE OF DECISIONS PROPOSED TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE SESSION AND NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MAKE A KEY DECISION
1 JULY 2025 – 31 OCTOBER 2025

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

By virtue of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, local authorities are required to publish a notice setting out the key executive decisions that will be taken at least 28 days before such decisions are to be taken. The Regulations also require notice to be given of the intention to exclude the press and public for part of a meeting.

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

It is possible that matters may be rescheduled to a date which is different from that given on the Forward Plan. This may be the case for key decisions and the intention to hold a private meeting. In this regard, please note that agendas and reports for meetings of the Executive are made available on the Council's website at www.westoxon.gov.uk/meetings five working days in advance of the meeting in question. Please also note that the agendas for meetings of the Executive will also incorporate a necessary further notice which is required to be given in relation to matters likely to be considered with the public excluded.
There are circumstances where a key decision can be taken, or parts of the meeting may be held in private, even though the 28 clear days' notice has not been given. If that happens, notice of the matter and the reasons will be published on the council's website, and available from the Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB.

Key Decisions

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

The Council has decided that a cost or saving of an amount greater than £150,000 is necessary to constitute expenditure or savings which are significant for the purposes of this definition.
Please note that if a matter is approved by the Council following a recommendation from the Executive, that decision will not be a key decision.

Matters To Be Considered in Private

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

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

Documents and Queries

Copies of, or extracts from, documents listed in the programme and any which subsequently become available are (subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure), obtainable from the following, and this contact information may also be used for any queries.
Democratic Services – Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk Tel: 01993 861000.

West Oxfordshire District Council: Executive Members 2025/26

Name of Councillor	Title and Areas of Responsibility
Andy Graham (**Leader**)	***Leader of the Council:*** *Overview of all Executive Portfolios; Policy Framework; Town and Parish Council Engagement; Council Plan; Strategic Partnerships (including Oxford to Cambridge, Oxfordshire Joint Leaders and South East Councils); Oxfordshire Leaders; Publica and Partnerships Authorities and Ubico; Democratic Services; Communications; Legal Services; Emergency Planning; Assets of Community Value.*
Duncan Enright (**Deputy Leader**)	***Economic Development:*** *Economic Development; Business Development; Visitor Economy; Town and Village Regeneration; Customer Services.*
Alaric Smith	***Finance:*** *Finance & Management; Council Tax and Benefits; Asset Management; South West Audit Partnership; Performance Management; Capital Investment Strategy; Strategic Housing Investment; Financial Aspects of Major Projects; Customer Services; Counter Fraud.*
Hugo Ashton	***Planning****: Local Plan; Government Planning Policies and Guidance; Development Management; Ensuring Planning Policies meet 2030 Requirements; Customer Services.*
Tim Sumner	***Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy:****; Leisure Provision (including Swimming Pools); Carterton Area Strategy.*
Rachel Crouch	***Stronger, Healthy Communities:*** *Voluntary Sector Engagement; Health and Safety; Community and Public Health; Refugee Resettlement Programme; Young People; Equality and Diversity; Customer Services; Culture, Arts and Heritage.*
Geoff Saul	***Housing and Social Care:*** *Housing Allocations; Homelessness; Provision of Affordable/social Homes; Sheltered Housing Accommodation; Safeguarding – Community Safety Partnership; Crime and Disorder; Neighbourhood Policing; Scrutiny of Police and Crime Commissioner.*
Lidia Arciszewska	***Environment:*** *•Flood Alleviation/Natural Flood Management and Sewage; Environmental Partnerships – WASP and Evenlode CP, Windrush CP; North East Cotswold Cluster; Waste Collection and Recycling; Landscape and Biodiversity; Air Quality; Land Use, Food Production and Farming; Street Scene (Cleansing, Litter and Grounds Maintenance); Food safety; licensing; Housing (private landlords); Environment safety; Car Parking.*
Andrew Prosser	***Climate Action and Nature Recovery:*** *Energy Advice; Renewable Energy and RetroFit Investment; Biodiversity (Across the District); Carbon Neutral by 2030; Fossil Fuel Dependence Reduction; Local, National and County Liaison on Climate Change; Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Rollout, Conservation and Historical Environment.*

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

Item for Decision	Key Decision (Yes / No)	Open or Exempt	Decision – Maker	Date of Decision	Executive Member	Lead Officer
Executive 9 July 2025						
Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Phase 3c Windrush Leisure Centre	Yes	Open	Executive Council	9 Jul 2025 16 Jul 2025	Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery.	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
2024/25 Quarterly Finance Review Q4	Yes	Open	Executive Council	9 Jul 2025 16 Jul 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Car Parking Strategy	Yes	Open	Executive	9 Jul 2025	Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy	Susan Hughes, Business Manager for Support and Advice Susan.Hughes@publicagroup.uk
HMO licence fee, Civil Penalties Enforcement and Amenity Standards Policies.	No	Open	Executive	9 Jul 2025	Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment.	Philip Measures, Service Leader philip.measures@publicagroup.uk
Climate Change Strategy	No	Open	Executive	9 Jul 2025	Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
Woodford Way Project	Yes	Open	Executive	9 Jul 2025	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Michael David, Housing Delivery Programme Manager michael.david@westoxon.gov.uk
Carterton Units 1-3 and Station Lane Roofing Project	Yes	Part exempt	Executive Council	9 Jul 2025 16 Jul 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Jasmine McWilliams, Assets Manager jasmine.mcwilliams@publicagroup.uk

Council 16 July 2025						
Options for Out of District Investment Property	Yes		Council	16 Jul 2025		Jasmine McWilliams, Assets Manager jasmine.mcwilliams@publicagroup.uk
Review of Members' Allowances Scheme	No	Open	Council	16 Jul 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services andrew.brown@westoxon.gov.uk
Executive Date TBC - Local Plan Spatial Options						
Executive 10 September 2025						
Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Planning	Yes	Open	Executive	10 Sep 2025	Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery.	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
Private Sector Housing and Caravan Sites policy review and update.	No	Open	Executive	10 Sep 2025	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Philip Measures, Service Leader philip.measures@publicagroup.uk
Review of the Ubico Shareholder Agreement & Ubico Board Member Appointments	No	Open	Executive	10 Sep 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Si Pocock-Cluley, Environmental Services and Waste Transformation Lead si.pocock-cluley@westoxon.gov.u

Options Appraisal of Leisure Management Arrangements	Yes	Part exempt	Executive	10 Sep 2025	Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy - Tim Sumner	Rachel Biles, Leisure Strategy Manager rachel.biles@westoxon.gov.uk
Public Toilet Review	Yes	Open	Executive	10 Sep 2025	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Fiona Woodhouse, Parking Projects & Contracts Officer Fiona.Woodhouse@publicagroup .uk
Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)	No	Open	Executive	10 Sep 2025	Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Melanie Dodd, Senior Biodiversity Officer Melanie.Dodd@publicagroup.uk
2025/26 Quarterly Finance Review Q1	No	Open	Executive	10 Sep 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q1	No	Open	Executive	10 Sep 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Waste Project Update	No	Open	Executive	10 Sep 2025	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Si Pocock-Cluley, Environmental Services and Waste Transformation Lead si.pocock-cluley@westoxon.gov.u
Leisure Centres Asset Management Strategy	Yes	Fully exempt	Executive	10 Sep 2025	Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy - Tim Sumner	Stuart Wilson, Leisure Contracts Lead stuart.wilson@publicagroup.uk
Council 1 October 2025						
Recommendations from the Constitution Working Group	No	Open	Council	1 Oct 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Ana Prelici, Senior Democratic Services Officer Ana.Prelici@westoxon.gov.uk

Executive 15 October 2025						
Council 22 October 2025 - Local Government Review						
Executive 5 November 2025 - Local Government Review						
Executive 12 November 2025						
Local Government Reorganisation	Yes	Open	Executive	15 Oct 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Council tax support 2026/27	Yes	Open	Executive Council	12 Nov 2025 3 Dec 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Council 3 December 2025						
Executive 17 December 2025						
2025/26 Quarterly Finance Review Q2	No	Open	Executive	17 Dec 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q2	No	Open	Executive	17 Dec 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk

Draft Budget 2026/27 version 1	Yes	Open	Executive	17 Dec 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Local Plan Annual Monitoring 2024/25	No	Open	Executive	17 Dec 2025	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Andrew Thomson, Planning Policy Manager Andrew.Thomson@westoxon.gov.uk
Executive 14 January 2026						
Draft Budget 2026/27 version 2	Yes	Open	Executive	14 Jan 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Council 28 January 2026						
Executive 11 February 2026						
Budget 2026/27 & medium term financial strategy	Yes	Open	Executive Council	11 Feb 2026 25 Feb 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Council 25 February 2026						
Council tax 2026/27	No	Open	Council	25 Feb 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk

Executive 11 March 2026						
Procurement and Contract Management Strategy	No	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Ciaran Okane, Senior Business Partner - Procurement Ciaran.Okane@publicagroup.uk
2025/26 Quarterly Finance Review Q3	No	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Chief Accountant georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q3	No	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Key Decision Delegated to Executive Member						
UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund	No	Open	Executive Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development - Cllr Duncan Enright	Before 31 Mar 2026	Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development - Cllr Duncan Enright	Emma Phillips, Market Town Officer Emma.phillips@westoxon.gov.uk

Key Decisions Delegated to Officers						
Delegation on Purchase of Emergency	Yes	Fully exempt	Executive Director of Finance - Madhu Richards	12 Feb 2025 31 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Jon Dearing, Interim Executive Director jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk
Standing Delegation: Settlement of Legal Claims	Yes	Open	Head of Legal Services - Leonie Woodward	Before 31 Mar 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham, Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Leonie Woodward, Head of Legal Leonie.Woodward@cotswold.gov.uk
Allocation of New Initiatives Funding	Yes	Open	Chief Executive & Head of Paid Service - Giles Hughes	Before 31 Mar 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Review and Repurpose Earmarked Reserves to Mitigate against Four Main Financial Risks	Yes	Open	Director of Finance - Madhu Richards	Before 31 May 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Allocate Funding from the Project Contingency Earmarked Reserve	Yes	Open	Director of Finance - Madhu Richards	Before 31 May 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk