

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

Executive

Held in the Main Hall (Memorial Hall, Charlbury) - Charlbury Corner House and Memorial Hall at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 11 March 2026.**

PRESENT

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

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive Officer), Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance and Regulatory Services), Phil Martin (Director of Place), Claire Locke (Executive Director), Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer), Maria Harper (Democratic Services Assistant), Mathew Taylor (Democratic Services Officer), Tatiana Bell (Nature Recovery Officer), Alison Borrett (Senior Performance Analyst), Emma Cathcart (Head of Service, Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit), Melanie Dodd (Senior Biodiversity Officer), Lucy Empson, Heather McCulloch (Community Wellbeing Manager), Gemma Moreing (Business Information and Performance Lead), Emma Tarry, Thomas See (Homeseeker Plus Lead) and Leighton Simmons (Senior Ecologist)

Other Councillors in attendance: Julian Cooper, Genny Early, Dan Levy, David Melvin and Elizabeth Poskitt

465 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

466 Declarations of Interest

8. West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 - Spatial Options Consultation Summary Report and Local Development Scheme (LDS) Update.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Declaration for Transparency, Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader, declared that he was a director of a company in the planning industry. The interest was declared in relation to item 8. Councillor Enright would leave the meeting for the duration of that item.

467 Minutes of Previous Meeting

There were no amendments to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 February 2026.

The approval of the minutes was proposed by Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council.

Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council, seconded the proposal. The proposal was voted on and approved unanimously.

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RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 February 2026.

468 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, announced that there were two weeks remaining for participation in the public consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). There were three proposals for Oxfordshire and Councillor Graham encouraged all to take part and put their views across.

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, announced that there on 21 March 2026 at 10:00am there was a Go Electric Oxfordshire EV charging event at the Woolgate car park in Witney. At the event there would be an opportunity to learn about a range of electric vehicles and charging solutions.

Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities, announced that £5,000 of funding had been secured from Oxfordshire County Council, for Community Outreach Active Travel. This scheme was intended to encourage active travel in schools. A walking bus pilot was to be launched at Witney Community Primary School on 21 March 2026 at 8:00.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment, announced that Food Waste Action Week was running from 9 to 15 March 2026 to raise awareness of the issues around food waste. Councillor Arciszewska gave the meeting detail of the cost of food waste in monetary and energy use terms. Residents of West Oxfordshire were encouraged to consider what they do with their food waste which was seen to be costly to the taxpayer to dispose of at an incinerator where instead it could have been used to generate electricity. Councillor Arciszewska encouraged the public to obtain a compost bin and food caddy from the Council which was free of charge.

Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy, announced the appointment of Michael Rich to a role to lead on the Carterton Area Strategy. Mr Rich would continue to build on the engagement work with communities and stakeholders that had taken place to date.

469 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

470 Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Executive noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had met on 4 March 2026.

The comments made by the Committee had been circulated and published prior to the meeting. Full details could be viewed on the Council website.

The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to Item 9 - National Planning Policy Framework: Proposed reforms and changes to the planning system were addressed as part of agenda Item 9.

471 Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee

There had been no meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee since the last meeting of the Executive.

472 West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 - Spatial Options Consultation Summary Report and Local Development Scheme (LDS) Update

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council, left the meeting at 2:11pm, and returned at 2:21pm, the duration of item 8, in light of his previously declared interest.

Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to consider the Local Plan Preferred Spatial Options Consultation Paper which was proposed to be published for consultation in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

In his presentation Councillor Ashton made the following points:

- The Council had recently completed the fourth round of public consultation which had been on spatial options.
- The report presented at the meeting was a summary of the feedback from that consultation. The report also contained an update on the Local Development Scheme.
- There had been 2,200 responses from 900 individuals to the draft spatial options consultation and Councillor Ashton considered this to be a successful engagement. The summary of the responses could be viewed in annex A to the report.
- Stakeholders had expressed support for the extension of the plan period to 2043.
- Stakeholders had questioned the categorisation of their settlements in the proposed settlement hierarchy. Many respondents had suggested changes to the categorisation. A number had suggested that there should be an additional tier of settlement introduced.
- The overall Spatial Strategy, that had focussed on principal settlements and well-connected locations, was generally well supported, with an important caveat that developments should be underpinned by the availability and delivery of infrastructure.

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- Some stakeholders had considered the scales of development proposed to be too restrictive, where others had felt more clarity was required to prevent cumulative expansion.
- Residents had expressed concern on the proposed allocations in terms of scale, impact on community, infrastructure and impact on heritage assets. However, some support for the sites was seen from developers.
- All of the consultation feedback received would be considered in the Regulation 19 Draft.
- There had been changes in the Local Development Scheme which had set out the timeframe for Local Plan documents to be produced. As a result of a two-stage Regulation 18 consultation there was a delay to the consultation on the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan which would now take place in June 2026.

Councillor Ashton proposed the recommendations in the report.

Alternative options that were noted in the report were that the Council could have chosen not to progress with an update of the Local Plan. However, local authorities were required to keep plans up to date, typically reviewing them every 5-years or so.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, seconded the proposal and stated that the Local Development Scheme was published online and was made available in agreed deposit locations across the district. Councillor Graham noted the full consultation had taken place and Regulation 19 was the last chance to ensure robust policies were put in place to ensure developers could not exploit the new plan.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Note the content of the report.
2. Agree that the Preferred Spatial Options Consultation Summary Report attached at Annex A be published online.
3. Agree that the updated Local Development Scheme attached at Annex B be published online and made available in hard copy format in agreed 'deposit' locations across the District.

473 National Planning Policy Framework: Proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system

Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to consider the Council's response to the Government's consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other aspects of the planning system.

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In his presentation Councillor Ashton made the following points:

- The report had provided an overview of the consultation, highlighted the most significant proposals and changes and proposed the Council's response.
- The scale of the changes had taken many by surprise and was a comprehensive restructure and centralisation of policy formulation
- The District Council could have chosen not to respond to the consultation, however as a proactive Council it was felt necessary to try and influence the policies.
- The report and Annex A had been discussed at the recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, and the Committee's proposed responses and changes had been published on the Council's website and been very useful in the draft response.
- The consultation had been intended to conclude on 10 March 2026; however, the Council was able to put the response in on 13 March 2026 to take into account the comments at the Executive meeting.
- Councillor Ashton went on to summarise the key changes highlighted in the report, and the Council's position on the proposals in terms of those changes. Councillor Ashton focussed on the following areas: Plan-making; decision making policies; pre-application engagement; the ability to set local standards, such as was the case with the Salt Cross development; the use of settlement boundaries; reduced local control over large scale energy and infrastructure; the use of "permission in principle" on medium scale developments. Full detail was included in Annex A of the report.

Councillor Ashton proposed the recommendations in the report, with the additional second recommendation that had not been included in the published report as follows:

"Delegate authority to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning to finalise the consultation response and make amendments to address comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive."

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, suggested that there were some positive aspects to the proposals, however there were concerns about the centralisation of policies. Councillor Prosser queried if Government had addressed the housing numbers and targets in the proposed new framework. Councillor Ashton clarified that the housing targets had been made clear to be a minimum with no prospect of these being reduced.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council, welcomed that in the proposals certain elements of the planning system were being proposed to be standardised, particularly for smaller builders who worked across districts. Councillor Enright noted that in a rural district the "place" was important to ensure that that context was recognised in developments. Finally, Councillor Enright suggested that it was still difficult for young people in

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the district to get housing close to their networks and so the Local Plan produced by the Council should be well thought through and supported by the NPPF.

Non-Executive Members present suggested that the changes were significant and therefore encouraged cross-party representation to be made by the Council to the three Members of Parliament for West Oxfordshire. The members highlighted some of the flaws in the proposals that should be raised, these included the need for local representation, the removal of environmental protections which would impact the Salt Cross development among others, building near stations which was considered inappropriate in some rural settings and developers being enabled to buy out of their obligations around affordable housing and environmental provision.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, seconded the proposal and stated that, in light of the comments made by non-Executive members, he would commit to sending the response to Members of Parliament for West Oxfordshire and would raise the matter with them at his next regular meeting with them.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Note the content of the report and agree that the suggested draft consultation response attached at Annex A is submitted to Government.
2. Delegate authority to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning to finalise the consultation response and make amendments to address comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive

474 Approach to commissioning 3 year SLA 2027 onwards

Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities, presented the item, the purpose of which was to outline the principles, application process and timeline for the commissioning of three-year Service Level Agreements for Community Grants covering the period 2027-2030.

In her presentation Councillor Crouch raised the following points:

- In November 2025 the Executive had agreed to commission a further 3-year Community Grants Programme with a base budget of £396,000.
- The new Community Grants Programme needed to be commissioned before current agreements ended in March 2027 and needed to be in place by April 2027.
- The programme would use the procurement framework with an emphasis on measurable outcomes and alignment with Council priorities.
- Applications for grants would open in June to September 2026.

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- Funding decision would be made in November 2026.
- The programme would focus on: Climate resilience; Nature recovery and Community wellbeing.
- The maximum award was £30,000 per application, with up to two applications allowed per organisation.
- There was an assessment panel for the applications that would prioritise: partnership working, evidence of need, multi-focused delivery, inclusivity, climate and nature co-benefits and deliverability.
- The current base budget had been considered insufficient to meet expected demand and the proposals would increase the budget by £53,000 per annum, which meant a £555,000 programme over the three-year period.

Councillor Crouch then proposed the recommendations in the report.

The alternative options detailed in the report were that the timeframe could have been contracted as at the moment it is very generous. Options could have included opening the programme to applications later in the year, reducing the application window, shortening the assessment and decision-making period, or providing applicants with less notice of funding outcomes. However, the Council's preference was to retain a generous timeline at this stage that allowed for unexpected developments and competing demands on time. The Procurement team had confirmed that the proposed timeframe was both achievable and preferable. The number of Lots could also have been adjusted, either reduced or increased. The Council's preference was to maintain multiple focus areas, as this is likely to have made the programme more relatable and accessible to a wider range of potential applicants across different sectors.

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, seconded the proposal and stated that he considered it important to ensure that this work would continue in light of Local Government Reorganisation.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Approve the principles and timeline as set out in Sections 3 and 4.
2. Agree an increase to the Base Budget of £53k per annum as part of the 2027-2028 budget setting process, and for subsequent years, bringing the total budget available to £555k over three years.
3. Delegate authority for oversight of the commissioning process to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Stronger Healthier Communities.

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Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, presented the item, the purpose of which was to consider the West Oxfordshire District Council Biodiversity Duty Report, which must be published by the Council before 26 March 2026.

In his presentation Councillor Prosser made the following points:

- The Duty Report was a new requirement on Local Authorities to demonstrate actions that they had taken to support biodiversity and nature recovery in their areas.
- It was appropriate that the meeting was taking place in Charlbury which was an area well known for its work in supporting nature.
- The Council had put in place a Nature Recovery Plan to 2030 three years ago to show what actions it would take to support biodiversity and nature. The report showed where the Council was in terms of this plan.
- The importance of the work was highlighted. It was estimated that 50% of biodiversity had disappeared in the country since the industrial revolution. The challenges in this area were very large but important.
- The Council had strengthened its partnerships with local organisations to support managing land to enhance value for wildlife.
- Officers had worked to embed the Biodiversity Net Gain Duty on developers.
- The Council had installed wildlife features at offices and supported other landowners to do this also.

Councillor Prosser proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

As the Biodiversity Duty Report must have been published in order to comply with the statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021 there were no alternative options outlined in the report.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment, seconded the proposal.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Note the content of the West Oxfordshire Biodiversity Duty Report attached at Annex A; and
2. Agree that the report be published before 26 March 2026 in accordance with legislative requirements.

476 HomeseekerPlus Policy Review

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care, presented the item, the purpose of which was to review the HomeseekerPlus Policy.

In his presentation Councillor Saul made the following points:

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- HomeseekerPlus was the choice based- lettings system used jointly by the seven councils across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire. It had been in place since 2016 and was last reviewed in 2022. Since then, changes in legislation, alongside operational learning, had meant that the policy now needed to be updated.
- The aim of this review was to ensure the policy remained fair, transparent, and legally compliant, and that it would continue to prioritise those most in need of affordable housing.
- The Key changes to the policy were:
- Qualification Criteria: The financial assessment had been updated so that it now also considered whether a resident had sufficient resources to access housing across different tenures. Where an applicant had deliberately worsened their housing circumstances, they would now be placed in the lowest priority band for six months and could only move up if they had taken reasonable steps to improve their situation. Local connection through employment would now apply only to the main or joint applicant (unless there are exceptional circumstances), which brought consistency across all partners. The Council was consulting on options to expand local connection for Armed Forces personnel and veterans.
- Assessment and Banding: Applicants would only receive higher banding where they had acted on reasonable professional advice — for example advice about preventing homelessness through working with Environmental Services, Landlords or medical professionals. Emergency priority for downsizing would now only apply where releasing the property had met a clearly identified demand, rather than being automatic. Fixed, six-month periods where banding may be reduced if an applicant does not act with urgency were being introduced. Two new criteria were added for bedroom need: where a couple could not share due to medical reasons, and where an applicant was in the third trimester of pregnancy.
- A four-week public consultation would commence in May 2026 which would allow residents, housing associations, voluntary organisations and other stakeholders to comment on the proposed changes.

Councillor Saul proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

As there was a requirement to ensure an open, transparent and fair process to changes in Policy there were no other alternative options detailed in the report.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, seconded the proposal and noted that there would be a consultation on the proposals and communications would be made to highlight how the public could take part.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Approve the draft Policy for public consultation

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2. Delegate authority to the Business Manager Housing in consultation with Executive Member for Housing and Social Care and Publica Executive Director – Operations to adopt the new policy following consideration of the consultation results

477 Kilkeny Car Park

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment, presented the item, the purpose of which was to add Kilkeny Car Park to the West Oxfordshire District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order.

In her presentation Councillor Arciszewska advised that the Kilkeny Car Park was a Council owned car park, and it had been suggested that this should now be brought in line with the management of other Council owned car parks by adding it to the Parking Order. This action was in response to issues with the use of the car park in 2025 with which residents had been unhappy.

Councillor Arciszewska proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

The alternative options detailed in the report were that the Council could have chosen not to include the car park in the Parking Order and continue to have little or no regulations at the site and rely on ownership rights.

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, seconded the proposal.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Add the Kilkeny Car Park to the West Oxfordshire District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order ('the Parking Order') to enable the Council to regulate and manage the use.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Corporate Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment to consider consultation feedback received in respect of the proposed amendments to the Parking Order and decide whether to make the variation to the Parking Order in whole or in part or to abandon the proposal.

478 Corporate Enforcement Policy

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, presented the item, the purpose of which was to present the Executive with a revised Corporate Enforcement Policy ('The Policy') for approval and adoption.

West Oxfordshire District Council ('the Council') was required to have an effective Corporate Enforcement Policy that enabled Officers to investigate and take action to ensure individuals and businesses complied with the law. The Policy set out the legislative framework and principles the Council would abide by when undertaking investigations to mitigate the risk

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of legal challenge in Court. The Policy demonstrated the Council's consideration of necessity, proportionality and public interest when deciding on enforcement action and demonstrated openness and transparency for residents, Councillors and employees.

Councillor Graham noted that the policy had been reviewed by the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit who had consulted with the enforcement lead officers across the Council. The policy was overarching and acted as the Council's prosecution policy however various service areas who had responsibility for enforcement had much more detailed enforcement policies and procedures relating to their areas legislation and approach. Councillor Graham noted that only minor changes to most of the policy were needed with the more significant amendments in the service area sections which included more detail.

Councillor Graham proposed accepting the recommendations made in the report.

The report noted that there were no alternative options available to the Executive in this case.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council, praised the Council for having a lean approach to enforcement, which included the Audit and Governance Committee and the teams that supported this, including the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit.

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, seconded the proposal and noted that this was a key policy to ensure that the Council could undertake necessary enforcement action.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Approve and adopt the Corporate Enforcement Policy attached to this report as Annex A.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services to approve future minor amendments to the Policy, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Head of Service Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit, Relevant Heads of Service and the Head of Legal Services.

479 Quarterly Finance Review Q3

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to detail the Council's financial performance for Quarter Three 2025-2026.

In his presentation Councillor Smith highlighted the following points:

- At the end of Quarter three there was a cost-of-service underspend of £630,078.
- The key factors contributing to the position were, additional income from Trade Waste, Development Management and the leisure contract.

- There were no significant overspends to report for Quarter Three.
- Investment income was better than budget due in the main to interest rates falling more slowly in the last year than had been anticipated at 2025/26 budget setting. The year end forecast was for an additional £596,000 of investment income above budget.
- In terms of the Capital Programme, there were a number of projects ongoing that included, repairs at The Old Court, Chipping Norton Leisure Centre and Carterton Industrial Estate.
- There was an underspend on the replacement waste fleet which had been rolled into a full waste vehicle strategy which should generate savings.
- The Council was acquiring properties in the district for emergency accommodation, and advance negotiations were ongoing for a further six properties to be acquired.
- The Witney PSDS project was now in the construction phase and had an estimated completion of March 2026.
- S106 contributions had resulted in £1.6m distributed to Town and Parish Councils for projects.

Councillor Smith proposed accepting the recommendations in the report.

There were no alternative options detailed in the report.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, seconded the proposal.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Note the Council's Financial Performance for Quarter Three 2025-2026
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, to review earmarked reserves to mitigate against the financial risks identified in this report. See Sections 2.21 – 2.24.

480 **Quarterly Service Review Q3**

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, presented the item, the purpose of which was to provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2025-26 Quarter Three (Q3).

Councillor Graham summarised several of the key aspects of the report as follows:

- Overall performance for the Council had been positive for Quarter Three.
- Westhive Round 5 had finished and had provided funding for ten new community projects.
- Lettings at Marriotts Walk had continued, with agreements having been secured for three Units alongside ongoing work on public realm design. This was significant progress when compared to other towns across the country who were struggling.
- The Windrush Leisure Centre decarbonisation project had continued to progress with installation of the new low-carbon heating system and removal of the asbestos boiler.

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- Market town support had continued, with fourteen Shop Front Improvement Grants that were on track for award with further grants expected to assist up to nineteen local businesses. Markets in Witney and Chipping Norton had continued to be successful.
- Planning applications determined within agreed timescales had continued to exceed targets and planning appeals had come back under target in the quarter.
- Customer Service satisfaction had continued to be strong and the average wait times had improved by around forty-five seconds compared to last year.
- Visits to the leisure centres and gym memberships had remained high, with memberships exceeding the target by just over 11% and visits exceeding the target by around 32%.
- Councillor Graham acknowledged that some service performance had not hit targets and there was work to be done on these areas.

Councillor Graham proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

There were no alternative options detailed in the report.

Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy, seconded the proposal.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive Resolved to:

1. Note the 2025/26 Q3 service performance report.

481

Review of Publica Members Agreement and Service Specifications

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, presented the item the purpose of which was for the Executive to consider proposals for amendments and an extension to governance arrangements following the conclusion of the Publica Review. This included the updating of service specifications, service agreements, the members agreement and articles of association.

Councillor Graham made the following key points in his presentation:

- There had been significant changes to Publica in the last few years following the Publica Review and the return of some services to the Council.
- There had also been changes to the company board structure with new Non-Executive Directors having been appointed including council officer representation, and a slimmed down Publica Executive structure that reflected the reduced service provision to partners.
- The changes to governance arrangements and service specification were set out in the report. There were minor changes to the Articles of Association and Members Agreement to ensure provisions were up to date, relevant and clear. There were more significant changes to the Service Specification, with the merging of three separate service specifications into one and a reduction in services provided by Publica as some

had transferred back to the Councils. It also provided one single agreement end date of 31 October 2030 that provided continuity should any new unitary authority want to continue with the model, or undertake a phased shutdown, whilst retaining flexibility for termination earlier, if necessary.

- Once approved, the changes to the Articles of Association, Members Agreement and Service Specification would be legally enacted through deeds of variation to the original documentation.

Councillor Graham proposed accepting the recommendations in the report.

Alternative options detailed in the report were that the council could have continued to operate the arrangements with Publica under side letter, however this would have failed to provide clarity of revisions to roles and responsibilities and the service specification after the Publica Review.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council, seconded the proposal.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Approve in principle the changes to the governance agreements set out in section 3 below.
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to finalise and enact through appropriate legal documentation, the detailed changes to the agreements, in line with principles agreed.

482 Ubico Service Agreement

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, presented the item the purpose of which was to move to a single, common service agreement to be adopted by all Ubico shareholder councils and effective from April 2027, with council-specific service specifications appended.

Councillor Graham stated that this approach would secure the delivery of service beyond the current contract end date in March 2027, retain local flexibility over service scope and standards and introduce consistency in legal structure, definitions, and core contractual provisions across the Ubico Shareholding partnership. The proposed agreement had updated terminology, reflected legislative change, standardised notice periods, and included specific provisions to ensure continuity of services in the event of local government reorganisation. Importantly, it did not change the Shareholder Agreement or the Council's role as an owner of Ubico. Adoption of the common Service Agreement would provide greater clarity, resilience and long-term planning certainty while retaining strong council control over service scope, cost and performance, within the existing shareholder governance framework.

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Councillor Graham proposed accepting the recommendations in the report and reminded those attending that there were mechanisms available to make complaints and comment on the services provided by Ubico.

Alternative options detailed in the report included: Do nothing – Retain the existing WODC-specific agreement. This would have perpetuated inconsistency across shareholders and required a separate renegotiation for WODC by March 2027. Re-procure services externally. This would have introduced significant cost, risk and service disruption. Neither alternative option was recommended.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment, seconded the proposal.

This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Approve the Ubico Service Agreement in principle.
2. Delegate authority to Director of Place in consultation with The Leader of the Council, to:
 - a. Agree and approve the final wording of the Service Agreement before the current contract expires at the end of March 2027.
 - b. Agree and approve the final wording of the Lease Agreement
 - c. Agree and approve the updated Service Specification

483 Response to government consultation on local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, presented the item the purpose of which was to seek delegated authority for the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to submit a response to the Government's statutory consultation on the three proposed options submitted for Local Government Reorganisation for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.

Councillor Graham reminded the meeting that he had alluded to the three structures proposed for a new Unitary Council in his earlier announcement and proposed accepting the recommendation of the report.

The alternative options detailed in the report were that the Executive could have decided not to submit a consultation response to the statutory consultation for Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire. To do so would have been inconsistent with the formal decisions taken in November 2025 to support and submit the proposal for a two unitary model for Local Government Reorganisation in response to the Secretary of State's formal invitation to do so.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of Council, seconded the proposal.

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This was voted on and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

- I. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to submit a response to the Government's statutory consultation on Local Government Reorganisation for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council.

The Meeting closed at 3.23 pm

CHAIR