

Tuesday, 24 February 2026

Tel: 01993 861000

e-mail: democraticservices@westoxon.gov.uk

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, 4 March 2026 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 - 12)**
To approve the minutes of the Committee meeting held 4 February 2026.
4. **Chair's announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
5. **Participation of the Public**
To receive any submissions from members of the public, in accordance with the Council's [Public Participation Rules](#).

The deadline for submissions is 2.00pm, two clear working days before the meeting.
6. **Report back on recommendations (Pages 13 - 14)**
To note the Executive's response to the Committee's recommendations on Mental Health Initiatives and Nature Recovery.
7. **National Planning Policy Framework: Proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system (Pages 15 - 34)**
Purpose
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.

Recommendation
That the Executive resolves to:
 - I. Note the content of the report and agree that the suggested draft consultation response attached at Annex A is submitted to Government.
Annex A- to follow
8. **2025/26 Quarterly Finance Review Q3 (Pages 35 - 52)**
Report to follow.
9. **2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q4 (Pages 53 - 118)**
Purpose
To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2025-26 Quarter Three (Q3).

Recommendation

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves to:

- I. Note the report and agree any recommendations to the Executive.

10. **Approach to commissioning 3 year SLA 2027 onwards (Pages 119 - 128)**

Purpose

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.

Recommendation

That the Committee resolves to:

- I. Note the report and agree any recommendations to the Executive.

11. **Updates from Task and Finish Groups**

For the Chairs of Task and Finish Groups to provide any verbal or written progress updates.

12. **Committee Work Programme (Pages 129 - 142)**

Purpose:

For the Committee to review and note its work programme.

Recommendation:

That the Committee

1. Notes the work plan for 2025-26
2. Recommends the 2026-27 work plan to the incoming committee

13. **Executive Work Programme (Pages 143 - 154)**

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
INB at 5.30 pm on **Wednesday, 4 February 2026**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Genny Early (Vice-Chair), Adam Clements, Steve Cosier, Natalie King, Julian Cooper, Nick Leverton, Elizabeth Poskitt, Paul Marsh, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray

Officers: Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Georgina Dyer (Head of Finance), Phil Martin (Director of Place), Mathew Taylor (Democratic Services Officer), Melanie Dodd (Senior Biodiversity Officer), Heather McCulloch (Community Wellbeing Manager) and Leighton Simmons (Senior Ecologist)

Other Councillors in attendance: Rachel Crouch, Andrew Prosser and Alaric Smith

85 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

Apologies were received from Councillors Liz Leffman, Dan Levy, Mark Walker and Ruth Smith.

Councillor Julian Cooper substituted for Councillor Leffman and Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt substituted for Councillor Levy.

86 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from members of the Committee.

87 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Genny Early, Vice-Chair of the Committee, noted that she had not made the comment attributed to her in the minutes but rather was pointing out an omission in the previous minutes.

The approval of the minutes, subject to Councillor Early's amendment, was proposed by Councillor Stuart McCarroll and seconded by Councillor Steve Cosier, put to the vote and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2026 as an accurate record subject to the minor amendment.

88 Chair's announcements

Andrew Beaney, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, announced that there would be an informal meeting to discuss the work plan for the following year at 4.00pm on 19 February 2026, he encouraged Members to attend.

89 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

90 Budget 2026/27 & medium term financial strategy

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, highlighting that:

- The associated strategies for treasury, capital and investment had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee.
- The budget was balanced based on the 3-year government settlement.
- There was a contribution to general fund reserves of £650,884 before growth items, which would help the Council to deliver its priorities.
- There were sufficient reserves to see the Council through to vesting day for the successor authority, although there were a number of unknowns.
- The Committee was considering the second draft of the budget. Version 3 had been published for the Executive the previous day and included some changes from version 2, including savings related to the Ubico contract and the reallocation of Publica costs, which had been favourable for the Council.
- Officers were thanked for their work in delivering a satisfactory budget.

The Committee asked questions and the following points were noted from the responses:

- More information was requested on the £156k growth item for sovereign posts. Negotiations were underway with a small number of employees in shared posts about working 100% for the Council and the Director of Finance agreed to consult SLT on providing more specific information to the Committee.
- There would be costs associated with local government transformation but those costs unknown at this stage and may differ depending on the future unitary model.
- The capital programme reflected the Council's intention to invest in temporary emergency accommodation to better support people experiencing homelessness and, at Woodford Way, the delivery of affordable housing.
- All growth requests included in the budget had been subject to an internal approval process involving the Council's senior leadership team. Where posts were being

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funded for fixed periods, these could potentially be extended through the same process if there was a business case for doing so.

- An additional Environmental Crime Officer post would provide additional capacity to address offenses such as fly tipping and meet the demands on that service.
- The change to the bottom line from version 2 to version 3 of the budget was only £32k but within that there a number of changes, including:
 - o Additional external audit costs (fees were set externally).
 - o An increased Council Tax surplus.
 - o Reduced interest on external borrowing as the Council was now not expected to undertake prudential borrowing in 2026/27.
 - o Adjustments to commercial property income.
 - o The inclusion of mileage costs for Council employees who undertake site visits (previously employed by Publica).
 - o Reduced costs related to the Ubico contract and the rebasing of the Publica cost model.
 - o £50k for exploratory work on undertaking a community governance review following a Council motion.

The Committee thanked the Executive Member and officers for providing clear explanations.

The Committee agreed to consider how to approach scrutinising the budget next year. Members commented that it would have been helpful for the changes in version 3 to have been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting, or alternatively for the meeting to have been held closer to the February Executive meeting to enable scrutiny of a later version.

91 West Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Plan

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, presented the item to the Committee, the purpose of which was to provide a progress update on the delivery of the Council's Nature Recovery Plan (2024 – 2030) and an outline of the requirement to publish a report on the implementation of the Council's statutory biodiversity duty for the reporting period 12 February 2024 to 1 January 2026. Councillor Prosser advised that the Nature Recovery Plan had three themes which could be seen at section 2.3 of the report.

In the discussion the following was discussed:

- The Committee explored the likely impact of the Infrastructure Planning Bill on the Nature Recovery Plan. It was noted that the impacts of this were not yet known as secondary legislation was still awaited. Further, it was the intention that the Nature

Recovery Plan would apply to a broader area than planning alone and included Council owned land and policies.

- Members suggested that the report should show more clearly how the investment and officer work was resulting in outcomes that were measurable. It was suggested that it may be beneficial for targets and KPI's to be set on an annual basis, with an eventual ten-year review, so that the impacts of the work could be seen. The officers advised that there was an action tracker with some KPI's and that this could be included in future reports. A Member also suggested that fewer work streams with key deliverables could be beneficial for reporting and more focused work.
- It was noted that the report did not feature a sewerage map, this was seen as an important area of action, and it was suggested that this could be included.
- The Committee considered targets for the use of glyphosate and questioned how its use was tracked. It was suggested that there were challenges in obtaining data to monitor the historic and current use of glyphosate. The Executive Member noted that the target for its use was zero in 2026 but noted exceptions to this for cases of certain invasive species. The Principal Ecologist advised that the Council's Woodgreen offices had been trialling zero glyphosate use for the past year which could be expanded. It was proposed that a policy on glyphosate use should be created.
- The Council's engagement with Town and Parish Councils on the plan was explored. Efforts to engage had seen disappointing results and officers were considering meeting in person with representatives as a potential next step. It was suggested that the varying levels of expertise and resource at Town and Parish Councils may have been a barrier to implementing aspects of nature recovery. Members were encouraged to advise Parish and Town Councils that the Council did fund organisations, such as Wild Oxfordshire, to give support in this area and to contact officers for information.
- Within new housing developments it was suggested that Management Companies did not undertake the required biodiversity work that was promised. Solutions to this issue were explored. Officers suggested that the emerging Local Plan included ongoing stewardship requirements on developers and Biodiversity Net Gain would be monitored for thirty years. A Member suggested that in future the Council could own and manage the green spaces to ensure the biodiversity work continued and was completed. The Chair suggested that this topic could be added to the work plan.
- It was suggested that the Council's approach to the biodiversity of rivers was fragmented and value could be added by the Council through providing support, co-ordination and overarching strategies. Examples were given where the Council could have assisted projects by helping to establish land ownership. The Executive Member noted that the emerging Local Plan was an overarching strategy. The Officer noted that the Council did facilitate collaboration between catchment projects. A Member suggested that while smaller projects added value for rivers, Thames Water needed to be held accountable.
- A query was raised to the number of swift bricks on Council owned land. The Officer advised that installation at Woodgreen was imminent following maintenance work.
- Members discussed who was responsible for handling the removal of non-native invasive species. Officers advised that cases could be reported and dealt with by the Council however in some cases it was the landowner's responsibility.

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- The Chair queried when a decision would be made on the ongoing support for the Windrush Project. Officers advised that positive meetings had been held and the service level agreement had been reviewed. A further meeting was planned for later in February, but the Council's expectation was that bids should be delivered in the year.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Noted the progress made in delivering the Nature Recovery Plan (2024 – 2030); and
2. Noted the requirement to publish a report on the Council's implementation of the statutory biodiversity duty within 12 weeks of the end of the reporting period (26th March 2026).
3. Agreed to submit the following recommendations to the Executive:
 - i. That the Council sets out a clear policy and timeline for ceasing the use of glyphosate.
 - ii. That the Council's nature recovery reporting is focused on a more limited number of work streams, with clear Key Performance Indicators.

92 Supporting mental health initiatives

Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, presented the item the purpose of which was to update on activities undertaken by the Council to promote good mental health.

In her presentation Councillor Crouch made the following points:

- Section two of the report had set out the current data across Oxfordshire that related to mental health.
- The actions that had been undertaken by the Council to promote better mental health were shown in section four of the report. Councillor Crouch gave examples that included: the Mental Health Summit; training for Councillors; West Oxfordshire Youth Partnership meetings; research in Central Witney Ward; funding for APCAM and others; Westhive projects; YouMove; Low Income Family Tracker and a Volunteers' Fair.
- Councillor Crouch reiterated the support that was available for Councillors and highlighted the upcoming sessions on the mental health Training delivered by MIND.

In the discussion the following points were raised:

- New housing developments needed to include a specific mental health scheme to tackle the potential for disconnected communities. Developments should also be

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planned to avoid such disconnection through segmenting different residents. The risk of disconnect was even greater given the scale of the proposed developments in the district. There was a suggestion that such schemes could be included in the emerging Local Plan. Members also commented that it was essential for large developments to include a community hub to help tackle disconnected and socially isolated residents. The example of Shilton Park was given. A member noted that a motivated and dynamic person was often essential to ensure such hubs were successful.

- Suggestions for further action in the area of mental health were raised such as: Officers visiting and collaborating with schools and parents; additional resources for GLL to provide more activities; promotion of schemes and improvement of Council communications; targeting late teens to improve access to fitness resources. The officers noted that they were working with GLL to increase capacity for activities and S106 monies were available for this. The Chair commented that the current communication methods may have missed older children who preferred other media to gather information.
- The Executive Member advised that the key resources that had been identified as needed for organisations working in mental health were spaces to operate and transport. Further resource and work had been done in this area and spaces for services to operate in Witney had been identified. At present ten thousand pounds had been allocated for this work.
- A Member queried if the research that had been undertaken in the Central Witney Ward could be expanded to other areas of the district. Officers advised that this research had been targeted at this ward on the basis of identified health inequality. Further work of this type would require additional financial and officer resource.
- The Committee explored the possibility of the Council encouraging employers to use their apprenticeship levy to develop mental health roles, rather than the current predominant focus on operational roles. This was noted to be an underexplored area which officers would look at.
- Officer training for assisting residents with mental health difficulties and the Council's touchpoints were explored, including the current Woodgreen office reception arrangements. Officers advised that training was available and those officers in particularly challenging roles received specific training. The future direction of the reception at Woodgreen was currently under consideration.
- The Chair encouraged all Members to sign up for the training on Mental Health for Councillors.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Noted the report.
2. Agreed to submit the following recommendations to the Executive:
 - i. That the Council allocates resources to replicate the Community Health Insight Profile (CHIP) undertaken in Central Witney, in other parts of the district.
 - ii. That the Council increases the funding for the mental health projects from £10k to £20k.

- iii. That the Council reviews the reception arrangements at Woodgreen.

93 Report back on recommendations

The Committee noted the letter that had been sent to Oxfordshire County Council on behalf of the Committee in response to the County Council's consultation on proposed changes to the fire and rescue service.

94 Updates from Task and Finish Groups

The Chair noted that the Leisure Task and Finish Groups work had now been completed. Questions from the Waste Transformation Task and Finish Group were still awaiting responses and officers were asked to follow this up and arrange a further meeting of the Group within the current civic year.

Councillor Genny Early, Vice-Chair of the Committee, advised that the Public Conveniences Task and Finish Group had considered the forthcoming Executive report titled "Investment in Public Conveniences" and had endorsed the proposals therein.

95 Committee Work Programme

Further to the discussion at item 8, it was proposed that an item on Management Companies in new developments be added to the Committee Work Plan.

96 Executive Work Programme

There were no comments on the Executive Work Programme.

The Meeting closed at 8.13 pm.

CHAIR

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Executive response to recommendations on from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – February 2026

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 February 2026 considered reports it had requested from officers titled “West Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Plan” and “Supporting Mental Health Initiatives”. The Committee agreed to submit the following recommendations to the Executive.

West Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Plan

Recommendation	Agreed Y / N?	Comment	Responsible Executive Member	Lead Officer
1. That the Council sets out a clear policy and timeline for ceasing the use of glyphosate.	Yes	The target in the Council’s Nature Recovery Plan is to phase out use of glyphosate completely. It has been reduced, as agreed at Executive on 23 rd April 2025 West Oxfordshire District Council - Agenda for Executive on Wednesday, 23rd April, 2025, 2.00 pm Following this, it was agreed with both Environmental Services and Waste Transformation Lead and Ubico to stop using glyphosate at the WODC offices in Woodgreen. Alternative methods are being trialled at Woodgreen with a view to using this elsewhere (only 1 growing season so far and it was a drought year). There needs to be an agreement on a timeline to phase out glyphosate use entirely.	Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery	Mel Dodd, Principal Ecologist
2. That the Council’s nature recovery reporting is focused on a more limited number of work streams, with clear Key Performance Indicators.	Yes	It would be relatively simple to add an Annex to the committee report next year to provide a summary of action towards the KPIs in the Nature Recovery Plan. This would be based on an existing project tracker that the team use to monitor progress (highlighting progress using red-amber-green colour coding). The report itself could then be simplified to focus on key areas of work and/or success stories. <i>Headlines from the Local Plan Biodiversity Annual Monitoring Report (produced by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre, TVERC) could be added to the report next year to provide additional context relating to regional trends.</i>		

Supporting Mental Health Initiatives

Recommendation	Agreed Y / N?	Comment	Executive Member	Lead Officer
1. That the Council allocates resources to replicate the Community Health Insight Profile (CHIP) undertaken in Central Witney, in other parts of the district.	N	Funding of £60k is provided by OCC Public Health to undertake CHIP work. The format has 3 parts – 1. Commission new research 2. Appoint a Community Health Dev Officer and 3. Distribute grant funding of around £25k. Other councils have done them independently (South Ox for Didcot). Areas are selected based on areas of greatest need based on the National Indices of Multiple Deprivation data. Whilst there would be value in this an alternative could be to link additional resources, should they be available, to the current Marmot Place health research taking place to enable interventions to be delivered based on the data emerging from those 4 rural locations – Chipping Norton, Charlbury, Long Hanborough and Freeland. Officers could also offer to provide more of a deep dive into the workings of the CHIP. A further report will be brought forward for consideration once the outcomes of the Marmot Place Health Research are known.	Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger Healthier Communities	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager Madhu Richards, Director of Finance
2. That the Council increases the funding for the mental health projects from £10k to £20k.	Y	Across the service funding is being directed at interventions which are known to positively support mental wellbeing – and this is linked to the data. The additional £10k provided to accompany the MH Champion role has not yet been allocated although Cllr Crouch has some options and ideas around funding hire of spaces and transport. No-one would argue that funds for MH is a positive step but more clarity of purpose might be helpful. One option to consider could be the question of space which seems to be an acute issue especially in Witney – Keystone Hubs / CAMHS both urgently looking for space. A further £10k will be allocated from the new initiatives funding once need has been identified.	Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger Healthier Communities	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager Madhu Richards, Director of Finance
3. That the Council reviews the reception arrangements at Woodgreen.	Y	Following the refurbishment of areas of the Woodgreen Offices as part of the overall Agile project, the reception area was moved and was re-established as a customer point rather than being the Council's primary reception area which is now in the Welch Way Office in the Town Centre, due to it being a more convenient location for the majority of residents due to access to public transport and car parking. Officers are looking at how this function is resourced more effectively, the ICT arrangements and seating arrangements for visitors, many of which have appointments with the registrars.	Councillor Andy Graham, Leader	Phil Martin, Director of Place

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 MARCH 2026.</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>PROPOSED REFORMS TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND OTHER CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Hugo Ashton – Executive Member for Planning Email: hugo.ashton@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves – Head of Planning Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves – Head of Planning Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Suggested draft consultation response</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note the content of the report and agree that the suggested draft consultation response attached at Annex A is submitted to Government.
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>The proposed changes to the NPPF and other planning reforms cover a broad spectrum of issues that inter-relate with the following priorities in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>

Consultees/ Consultation	This is a Government consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other aspects of the planning system. The Council's suggested draft response to the consultation is attached at Annex A.
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Government is consulting on a new draft version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF – hereafter referred to as ‘the Framework’) alongside other proposed reforms to the planning system.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the consultation, highlighting the most significant proposed changes that are likely to have implications for plan-making and decision-making in West Oxfordshire and to agree the Council’s response to the consultation.

2. WHAT IS BEING CONSULTED ON?

- 2.1 The consultation proposes some fundamental changes to national planning policy.
- 2.2 There are two main consultation documents – an overarching paper which explains the context and rationale for the proposed changes and a revised draft text version of the Framework itself.
- 2.3 There are 225 consultation questions in total. The majority of these relate to the proposed changes to the Framework, with the remainder focusing on other proposed changes relating to energy thresholds and data centres, viability and site thresholds.

3. BACKGROUND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The consultation paper provides useful context on the reason for the proposed changes, much of which relates to boosting housing delivery and economic growth, building on the changes already introduced by the Government in the previous December 2024 update of the Framework (e.g. increased mandatory housing targets etc.).
- 3.2 It also reflects the progress of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill which received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025 as well as the outcomes of various ‘working paper’ consultations previously carried out on issues such as brownfield passports.
- 3.3 In essence, what is now proposed is a fuller, more definitive update of national policy with the changes designed to make planning policy easier to use, underpin the development of faster and simpler local plans, and be more directive of decision-making.

4. SUMMARY OVERVIEW: SECTIONS 1 - 4

4.1 This section of the report provides a summary overview of the consultation, with a particular focus on the first four sections of the draft Framework, highlighting those aspects which are new and/or likely to be most impactful.

Overarching objectives

4.2 The consultation is based on three main objectives:

- To ensure national policy is accessible and understandable;
- To establish a suite of national policies on general planning matters (thereby avoiding the need for these to be repeated or deviated from in locally produced plans); and
- To introduce a more 'rules-based' approach to support timely and consistent planning, with a default 'yes' to development in suitable locations.

12 key policy changes

4.3 The consultation highlights twelve particularly substantive changes to the Framework. These are explained in more detail throughout this report and the suggested draft response at Annex A, but in summary include:

1. A permanent presumption in favour of suitably located development
2. Building homes around stations
3. Driving urban and suburban densification
4. Securing a diverse mix of homes
5. Supporting small and medium sites
6. Streamlining local standards
7. Boosting local and regional economies
8. Supporting critical and growth minerals
9. Embedding a vision-led approach to transport
10. Better addressing climate change
11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
12. Taking a more positive approach to the use of heritage assets

Overall Structure and Content

4.4 Changes are proposed to the overall structure and content of the Framework to improve clarity, useability and consistency.

4.5 In terms of structure, it retains the use of 'topic-based' chapters on issues such as housing, the economy and natural environment. These have however been re-ordered and put into more logical sub-headings and groupings.

4.6 Additional chapters are included on planning for energy and water and managing flood risk and coastal change. The draft Framework also incorporates policies relating to traveller sites which are currently set out in separate national planning policy.

4.7 A number of new annexes are proposed, primarily to import key aspects of separate Planning Practice Guidance where these are considered essential for the operability of the Framework's policies. This includes housing calculations and supply, the approach to Green Belt assessments and information requirements for planning applications.

Key Points to Note

4.8 The most significant update in terms of the overall structure and content of the Framework is the introduction of new national policies relating to 'plan-making' and 'decision-making'.

4.9 The 'plan-making' policies are intended to guide the preparation of Local Plans and must be taken into account by local authorities when drawing up those plans. They are not however to be used when making decisions on development proposals.

4.10 Whilst the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 will be examined under the December 2024 version of the Framework under transitional arrangements, the new plan-making policies provide a clear indication of the Government's intent and thus will be reflected on as Officers work up the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan later this year.

4.11 The 'decision-making' policies whilst non-statutory, will be a material consideration when applications are determined, alongside the local plan and any other material considerations. Importantly, the decision-making policies will carry weight from the date of publication of the new Framework and where existing Local Plan policies are inconsistent with them, the Local Plan policies will be given 'very limited weight'.

4.12 Officers are concerned about this approach and consider that a transitional period should apply to allow local authorities the time to update their Local Plans accordingly.

4.13 The consultation makes it clear that the new national decision-making policies should not be repeated in locally produced plans (Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans etc.) the primary purpose of which in the future will be to focus on site-specific and locally-specific matters only.

4.14 Again, this raises some concern. Whilst it is accepted that Local Plans do not need to repeat national policy unnecessarily, removing their ability to cover the wide variety of issues addressed by the new national decision-making policies altogether is considered a step too far. This is reflected in the draft response attached at Annex A.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

4.15 The opening chapter of the draft Framework explains its role, provides practical information on how it should be used and sets out a high-level narrative on the purpose of the planning system. Whilst it helpfully reinforces the importance of having a plan-led system in place, as outlined above, Officers have concerns that too much of the current content of Local Plans is proposed to be stripped out and deferred to the new national decision-making policies and new Spatial Development Strategies (see Chapter 2 overview below).

Key Points to Note

- 4.16** Of note here is the proposed use of a simpler and more consistent approach to the ‘weighting’ of different considerations throughout the Framework. Members will be aware that the current version uses a number of different terms where weight is to be given to particular matters (e.g. great weight, significant weight, substantial weight etc.).
- 4.17** As these are not intended to imply any sort of hierarchy, it is instead proposed that the single term ‘substantial’ is instead used throughout. Officers are supportive of this proposed approach.

Chapter 2 – Plan-Making Policies

- 4.18** This chapter explains what the required parts of the development plan are. It then sets out plan-making policies which are intended to support the implementation of the new plan-making system, alongside new regulations and guidance. These are grouped under three main areas, ‘plan-making’, ‘preparing plans’ and ‘examining plans’ with a series of policies under each.

Key Points to Note

- 4.19** There are a number of important points to note here.
- 4.20** Firstly, the proposed, collective components of the ‘development plan’ which, going forward, will include:
- A Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) produced by strategic planning authorities;
 - A Local Plan produced by local planning authorities;
 - A Minerals and Waste Plan produced by a minerals and waste planning authority; and
 - A Policies Map, prepared and maintained by the local planning authority.
- 4.21** In addition, it may also include:
- Supplementary Plans, produced by local planning authorities, minerals and waste planning authorities and, where relevant, the Mayor of London; and
 - Neighbourhood Plans, produced by parish councils and neighbourhood forums.
- 4.22** The ‘new’ aspects here are the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) and Supplementary Plans.
- 4.23** Strategic Development Strategies (SDSs) are intended to be strategic, high-level plans that will be prepared at the sub-regional level. Once adopted, they will form part of the development plan and will therefore be a material consideration for decision-making.
- 4.24** They should cover a period of at least 20 years, setting out a positive vision for future growth and change and providing a clear spatial framework for investment and growth, including new housing.
- 4.25** Importantly, the SDS will be expected to deal with the assessment of housing need and other uses and identify broad locations for strategic development (new settlements, major urban extensions etc.). They will need to be updated at least every 5 years.

- 4.26** Whilst Officers do not have concerns about the principle of sub-regional strategic planning, there are concerns around the ability of SDSs to determine future locations for major growth (new settlements, urban extensions etc.) even if this is done in a broad sense.
- 4.27** Whilst the SDS should consider overall housing and economic need and the broad spatial strategy for accommodating this, Officers consider that a Local Plan is the better tier of plan-making for determining specific growth locations. The same applies to the consideration of specific Green Belt boundaries.
- 4.28** The other ‘new’ aspect is the proposed level of ‘Supplementary Plan’ which is intended to focus on specific issues that are not addressed by other components of the development plan. This must be limited to locally specific design standards or situations where such a plan would allow the authority to respond positively and quickly to unanticipated changes in their area, where it is important to put in place policies to shape and direct development for a site or group of sites which the authority considers to be nearby to each other. This can include the allocation of sites for development, the expectation being that where Supplementary Plans allocate sites, these should be included in the next Local Plan unless changes in circumstances mean it is no longer relevant to do so.
- 4.29** Officers have no major concerns about the principle of producing Supplementary Plans – indeed they would likely be a useful complement to a Local Plan which may identify broader areas of development potential but then needs a further layer of policy to provide the necessary detail.
- 4.30** However, it is notable that such Supplementary Plans will be subject to a purposefully streamlined preparation, consultation and examination process, with the latter focused on legal compliance, consistency with national policy and whether the local authority has reached a ‘reasonable conclusion’ that the sites involved are nearby to each other.
- 4.31** There seems to be little, if any, consideration of the merits or ‘soundness’ of the plan, despite the fact that it may include specific site allocations. This is a significant departure from the current system whereby site allocations must be made through a Local Plan and subject to independent examination.
- 4.32** In terms of the remaining components of the development plan, much of this remains the same as the current system including the use of Local Plans, Minerals and Waste Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.
- 4.33** However, as outlined above, it is clear that the scope of such plans is to be ‘stripped back’ greatly so as to avoid any unnecessary repetition with the Framework, with the general principle that they should only include policies which extend beyond site or location-specific requirements where these are necessary and where plan makers consider there is a clear and justified reason for inclusion.
- 4.34** In addition to the issues summarised above, there are a number of other important points to note from the new plan-making section of the Framework.

- 4.35** In terms of co-operation between local authorities and other relevant partners, although the duty to co-operate is removed, plan-making authorities remain under an obligation to engage proactively and regularly with neighbouring authorities, infrastructure providers and other relevant bodies, demonstrating such engagement through the preparation of statements of common ground as appropriate.
- 4.36** This overall approach is supported by Officers along with the increased emphasis on a proportionate evidence base for plan-making, including the re-use of existing evidence wherever possible.
- 4.37** Of considerable concern, however, is the proposal to limit any quantitative standards set through development plan policies to infrastructure provision, affordable housing, parking and design and place-making. They should not cover matters which are already addressed by the Building Regulations other than in relation to accessibility standards and water efficiency.
- 4.38** This is a severe blow to West Oxfordshire's net zero carbon ambitions and is a major concern of Officers as reflected in the draft consultation response attached at Annex A.

Chapter 3 – Decision-Making Policies

- 4.39** This chapter includes a number of new policies focused on the issue of decision-making, as opposed to plan-making. The policies cover three main areas; the preparation of development proposals (by applicants) the determination of development proposals (by the local planning authority) and other routes to consent such as the use of development orders and the removal of permitted development rights through Article 4 directions.

Key Points to Note

- 4.40** Much of this section reflects the existing Framework including the need for local authorities to work pro-actively with applicants to find solutions, the amount of weight to be afforded to emerging local plans and the expectation that viability issues should be addressed at the plan-making stage and only dealt with at the planning application stage by exception.
- 4.41** There are however some important new aspects which are worth highlighting. These are briefly outlined below and reflected in the draft consultation response attached at Annex A.
- 4.42** In terms of pre-application engagement, the focus is on 'major' developments only, with any such engagement being proportionate to the nature of the scheme and those likely to be affected by it. Pre-application engagement for smaller non-major proposals will only be required in certain limited circumstances. This is a concern for Officers as the pre-application process is considered invaluable for all parties concerned, irrespective of the scale of development proposed.
- 4.43** In terms of the supporting information to be provided with planning applications, this is proposed to be much reduced. Major development proposals will require a concise planning statement with any further information required via local validation checklists, limited to that listed at Annex C of the Framework unless there is a policy in the development plan requiring a specific further assessment.

- 4.44** Again, this represents a concern for Officers. Whilst it is accepted that the amount of supporting information for a planning application should be kept to the minimum necessary, the proposals take this approach too far and could mean significant, strategic-scale developments having to be determined on the basis of insufficient information.
- 4.45** Furthermore, during the determination stage, local authorities should consult statutory or internal consultees only where it is necessary to do so. Importantly, decisions should not be delayed in order to secure advice from a statutory or internal consultee beyond their statutory deadlines, unless there is insufficient information to make the decision or more detailed advice may enable an approval rather than a refusal.
- 4.46** In terms of viability, there is an expectation that any viability assessment submitted in support of a development proposal (e.g. to justify a lower proportion of affordable housing) should utilise a number of standardised inputs which are to be appended to the Framework. whilst much of the text remains similar to the current framework – the most notable difference being the requirement for site-specific viability assessments to utilise standardised inputs, imported from the current viability planning practice guidance and updated accordingly. This approach is supported by Officers as it will help to ensure greater consistency of approach.
- 4.47** Other important changes in this section include increased clarity regarding the inter-relationship of the planning system with other regulatory regimes – the key point being that whilst matters which are controlled by other regimes may be a material planning consideration where they have land use implications, decision-makers should assume, unless there is clear evidence to the contrary, that those separate regimes will operate effectively. A good example of this in West Oxfordshire would be in relation to the water environment and the respective roles of the Environment Agency and Thames Water.
- 4.48** Finally, there is a notable shift of emphasis in relation to unauthorised development and enforcement, whereby if there is clear evidence that unauthorised development has taken place intentionally, this fact will be given substantial weight in the determination of any application for retrospective planning permission. This responds to long-standing concerns about the integrity of the planning system being undermined by retrospective permissions and is therefore welcome.

Chapter 4 – Achieving Sustainable Development

- 4.49** Chapter 4 includes a number of plan-making and decision-making policies focused on sustainable development.
- 4.50** In terms of plan-making, the policies largely reflect the current Framework, emphasising the importance of development plans meeting identified development needs (e.g. housing, employment, infrastructure) including any unmet needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas. They also emphasise the importance of having in place a robust spatial strategy setting clear expectations for the location of development. The policies raise no particular concerns in this respect.

- 4.51** The decision-making policies introduce much more significant changes in relation to the presumption in favour of sustainable development, including the removal of the ‘tilted balance’ whereby in certain circumstances (e.g. lack of 5-year housing land supply) planning permission will generally be granted.
- 4.52** The approach taken is that as a matter of general principle, in all locations, development which accords with the development plan and with the decision-making policies of the Framework should be approved without delay.
- 4.53** Importantly, the Framework then makes a clear and purposeful distinction between development ‘within settlements’ and development ‘outside settlements’ which is a complete departure from the current version.
- 4.54** Within settlements, the expectation is that development will be approved unless the benefits would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in the Framework. Examples of such adverse effects include potential conflict with an allocated site or safeguarded land, loss of formal green space, wildlife habitats and cemeteries/burial grounds as well as more generally, conflict with one of the national decision-making policies which state that development proposals should be refused in specific circumstances.
- 4.55** In terms of development outside of settlements, the draft Framework stipulates that only certain forms of development should be approved and that these should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in the Framework.
- 4.56** Examples of acceptable development include uses such as agriculture, horticulture and forestry, rural business including tourism, re-use of existing buildings, redevelopment of previously developed land, limited infilling, allocated sites etc.
- 4.57** Importantly, it includes housing or mixed-use development of an appropriate scale which would be within reasonable walking distance of, or physically well related to, a railway station or settlement within which a station is located.
- 4.58** It also includes development which would meet an evidenced unmet need such as where a local authority is unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, albeit with the caveat that the development must be well-related to an existing settlement would be of an appropriate scale or comprises major development for storage and distribution purposes.
- 4.59** Any other development proposals which do not fall within one of the categories set out above should only be approved in exceptional circumstances, where the benefits of the proposal would substantially outweigh the adverse effects, including to the character of the countryside and in relation to promoting sustainable patterns of movement.

Key Points to Note

- 4.60** The changes introduced here are significant particularly the decision-making policies and whilst some aspects are supported by Officers, they also raise some concerns as set out in the draft consultation response at Annex A.
- 4.61** Of particular concern is the almost default ‘Yes’ to development taking place within settlement boundaries other than in a very limited number of circumstances cited in which the benefits of development are likely to be outweighed by adverse impacts. Whilst it is accepted that the circumstances listed are not intended to be exhaustive, the approach being proposed is likely to make it very difficult for local authorities to resist most forms of development within settlement boundaries, despite there being potentially significant and harmful impacts.
- 4.62** In terms of development outside of settlement boundaries, again there are some concerns here given that the list of acceptable forms of development is so extensive and includes circumstances in which a local authority cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. Although various caveats are included (e.g. the need for development to be well-related to a settlement) the reality is that the approach taken is likely to ratchet up current development pressures in unsustainable greenfield locations.
- 4.63** Of particular concern is the fact that irrespective of location, the judgment on whether any adverse impacts of new development would substantially outweigh the benefits, will be made against the national decision-making policies in the Framework and not the Local Plan. Other than allocating sites, this brings into question the purpose of having a Local Plan in place at all and Officers consider that instead, any such judgment should be made having regard to both the new national decision-making policies and the Local Plan.

5. SUMMARY OVERVIEW: SECTIONS 5 – 20

- 5.1** Chapters 5 – 20 of the draft Framework comprise a series of topic-based sections much like the existing version, covering issues such as housing, the economy, town centres, natural and historic environment etc.
- 5.2** Climate change now has its own dedicated section and there are new sections relating to energy and water and flood risk.
- 5.3** In the interests of brevity, the proposed content of these topic-based sections is not summarised in detail below, but Officers have sought to pull out and identify those aspects which are completely new and/or likely to be most impactful in terms of both longer-term plan-making and decision-making.

Key Points to Note

- 5.4** From the outset, it is worth noting that Officers are supportive of much of what is being proposed within these topic-based sections. They are logically grouped and important issues such as climate change and the water environment have been given greater specific attention which is welcome.
- 5.5** Where Officers are supportive of the proposed changes, this is reflected in the positive responses attached at Annex A which are not repeated here. However, some of the proposed changes are considered to have a potentially harmful effect and those are highlighted below as well as being set out in more detail at Annex A.
- 5.6** The first key concern relates to climate change. There is one plan-making policy which outlines the overall approach to be taken when development plans are prepared. Whilst Officers have no concerns about what is included in this policy, concerns are raised in relation to what has been omitted – in particular the absence of any specific reference to local authorities being able to set their own standards for sustainable construction.
- 5.7** Whilst there is reference to the setting of local water efficiency standards, there is nothing on the use of low or zero carbon construction such as that which recently been approved by the Planning Inspectorate in relation to Salt Cross Garden Village. This is extremely disappointing and is reflected in the suggested draft response at Annex A. In particular, Officers have major concerns that the proposed approach will greatly inhibit the ability of the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 to roll out Salt Cross net zero carbon standards more widely, with the Council instead, effectively being bound by the Building Regulations only.
- 5.8** In terms of the provision of new homes, there is a clear, upward push on housing numbers with the draft Framework making it very clear that the standard method should be treated as a minimum and that development plan housing requirements should be set higher where appropriate, including situations where this is necessary to meet the needs of neighbouring areas, or where it reflects growth ambitions linked to economic development or infrastructure investment.
- 5.9** Members will be aware that at around 905 new homes per year, the standard method level of housing need for West Oxfordshire will already be extremely challenging to meet, irrespective of any further upward pressure relating to economic growth ambitions or infrastructure provision. The purposeful way in which it is expressed as an absolute minimum with a push for development plans to set higher housing requirements is therefore of concern.
- 5.10** A further notable shift in emphasis is the specific requirement for development plans to identify suitable locations for large scale development, such as new settlements, new urban quarters or significant extensions to existing settlements. Whilst this, in itself, does not present any major concerns, Officers are concerned that such locations will be identified through the new tier of high-level sub-regional Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs). Officers consider that whilst the SDS should deal with the overall quantum and broad

distribution of growth, decisions on individual sites/locations should remain at the Local Plan level.

- 5.11** With specific regard to residential standards, it should be noted that the draft Framework introduces a requirement for at least 40% of all new homes to be built to Building Regulations Part M4(2) standards relating to accessible and adaptable dwellings. Whilst this is an improvement over the current West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 which requires 25% on larger schemes of 50 or more units, it is disappointing as the Government have previously indicated an intention to require all new homes to be built to Part M4(2) standards.
- 5.12** In terms of affordable housing, the draft Framework builds on the current version in promoting a minimum proportion of social rent which is welcome and notably, in respect of military housing, effectively proposes that it is treated as a form of affordable housing in its own right and thus exempt from any local plan affordable housing mix requirements that would apply to market housing. There must however be a policy compliant quantum of military affordable homes. This approach is supported.
- 5.13** It is also notable that homes for travellers have been brought into the bracket of ‘exception sites’ such as rural exception sites and community-led development sites. Thus a rural exception site would not only be relevant to affordable housing needs but affordable traveller site needs too. Again, this is supported, as is the provision of helpful criteria to guide the location of traveller sites more generally.
- 5.14** In the interests of boosting housing supply, the draft Framework encourages the use of planning conditions to expedite development that has secured planning permission but not been delivered. This is also welcome as it will help to address long-standing concerns around the issue of unnecessary ‘land banking’ on the part of developers.
- 5.15** The draft Framework also stipulates that where development proposals are put forward on sites that have been identified for large-scale residential and mixed-use development in emerging local plans, that any such proposals should not be inconsistent with those emerging plans in order to better safeguard such development opportunities.
- 5.16** In terms of the economy, the proposed changes focus on further strengthening support for businesses and long-term economic growth. The changes aim to reflect changing business needs and the growth of different sectors, including data centres and freight and logistics.
- 5.17** Notably, there is a push for local authorities to avoid being overly prescriptive on acceptable uses, thereby providing a greater degree of flexibility.
- 5.18** A proposed new policy proposes that substantial weight should be given by the decision-maker to the economic benefits of proposals for commercial development - with particular references included to certain areas, e.g. supporting improvements in freight and logistics.
- 5.19** The approach to rural business is largely consolidated and re-ordered from the current Framework with no substantive changes or new policies proposed.

- 5.20** Much of the text around Town Centre vitality and viability remains the same or very similar to the current Framework including the core principle that ‘main town centre uses’ should be located within existing town centres wherever possible, with development outside these areas only considered when suitable sites are not available.
- 5.21** There is an increased emphasis on local plan policies reflecting clear strategies for town centres and identifying opportunities in this context and the proposed decision-making policies place greater emphasis on diversifying town centre uses to address the oversupply of retail floorspace and create opportunities for more residential accommodation.
- 5.22** Increased weight will be afforded to proposals that support town centre vitality and viability and protection and enhancement of community access to local shops.
- 5.23** In terms of communications infrastructure, much of the text is very similar to the current Framework but there is a notable shift towards the re-use of existing sites before new infrastructure is proposed on undeveloped sites which is welcome.
- 5.24** A new chapter on energy and water is proposed in recognition of their increasing importance in planning matters. The plan making policies emphasise the importance of early engagement with providers and making appropriate provision for necessary development as well as supporting the transition to clean power.
- 5.25** Decision making policies focus on the circumstances in which substantial weight should be given to renewable and low-carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure and for water.
- 5.26** Notably, current Framework paragraph 169 is proposed to be modified, so that where renewable and low-carbon schemes come forward outside areas identified in the development plan, they should be assessed against the national decision-making policies as a whole, rather than the criteria used for identifying suitable areas in the development plan.
- 5.27** Officers are concerned that this will effectively circumvent the purpose of the Local Plan and is reflect in the draft response at Annex A.
- 5.28** In terms of the sustainable use of minerals, there are some notable policy shifts including a more restrictive approach to the extraction of coal, oil and gas and new policy on critical and growth minerals (essential, high-risk, or high-demand raw materials vital for modern technology, energy transition (EVs, wind turbines), and economic security).
- 5.29** The draft Framework also provides a more directive policy to prevent minerals sterilisation by ‘requiring’ prior extraction on sites allocated for non-mineral development which is welcome.
- 5.30** There are some significant proposed policy changes in relation to the efficient use of land including a stronger emphasis on allocating sites of all sizes (small, medium, large) and the setting of minimum density standards in plans including in relation to land around train stations with at least 50 dwellings per hectare to be achieved near ‘well-connected’ stations.

- 5.31** Substantive new support is provided for urban densification (e.g. mansard roofs, roofline infill, corner buildings, plot redevelopment) brownfield re-use and intensification.
- 5.32** In terms of the Green Belt, again there are some important policy shifts, building on the grey-belt concept already introduced under the 2024 version of the Framework. This includes Green Belt boundaries being altered in order to support development opportunities on land around suitable stations. The draft Framework also clarifies that spatial development strategies should assess the strategic role of the Green Belt and identify broad locations for further consideration, while local plans should undertake detailed assessments.
- 5.33** Importantly, there is a stronger emphasis on setting out positive expectations in development plans (e.g. beneficial uses such as nature recovery) which is welcome.
- 5.34** With regard to design and place-making, the draft Framework includes two plan-making policies and two decision-making policies. The plan-making policies establish a clear design strategy, setting expectations for design quality, identifying where codes, guides or masterplans are required, clarifying when design review applies, and ensuring the plan's vision delivers high-quality placemaking.
- 5.35** The two decision-making policies set out the key principles of well-designed places, giving substantial weight to design quality in determining applications and making clear that poorly designed development will be refused.
- 5.36** The draft Framework provides clearer wording on assessing proposals against national policy, local design policies, and design codes, and continues to give weight to outstanding or innovative designs.
- 5.37** For sustainable transport, the draft Framework builds on the Government's commitment to a 'vision-led' approach, embedding the role that transport infrastructure and choices can play in creating well-designed, sustainable, inclusive and popular places.
- 5.38** For plan-making, sustainable transport should be considered from the earliest stages so that it is reflected in the vision for the plan and its specific proposals, and forms an integral part of a plan's strategy. Local Plans should also set local parking standards across the plan area or for specific areas, with a more permissive approach now adopted towards the use of maximum parking standards, the use of which under the current Framework, requires clear and compelling justification. This is welcome.
- 5.39** The decision-making policies address the location of development, street design, access and parking, roadside facilities, transport impact assessment, proposals for ports and aviation facilities, and effects on public rights of way.
- 5.40** Section 16 of the draft Framework relates to the promotion of Healthy Communities. The plan-making policies require development plans to be based on healthy place-shaping principles, including setting open space standards, allocating land for community facilities, and identifying local green spaces.

- 5.41** The decision-making policies seek to ensure new development is supported by appropriate community facilities and infrastructure, give substantial weight to proposals that enhance them, and address hot food takeaways, loss of key facilities, impacts on recreation space, and development affecting local green space.
- 5.42** Officers are generally supportive of the changes proposed – in particular the increased clarity on how development plans should assess and make provision for community facilities and public service infrastructure including the setting of specific quantitative standards for the provision of outdoor recreational land.
- 5.43** Greater community engagement in relation to the design of play facilities is also welcome along with the additional clarity provided on the loss of community facilities. Officers are however concerned that the approach proposed would only apply to facilities which are the last of their type in the locality which would still see a likely dwindling of local service provision in rural areas.
- 5.44** The draft Framework includes a dedicated section on pollution, public protection and security. The plan-making policy sets out key considerations for identifying sites and managing risks from ground instability, contamination and other hazards whilst the decision-making policies address ground conditions, pollution and living conditions, protect existing lawful activities from undue constraint and safeguard public safety, security and land used for defence and public protection.
- 5.45** It includes explicit reference to daylight and sunlight, as common and important planning considerations, and adds specific provisions on air pollution, noise exposure, artificial light and water quality.
- 5.46** Chapter 18 comprises a dedicated section on flood risk and coastal change. Most of the content reflects pre-existing policy in chapter 14 of the current Framework, although changes are also proposed to reflect recent updates to Planning Practice Guidance, and to strengthen policy on coastal risks and protection, ensuring development is safe from flooding, the use of sustainable drainage systems and development in coastal change management areas.
- 5.47** The wording has been updated to make clear the importance of considering both current and future flood risk (rather than referring less directly to the effects of changing climate), and to be clear about the consequences which should be considered. This is welcome.
- 5.48** The draft Framework also introduces a new requirement for Sustainable Drainage Systems to be designed in accordance with the National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems to provide a consistent basis for improving their design. Again, this is supported in principle.
- 5.49** A further change introduces a new policy to avoid the enclosure of watercourses and encourage the de-culverting and re-naturalising of river channels.
- 5.50** The penultimate section of the draft Framework relates to the natural environment and includes one plan-making policy and five decision-making policies focused on conserving and enhancing the natural environment, driving nature recovery and embedding natural capital considerations within sustainable growth.

- 5.51** In terms of plan-making, the policy strengthens expectations that development plans must safeguard and enhance landscapes, habitats, waterbodies and species, informed by evidence including Local Nature Recovery Strategies, River Basin Management Plans, Protected Landscape Management Plans and other relevant strategies. Plans are expected to identify a clear hierarchy of environmental assets and steer development towards land of least environmental value, consistent with other Framework policies.
- 5.52** The draft introduces a stronger emphasis on green infrastructure (GI), requiring plans to set clear GI standards drawing on national benchmarks. It also anticipates Environmental Delivery Plans and clarifies protection for locally designated sites, addressing a gap in the current Framework.
- 5.53** Importantly, the draft limits the circumstances in which local plans may set biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements above the statutory 10% minimum. Higher local standards may only be applied to specific allocations and must be fully justified and deliverable.
- 5.54** The decision-making policies require development to contribute positively to the natural environment, retain and enhance trees, and respond to landscape character and existing natural features. A new requirement for swift bricks in developments is proposed to be introduced.
- 5.55** For protected landscapes such as the Cotswolds National Landscape, the term “substantial weight” replaces “great weight” for consistency across the Framework. The exceptional circumstances test for major development remains, with additional emphasis on mitigation that respects the special qualities of these landscapes and the use of compensation where harm cannot be mitigated.
- 5.56** Additional policies address coastal character and development affecting areas important for biodiversity, with clearer and more comprehensive expectations for environmental enhancement.
- 5.57** The overall direction of travel is supported, particularly the stronger emphasis on nature recovery, green infrastructure and clearer protection for locally designated sites. However, the restriction on setting local BNG standards above the statutory requirement would limit local flexibility, particularly in areas with significant ecological constraints or ambitions exceeding the national baseline.
- 5.58** The requirement to set clear GI standards has resource implications and is likely to require further evidence and viability testing at plan-making stage. Finally, whilst the terminology shift from ‘great weight’ to ‘substantial weight’ is intended to improve consistency, there may be uncertainty as to whether this alters the level of protection afforded in practice, particularly in protected landscapes.
- 5.59** The final chapter – Chapter 20 – includes three plan-making policies and eight decision-making policies relating to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

- 5.60** The plan-making policies require development plans to take a proportionate and evidence-based approach to the historic environment, including the preparation and use of historic environment records (HERs) and the identification of non-designated heritage assets through local lists.
- 5.61** Plans must set out clear strategies for conserving and enhancing Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites (WHS), including any locally specific policies needed to protect their significance, Outstanding Universal Value and settings. A new expectation is introduced that Conservation Areas are periodically reviewed and supported by adopted appraisals and management plans.
- 5.62** The decision-making policies retain the core principle that heritage assets should be conserved and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance. Substantial weight must be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of the degree of harm identified.
- 5.63** The draft provides clearer and more structured policy for proposals affecting World Heritage Sites, conservation areas and archaeological assets. It separates WHS policy from Conservation Area policy and expands guidance on assessing impacts on character and appearance. This is of course of direct relevance to West Oxfordshire and the Blenheim Palace WHS.
- 5.64** The redraft seeks to clarify and simplify decision-making, including explicit support for proposals that deliver positive impacts, such as bringing vacant or underused heritage assets back into use or improving energy efficiency. The concept of ‘optimum viable use’ has been removed, allowing greater flexibility where harm is less than substantial.
- 5.65** Greater clarity is also provided for proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets, including clearer balancing tests and explicit recognition of positive effects. Expanded guidance addresses investigation, recording and preservation of archaeological assets where harm cannot be avoided.
- 5.66** The attempt to simplify and clarify heritage decision-making is welcomed, particularly given the complexity and frequency of legal challenge under the current Framework. The stronger positive framing, including explicit support for reuse and energy efficiency improvements, may assist in bringing vacant or underused heritage assets back into productive use.
- 5.67** However, the removal of ‘optimum viable use’ may create uncertainty in how viability arguments are considered in cases involving less than substantial harm. As with Chapter 19, the shift from ‘great weight’ to ‘substantial weight’ may also prompt debate as to whether the level of protection has been materially altered.
- 5.68** The requirement for periodic review of Conservation Areas and preparation of management plans will have resource implications for local authorities.

6. OTHER PROPOSED REFORMS

- 6.1 Alongside the proposed revisions to the NPPF, the consultation seeks views on a number of wider reforms aimed at accelerating delivery, improving certainty and reducing complexity within the planning system.

AI Data Centres and Energy Infrastructure

- 6.2 The consultation proposes increased flexibility in the consenting regime for AI data centres, including allowing developers greater choice between the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) system and the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) regime under the Planning Act 2008.
- 6.3 Views are sought on enabling joint consenting of data centres and co-located energy generation (such as on-site renewables) under a single regime, and on whether new Secretary of State powers to direct or redirect projects into or out of the NSIP regime provide sufficient flexibility.
- 6.4 The consultation also considers whether thresholds for renewable energy projects co-located with data centres should be raised, enabling more schemes to remain within the local planning system and potentially speeding up decisions.
- 6.5 These proposals signal a strong pro-growth and streamlining agenda but Officers are concerned that they will reduce local control over large-scale energy and digital infrastructure projects.

Viability Reform

- 6.6 The consultation proposes incorporating updated standardised viability inputs into the Framework (with supporting detail remaining in Planning Practice Guidance) to improve consistency and reduce negotiation at application stage.
- 6.7 Views are sought on introducing “growth testing” for large phased schemes, refining guidance on developer returns (including whether the current 15–20% GDV range should be tightened or differentiated by risk profile), and expanding guidance on alternative return metrics.
- 6.8 Proposals also seek clearer guidance on benchmark land values, including circumstances where a landowner premium may not be justified and when alternative use value should not be relied upon. The use of residual land value cross-checks is also under consideration.
- 6.9 These reforms aim to increase transparency and reduce viability disputes, but may have implications for land values, scheme deliverability and negotiations over affordable housing.

Reforming Site Thresholds

- 6.10 A new ‘medium development’ category is proposed, defined as schemes of 10 - 49 dwellings on sites up to 2.5 hectares, intended to better support SME housebuilders. Targeted planning easements are proposed for medium sites, including proportionate information requirements, potential use of commuted sums, standardised Section 106 templates, and possible extension of Permission in Principle (PiP).

- 6.11 The consultation also seeks views on extending the small-site exemption from the Building Safety Levy to medium sites and on how medium sites should be treated under related regimes such as biodiversity net gain and planning committee referral thresholds.
- 6.12 Concerns are acknowledged regarding potential 'gaming', such as subdivision of larger sites to benefit from easements, and views are sought on mitigation measures.
- 6.13 Overall, while aimed at supporting SME delivery and speeding up decisions, Officers have some concerns that these proposals could create complexity around thresholds and a risk of unintended consequences.

7. NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 Subject to the approval of the Executive, the draft consultation response attached at Annex A will be submitted to Government. It is anticipated that a final version of the Framework will be issued in the summer.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1 The District Council could choose not to respond to the consultation or to submit different responses to those set out at Annex A. Not submitting would deprive the Council of the opportunity to make its views known on fundamental proposed changes to national policy.
- 8.2 Similarly, although different responses to those attached at Annex A could be submitted, Officers consider that the responses as drafted highlight particular areas of concern whilst remaining largely supportive of the changes proposed.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The report raises no direct financial implications. Indirectly, there may be a reduced cost associated with local plan preparation as the emphasis is on less, more proportionate evidence and re-using existing evidence where possible.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The report raises no direct legal implications.

11. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 The report raises no significant risks.
- 11.2 Although the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 will be examined under the current December 2024 version of the Framework, there is a degree of indirect risk that some of the aspects of the new Framework (e.g. preventing local authorities from being able to exceed building regulations relating to sustainable construction) could make it more difficult for the Council to justify its approach on certain matters at examination.
- 11.3 There is also a risk that, once adopted, some of the new Local Plan policies effectively become out of date and superseded by the new Framework where they are not fully aligned.

11.4 In the longer-term, there is a risk of further upward pushes to overall housing requirements beyond the minimum level of housing need identified through the standard method.

12. EQUALITIES IMPACT

12.1 Views on the potential impacts of the proposed changes are being sought by the Government as part of the consultation.

13. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

13.1 As outlined in the report and attached Annex, there are a number of proposed changes which relate to the climate and ecological emergencies. Where concerns have been identified, these are reflected in the responses provided at Annex A.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 None.

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 2026</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>Financial Performance Report 2025/26 Quarter Three</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Alaric Smith Executive Member for Finance Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Madhu Richards, Director of Finance Email: madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance Email: georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Detailed Revenue Budget Comparison Annex B – Capital Spend against Budget</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To detail the Council’s financial performance for Quarter Three 2025-2026</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Corporate Priority</p>	<p>Working Together for West Oxfordshire</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Consultees</p>	<p>None</p>

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the financial performance of the council's activities for the first three quarters of the 2025/26 financial year from 1 April 2025 to 31st December 2025.
- 1.2. The report considers the significant variances in revenue income and expenditure against the approved revenue budget set by Full Council on 26th February 2025 which anticipated a contribution of £91,280 to General Fund reserves.
- 1.3. The report also includes progress in delivering the approved Capital Programme and a forecast revenue position at year end. This forecast should be viewed as indicative only at this stage of the financial year.

2. MAIN POINTS

Financial Performance Revenue Budget Monitoring - Summary

- 2.1. At quarter 3 (Q3) there is an overall cost of service underspend of **£630,078** against the profiled budget for the period. The key factors driving this revenue position are additional income from Trade Waste, Development Management and the leisure contract. Development Management income is 70.7% up on the same period last year due to the receipt of major applications, Trade Waste is up 21.4% and the leisure contract has returned an additional £101,609.
- 2.2. There are no significant overspends to report for Q3, but any variance to the profiled budget that is over £10,000 has been included in this report.
- 2.3. Investment income through our Treasury Management activity is again performing significantly above budget, due in the main to interest rates falling more slowly over the last year than anticipated at the time of setting the 2025/26 budget. Our Treasury Management Advisors believe that there is likely to be one more interest rate cut of 0.25% this financial year. The year end forecast is an additional £596,000 of Investment interest above budget.
- 2.4. The table below sets out the summary revenue monitoring position for the 31 December 2025 against profiled budget by service area.

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - Budget Monitoring

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2025/26 - Quarter 3, 1st April to 31st December 2025

Service Area	Quarter 3				
	Original Budget 2025/26	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast to Year End
	£	£	£	£	£
Democratic and Committee Services	1,412,297	1,185,917	1,179,781	(6,136)	(5,631)
Environmental & Regulatory Services	784,557	434,003	468,300	34,297	43,297
Environmental Services	8,285,567	5,655,041	5,511,323	(143,718)	(134,494)
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	1,062,851	969,667	950,512	(19,155)	4,231
ICT, Change & Customer Services	2,230,097	2,792,731	2,799,479	6,747	8,000
Land, Legal & Property	841,492	970,108	965,510	(4,598)	9,500
Leisure & Communities	555,410	(596,517)	(686,592)	(90,075)	(106,104)
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,383,153	986,815	601,176	(385,638)	(341,974)
Revenues & Housing Support	1,592,014	528,162	518,350	(9,812)	(2,120)
Investment Property and Retained Services	682,434	105,168	93,177	(11,991)	826
Total cost of services	18,829,872	13,031,095	12,401,017	(630,078)	(524,469)
Plus:					
Investment income receipts	(1,156,228)	(867,171)	(1,249,389)	(382,218)	(596,000)
Cost of services before financing:	17,673,644	12,163,924	11,151,628	(1,012,295)	(1,120,469)

Significant Variances

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

Environment & Regulatory Services

2.5. Building Control

Building Control has met the income target for the first three quarters of the year but is overspent by £9,415 in staff overtime and £5,998 in mileage that were not budgeted for in 2025/26, following the TUPE of staff from Publica back to the Council. This issue has been addressed in the 2026/27 budget.

2.6. Markets

A commercial operator now manages the markets in Witney & Chipping Norton. The outsourcing is designed to revitalise the markets with income to the Council increasing over time. At the point of transfer, income was at 50% of the budgeted target, a £17,000 overspend at Q2. At the end of Q3 the overspend has risen to £22,407, an improvement over the Q2 trajectory of 14.5%.

Land, Legal & Property

2.7. Corporate Buildings

The overspend of £22,162 is driven mainly by £11,000 Standby pay. Standby charges are incurred to lock/unlock Council buildings for example after evening committee meetings and for call outs to attend Council premises if the fire or security alarms are activated. Until the end of June 2025 this out of hours work was undertaken by Ubico but since the TUPE of the Property & Assets team back to the Council in July 2025, members of Council staff have taken on the responsibility.

Environmental Services

2.8. Green Waste

Green Waste licence income has achieved £1.655m at the end of Q3, which represents 95.8% of the target for the year. Work is ongoing with Ubico to make sure that the contract sum is split accurately across Waste, Recycling and Cleansing so that the Council can have assurance that commercial elements of waste collection and recycling are, at the very minimum, covering their costs. Licences for the 2026/27 year were made available online at the beginning of February and have so far returned £427,875.

2.9. Trade Waste

Trade Waste is invoiced in April & September with payment taken by Direct Debit. In Q3 income is £223,000 above target and tipping charges are £10,000 underspent. This is partially offset by expenditure of £30,000 on bins and boxes which is expected to remain at the same level to year end.

The forecast year end position is an underspend of £220,000 which considers additional income generated in the last quarter of the year. The budget for 2026/27 has been adjusted to reflect the positive performance of the Trade Waste service and the contribution to service delivery. The performance of the Trade Waste service can be attributed to the active management of the customer base, invoicing and income collection by the Publica Trade Waste team in conjunction with the Council's Waste team and Ubico.

2.10. Downs Road Depot

Repairs and maintenance costs for the Depot now sit with the Council rather than being recharged to Ubico. The result is the Ubico contract sum is reduced and therefore attracts a lower central overhead. The costs are now in the Environmental Services budget with the year-to-date expenditure at £41,000. The 2026/27 budget includes an allocation for depot repairs and maintenance as part of the Council Buildings maintenance programme.

2.11. Bulky Waste

The service has achieved income of £15,000 over and above the budget up to Q3 and is forecast to achieve an additional £5,000 by the end of the year.

2.12. Household Waste

There is an overspend of £30,000 for replacement bins and expenditure of £22,000 on the Alloy Environmental Services Management system, used to streamline waste collection, street cleaning, and maintenance operations. It is designed to manage waste, recycling, and environmental services through real-time data, in-cab technology, and mobile applications. The renewal of the software licence has been included in the budget for 2026/27.

2.13. Dog Warden

The costs against this cost centre are for kennelling stray dogs. At Q3 there is an underspend of £24,000, a 58% reduction in demand compared to the same period last year. By its nature, this service is subject to demand volatility.

2.14. Car Parking

The budget for the year includes £30,000 for car park maintenance, identified as part of the updated Car Parking Strategy. So far, the majority of this budget has not been spent, creating a £25,000 underspend in Q3.

Leisure and Communities

2.15. Recreational Facilities Development

There is a £16,000 overspend relating to the repayment of an unused portion of grant funding from Sports England as the project came in under budget. This was not known until after the 2024/25 year end and therefore it was not accrued for. The remainder of the expenditure is within the existing base budget.

2.16. Contract Management

The budget includes £50,000 for external legal advice related to the negotiation of the extension to the leisure contract from 2027. This legal advice is likely to be taken in Q4 and the first part of 2026/27. Unbudgeted spend includes £9,975 for the installation of energy saving showers at Carterton LC. There are also a number of minor overspends for the appraisal of Carterton LC roof repairs and professional advice on the specification of Solar PV installed. The annual contract income is increased by CPI inflation mid-year and could bring the year end contract sum to a forecast of £110,000 above budget.

Planning & Strategic Housing

2.17. Development Management

Planning Application income is £449,000 above target at Q3 due to the receipt of major applications, offset by £90,000 of expenditure on agency staff. This income is an increase of £585,000 on the same period last year, an indication of the volatility of application income and the difficulty in setting an appropriate budget. The income budget has been revised upwards for 2026/27 in line with advice from the Development Manager and the Head of Planning.

2.18. Development Management Appeals

The underspend relating to appeals is £59,145 year to date. It is difficult to predict when planning appeals will be lodged, or to forecast whether the full budget will be exhausted by the end of the year. The budget for 2026/27 has been reviewed and has been reduced by £50,000.

Retained Services

2.19. External Audit Fees

The fees for the audit of the 2025/26 financial year were published at the end of November. The base budget includes £158,000 for the audit of the Statement of Accounts and a further £50,000 for the audit of the Housing Benefit system, both of which are statutory requirements. There will likely also be additional costs for the increased audit assurance requirements relating to the adoption of Accounting Standard IFRS 16, Leases, related to the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts that will be charged in 2025/26 producing an estimated overspend at year end of £40,000.

2.20. Investment Property

Investment Property and Industrial Estates combined are £10,159 underspent at the end of Q3. Within the portfolio there are individual properties that are performing either well above or below targets i.e. Talisman income is £80,000 above budget due to the base budget not taking into account the end of a rent-free period in the first quarter of the financial year. This underspend is expected to increase to around £118,000 by year end.

At the other end of the scale, Carterton Industrial Estate is £77,732 overspent due to costs to keep Units 1 – 3 secure and for preparations in advance of the construction of the new roof, including repairs to the rolling shutters, electricity supply works, surveys and inspections. The forecast for year-end assumes a continuation of security measures until the construction phase has been completed.

Earmarked Reserves

2.21. The Capital Programme proposes the use of £1m of earmarked reserves to fund Investment Property repairs in 2026/27 and 2027/28 instead of relying on internal borrowing. Capital expenditure funded through internal or external borrowing requires the Council to charge the revenue budget for Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) to “pay back” the borrowing, as defined in the Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27. The use of earmarked reserves therefore removes the burden of additional MRP on the revenue budget.

2.22. The statutory override for Financial Instruments (pooled funds), which requires fair value gains and losses to be taken to an unusable reserve unless the fund is sold, was set to end in 2025/26. It was therefore recommended by our Treasury advisors Arlingclose, that it would be prudent to create an earmarked reserve to smooth out the impact of any unrealised gains or losses to protect our revenue position and our ability to fund front line services. This was approved by the Executive in February 2024.

The government subsequently announced that the statutory override would remain in place until the end of the 2027/28 financial year. In September 2024 one of our Pooled Funds,

operated by UBS, was closed, resulting in a capital loss of £497,000. The £200,280 balance in this reserve is no longer required.

- 2.23. The acquisition of 8 additional temporary accommodation properties by the end of this financial year, as outlined in the budget report 2026/27, will require funding for refurbishment works and ongoing maintenance.
- 2.24. It is requested that authority is given to the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, to review existing earmarked reserves to better align them with Council Priorities, to set up the specific risk reserve for Local Government Reorganisation as per the 2026/27 budget report, to top up the existing Investment Property reserve by £1m, to close the Financial Instrument Revaluation reserve and to allocate £500,000 for the refurbishment and ongoing maintenance of Council owned properties.

Capital Programme

- 2.25. At the end of Q3 capital expenditure is £4,024,078 against an approved Capital Programme for the year of £16.165m, which includes slippage from 2024/25 of £4.9m related to the decarbonisation of Witney Leisure Centre, Waste Vehicle replacement and repairs to our buildings. (See Annex B).
- 2.26. The Witney PSDS project is now in the construction phase with an estimated completion date of March 2026. The Leisure, Assets and Climate teams are working together to deliver the project and are working in conjunction with GLL to mitigate any operational issues caused by the construction works. The Council has received grant funding of £1.649m towards the cost of this project, with an estimated contribution from the Council of £565,549.
- 2.27. The Council completed the acquisition of a property in Witney in the first week of November which will provide 5 temporary emergency accommodation beds, the first property completion in a programme providing 30 additional emergency accommodation beds before the end of the financial year. The purchase of a second property in North Leigh was completed at the beginning of January and will provide emergency accommodation for 4 families.
- 2.28. This programme is on track to deliver all 30 beds, with legal work currently in progress to complete on a further 6 properties by the end of Q4. These properties have been surveyed and roof replacement in 3 of the properties will be required. This gives the Council the opportunity to upgrade the insulation in the properties which concurs with advice provided by the Climate Manager and supports climate emergency goals for WODC.
- 2.29. Expenditure on Council owned assets relates to the works on the roof of The Old Court, dilapidations at Chawley Park and fuel bunkering at the Down's Road depot. The replacement roofing works at Units 1-3 Carterton Industrial Estate and Station Lane moved to the

construction phase in November for completion in Spring 2026. These works will fully exhaust the £1,500,000 in the capital programme by the end of the financial year.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1. There are some key areas of optimism at the end of Q3, and these have been highlighted in the body of this report. There are no significant overspends in the first three quarters of the year with the forecast for year-end as a significant cost of service underspend, combined with an estimated Investment income from Treasury Management activity of around £596,000 above budget.
- 3.2. The forecast is extremely encouraging, but we must look ahead and prepare to fund the cost of the next stage of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). There is currently no indication that there will be any funding from central government to help with these costs which are likely to be significant. Whilst the outcome of LGR for Oxfordshire will not be known until Q1 or Q2 of 2026/27, it is deemed prudent to set aside earmarked reserve funds in 2026/27 to fund a Project Office in the first instance.
- 3.3. All areas will be closely monitored and reported on in the final quarterly Financial Performance Report of 2025/26.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

These are set out within section 2 of the paper.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this paper.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

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

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

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

8. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

None arising from this report.

Annex A - Comparison of Q3 Budget Monitoring

	Q3 position			Forecast to Year End
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	
	£	£	£	£
Democratic Services				
DRM001-Democratic Representation	238,598	248,416	9,818	7,500
DRM002-Support To Elected Bodies	397,108	389,553	(7,555)	(8,500)
ELE001-Registration of Electors	227,604	221,221	(6,383)	(2,500)
ELE002-District Elections	4,500	3,411	(1,089)	0
ELE004-Parliamentary Elections	104,899	105,034	135	0
ELE005-Parish Elections	0	4,869	4,869	4,869
ELE006-County Elections	88,703	88,661	(42)	0
ELE008-Police & Crime Commissioner Elections	7,821	7,821	(0)	0
SUP001-Administration	116,685	110,796	(5,889)	(7,000)
Total - Democratic Services	1,185,917	1,179,781	(6,136)	(5,631)

	Q3 position			Forecast to Year End
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	
	£	£	£	£
Environmental & Regulatory Services				
BUC001-Building Control - Fee Earning Work	50,596	68,518	17,922	18,500
BUC002-Building Control - Non Fee Earning Work	2,513	3,635	1,122	1,122
EMP001-Emergency Planning	22,943	16,845	(6,098)	(8,000)
ESM001-Environment - Service Mgmt & Supp Serv	76,898	76,898	0	0
PSH002-Private Housing-Condition of Dwellings	2,250	0	(2,250)	0
REG001-Environmental Health General	0	0	0	0
REG002-Licensing	(82,017)	(88,660)	(6,643)	(5,000)
REG009-Environmental Protection	158,848	166,978	8,130	9,500
REG011-Authorised Process	(8,890)	(7,903)	987	987
REG013-Pollution Control	97,259	98,071	812	812
REG016-Food Safety	108,837	105,665	(3,172)	(4,500)
REG021-Statutory Burials	3,750	4,830	1,080	0
STC011 - Abandoned Vehicles	0	(1,750)	(1,750)	0
TAC309-Other Trading Services - Markets	575	22,982	22,407	29,876
Total - Environmental & Regulatory Services	434,003	466,550	32,547	43,297

BUC001 - the overspend comprises £9,000 of overtime and £6,000 of mileage that is not budgeted for in 2025/26, following the TUPE of staff from Publica back to the Council. This budget has been reviewed for 2026/27 to ensure all employee costs are included.

TAC309 - The markets in Witney and Chipping Norton are now managed by a commercial operator. As the new model develops and attracts more traders to the revitalised markets, income is expected to grow over time. The income target has been reviewed as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process.

	Q3 position			
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast to Year End
	£	£	£	£
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement				
SUP003-Human Resources	236,781	241,733	4,951	5,000
SUP009-Accountancy	312,284	303,701	(8,583)	0
SUP010-Internal Audit	174,748	179,479	4,731	4,731
SUP011-Creditors	33,101	29,137	(3,965)	(1,500)
SUP012-Debtors	46,000	39,617	(6,382)	(2,500)
SUP013-Payroll	44,273	40,291	(3,983)	(2,500)
SUP019-Health & Safety	25,708	25,791	83	100
SUP020-Training & Development	22,336	22,525	189	200
SUP033-Central Purchasing	29,248	29,907	658	700
SUP035-Insurances	7,502	7,502	0	0
Total - Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	962,812	950,512	(12,300)	4,231

	Q3 position			
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast to Year End
	£	£	£	£
ICT, Change & Customer Services				
SUP002-Consultation, Policy & Research	3,803	990	(2,813)	(2,500)
SUP005-ICT	1,042,235	1,047,561	5,326	6,000
SUP008-Reception/Customer Services	455,330	452,672	(2,659)	(2,500)
TMR002-Street Furniture & Equipment	(12,962)	(6,070)	6,892	7,000
Total - ICT, Change & Customer Services	2,792,731	2,799,479	6,747	8,000

	Q3 position			Forecast to Year End
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	
	£	£	£	£
Land, Legal & Property				
ADB301-3 Welch Way (Town Centre Shop)	6,693	547	(6,145)	(5,000)
ADB302-Guildhall	7,695	2,541	(5,154)	(4,500)
ADB303-Woodgreen	217,688	208,715	(8,972)	(8,500)
ADB304-Elmfield	(103,000)	(106,170)	(3,170)	(1,500)
ADB305-Corporate Buildings	853,711	867,146	13,436	16,000
ADB306-Depot	101,492	103,706	2,214	4,000
FIE346-Marriotts	(484,654)	(483,230)	1,424	3,000
LLC001-Local Land Charges	(45,156)	(44,116)	1,040	2,500
SUP004-Legal	180,090	178,489	(1,601)	0
TAC303-Swain Court	235,550	237,881	2,332	3,500
Total - Land, Legal & Property	970,108	965,510	(4,598)	9,500

ADB305 - the overspend is made up mostly of £11,000 in Standby pay (the costs to have the building unlocked & locked after hours and for call outs relating to any alarm activations) that is not budgeted for in 2025/26, following the TUPE of staff from Publica back to the Council. This budget has been reviewed for 2026/27 to ensure all employee costs are included.

	Q3 position			Forecast to Year End
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	
	£	£	£	£
Leisure & Communities				
CCR001-Community Safety (Crime Reduction)	173,251	177,580	4,329	5,000
CCR002-Building Safer Communities	19,500	23,854	4,354	5,000
CCR301 - Communities Revenue Grant	288,000	285,416	(2,584)	15,000
CCT001-CCTV	80,850	86,576	5,726	6,000
CSM001-Cultural Strategy	66,574	63,355	(3,219)	(4,500)
CUL001-Arts Development	5,716	(1,253)	(6,969)	(7,000)
ECD001-Economic Development	116,535	116,986	452	0
ECD010 – SPF Community and Place	(541,975)	(541,975)	0	0
REC001-Sports Development	156,576	157,237	661	0
REC002-Recreational Facilities Development	49,313	65,202	15,889	16,500
REC003-Play	65,984	67,412	1,428	1,428
REC301-Village Halls	11,236	11,236	0	0
REC302-Contract Management	(1,373,504)	(1,475,113)	(101,609)	(135,000)
SUP016-Finance - Performance Review	83,525	83,525	0	0
TOU001-Tourism Strategy and Promotion	83,589	75,057	(8,532)	(8,532)
Total - Leisure & Communities	(714,831)	(804,906)	(90,075)	(106,104)

CCR301 - there is an error in the base budget which will create an overspend of £17,000 by year end. This budget has been corrected for 2026/27.

REC002 - the overspend is a repayment to Sports England prior year unused grant money that was not spent as the project came in under budget. This was not known until after the year end 2024/25 so it was therefore not accrued for. The remainder of expenditure is within existing budget.

REC302 - The budget includes £50,000 for external legal advice related to the negotiation of the new leisure contract for 2027. This legal advice is likely to be taken in Q4 and the first part of 2026/27. Unbudgeted spend includes £9,975 for the installation of energy saving showers at Carterton LC. There are also number of minor overspends for the appraisal of Carterton LC roof repairs and professional advice on the specification of Solar PV installed. The annual contract income is increased by CPI inflation mid year and could bring the year end contract sum to a forecast of c£110,000 in excess of budget.

	Q3 position			Forecast to Year End £
	Current Budget £	Actual Exp £	Variance (under) / over spend £	
Environmental Services				
CCC001-Climate Change	108,655	116,331	7,676	1,077
COR301-Policy Initiatives - Shopmobility	12,306	12,306	(0)	0
CPK001-Car Parks - Off Street	173,741	151,454	(21,377)	(21,000)
ENI002-Grounds Maintenance	468,575	465,355	(3,220)	1,000
ENI303-Landscape Maintenance	58,371	51,216	(7,155)	(2,223)
FLD001-Flood Defence and Land Drainage	132,851	133,492	641	1,066
REG004-Dog Warden	35,000	10,867	(24,133)	(24,000)
REG019-Public Conveniences	132,631	130,803	(1,828)	6,000
REG023-Environmental Strategy	61,224	60,389	(835)	(578)
RYC001-Recycling	1,718,673	1,711,612	(7,061)	(2,000)
RYC002-Green Waste	(688,940)	(652,721)	36,219	65,000
RYC003-Food Waste	807,505	801,728	(5,777)	(3,851)
STC004-Environmental Cleansing	690,357	697,666	7,309	(2,340)
TRW001-Trade Waste	17,133	(186,486)	(203,619)	(220,000)
TRW002-Clinical Waste	(375)	0	375	250
WST001-Household Waste	1,727,047	1,782,201	55,154	45,105
WST004-Bulky Household Waste	13,436	(2,094)	(15,530)	(20,000)
WST301-Env. Services Depot, Downs Rd, Witney	186,851	228,043	41,193	42,000
Total - Environmental Services	5,655,041	5,512,163	(141,968)	(134,494)

CPK001 - At Q3 there is a budget of £25,000 for repairs and maintenance that has not yet been spent.

REG004 - the Council has a responsibility to collect and kennel stray dogs until their owners can be found. The cost at Q3 is a 58% reduction on the same period in 2024/25. Clearly this statutory service is subject to volatility of demand.

RYC002 -the service has achieved 96% of the income target in 2025/26. Licences for 2026/27 have been available online since the beginning of February and have so far returned £427,875.

TRW001 - Trade Waste income is £223,000 ahead of target and tipping charges are £10,000 underspent. This is partially offset by £30,000 of expenditure on replacement bins.

WST001 - there is an overspend of £30,000 on replacement bins and expenditure of £22,000 on the Alloy environmental services management system. A budget for the renewal of the software licence has been included in the 2026/27 budget.

WST004 - Bulky Waste income is £15,000 above target with a forecast of £20,000 at year end.

WST301 - Repairs and maintenance costs for the Depot now sit with the Council rather than being recharged to Ubico. Year to date this expenditure is £41,000 and is forecast to remain at this level at year end. The 2026/27 budget includes an allocation for depot repairs.

	Q3 position			Forecast to Year End
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	
	£	£	£	£
Planning & Strategic Housing				
DEV001-Development Control - Applications	(326,595)	(648,553)	(321,957)	(300,000)
DEV002-Development Control - Appeals	161,805	102,660	(59,145)	(40,000)
ENA001-Housing Enabling	114,239	111,613	(2,627)	(2,561)
ENI301-Landscape Initiatives	43,607	42,727	(880)	(880)
HLD315-Growth Board Project (Planning)	5,526	2,820	(2,707)	170
PLP001-Planning Policy	704,594	707,439	2,845	2,845
PLP004-Conservation	189,840	190,203	363	452
PSM001-Planning Service Mgmt & Support Serv	93,028	91,498	(1,530)	(2,000)
Total - Planning & Strategic Housing	986,815	601,176	(385,638)	(341,974)

DEV001 - Income is £449,000 above target due to major applications that have been received. This is offset by £90,000 of agency staff, £13,000 to the County Council for the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre and a number of small

DEV002 - it is difficult to predict when planning appeals will be lodged or to forecast whether the full budget will be exhausted by the end of the year. The budget for 2026/27 has been reduced by £50,000.

	Q3 position			Forecast to Year End £
	Current Budget £	Actual Exp £	Variance (under) / over spend £	
Retained Services				
COR002-Chief Executive	385,623	388,666	3,044	5,000
COR003-Corporate Policy Making	56,609	56,031	(577)	0
COR004-Public Relations	304,873	302,697	(2,176)	0
COR005-Corporate Finance	532,841	534,373	1,532	2,500
COR006-Treasury Management	20,025	18,900	(1,125)	(1,500)
COR007-External Audit Fees	156,234	156,677	443	40,000
COR008-Bank Charges	58,875	47,568	(11,307)	(15,000)
COR012 - Publica Review	177,968	179,429	1,461	0
COR302-Publica Group	220,639	219,807	(832)	0
FIE341-Town Centre Properties	(421,812)	(429,115)	(7,303)	(8,500)
FIE342-Miscellaneous Properties	(56,029)	(59,167)	(3,139)	1,000
FIE343-Talisman	(1,242,120)	(1,318,816)	(76,696)	(118,000)
FIE344-Des Roches Square	(439,036)	(443,070)	(4,034)	(5,000)
FIE345-Gables at Elmfield	0	5,415	5,415	6,500
NDC001-Non Distributed Costs	612,000	622,037	10,037	15,000
TAC304-Witney Industrial Estate	(128,565)	(130,310)	(1,745)	(2,400)
TAC305-Carterton Industrial Estate	(132,319)	(54,587)	77,732	85,000
TAC306-Greystones Industrial Estate	(7,763)	(8,150)	(387)	(774)
TAC308-Other Trading Services - Fairs	7,126	4,794	(2,332)	(3,000)
Total - Retained Services	105,168	93,177	(11,991)	826

COR007 - fees for the audit of the 2025/26 financial year were published at the end of November. The base budget includes £158,000 for the audit of the Statement of Accounts and a further £50,000 for the audit of our Housing Benefit system, both of which are statutory requirements. In recent years the final cost of the external audits has been higher than the original PSAA fee due to the additional assurance required for property valuations and the introduction of new Accounting Standards i.e. IFRS16 Leases.

FIE343 - Rental income for Unit 13 has been incorrectly excluded from the base budget for 2025/26, this error has been corrected for the 2026/27 budget but will cause a £107,000 underspend in the current financial year, giving a Q3 underspend for income of £80,000

TAC305 - the overspend relates to business rates and expenditure to secure the vacant units 1 - 3 in advance of the construction of the new roof, including repairs to the rolling shutters, electricity supply works, surveys and inspections. The forecast for year end assumes a continuation of security measures until the construction phase has been completed.

	Q3 position			
	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend	Forecast to Year End
	£	£	£	£
Revenues & Housing Support				
HBP001-Rent Allowances	316,108	315,438	(670)	(1,500)
HOM001-Homelessness	(56,908)	(59,423)	(2,515)	(5,029)
HOM004-Refugees	0	0	0	0
HOM005-Homelessness Hostel Accommodation	(2,993)	(3,421)	(428)	5,000
HOM006 - The Old Court	50,404	45,864	(4,541)	(4,541)
HOM007-Afghan Resettlement Programme	(254,396)	(254,395)	1	0
HOM008-Homes for Ukraine	18,102	18,102	0	0
LTC001-Council Tax Collection	360,029	354,351	(5,679)	(5,000)
LTC011-NNDR Collection	99,611	105,273	5,662	7,500
PSH001-Private Sector Housing Grants	39,080	39,505	425	450
PSH004-Home Improvement Service	(40,877)	(43,611)	(2,734)	1,000
Total - Revenues & Housing Support	528,162	518,350	(9,812)	(2,120)

Capital Programme 2025/26

Scheme	Funded By	2025/26 Total Budget	Q3 Actual	
Asset Repairs	Borrowing	1,500,000	287,610	a
Ubico Fleet - Replace Vehicle Hire Costs	Borrowing	4,721,266		b
Replacement Sweepers	Borrowing	850,000		
In Cab Technology	Borrowing	100,000		
Witney ATP Refurbishment	Revenue Contribution	200,000		
Purchase of Temporary Accommodation	Capital Receipts	3,000,000	562,754	c
CCTV - Upgrading	Capital Receipts	255,635	247,180	
Improvement Grants (DFG)	Grant	880,000	838,265	
UK Rural Prosperity Fund	Grant	0	108,282	
Witney Leisure Centre PSDS	Grant/Borrowing	1,584,841	78,713	d
Carterton Leisure Centre Solar PV Installation	Grant	0		
Chipping Norton Leisure Centre PSDS	Grant/Borrowing	2,643,926		
IT Provision - Systems & Strategy	Revenue Contribution	100,000		
Council Buildings Maintenance Programme	Revenue Contribution	250,000	243,112	
IT Equipment - PCs, Copiers etc	Revenue Contribution	40,000	45,559	
Chipping Norton Creative	S106	0	21,805	
Windrust Place Public Art	S106		3,226	
Carterton Connects Creative (Swinbrook s106)	S106	39,500		
Developer Capital Contributions	S106	0	1,587,571	e
		16,165,168	4,024,078	

- a. Expenditure relates to the works on the roof of The Old Court and internal works at Chipping Norton Leisure Centre. The replacement roofing works at Units 1-3 Carterton Industrial Estate and Station Lane are moving to the construction phase in November for completion in Spring 2026. These works will fully exhaust the £1,500,000 in the capital programme by the end of the financial year.
- b. A full waste vehicle strategy will be coming forward from the Waste Transformation Programme for Member consideration in Q4. This strategy will look to maximise the efficiencies attainable through partnership working across the County, that the Council could never achieve through unilateral action.
- c. The Council completed the acquisition of a property in Witney in the first week of November. This property will provide 5 bedrooms and requires only modest works before tenants can move in. A second property has been acquired in North Leigh which will provide accommodation for 4 families. Completion negotiations are at an advanced stage on a further 6 properties suitable for temporary emergency accommodation, both for single people and families. These properties will however require reconfiguration and upgrading.
- d. The Witney PSDS project began the construction phase in September and has an estimated completion date of the March 2026.
- e. Developer Capital contributions are the amount of \$106 that the Council has paid out to Parish and Town Councils so far this financial year.

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 MARCH 2026.</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025-26 QUARTER THREE</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Alison Borrett – Senior Performance Analyst. Email: alison.borrett@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To provide details of the Council’s operational performance at the end of 2025-26 Quarter Three (Q3).</p>
<p>Annex</p>	<p>Annex A - Council Priorities report Annex B - Corporate Plan Action Tracker Annex C - Performance indicator report</p>
<p>Recommendation.</p>	<p>That the Executive Resolves to: I. Note the 2025/26 Q3 service performance report.</p>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>Publica Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.</p>

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1** The new Council Plan was adopted in January 2023 and the Action Plan, setting out how the priorities within the Council Plan will be delivered, then followed. Additionally, following on from the external audit report in August 2023 which included a recommendation to review performance management to match the Council Plan and measure performance, a new performance framework has been developed. This includes a Corporate Action Plan Tracker and a Priority Report alongside the service output metrics.
- I.2** A high-level Commissioning Framework was approved by the Executive in October 2020, which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica provides the necessary information, including a range of performance indicators, to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and standard.
- I.3** The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for reviewing and approving the information provided in this report prior to its publication.

2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT

- 2.1** Progress on actions in the Corporate Plan for Q3 include:
- Key lettings at Marriotts Walk progressed during the quarter, with agreements secured for Units 6, 14a and 11a. Based on square metreage, current occupation now stands at just below 97%, with only one unit remaining vacant and continued work is underway on public-realm design improvements.
 - The Salt Cross Area Action Plan moved closer to adoption, following receipt of the Planning Inspector's final report, with Full Council consideration expected in February 2026.
 - The Windrush Leisure Centre decarbonisation project continues to progress and surpassed a major milestone in Q3 with the installation of the new low-carbon heating system and removal of the asbestos boiler. Additional decarbonisation measures are scheduled for future phases of the programme.
 - Community grant delivery advanced strongly, with a Food Officer appointed for January 2026 and 22 projects approved through the Witney Community Insight Profile grant round.
 - Westhive Round 5 was completed, with 10 community projects receiving Council and community pledges. In addition, Executive approved continuing the council's community crowdfunding approach for a further three years by moving to a new platform, building on experience from the previous provider.
 - Market town support continued to scale, with 14 Shop Front Improvement Grants on track for award and additional grants expected to assist up to 19 local businesses.
 - Development of the Woodford Way business case has progressed, supported by a revised site layout that integrates housing and parking. The proposal was endorsed by the Executive in January, including an initial timetable, design approach, parking solutions, and the planned planning and consultation stage.
- 2.2** The Council Priority highlight report is attached at Annex A with an overview of progress against all actions in the Corporate Plan is attached at Annex B.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Overall, the Councils performance remained strong across many key services, with high customer satisfaction, excellent planning determination times, robust business rates collection and continued growth in leisure participation. Council Tax collection also remained close to target, and several regulatory indicators continued to perform well. Environmental performance also strengthened this quarter, with fly-tips collected decreasing year-on-year by 25%. In addition, 31 enforcement actions were taken in relation to fly-tipping incidents, reflecting the Councils' continued focus on prevention and compliance.

A smaller number of services experienced ongoing pressure, particularly in the processing of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support changes, where in-quarter improvements have not yet offset the cumulative impact of earlier delays and increasing case complexity. FOI response times dipped below target and Land Charges performance was temporarily affected by staffing shortages, though early signs of recovery are evident. Recycling rates continue to reflect seasonal and national trends. Taken together, Q3 demonstrates strong and consistent delivery across priority services, with targeted improvement work in place where performance remains below expectations.

3.1 Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates Collected (83.15% against a target of 81%)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims (19.06 days against a target of 20 days)
- Customer Satisfaction (97.44% against a target of 90%)
- Building Control Satisfaction (96.67% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (90.01% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (93.94% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (98.99% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (28% against a target of 30%)
- Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (267 against a target of 207)
- Percentage of high-risk food premises inspected within target timescales day (100% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of high-risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 95%)
- Missed bins per 100,000 (39.62 against a target of 120)
- (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (5,668 memberships against a target of 5,075 memberships)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres (237,216 visits against a target of 178,574)

3.2 Service Performance near target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (84.78% against a target of 85%)
- Residual Household Waste Collected per Household (kg) (91.23kg against a target of 90kg)

3.3 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (8.33 days against a target of 5 days) and Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (7.59 days against a target of 4 days)

The Council saw a reduction in processing times for both Council Tax Support (CTS) change of events and Housing Benefit (HB) changes of circumstances compared to Q2. However, cumulative averages remain above the respective targets of 5 days for Council Tax Support and 4 days for Housing Benefit.

Although the cumulative processing time for Council Tax Support Change of Events remains above target, in-quarter performance continued to improve. The average processing time between October and December was 3.74 days, which is within the service target. While further reductions are expected, the cumulative nature of the measure means it is unlikely to return within target before the end of the financial year.

Housing Benefit continues to experience pressure, driven by the complexity of cases and the volume of DWP-mandated Full Claim Reviews. Many of these reviews require extensive evidence, creating unavoidable delays even as the team works to keep cases moving. The remaining HB caseload is now highly concentrated among pension-age households and temporary accommodation, meaning fewer routine income changes are coming through. With a smaller flow of day-to-day updates, any delay has a sharper impact on overall processing times, though the team continues to prioritise the most time-sensitive and higher-risk cases.

To strengthen financial resilience for residents, the Council continued to deliver targeted support through the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) during the quarter. Key campaigns included:

- Benefit Maximisation – Outreach to households on Universal Credit not receiving Council Tax Reduction, as well as residents potentially eligible for Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance.
- Housing Related Support – Targeted communications to households affected by welfare reforms, including those impacted by the Benefit Cap, Bedroom Tax and Local Housing Allowance pressures.
- Financial Hardship Intervention – Engagement with Council Tax Reduction customers showing signs of arrears or financial stress to offer early support and signposting.
- Accuracy and Assurance – Ongoing checks on severe disability entitlements, with no changes affecting Quarter 3 performance.

These campaigns are helping the Council proactively identify financially vulnerable households and ensure residents receive the support they are entitled to.

Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.51% against a target of 0.35%)

The Council exceeded the national 0.48% target this quarter due to one significant claim overpayment identified by officers. In total, 2,080 Housing Benefit claims have been paid, comprising 1,842 normal claims and 238 temporary accommodation claims. Of these, 64 normal claims and 4 temporary accommodation claims were identified as having overpayments made on them. Although the error rate continues to fall, it is unlikely to meet the service target this quarter; however, it is expected to return within the national threshold by the end of Q4. Any Government penalties would be based on the final year-end figure.

To address overpayment risk, the service has put in place a range of targeted interventions. Around 20% of the Housing Benefit caseload is undergoing enhanced Quality Assurance checks, with a particular focus on areas with historically higher error rates, such as earnings assessments, to identify and correct issues before they result in overpayments. Staff are receiving strengthened training and ongoing technical support to ensure accurate processing, while internal procedures are being refined to streamline assessments and reduce avoidable delays. This includes further use of automation where appropriate.

The Council is also continuing its participation in the DWP's Housing Benefit Award Accuracy (HBAA) initiative, which provides additional assurance through joint work aimed at reducing fraud and error. The service remains mindful of the pressures created by increased workloads, including the potential for processing delays that could affect subsidy levels. Taken together, these measures are designed to reduce overpayments attributable to local authority error and support the Council in meeting expected performance levels in the final quarter of the year.

Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (81.17% against a target of 90%)

During Q3, the Council responded to 81.17% of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests within the 20-day timeframe, a decline from 83.16% in Q2 and below the target of 90%. The majority of requests continue to be directed toward Development Management, Environmental Services (ERS), Revenues and Benefits and Housing, reflecting sustained public interest in these areas.

To strengthen transparency and improve FOI performance, the Council is taking a proactive approach to reviewing internal processes and identifying opportunities for improvement. This includes exploring ways to streamline request handling, enhance coordination across high-volume service areas, and reinforce awareness of statutory response times. By embedding best practices and promoting a culture of responsiveness, the Council aims to restore compliance with national standards and ensure residents continue to receive timely access to information.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (55.47% against a target of 90%)

During Q3, the Council experienced a downturn in performance against the 10-day target for processing Land Charges searches. This was primarily the result of the unexpected loss of a team member in September, which significantly reduced capacity at a point when demand remained steady. The reduction in resource led to a build-up of outstanding cases and a temporary fall in overall service performance.

In response, the service has implemented resilience measures, including bringing in additional administrative support to increase throughput and focus on clearing the older cases in the backlog. These interventions have helped stabilise day-to-day operations, and early performance data indicates that processing times are beginning to improve.

Percentage of household waste recycled (55.72% against a target of 62%)

During Q3, the household recycling rate fell by around 1.5% compared with the same period last year, bringing current performance to 55.72%, below the Council's 62% target. Although the yearly percentage has decreased, there is no indication that the introduction of the booking system at recycling centres is contributing to this, as recycling tonnages for the quarter remain broadly consistent with last year's levels.

Alongside operational performance, the Council delivered a range of targeted seasonal communications, including Christmas campaigns promoting correct recycling of packaging, wrapping paper, cardboard, and other festive waste, helping residents understand what can and cannot be recycled. The Council also regularly shares national and sector-led campaign content from organisations such as Alupro (covering aluminium packaging recycling) and Love Food Hate Waste, amplifying consistent behavioural messages when these organisations have campaigns running. These combined efforts support residents to recycle correctly and reduce contamination levels.

Nationally, recycling rates continue to vary widely: in 2023/24, councils in England recorded household recycling rates ranging from 15.8% to 62.9%, with a provisional national average of 42.2%, highlighting the considerable spread between the highest- and lowest-performing areas. Against this backdrop, West Oxfordshire continues to perform strongly, ranking 16th of 197 waste collection authorities in England for 2023–24, with a recycling rate of 57.2%, placing the district firmly within the top tier nationally.

Despite being below target for the quarter, the Council's current rate of 55.72% remains well above the national average and consistent with Oxfordshire's reputation as one of the leading areas in England for recycling. All Oxfordshire districts continue to outperform the wider national picture, underscoring the region's strong culture of waste reduction, reuse, and recycling, supported by ongoing engagement and public-facing campaigns.

3.4 A full report is attached at Annex C and should be looked at in conjunction with this report.

3.5 As previously agreed, where possible, broader benchmarking has been included in the full performance report to gain a more robust and insightful evaluation of performance.

4. DELTA DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS SCORECARD

4.1 The DELTA Disabled Facilities Grants Scorecard provides an annual overview of the Council's performance in delivering Disabled Facilities Grants. It summarises key measures such as the number of completed adaptations, who receives support and the time taken to progress cases from application through to completion. Developed by Foundations using statutory DELTA returns submitted by each local authority, the scorecard offers a balanced and accessible assessment of service performance, highlighting areas of strong delivery as well as emerging pressures. DELTA is the primary online platform used by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for collecting statistical data and grant information, providing a single, centralised system for submissions.

4.2 In 2024–25, West Oxfordshire performed strongly against national comparators, ranking within the top 7.6% of local authorities for delivery times. This reflects effective case-flow management and a sustained focus on timely outcomes for residents with mobility or independence needs.

4.3 For full context, the current and previous years' DELTA DFG Scorecards should be reviewed together, as they provide a clear picture of performance trends and the impact of improvement activity over time. These can be found [here](#).

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 5.1** This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 4 March 2026. The draft minutes of that meeting will be circulated to all Members and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to the 11 March 2026 Executive meeting.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** Contained in this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** None

10. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** A Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) is not required because it is a quarterly review report for the Executive to note.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1** None

(END)

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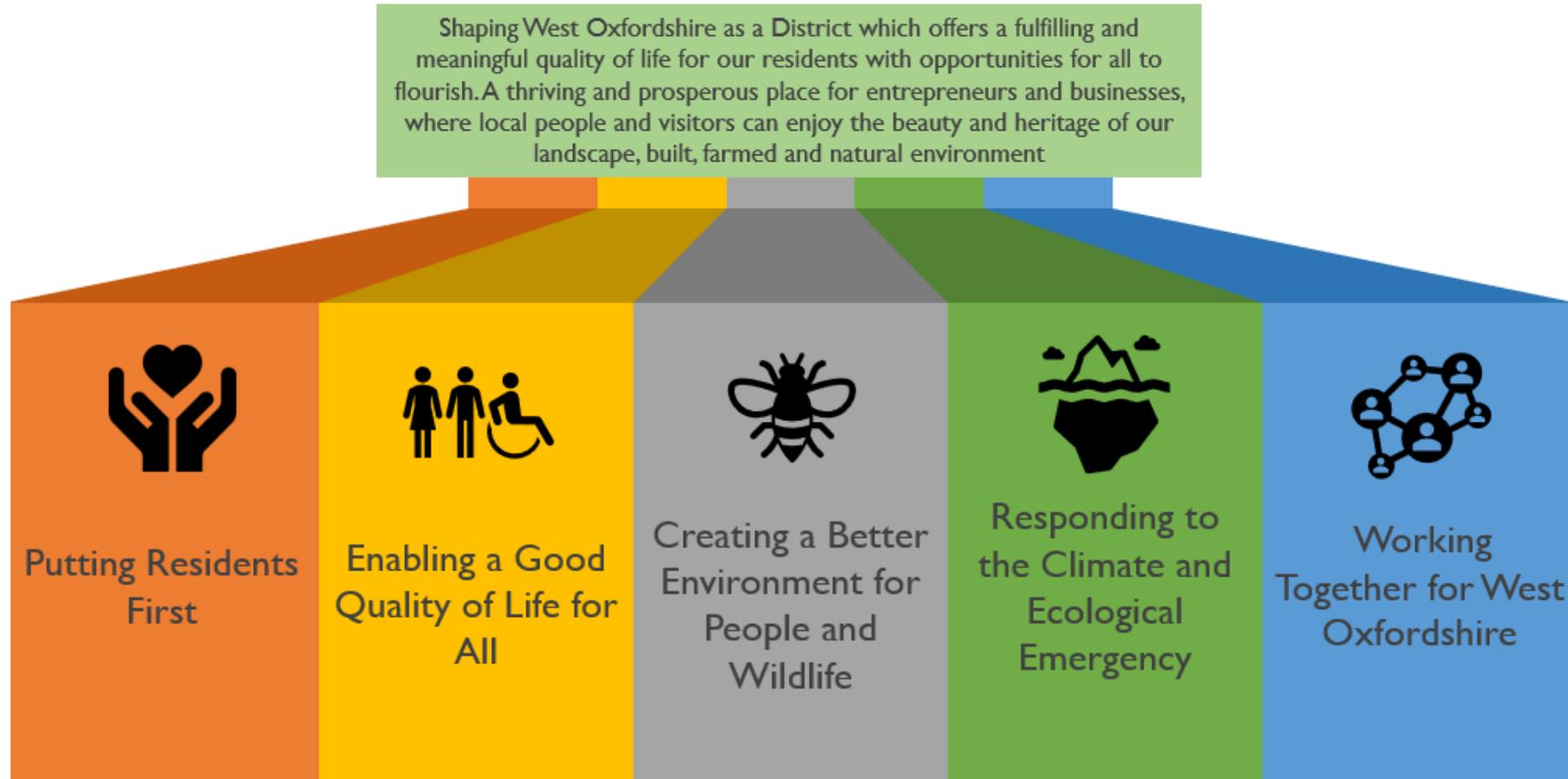


WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITIES REPORT
October – December 2025

Background

The Executive Action Plan was created to outline the steps needed to carry out the vision of the Executive after the new Council Plan was adopted in February 2023. In the Council Plan, the Executive looks to the district's future and establishes a vision for West Oxfordshire. In addition to updating the public on the status of each priority at regular meetings across the plan's four-year duration, a new performance framework has been created to offer timely updates for actions taken in relation to the priorities.



Putting Residents First



Actions we are taking

In early 2022, West Oxfordshire District Council conducted its first Youth Needs Assessment, gathering structured responses from 3,908 young people attending seven secondary schools or colleges, alongside feedback from parents and youth organisations. The assessment revealed significant challenges, including limited access to activities, widespread mental health concerns, safety issues, climate anxiety, and barriers linked to education, employment, and support services. Following a review of the findings in October 2023, the Council committed to strengthening youth engagement and approved the recruitment of a full-time Youth Development Officer in February 2024. By September 2025, the officer had engaged extensively with community groups, parish and town councils, Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Police, specialist youth agencies, councillors, and internal teams, reinforcing six thematic youth priorities: developing new provision, sustaining existing services, improving safety and wellbeing, supporting education and skills, promoting volunteering, and amplifying youth voice.

Key initiatives emerging from this work include supporting the revival of youth clubs in areas with limited provision, such as Eynsham and Stonesfield, and facilitating multi-agency partnerships to address anti-social behaviour, mental health, and community safety. This includes ongoing collaboration with Witney Town Council and Thames Valley Police to strengthen coordinated responses to youth issues. The Council is also promoting youth-friendly employment, expanding engagement with both state and private schools, and exploring the development of a Youth Assembly to involve young people in climate action and local democratic processes. To widen opportunities, the Youth Development Officer is additionally working with sports clubs to reduce participation barriers and supporting initiatives to improve youth volunteering, including through local employers.

To support youth-led innovation, the Council allocated £20,000 from its COMF budget for initiatives delivered through Westhive, its civic crowdfunding platform. By Spring 2025, 12 youth-focused projects had been successfully funded, attracting over £412,000 in total pledges. Westhive's broader programme continues to grow, with 38 projects supported and more than £1.16 million pledged across the platform by 2025. Within this total, 2025 funding rounds saw £124,000 committed to 10 new community projects (including young carers and arts-based initiatives), and a further £114,000 directed to projects improving accessibility, biodiversity and family services. The Council continues to pledge up to £12,000 per project, with at least £20,000 ring-fenced annually for youth-led ideas.

The Council's commitment to youth and housing is further reflected in the 'Our House' project, delivered in partnership with Cottsway Housing and Aspire Oxfordshire. The initiative provides shared, affordable accommodation and tailored employment, training, and wellbeing support for young adults under 35 on out-of-work benefits, enabling them to build independence and progress into education, employment, and long-term housing. In July 2024, the Executive approved a two-year funding extension from November 2024 to October 2026, ensuring the programme's stability and permitting continued partnership working and potential external funding applications.

In parallel with these strategic initiatives, the Council remains actively engaged in shaping the future structure of local government through the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process. In November 2025, five of the seven councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire—including West Oxfordshire—formally backed a proposal to replace existing district and county councils with two new unitary authorities. They argued that this model offered the strongest improvements in services, the greatest annual savings (estimated at £59.8 million), and the best balance between efficiency and local accountability. Under the proposal, Oxford and Shires Council would encompass Cherwell, Oxford City, and West Oxfordshire, while Ridgeway Council would cover South Oxfordshire, the Vale of White Horse, and West Berkshire. A full joint submission was made to Government at the end of November 2025.

This two-unitary model is being considered alongside two competing proposals: a single Oxfordshire-wide unitary authority put forward by Oxfordshire County Council, and a three-unitary model led by Oxford City Council, featuring Greater Oxford, Northern Oxfordshire, and Ridgeway councils. All proposals will be assessed by Government, with a final decision expected in 2026 and implementation anticipated in 2028.

Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All



Actions we are taking

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule was adopted on 1 October 2025 and comes into effect for planning permissions granted from 31 January 2026. Preparations for implementation have continued at pace, including detailed staff training, the configuration of back-office systems and financial processes, and the development of clear guidance to support applicants and developers. This work ensures the Council will be ready to collect and allocate CIL from the effective date. Once operational, CIL will work alongside Section 106 obligations to support both strategic infrastructure and local priorities, with a proportion of receipts passed directly to town and parish councils to help deliver community-led improvements across West Oxfordshire.

Substantial progress is also being made on the Salt Cross Garden Village, which remains one of the district's most significant long-term growth areas. The Planning Inspector's final report on the Area Action Plan, including the revised Net Zero development policy, has now been received for fact-checking, with adoption expected at Full Council in February 2026. Work continues with Oxfordshire County Council and the developer to confirm the outstanding information needed for timely determination of the outline planning application, supported by an anticipated Planning Performance Agreement to establish clear timescales and resource commitments. Engagement with Eynsham Parish Council remains constructive, including review of its draft Neighbourhood Plan. Meanwhile, the Oxford Growth Commission has reaffirmed its support for the Garden Village as part of the national garden communities programme. Alongside planning work, the Council continues to explore opportunities for clean-growth employment and to collaborate with innovation partners to support low-carbon enterprise linked to the emerging development.

Following the close of the spatial options consultation in December 2025, work is now focused on preparing the Draft Regulation 19 Local Plan, which will set out a comprehensive policy framework for sustainable development, long-term stewardship and place-shaping across the district. Work on the Carterton Area Strategy is progressing in parallel, reflecting its close alignment with the Local Plan's vision for future growth. Early engagement has been positive, and the Oxford Growth Commission has endorsed the Council's approach. A dedicated officer will be appointed in early 2026 to lead work with residents and stakeholders, building a shared and ambitious long-term plan for Carterton to be in place by 2028. Alongside this, partnership work continues with the West Oxfordshire Business and Retail Park, Carter Jonas and local landowners to produce a focused investment prospectus and strengthen the town's economic offer, including development opportunities around the RAF Brize Norton main gate.

Walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure projects continue to advance across the district. The Carterton LCWIP, formally adopted by Oxfordshire County Council in October 2025, provides a 10-year programme of improvements designed to increase active travel and support future funding bids. The Eynsham LCWIP is being refined following public consultation, incorporating proposals for upgraded crossing points, traffic-free routes and heritage-sensitive wayfinding. In Witney, plans to enhance the High Street and Market Square have progressed through statutory consultation, and subject to approval of final designs and associated traffic orders, construction is expected to begin in early 2026 and complete by mid-year. Supported by £1.98m from Active Travel England, the scheme aims to provide improved accessibility, planting, public spaces and traffic-calming.

A wide range of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) initiatives continue to deliver impact across the district's economy. The Wayfinding Signage Project is progressing in partnership with the Witney Chamber of Trade, while shopfront, rural enterprise, business boost and visitor economy grants remain on track to support more than 30 businesses by the end of Q4. Work continues with Marriotts Walk on enhancements to public realm and visitor experience, and officers are exploring opportunities to procure improved footfall data to strengthen the evidence base for town-centre decision-making. CBRE continues to support the management of retail units in a challenging market, with progress on new leases and ongoing design and costing work for further public realm improvements.

In housing, feasibility work has been undertaken with a range of modular construction providers, including timber-frame SIP and container-based manufacturers, though suitable sites have not yet been identified. Separately, 28 bedspaces are in the acquisition pipeline to meet high demand from single applicants on the housing register, with properties progressing through surveys, legal checks and contract preparation. At Woodford Way, partnership working with a Registered Provider remains the preferred delivery route, offering opportunities to leverage external funding and reduce financial exposure to the Council. Detailed design refinement continues, including parking arrangements aligned with the district's parking strategy, and commercial discussions with the RP and Homes England remain positive. However, the previous development partner has confirmed it cannot proceed with the proposed acquisition due to funding challenges. An Options Briefing Note will therefore be brought to Informal Executive in February 2026 to agree the best path forward and maintain momentum on delivery.

Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife



Actions we are taking

West Oxfordshire District Council has completed the Preferred Policy Options consultation for its emerging Local Plan 2041. Running from 26 June to 8 August 2025, this stage explored the updated vision, objectives and preferred approaches across housing, transport, climate, economy, infrastructure and the natural and historic environment. It did not propose site allocations but invited early views on the direction of travel, helping to build understanding of the key issues the Draft Plan will need to address. Engagement included online material, hard-copy documents and a programme of district-wide drop-in events and online sessions. A Consultation Summary Report was published in October 2025, setting out the themes raised and how they will inform the next stage of plan-making.

The Preferred Spatial Options consultation followed from 3 November to 22 December 2025, seeking views on the distribution of development, the settlement hierarchy and whether the plan period should extend to 2043 to ensure a full 15-year horizon. It revisited strategic sites including Salt Cross and West Eynsham and explored additional locations around towns and larger villages. This stage forms a bridge between early policy development and the forthcoming Draft Plan and is informed by the Preferred Options document published in June 2025. Preparation of the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan is now underway, incorporating a strengthened, integrated approach to the water environment based on updated technical evidence.

Updating the evidence base remains a critical part of this work. Draft updated reports for the Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Phase 1 Water Cycle Study were issued in July 2025, assessing fluvial and surface water risk, water supply and wastewater capacity, and setting out principles for applying the Sequential and Exception Tests. These studies, aligned with national guidance, complement wider updates to Oxfordshire's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and will underpin decisions about growth locations and infrastructure needs as the Draft Plan takes shape.

Nature recovery continues to be embedded across plan-making and delivery. The Pudlicote Farm habitat bank, established in March 2025 with the landowner and the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment, remains a key mechanism for delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) where on-site delivery is not feasible. Baseline BNG calculations for five priority sites are also being reviewed to support future project development. Opportunities for strategic land acquisition will be considered once the BNG market stabilises and in the context of local government reorganisation. Officers continue to participate in the Evenlode and Windrush Catchment Partnerships, supporting nature-based interventions such as wetland creation and helping to connect landowners with technical expertise.

The Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)—endorsed by West Oxfordshire's Executive in September 2025, and published in November 2025, identifies countywide habitat priorities and opportunity areas, with approximately 41% of West Oxfordshire falling within mapped opportunities. Officers and councillors attended the LNRS launch and the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership annual meeting, reflecting strong collaborative working with environmental partners. The LNRS is already informing delivery at a local level, including the Windrush in Witney project, where a February 2026 review meeting will consider future opportunities and help shape a planned National Lottery Heritage Fund bid in Year 3 of the Service Level Agreement.

Community-level nature initiatives continue to expand. The Coronation Community Orchard Scheme has supported six orchards in round one, sixteen in round two, and nine applications are progressing in the final round, with pruning workshops now scheduled. The Nature and Health Inequality project continues in partnership with local charities, councils and the University of Oxford, informed by updated Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 data. Officers are also reviewing ecological reports with the Ecology Team and working with Assets, volunteer groups and Ubico to identify additional Road Verge Nature Reserves, with one verge already under revised management. At the Station Lane depot in Witney, an Environment Agency exemption application for composting is awaiting a March 2026 decision, and at the Woodgreen offices, glyphosate-free management has been strengthened by a move to peat-free practices. Broader woodland planting work remains on hold pending clarity arising from local government reorganisation.

As the Local Plan advances, the Council continues to align updated technical studies, the LNRS, BNG delivery work, catchment partnership activity and community-level initiatives to ensure a robust and environmentally led Regulation 19 Draft Plan for consultation in 2026, ahead of submission for independent examination.



Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Actions we are taking

West Oxfordshire District Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2019 and remains committed to achieving carbon-neutral operations by 2030. This ambition is guided by the Climate Change Strategy 2025–2030, the Carbon Action Plan 2024–2030 and the West Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Plan, which together set a clear framework for cutting emissions, integrating climate considerations into Council services and strengthening biodiversity and climate resilience.

Progress continues on decarbonising the Council's estate. Heat-decarbonisation plans have been completed for Elmfield, 3 Welch Way and the Old Court House. At Windrush Leisure Centre, the PSDS Phase 3c scheme has advanced significantly, with the new air-source heat pump system installed and the asbestos boiler removed; completion remains on track for March 2026. The PSDS Phase 4 scheme for Chipping Norton Leisure Centre is still under review, and new funding will be required to decarbonise Carterton Leisure Centre following the unsuccessful PSDS Phase 3b bid. Solar PV has been installed at Carterton, although further upgrades will be needed to reduce emissions. Budget provision has been identified for low-carbon heating and solar PV at 3 Welch Way in 2026/27, while the Senior Leadership Team has confirmed no wider solar investment on Council properties ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

The district's electric vehicle charging network continues to expand through Council-owned sites and the countywide OXLEVI programme. Oxfordshire secured £3.6 million in LEVI funding to triple public EV charging by the end of 2025, supported by procurement completed in 2025. Legal contract documents for the countywide rollout are prepared, with approval anticipated in January 2026. A connection surgery is scheduled for 28 January 2026 to assess depot electrical capacity for fleet electrification.

Work to align waste and fleet operations with the Council's climate goals also continues. The Waste Environmental Services Programme (WESP) business case is being updated to reflect infrastructure needs such as depot decarbonisation and EV charging. A fleet review has been completed and procurement is underway for four new electric food-waste vehicles, with broader electrification planned as vehicles reach replacement. The Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool (SIAT) is now mandatory for all Council decisions.

The Council remains an active partner in CAPZero—the community-led energy plan around the Eynsham (Cuckoo Lane) primary substation—and discussions continue with Low Carbon Hub on districtwide application. Oxfordshire's Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) modelling has identified significant solar and wind potential, and the district LAEP will assess how these opportunities can be delivered for maximum community benefit. Countywide retrofit planning is being advanced through Arup's work for Oxfordshire County Council, supporting local efforts to scale retrofit. The Council continues to promote ESOX energy assessments for businesses and uses the Greenlight hub to support community climate action, funding signposting and engagement with town and parish councils. Work is also underway to strengthen youth climate networks.

The Council is preparing to enforce Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) more strongly in the private rented sector, with reported breaches to be investigated. Funding secured through a 2025 report is enabling development of a new Asset Management Strategy, including carbon assessments of tenanted buildings.

Support for low-income and off-gas households continues through HUG2 (Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2), which upgraded 15 homes in Year 1 and now benefits from expanded eligibility. This complements services offered through Better Housing Better Health, ensuring support reaches households least able to invest in upgrades themselves.

Delivery of the West Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Plan continues, with actions prioritised according to capacity and impact. The Ecology Team has returned to full staffing (3 FTE planning ecologists and 2 FTE nature recovery officers), enabling stronger project delivery. A full update will be presented to Overview & Scrutiny in February 2026, and Executive Members are considering budget provision for new and multi-year nature recovery projects in 2026–27. Officers remain engaged with county and regional partners on mitigation and adaptation.

A countywide energy baseline and modelling exercise is nearing completion, and the district LAEP will guide future energy infrastructure decisions. Work on Local Plan energy policies is being strengthened ahead of Regulation 19 to ensure alignment with the Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Route Map and wider strategies.

In June 2025, West Oxfordshire was named the top-performing rural district in the national Council Climate Action Scorecards, recognising strong governance, community engagement and practical progress across areas including decarbonisation, retrofit, nature recovery and carbon-literacy training.



Working Together for West Oxfordshire

Actions we are taking

West Oxfordshire District Council is entering the final year of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) delivery, with a clear focus on ensuring continuity for communities and businesses as national funding winds down. Final allocations for 2025/26 have been confirmed as £327,146 (UKSPF) and £214,829 (REPF), extending the district's overall Prosperity Fund programme into a fourth year and supporting local investment through March 2026. In December 2025, the Government announced an extension to the national programme, allowing expenditure until October 2026. This provides additional flexibility to manage any underspend and work collaboratively with the Delivery Group and Partnership Group ahead of the new hard stop deadline. A celebratory event is being planned to recognise the achievements of UKSPF and REPF participants and highlight the positive impact created across the district.

A strengthened programme of business support schemes has been launched to help local enterprises innovate, grow and future-proof their operations. This includes the new West Oxfordshire Business Boost Grant, offering up to £5,000 in capital funding for equipment, expansion and low-carbon investment, opening formally in September 2025. It complements existing schemes such as Shop Front Improvement Grants (up to £1,000), Visitor Economy Grants (£1,000–£10,000) and Rural Enterprise Growth Grants (£5,000–£20,000), all refreshed in June 2025. Six-month impact reporting for the 2025 rounds begins in October. Business and environmental sustainability support continues through the Carbon Action Fund, which has seen strong uptake, and the Tools for Tomorrow initiative, which continues to address skills shortages in the construction and retrofit sector. Wider support also includes delivery of the West Oxfordshire Business Support Programme (June 2025–January 2026), offering Business Sparks and Business Accelerator provision for start-ups and scaling businesses.

The Westhive civic crowdfunding programme continues to act as a flagship for community-led investment. By the end of Round 4 (July 2025), the platform had supported 28 projects worth £948,172. A further Round 5 has since been completed, with 10 additional projects receiving pledges. The Council has also invested an additional £60,000 in the Westhive Community Infrastructure Fund to support projects focused on youth engagement, inclusion and mental health. In 2024/25 alone, £273,682 in UKSPF support was channelled into VCS projects through Westhive. Recent Westhive-supported initiatives include:

- **Let's Roll!** - inclusive wheelchair dance classes, now fully funded for continued delivery and hosting a national competition in 2026.
- **Carterton Family Centre** - receiving funding to expand low-cost provision for young families.
- **Community Floodplain Restoration** - creating new meadows and wet woodland to boost biodiversity and natural flood management.

Youth-focused work continues to expand. The Council's Youth Development Officer has supported emerging youth-led projects in Stonesfield, Freeland and Eynsham, while a new Youth Partnership with Witney Town Council and Thames Valley Police focuses on inclusion and safeguarding. The YouMove programme now supports more than 500 families in West Oxfordshire and has seen a significant rise in activity levels countywide, with nearly 14,000 residents registered by mid-2025. The Leisure Cards scheme, delivered through GLL, also continues to offer free leisure access for residents experiencing poor mental health.

Engagement with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) remains strong, supported through forums in key settlements and biannual Health and Wellbeing Alliance meetings. New initiatives include the recruitment of a Food Action Plan Officer to deliver the district's Food Action Plan, and the launch of the Community Activity Grant (CAG) scheme, providing £500–£1,000 for small community action projects, with decisions due in October 2025. The Community Insight Profile Grant Scheme, funded by Oxfordshire County Council Public Health, will support organisations in Witney Central, with awards expected in November.

Business and environmental sustainability support continues through the Carbon Action Fund, which has seen strong uptake and has been submitted for consideration in the LGC Awards. This fund, worth £10,000–£20,000 per grant, targets SMEs seeking to decarbonise buildings, install renewables, or invest in waste-reduction equipment. The Tools for Tomorrow initiative also remains active, addressing skills shortages in the local construction and retrofit sector. [news.westoxon.gov.uk] Wider economic development initiatives include the West Oxfordshire Business Support Programme (June 2025–January 2026), delivered by ALP Synergy, offering a combined cycle of Business Sparks and Business Accelerator support for start-ups and scaling firms. The district continues to promote enterprise and innovation through workshops, peer-to-peer networks and tourism-sector support via Cotswold Tourism partnerships.

Together, these programmes and investments reflect the Council's commitment to sustaining the impact of the Prosperity Funds beyond their national end date, strengthening community resilience, supporting business growth, and ensuring that local priorities continue to be delivered through 2026 and beyond.

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Corporate Strategy Action Tracker

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

		Our Focus	Actions	Quarter 3 Update	Start Date	Date Due	Status	Executive Member	Link Officer
I.1	Putting Residents First	<p>The Council will listen and act in the best interests of residents by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Being an outward facing, accessible, inclusive and open Council, improving our use of technology to increase understanding and access to what we do, how we work and the decisions we take -Providing easy to use platforms for public consultations that are effective, accessible and timely so that the voice of residents can be heard in planning and other Council decisions 	<p>Explore how the Council leads Youth Engagement, ensuring youth are engaged across the wide range of activity it undertakes.</p>	<p>Youth Development officer has continued to strengthen engagement with youth organisations in order to reach young people and continued to engage with other Council services including Planning Policy and Economic Development</p>			On Target	Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Positively engaging with and listening to locally elected representatives on Town and Parish Councils -Actively seeking the voice of the seldom heard, including those of young people, to understand their particular needs and ensure that the Council is taking decisions that meet these needs. 	<p>Customer Experience Improvement Programme</p>	Completed	01/07/2020	01/01/2024	Complete	Andy Graham	Giles Hughes

1.2	Putting Residents, Young and Old, at the Heart of What We Do	The Council will act with outstanding levels of transparency and accountability, with high standards of governance and trustworthiness.	<p>Proposal to implement a robust system and process for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > the allocation of matters to the councils' forward plans > report preparation, consultation and approval > transparency and publication of decision making; and > decision tracking. 	Completed	01/05/2021	31/12/2023	Complete	Andy Graham	Giles Hughes
1.3		The Council will actively manage Council budgets, delivering good levels of service through the wise and efficient use of funds available as well as enabling those budgets to grow so that the Council can take action towards the priorities of this Council Plan.	Procurement: Publica-wide project to embed climate, ecological and social value considerations in procurement processes to maximise the use of sustainable suppliers and support local businesses.	Procurement Act Training was delivered in November. Toolkit training will now be rolled out in February, however, the toolkit is available on the Portal and provides an intuitive step by step guide.			In Progress	Alaric Smith	Ciaran O'Kane / Claire Locke
		Ensure the timely provision of built and green infrastructure which meets the needs of existing and incoming residents and that supports health and care to enable physical and mental well-being, community cohesion and delivers a high quality of life.	Adopt and implement CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy).	Preparation has continued ahead of the effective commencement date of 31 January 2026 including Officer training, development of back office systems etc.	01/11/2019	31/08/2024	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Hugo Ashton	Giles Hughes / Chris Hargraves
			Commission (Sport England) Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) through Max Associates to inform a West Oxfordshire Leisure, Health and Wellbeing Strategy which will define a more holistic leisure provision offer (inc. arts, culture, entertainment and sport). The SOPM will also inform the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (and Local Plan Review) and Town Centre regeneration plans.	Completed	01/09/2023	20/11/2024	Complete	Tim Sumner	Rachel Biles

2.1	Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All	Explore opportunities for green investment for strategic development areas eg through the Carterton Masterplan and also through the Pan-Regional Partnership.	Our UKSPF partnership with Low Carbon Hub is supporting ongoing infrastructure investments for businesses aiming to become more climate-conscious, with this phase concluding in Q4. We are focused on exploring strategic employment sites at Salt Cross and collaborating with local science-based innovation centres to drive this growth. Additionally, we are working with West Oxfordshire Business and Retail Park in Carterton to create new opportunities for green investment through a dedicated prospectus that promotes Carterton as a prime location for business.	01/01/2023	31/08/2025	On Target	Tim Sumner, Andrew Prosser	Sam Stronach		
		Explore how the Local Plan can address the issue of securing long term maintenance of green infrastructure on large SDAs.	Draft Regulation 19 Local Plan in preparation following conclusion of spatial options consultation on 22 December 2025. This will include consideration of long-term maintenance and stewardship arrangements in new development.	31/08/2022	31/08/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Chris Hargraves		
		Consideration of community stewardship and maintenance of Strategic Development Areas – how do we enable this?	Draft Regulation 19 Local Plan in preparation following conclusion of spatial options consultation on 22 December 2025. This will include consideration of long-term maintenance and stewardship arrangements in new development.	31/08/2022	31/08/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser	Chris Hargraves		
2.2		Work with Oxfordshire County Council and others to increase the opportunity for residents to travel around and beyond the District on foot or by bike, or on public transport, to reduce car dependence and benefit from the health and economic benefits of doing so.	Carterton Local Cycling and Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has been formally adopted by OCC. Eynsham LCWIP is being progressed.	10/09/2021		In Progress	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon		
		Explore the scope for alternative means of delivering the range of homes in the District that meet the diverse needs of our communities, such as investment in tenures and sizes of homes that the market does not currently deliver enough of	Strategic Housing Project: Internal management and modelling – proposals to be presented to Executive in paper compiled by Publica Assistant Director Planning and Sustainability to November Executive.		Completed	01/04/2023	15/11/2023	Complete	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes

2.3

The Council will be a hive of activity to help build and support

deliver enough of.

Strategic Housing Project: Assessing scope for investment and modelling.	Initial assessment shows that partnership working with an RP offers the potential to leverage funding and Homes England grant, whilst de-risking financial exposure for the Council. Live example at Woodford Way currently being progressed.	01/04/2023		On Target	Alaric Smith, Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes
Strategic Housing Project: Overview of modelling options and delivery. Proposed approach to the November Executive.	Completed	01/04/2023	15/11/2023	Complete	Tim Sumner, Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes
Further exploration of the best route to be more interventionist in housing delivery via direct provision – clarity needed over the desired objectives of establishing the council owned housing company or pursue an alternative route eg via a Joint Venture (OxPlace/Oxfordshire wide).	Routes to direct Council Intervention have been explored and a Council Owned company has been discounted. Alternative routes such as Joint Venture, Land trading, Profit share and commissioning models are more favourable. A recent example is partnership working with an RP to appraise, commission and develop a Council land asset at Woodford Way. This approach protects the Councils interests, offers protection from financial and resource risk, and it also provides clarity on the desired outcome.	01/04/2023		On Target	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes
Development of business cases for existing Council owned sites – initial focus should be on Woodford Way – a housing scheme which integrates carparking (what is needed/tie in with EVPC). Key landowners/development partners.	The proposals for Woodford Way will be taken to the Executive committee on the 14th Jan. An architect has been engaged to refine the existing block plan into a comprehensive plan which integrates sufficient car parking, residential development and appropriate amenities and landscaping. A working group of planners, conservation and the RP are all collaborating to arrive at the most beneficial design. The proposed parking solution includes the car parking capacity available at the Mariotts multi-storey car park in close proximity to the site. The recent car parking strategy makes this position clear, but further work is being done to quantify this. Commercial considerations are looking positive but are being confirmed with the RP and Homes England.	01/04/2023		On Target	Geoff Saul	Michael David
Further exploration of modular building – how, where and with whom including visits manufacturers. To understand options for delivery.	Modular Building companies have been researched (including Timber frame SIPs and container homes) however appropriate sites have not yet been identified.	01/04/2023		On Target	Geoff Saul	Giles Hughes
Emergency accommodation – Acquisition of - consider the balance – single/couple and family accommodation).	A total of 28 bedspaces have been identified in the pipeline for acquisition. These are predominantly to meet the needs of single persons which is the overriding demand from the housing register. Each property transaction is at varying stages of surveys, legal work in preparation for completion and exchange of contracts.			In Progress	Geoff Saul	Jon Dearing

	thriving towns and villages that provide residents with a high quality of life by supporting a vibrant local economy, homes and infrastructure that meet people's needs, excellent health and wellbeing and ensuring equal access to opportunity for all.	Work with partners to support a vibrant local economy which gives residents the opportunity to prosper and fulfil their ambitions through secure jobs and exciting careers, entrepreneurship and developing new skills to participate in and contribute to the local economy.	Completion of housing development at Walterbush Road, Chipping Norton.	Longstop date for development partner extended to 1st December 2025. Development partner has now confirmed that the sale to them is unlikely to proceed due to inability to secure funding. Options Briefing Note to be brought forward to Informal Executive 11th February 2026.	01/10/2021	31/07/2023	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Geoff Saul	Jasmine McWilliams
			Deliver the Local Authority Housing Fund as a means to relieve pressures on short term accommodation and bridging hotels with a longer term of objective to see the housing being used for more general affordable purposes.	Completed	01/04/2023	31/09/2024	Complete	Geoff Saul	Jon Dearing
2.4		Work with partners to support a vibrant local economy which gives residents the opportunity to prosper and fulfil their ambitions through secure jobs and exciting careers, entrepreneurship and developing new skills to participate in and contribute to the local economy.	Work with Carterton Town Council and other relevant stakeholders to identify economic regeneration priorities for the town and immediate area following completion of the UKSPF funded Carterton Strategic/Master Plan.	<p>Carterton Area Strategy work now underway. Strong inter-relationship with draft Local Plan 2043. The council is appointing a dedicated specialist, who will take up their post in the New Year 2026, to work closely with the community on the Carterton Area Strategic Plan, setting out a clear and shared vision for the areas future, ensuring that growth and development reflect local priorities with the goal of having a comprehensive plan in place by 2028.</p> <p>As part of the early groundwork, the council has already engaged with the Oxford Growth Commission, who have reviewed and endorsed the approach. Previous studies and reports highlight the strong potential for Carterton and this initiative will translate that potential into meaningful outcomes for residents and businesses.</p>			In Progress	Duncan Enright	Chris Hargraves
			Strategy and plan for reinvigorating the District's Charter Markets	Completed			Complete	Duncan Enright	Sam Stronach
			Set future project priorities for Council and Stakeholders to secure the long term viability of our Market Towns via enhancements inc wayfinding & signage, public realm and support for independent retailers and appropriate market promotions/attractions.	<p>We continue to make progress on the Wayfinding Signage Project, working closely with the Witney Chamber of Trade. Our UKSPF Shop Front Improvement Grant remains on track to award 14 grants by the end of Q4. In addition, the Rural Enterprise Growth Grant and the West Oxfordshire Business Boost are set to provide a further 11 grants to local businesses, while the Tourism Team's Visitor Economy Grant scheme aims to support up to 8 businesses.</p> <p>We are currently collaborating with the Assets Team and Marriotts Walk Shopping Centre on a public realm improvement project. Our Business Matters newsletter continues to champion local retailers, sharing up-to-date and relevant information. We also maintain our commitment to visiting businesses to offer tailored support whenever needed. We are exploring options to source a comprehensive footfall data package to support high street vitality and inform decision-making. This data will help us better understand visitor patterns, peak times, and overall trends, enabling targeted interventions to boost local business performance and enhance the customer experience.</p>	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Duncan Enright	Sam Stronach

			Oxfordshire County Council improvements to Witney Town Centre linked to Marriotts Walk redevelopment where appropriate.	Subject to approval, the final design will be published, traffic orders made, and construction is expected to start in early 2026. With completion mid-2026			Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Duncan Enright	Sam Stronach
2.5			Guide the future delivery of Salt Cross new garden village and associated infrastructure to enable delivery of Salt Cross Science Park.	Area Action Plan - Planning Inspector's final report regarding Net Zero received for Fact Checking. Anticipation of adoption at Full Council 25th February 2026. Outline Planning application 2021 reviewed with OCC / GDL; in the process of agreeing requirements for outstanding information / updated information required to enable a work programme to be fixed / resources allocated & PPA put in place with the objective of timely outline planning determination. Liaison with Eynsham Parish Council & receipt of draft Neighbourhood Plan for review. Receipt of Oxford Growth Commission Interim report supportive of Salt Cross within the garden community programme.	01/01/2018	31/12/2034	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Duncan Enright	Andrea Clenton
			Marriotts Walk – implementation of CBRE recommendations inc. securing new tenants, public realm improvements & making enhanced use of the square.	Work ongoing with CBRE to manage void units in a challenging market. Unit 6 Agreement for Lease completed and planning permission granted, landlord fitout due to be completed January 2026 with completion of lease thereafter. Lease of Unit 14a due to complete February 2026 and terms agreed to retain tenant at Unit 11a. Public Realm designs and costings in train.			On Target	Duncan Enright	Jasmine McWilliams
			Development of the Carterton Strategic/Master Plan to regeneration the town and in doing so redressing balance between housing development with investment in the town centre, leisure and culture facilities, community space and business opportunities. Will seek to determine the best way to maximise the economic benefit of the RAF's largest airbase for the town and immediate area.	We are working closely with the owners of West Oxfordshire Business and Retail Park and Carter Jonas to develop an investment brochure that highlights the park as an attractive location for businesses. As part of this initiative, we are providing key data and insights to strengthen the case for investment. Our aim is to continue supporting efforts to let vacant units near the RAF Brize Norton Main Gate, helping to drive economic activity in the area. In addition, we are exploring opportunities to collaborate on nominating Carterton for the Town of Culture of the Year competition, showcasing its unique character and community strengths. We are also partnering with Enterprise Oxfordshire to deliver a tailored business support and mentoring package for Carterton High Street businesses, ensuring they have the tools and guidance needed to thrive.	01/02/2022	31/05/2025	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Alaric Smith, Hugo Ashton, Geoff Saul, Tim Sumner	Sam Stronach
	Work with others, and fulfil our statutory obligations, to ensure that land, air and water support biodiverse habitats, reduce pollution and bring about nature recovery to the District, putting it at the forefront of local decision making.	Ubico Grounds Maintenance Contract – review contract with aim of securing both biodiversity enhancements and budgetary savings.	Ongoing work in relation to composting facility at Station Lane depot in Witney; exemption application has been submitted to Environment Agency and expecting outcome by March 2026. As well as no glyphosate use at Woodgreen offices, it has also been agreed that the site will be peat-free. Investigating the potential to identify additional Road Verge Nature Reserves through a change of management regime.	01/04/2025	01/03/2026	On Target	Lidia Arciszewska	Si Pocock-Cluley	

3.1	Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife	<p>Biodiversity Land Management Plans - Working with Ubico to change land management processes across key WODC sites, for example reduced mowing frequency, creation of urban meadows, changes to floodplain meadow management, invasive species action, subsidence works, to improve them for both wildlife and people.</p>	<p>Ecological reports are under review with the Ecology team and proposed future changes will be discussed with Assets, local volunteer groups and Ubico. The management of additional Road Verge Nature Reserves is under discussion, with one already managed in-house.</p>	01/02/2022	01/03/2026	On Target	Lidia Arciszewska	Si Pocock-Cluley / Hannah Kenyon / Melanie Dodd
		<p>Support DEFRA funded Landscape Recovery Project (contiguous with the Evenlode and Windrush Catchments) in partnership with the North East Cotswolds Farmer Cluster and the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership.</p>	<p>Awaiting the outcome of the grant application. Evenlode Catchment Partnership steering group and wider group meetings attended where this project was discussed.</p>			In Progress	Lidia Arciszewska	Chris Hargraves
		<p>Windrush in Witney funding bid, in partnership with Wychwood Forest Trust - Landscape-scale enhancements across the Witney Floodplains, working with OCC, WTC and Wychwood Forest Trust to introduce grazing, improve floral diversity, pollard willow trees, establishment of a new volunteer group and delivery of a series of community engagement/rural skills training events.</p>	<p>New Service Level Agreement objectives agreed for Year 2 between WODC case officer (Principal Ecologist), Community Funding Officer and WFT CEO to hold a Windrush in Witney project team meeting before the end of March 2026 to review the project and identify amendments and new opportunities, particularly in light of the LNRS. This meeting is scheduled to take place in February 2026. This will involve new partners such as the Windrush Catchment Partnership. The aim is to submit the development bid to National Lottery Heritage Fund in Year 3 of the SLA (2027-28) before local government reorganisation is underway.</p>	01/05/2022	01/03/2025	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Andrew Prosser	Melanie Dodd
		<p>Coronation Community Orchard Scheme</p>	<p>6 orchards were planted in the first round. 16 in the second round. There are 9 applications for the third and final round, each in varying stages of completion. Comms on the pruning workshop have been shared, with set dates now fixed. Contingency plan remains in place to use any remaining funding.</p>	01/11/2023	21/03/2025	On Target	Andrew Prosser/Lidia Arciszewska	Melanie Dodd

3.2	The Council will be a progressive custodian of our environmental resources, supporting a healthy natural landscape and functioning ecosystem which is rich in wildlife and habitats that are enjoyed by and benefit	Recognise and support the vital role of farming in natural ecosystem conservation, local food production and economic resilience, and the role that environmentally sustainable farming can play in achieving this.	Engaging with farmers as part of a wider consideration of the District's rural economy. How can WODC work to support (within its powers) a strong local rural economy, including diversification and the visitor economy.	LGR has made it difficult for WODC to invest in woodland planting schemes at this point.			In Progress	Lidia Arciszewska, Andrew Prosser	Chris Jackson / Hannah Kenyon	
3.3		Help people to connect with nature by improving understanding of and public access to green spaces and the countryside.	Deer Park South Access Project – Infrastructure improvements to enhance public access to woodland adjacent to strategic development area.	Completed	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	Complete	Duncan Enright	Hannah Kenyon	
			Tackling inequalities in nature	Nature and Health Inequality project is continuing. Officers are continuing to work with local charities and councils, County Council and University of Oxford researchers. Work has been focussed following the release of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 data. Forecasting and scheduling for the rest of the 3 year project is underway.				On Target	Andrew Prosser	Heather McCulloch / Melanie Dodd
3.4		Be an active participant in the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and contribute to the production of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to establish priorities and map proposals for action to drive nature's recovery, achieve Biodiversity Net Gain and provide wider environmental benefits specific to West Oxfordshire.	Officer group to convene with Local Nature Partnership - maintain relationship with LNP and work with partners to develop workstreams.	LNRS launch event and OLN annual meeting was attended by several WODC officers and Cllrs. Ongoing good working relationship with the LNP.	01/07/2022	01/07/2025		On Target	Lidia Arciszewska, Duncan Enright	Hannah Kenyon / Melanie Dodd
		Explore the potential for the Council to acquire land for Biodiversity Net Gain and nature-based carbon sequestration.	Baseline BNG calculations for the 5 priority sites are being reviewed. The acquisition of land for BNG and nature recovery could be considered after LGR once the BNG market has stabilised (after recent policy changes) and potential investment sources identified.	8/12/2024	31/03/2026		On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon / Melanie Dodd	

3.5	all.	Work with others to facilitate environmentally sensitive flood management of our river catchments.	Support of the Catchment Partnerships including the promotion (where appropriate) of other water quality campaigning groups. Sewerage and Water Agency Group continue to facilitate (Links with the Pan Regional Partnership – Scoping and Modelling Work).	Officers sit on the Evenlode Catchment Partnership steering group and attend the quarterly meetings and support the partnership through the SLA. Officers also attend the Windrush Catchment Partnership quarterly meetings. Promotion of Wetland Creation Scheme through the Climate Action Bulletin and through personal introductions. Connecting farmers and landowners to the relevant catchment partnership coordinators continues and support is offered for site visits.			On Target	Lidia Arciszewska, Andy Graham	Hannah Kenyon / Melanie Dodd
			Delivery of the Local Plan – overview including how can the site allocations process through the Local Plan review play a positive role in water management? Coordination of policy. Linked to 4.2.	Draft Regulation 19 Local Plan in preparation following conclusion of spatial options consultation on 22 December 2025. This will include consideration of an integrated approach to the water environment.	01/06/2022	31/12/2024	On Target	Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves / Hannah Kenyon
		Drive down carbon emissions from Council operations including leisure, waste and street cleansing and running of the Council's estate, and in so doing lead by example to inspire others to take action to collectively reduce the overall carbon emissions of the District.	Decarbonisation of council owned buildings, including leisure centres and sports pavilions – secure external PSDS funding and extend the MEES project to include the full decarbonisation of tenanted buildings.	PSDS 3c Windrush Leisure Centre - New heating system has been installed. Asbestos boiler has been removed.			On Target	Andrew Prosser, Dan Levy, Alaric Smith	Hannah Kenyon
			Decarbonisation of council owned buildings, including leisure centres and sports pavilions – secure external PSDS funding and extend the MEES project to include the full decarbonisation of tenanted buildings.	PSDS 4 Chipping Norton Leisure Centre - Scheme is currently under review.			Off Target	Andrew Prosser, Dan Levy, Alaric Smith	Hannah Kenyon

4.1	Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency	<p>PSDS 3b funded Carterton Leisure Centre decarbonisation - Carbon reduction through the replacement of the heating and hot water system of the building with a low-carbon alternative and increasing the amount of solar PV on site.</p>	<p>PSDS 3b Carterton Leisure Centre - New funding will need to be identified and secured to decarbonise the centre.</p>	31/10/22	31/03/25	Off Target	Andrew Prosser, Tim Sumner	Hannah Kenyon
		<p>Waste Vehicle Strategy - Supporting the Waste team on the development of the strategy to reduce emissions from the Council's waste vehicle fleet.</p>	<p>Connection surgery scheduled for 28th January 2026 to identify depot capacity for charging electric vehicles.</p>			On Target	Lidia Arciszewska	Si Pocock-Clulely / Hannah Kenyon
		<p>Carbon Action Plan to 2030 and Climate Change Strategy to 2050 - Update of the Carbon Action Plan and Climate Change strategy to include scope 3 emissions, district carbon budgets, route maps to net zero, and actions.</p>	Completed	01/07/23	30/6/2024	Complete	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
		<p>Climate Impact Assessment Tool (CIAT) – Develop the tool as a mandatory requirement on projects so as to embed climate and nature considerations in council decision making.</p>	Completed	01/02/2023	01/04/2024	Complete	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
		<p>Solar PV project for tenanted buildings - A Publica-wide long-term project to install rooftop solar panels on council owned buildings, increasing the amount of renewable energy generated in the District.</p>	<p>SLT has confirmed there is no appetite for solar investment in council-owned properties pre-LGR.</p>	01/08/2022	01/12/2023	Off Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon

4.2	The Council will be a community leader in responding to the challenges of climate change, including rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing the District and its communities for the impacts of climate change to ensure a fair transition for all to a future that will be defined by climate change.	Encourage the use of nature based solutions to sequester carbon and combat the risks arising from climate change at a river catchment scale, such as restoration of meadows and trees to reduce flooding and improve water quality.	Biodiversity Action Plan – Develop and deliver workstreams to restore nature and enhanced biodiversity in the District.	The Nature Recovery Plan continues to be implemented on a priority basis. Completed actions include the Ecology team, which is now back up to capacity with 3 FTE planning ecologists and 2 FTE nature recovery officers. Full progress report being provided to O&S committee meeting on 4th February 2026 (report in prep.). Possible budget for additional nature recovery projects being considered by Exec for 2026-27 (some of these will be multiple year projects).	01/03/2023		On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon / Melanie Dodd
4.3		Work with partner organisations and residents to facilitate the retrofit of carbon reduction measures in homes and businesses and pursue a drive to net zero carbon buildings in new developments through planning policy	Consider how proactive should WODC be in facilitating retrofit for the 'able to pay' market.	In discussions with Low Carbon Hub about the CAPZero model and districtwide rollout. LAEP is considering how to retrofit at scale. Arup have been commissioned by OCC to develop a retrofit action plan.			In Progress	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
			Greenlight – nature and online hub to facilitate community action for a greener future.	Continue to engage with a range of stakeholders on climate mitigation and adaptation.			In Progress	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
			Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) project for tenanted buildings - A Publica-wide review of tenanted buildings to determine what measures are needed to bring the EPC rating up to a B or above by 2030.	Reported breaches of MEES for privately rented homes will be investigated and enforced.	01/07/2023		On Target	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
			Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2) - A countywide scheme to upgrade energy efficiency and low carbon heating for low-income householders in the worst performing off-gas grid homes.	Completed	01/06/2023	01/03/2025	Complete	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
4.4		Encourage renewable energy generation at appropriate sites in the District, improving local energy and economic resilience and supporting the community benefits that this resilience will bring.	Explore opportunities with partners to encourage renewable energy within the District.	Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) countywide modelling has identified the potential for solar and wind power and this is being considered in more depth as part of the district LAEP. Exploring different community models for renewable energy to understand how best to support schemes that maximise community benefits. Supporting a community benefit policy for renewable schemes.			On Target	Andrew Prosser	Giles Hughes / Hannah Kenyon

4.5		Work with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver on our joint commitment to active travel and public transport, including through improved walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and better public transport services.	Install EV charging points across the District.	Legal contract documents have been prepared. Contract approval is anticipated in January 2026 and contract entered into with the preferred supplier shortly afterwards.	26/05/2023	01/01/2025	Off Target but Mitigation in Place	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon
5.1	Working Together for West Oxfordshire	Target available Council grant budgets to proposals by other organisations that will deliver on Council priorities.	Enable delivery of agreed project interventions on Government approved Investment Plan under UKSPF and REPF.	We continue to make steady progress across all UKSPF and REPF programmes, with grant agreements on track to conclude by Q4 2026. In December 2025, the government announced an extension for UKSPF/REPF funding, allowing expenditure up until October 2026. This provides additional time to address any underspend identified and work collaboratively with our Delivery Group and Partnership Group to allocate remaining funds before the new hard stop deadline. In addition, we are planning a celebratory event to recognise and showcase the achievements of all UKSPF and REPF participants, highlighting the positive impact these programmes have had on businesses and communities.			On Target	Duncan Enright	Sam Stronach
		Successful implementation of new Grant Scheme: a) Crowdfunding, b) Community and Voluntary Sector Service Level Agreements and c) Youth initiatives.		a) Round 5 has been completed with a further 10 projects being offered funding from the Council. Approval has been given by Executive to continue with this funding scheme over a further 3 years from April 2026. b) SLA organisations continue to operate. Funding for a new 3 year programme has been agreed from 2027 onwards c) Youth opportunities continue to be developed working in partnership with a range of providers and services	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Alaric Smith with Rachel Crouch, Andrew Prosser and Lidia Arciszewsk	Heather McCulloch
5.3		Support Town and Parish Councils to represent their communities energetically and take action on issues important to their locality.	Towns and Parish Biodiversity project– UKSPF funded project to provide case studies for communities on how to enhance biodiversity in different habitats.	Completed	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	Complete	Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon

5.4		Support the Voluntary and Community Sector to continue to undertake activity which serves the needs of residents including established organisations and more informal groups working to address particular needs such as access to food, youth support and cultural provision.	Community Grants	Ongoing engagement with VCS. Food officer recruited - due to start in Jan 2026. Witney Community insight Profile Grant round approved 22 projects to benefit the area.	01/12/2022	31/05/2025	On Target	Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch
5.5		Make a dedicated effort to further understand and meet the needs of our young people and support their mental health, including children, teenagers and young adults leaving school, entering the world of work and/or seeking to set up home in the District.	Focussed programme of engagement with young people, and other groups, on mental and physical health, local facilities and spaces for young people, to ensure future leisure, sport, culture and arts provision in the District best provides for these.	Youth development officer continues to engage with youth organisations across the district as well as interested groups in areas where services for young people are very limited. These have included sports clubs and private schools in the last quarter. OCC announced DCMS Local Transformation Pilot funding coming to WODC to develop a number of initiatives.			In Progress	Rachel Crouch, Tim Sumner	Heather McCulloch
			Have Your Say Events – focussed topic event for young people.	No plans for a one-off Have your say event at this stage.			In Progress	Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Delivering great services locally

PERFORMANCE REPORT:
October - December 2025

Summary Index

Area	KPI Name	RAG	Page
Revenues, Benefits and Housing	Percentage of Council Tax Collected	Amber	6
	Percentage of Non Domestic Rates collected	Green	7
	Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims	Green	8
	Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events	Red	9
	Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances	Red	10
	Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay	Red	11
	(Snapshot) Long Term Empty Properties	Grey	12
	(Snapshot) Number of households in B&B/hotel-type accommodation & Hostels (LA owned or managed); and Number of successful 'Move On' into suitable independent/long-term accommodation from B&Bs/hotels/hostels	Grey	13
Customer Experience	Customer Satisfaction - Telephone	Green	14
	Customer Satisfaction - Email	Grey	15
	Customer Satisfaction - Face to Face	Green	16

Summary Index

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

Summary Index

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

A note on performance benchmarking

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

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

Benchmarking has been included wherever possible ranking against other Local Authorities within Oxfordshire County Council. The Councils included are Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.

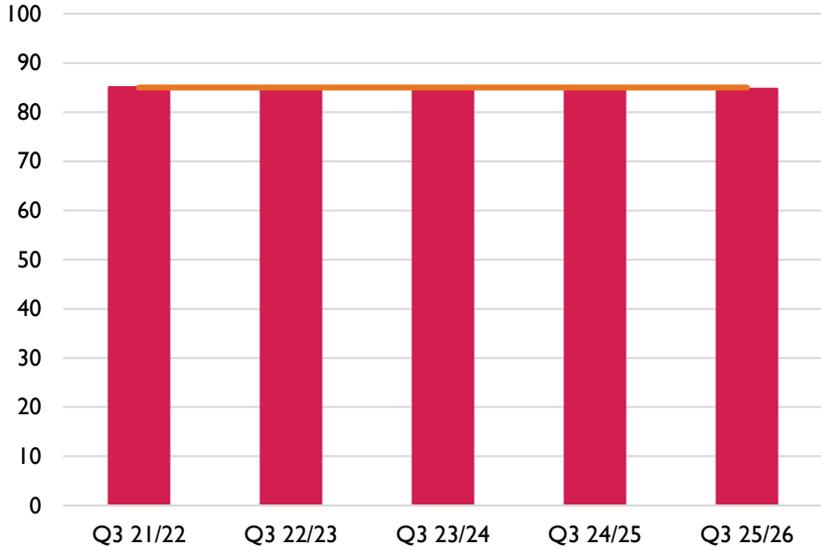
A RAG (red, amber, green) status has been applied to each KPI to provide a quick visual summary of the status of that KPI for the quarter. Additionally, RAG status has been added to the direction of travel for each metric to show how the performance against last quarter and the same quarter compared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

Overall Performance

Overall, the Councils performance remained strong across many key services, with high customer satisfaction, excellent planning determination times, robust business rates collection and continued growth in leisure participation. Council Tax collection also remained close to target, and several regulatory and environmental indicators continued to perform well. A smaller number of services experienced ongoing pressure, particularly in the processing of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support changes, where in-quarter improvements have not yet offset the cumulative impact of earlier delays and increasing case complexity. FOI response times dipped below target and Land Charges performance was temporarily affected by staffing shortages, though early signs of recovery are evident. Recycling rates continue to reflect seasonal and national trends. Taken together, Quarter 3 demonstrates strong and consistent delivery across priority services, with targeted improvement work in place where performance remains below expectations.

Moving forward, the Council remains committed to further enhancing its performance and service delivery. A key focus is on the development and implementation of automation and self-service options, aimed at providing customers with accessible and efficient self-help tools. By enabling customers to independently address their queries and concerns, the Council anticipates a reduction in the need for repeated interactions, streamlining services and improving overall efficiency. The Council will continue to monitor the impact of these improvement programs, assessing their effectiveness in reducing customer contact and enhancing operational processes to ensure the delivery of high-quality services to the community.

Percentage of Council Tax Collected



— Target

Direction of Travel

Against last Year 
Slightly decreased since last year

Higher is Good

Target **85%**
Actual **84.78%**

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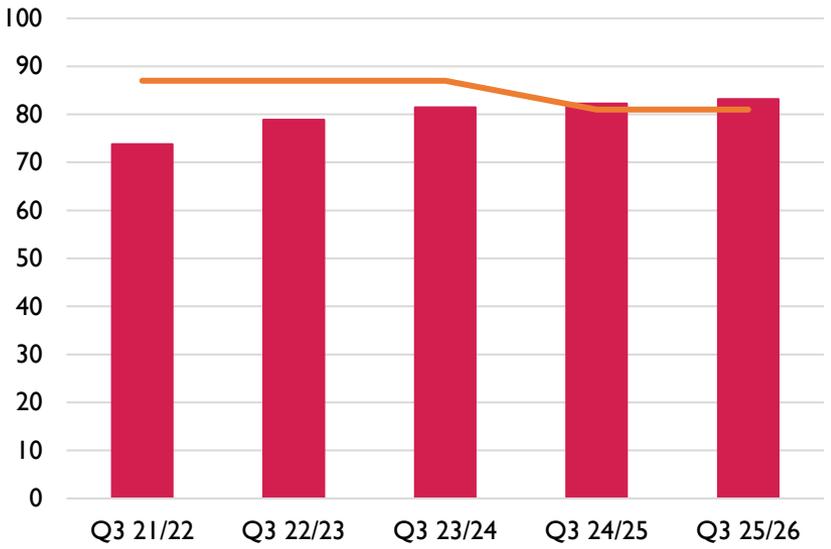
How do we compare?

Benchmarking via Gov.uk Tables and Individual Council Websites using other Local Authorities within Oxfordshire - Current Dataset is up to March '25 (2024-2025)

2024-2025 Benchmark	%	County Rank	Quartile
Cherwell	98.06	1/5	Top
West Oxfordshire	98.02	2/5	Top
South Oxfordshire	97.94	3/5	Second
Vale of White Horse	97.91	4/5	Third
Oxford	96.49	5/5	Bottom

By the end of Q3, the Council narrowly missed its collection target by 0.22%, with the small shortfall largely due to more households moving to 12-month instalment plans. A refreshed Direct Debit campaign is planned to help strengthen collection in future years.

Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected



Direction of Travel

Against last Year 
Increased since last year

Higher is Good

Target 81%
Actual 83.15%

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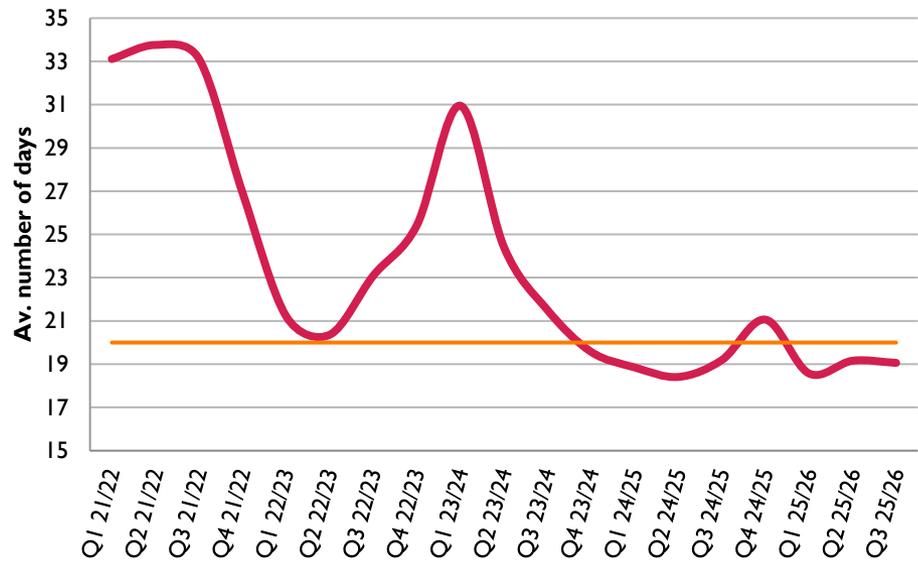
How do we compare?

Benchmarking via Gov.uk Tables and Individual Council Websites using other Local Authorities within Oxfordshire - Current Dataset is up to March '25 (2024-2025)

2024-2025 Benchmark	%	County Rank	Quartile
Cherwell	98.83	1/5	Top
West Oxfordshire	97.66	2/5	Top
Oxford	97.21	3/5	Second
Vale of White Horse	97.08	4/5	Third
South Oxfordshire	96.64	5/5	Bottom

By the end of Q3, the Council collected 83.15%, exceeding its 81% target and improving on last year's 82.25%. Up-to-date billing and account maintenance have supported this continued year-on-year improvement.

Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims



— Target

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Decreased since last quarter and last year

Lower is Good

Target	20
Actual	19.06

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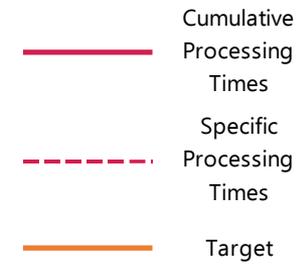
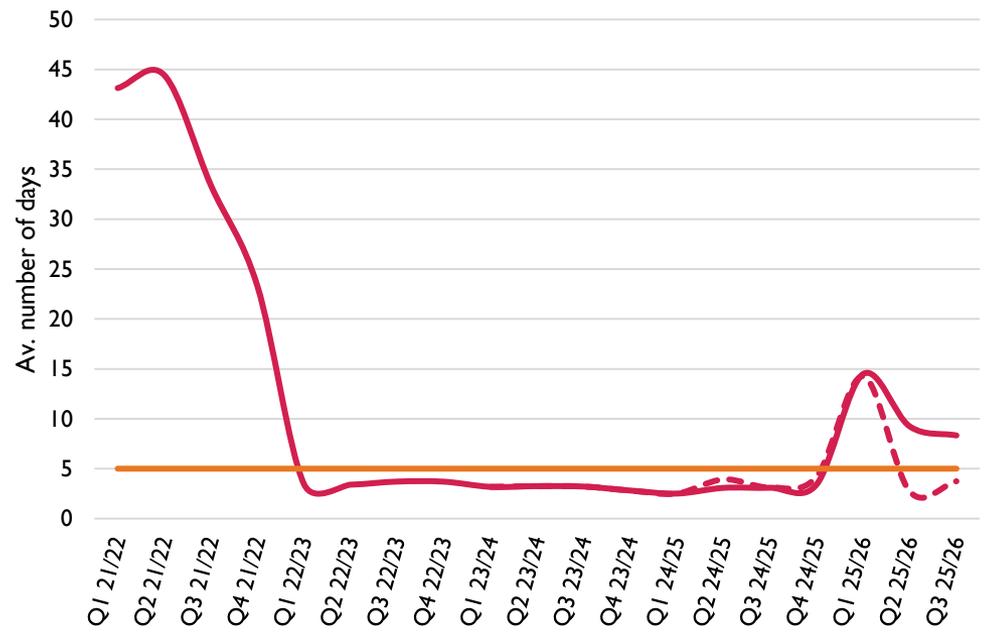
How do we compare?

Gov.uk produces tables to show a snapshot of the number of CTS claimants at the end of each financial year. The below table shows number of claimants at the end of September 2025 and the percentage change from September 2024 for each authority.

	Number of Claimants at end of Sept 2025	Percentage Change since Sept 2024
Oxford	8,430	-10.17%
Cherwell	5,904	-1.47%
West Oxfordshire	4,370	-0.70%
South Oxfordshire	4,887	-0.24%
Vale of White Horse	5,097	6.52%

The Council remains below its target for processing times for Council Tax new claims.

Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events



Lower is Good

Direction of Travel



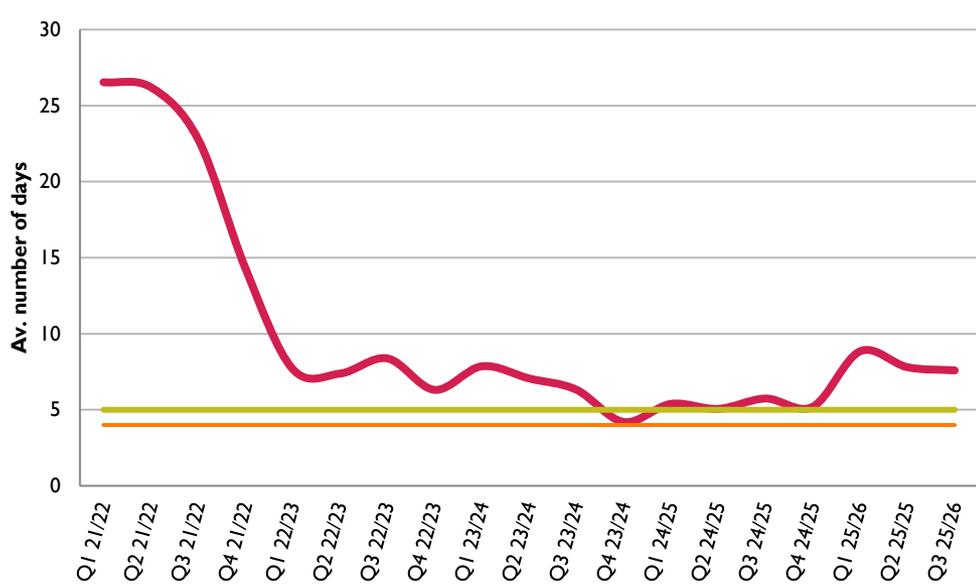
Decreased since last quarter but increased since last year

Target	5
Actual	8.33

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The cumulative processing time for Council Tax Support Change of Events remains over target, though it continued to improve through Q3. The in-quarter average from October to December was 3.74 days with the trend showing ongoing progress even as further acceleration becomes limited.

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances



— Target
— Shire Districts Mean

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter ↓

Against last Year ↑

Decreased slightly since last quarter but increased since last year

Lower is Good

Target	4
Actual	7.59

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How do we compare?

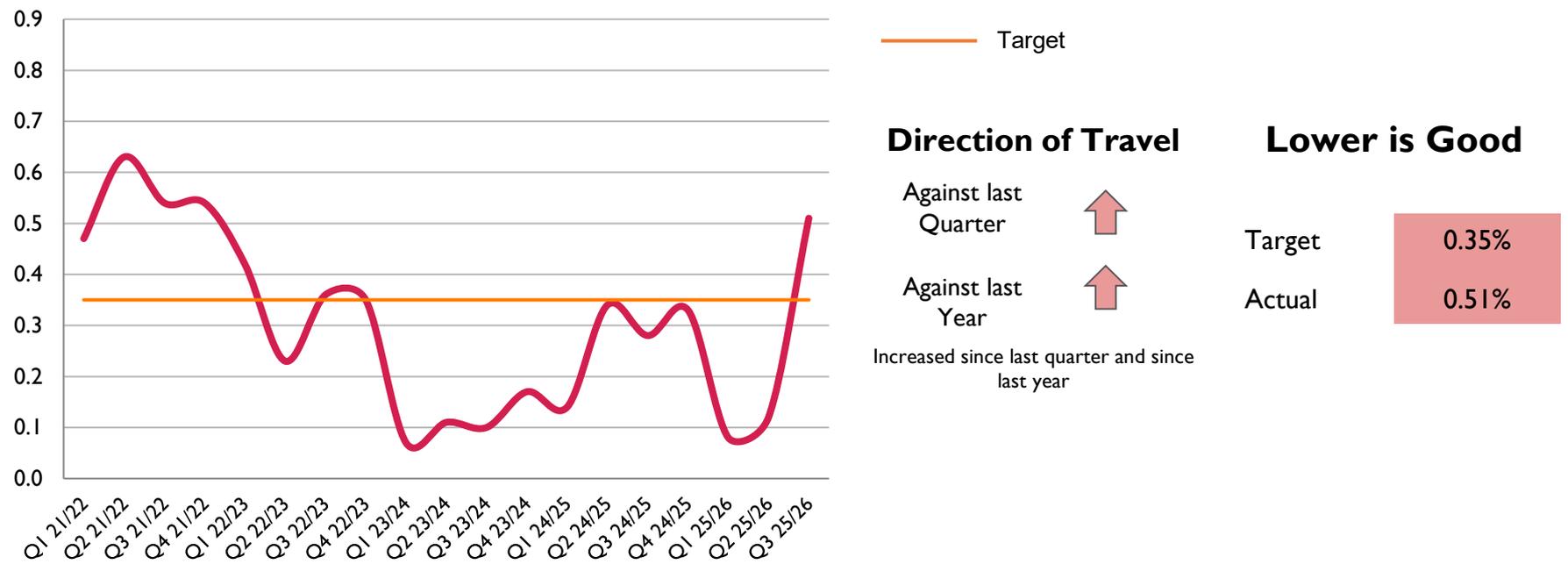
Gov.uk produces tables showing statistics on the average number of days to process a change in circumstance of an existing Housing Benefit claim. Latest Release – April – June 2025 (Q1 25-26)

Q1 25-26 Benchmark	Days	County Rank	Quartile
Cherwell	5.38	1/5	Top
South Oxfordshire	7.23	2/5	Top
Vale of White Horse	7.23	3/5	Second
West Oxfordshire	8.73	4/5	Third
Oxford	25.86	5/5	Bottom

Housing Benefit processing times remained over the cumulative target in Q3, affected by seasonal workload pressures and delays in receiving evidence for Change Events and Full Claim Reviews. The planned UC pause helped reduce parts of the backlog, with all scheduled CFU reviews completed on time and the HBAA Claims Review continuing into next year. With fewer HB change applications now coming in, any outstanding evidence has a greater impact on the cumulative metric, though the higher volume of HB changes expected in Q4 may help improve processing times toward year-end.

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

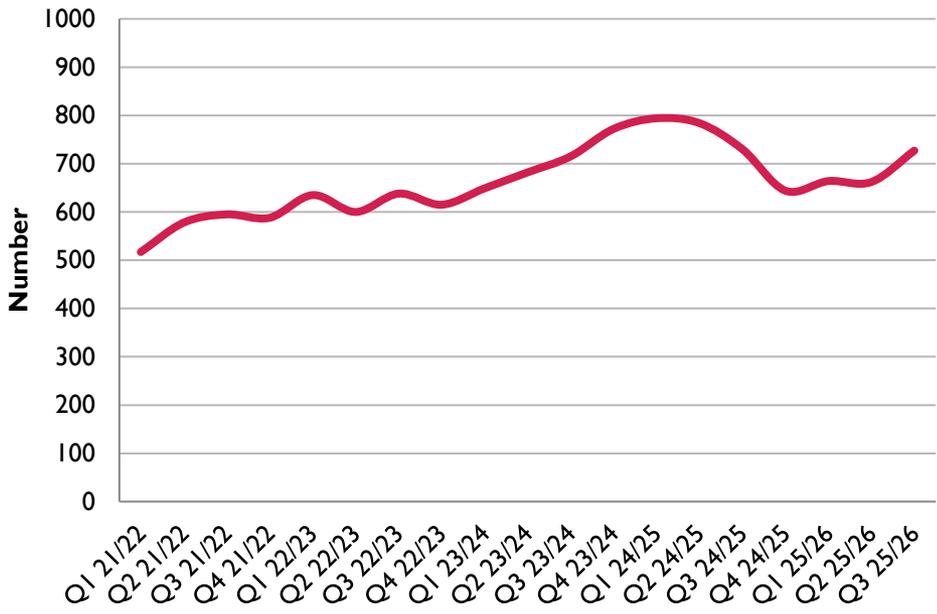
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The Council exceeded the national 0.48% target this quarter due to a significant claim overpayment identified by officers. Although the rate is steadily falling, it is unlikely to meet the service target, but is expected to return within the national threshold by the end of Q4. Any Government penalties would be based on the final year-end figure.

(Snapshot) Long Term Empty Properties

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Direction of Travel

- Against last Quarter 
- Against last Year 

Increased since last quarter and decreased since last year

Lower is Good

727

How do we compare?

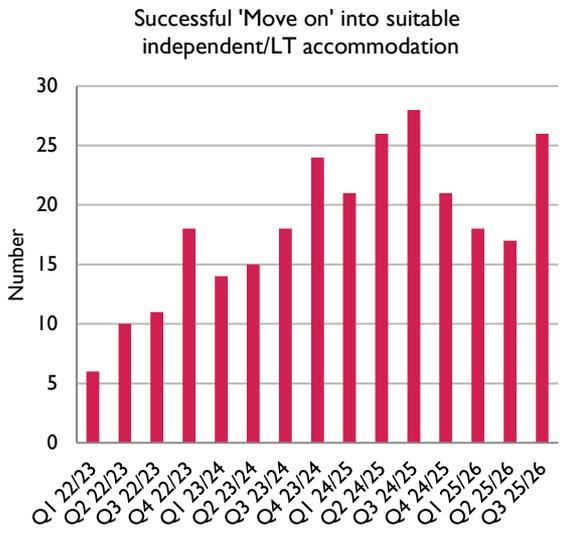
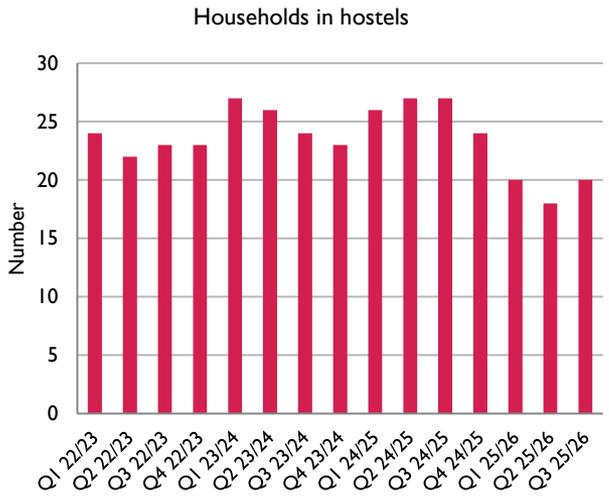
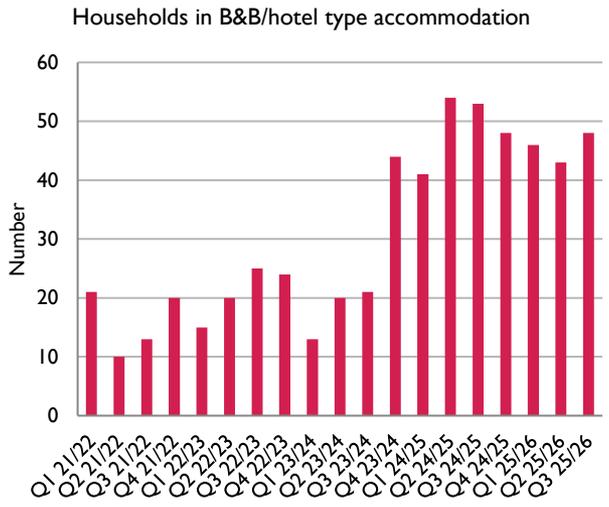
Long Term Vacant Properties within districts - Benchmarking via Gov.uk

2024 Benchmark	Days	County Rank	Quartile
South Oxfordshire	430	1/5	Top
Vale of White Horse	433	2/5	Top
Cherwell	456	3/5	Second
Oxford	712	4/5	Third
West Oxfordshire	767	5/5	Bottom

The Council saw an increase in long-term empty properties in Q3, driven primarily by improved reporting processes that provide a more accurate picture of empty homes across the district. Around 60% of these properties have been empty for less than two years; if the measure reflected only those vacant for more than two years, the total for West Oxfordshire would fall to 297.

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

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Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter	B&B/Hotels	↓
Against last Year	B&B/Hotels	↓
Against last Quarter	Hostels	↓
Against last Year	Hostels	↓
Against last Quarter	Move Ons	↓
Against last Year	Move Ons	↓

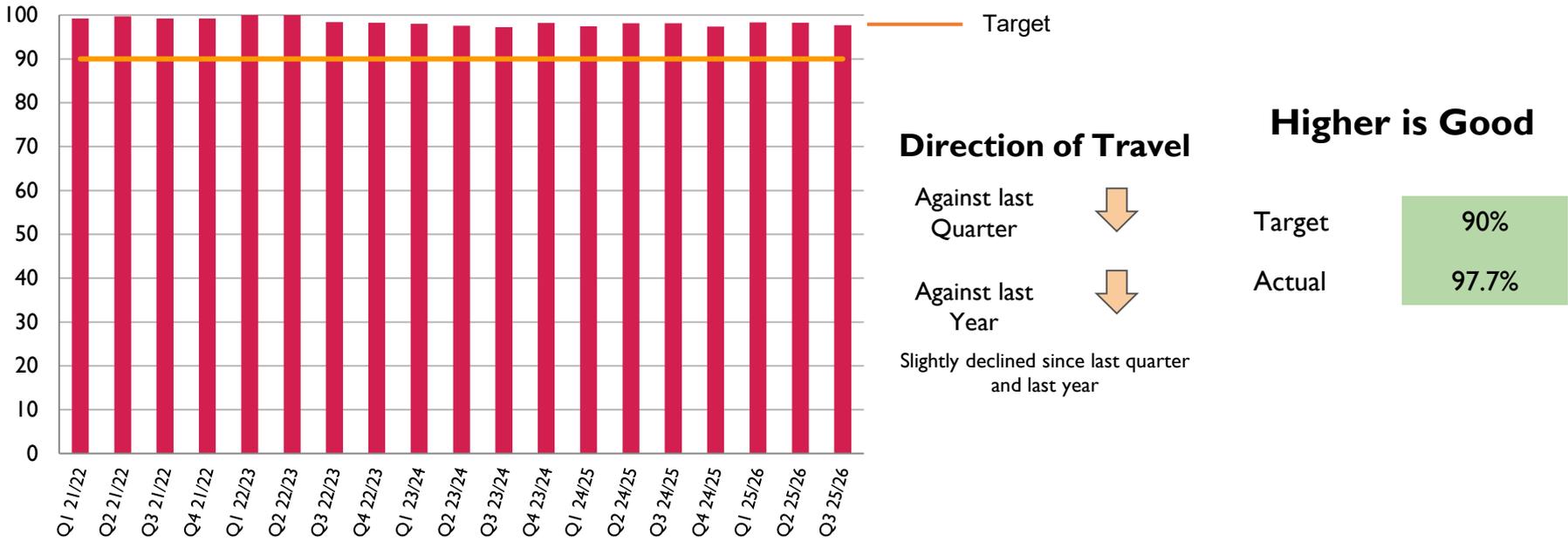
The number in temporary accommodation is gradually declining reflecting strong prevention activity and effective partnership working with local housing providers. Programmes such as the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) are increasing the supply of self-contained temporary accommodation. Two hostel purchases have been completed and work is underway with the Assets Team to bring them into use, with a further four acquisitions progressing.

How do we compare?

The Institute for Government has published the Homelessness Performance Tracker, which evaluates the effectiveness of local homelessness services in England by analysing data on demand, funding, and outcomes over time. The full report is available [here](#).

Customer Satisfaction - Telephone

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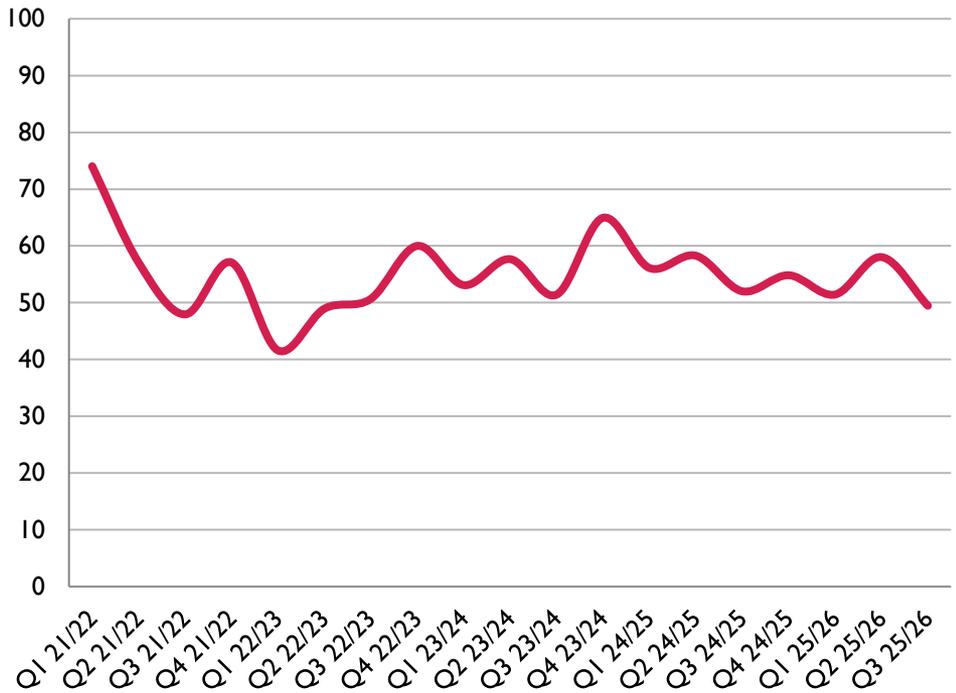
How do we compare?

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

A total of 522 residents participated in the survey, of these, 510 customers reported being satisfied with the service, reflecting a high level of overall satisfaction.

	Oct. Rank	Oct. Net Sat.	Nov. Rank	Nov. Net Sat.	Dec. Rank	Dec. Net Sat.
West Oxfordshire	4	92%	1	100%	4	94%

Customer Satisfaction - Email



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Declined since last quarter and slightly declined since last year

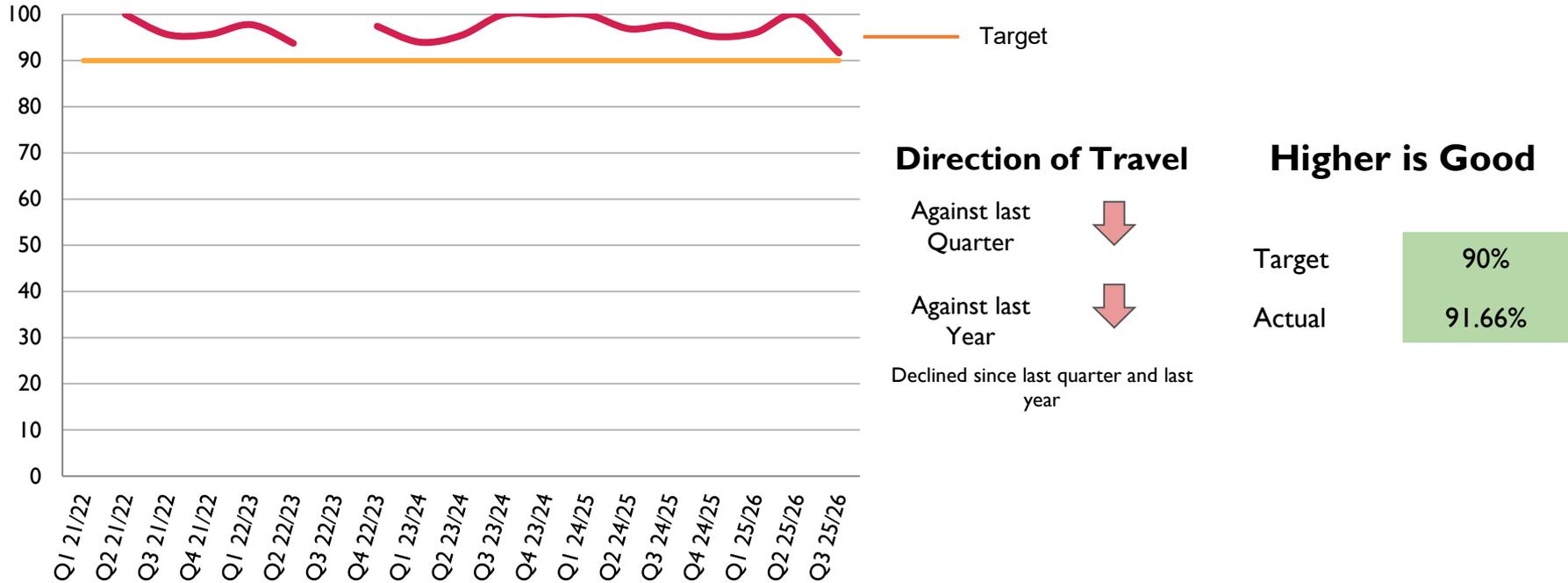
Higher is Good

49.46%

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374 residents responded to the survey, with 185 expressing satisfaction (49.46%), down from 58.03% in Q2, with all outbound customer service emails including a survey link. The team continually monitors feedback closely and proactively seeks opportunities to enhance the overall customer experience.

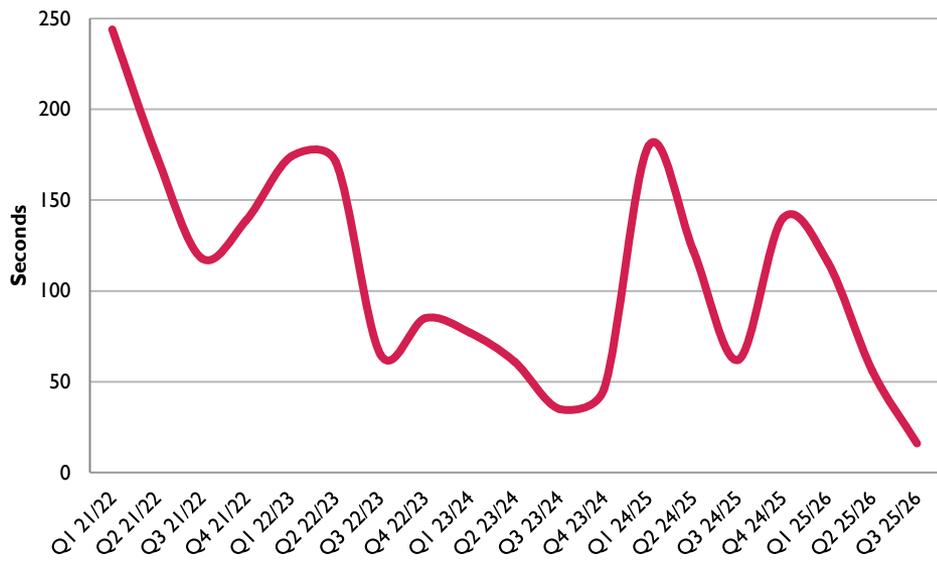
Customer Satisfaction - Face to Face



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Customer satisfaction with face-to-face interactions remains consistently strong, with 22 of 24 customers satisfied.

Customer Call Handling - Average Waiting Time



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

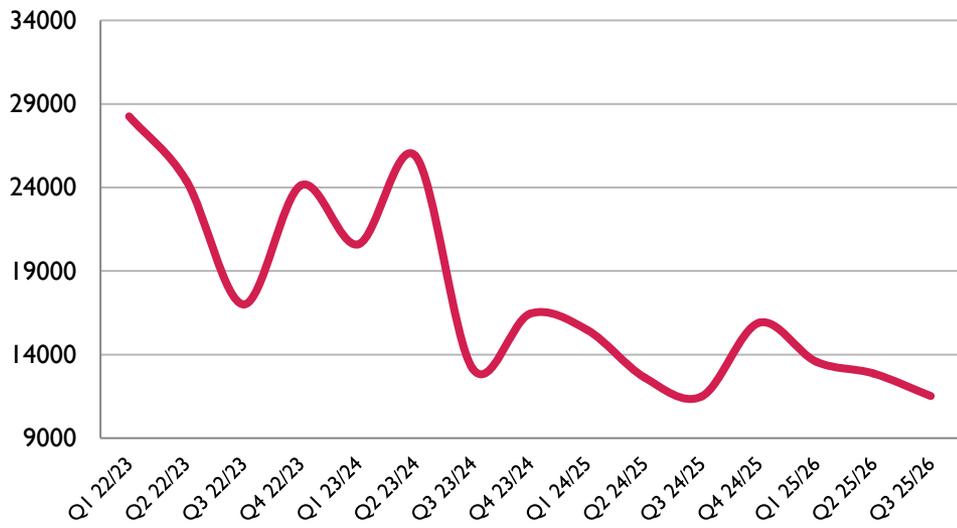
Decreased since last quarter and last year

Lower is Good

16 Seconds

Page 99

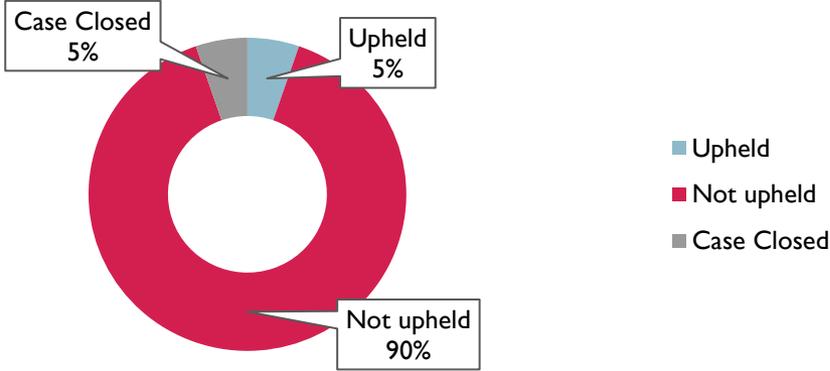
Call Volume over Time



Average call waiting times improved by around 45 seconds compared with the same period last year, when staffing pressures contributed to longer delays. Despite higher sickness levels this quarter, the team maintained strong performance, supported by ongoing training and refresher sessions that helped ensure consistent service delivery.

Number of complaints upheld

Complaints by Status



Direction of Travel

Complaints upheld or partly upheld at Stage 1

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Declined since last quarter but slightly increased last year

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

A new Customer Feedback Procedure went live on the 1st April 2025.

The new process has the following stages:

- Stage 1: A review of the complaint will be undertaken by an Operational Manager within the Service Area to which the complaint relates. A response needs to provide within 10 working days from the date that we advised that the complaint was valid.
- Stage 2: Requests for Stage 2 will be acknowledged and logged within five working days of the escalation request being received. Upon receipt of a Stage 2 request, an investigation into the complaint will be undertaken by the Complaint Officer or a member of the Complaints Team. A response will be provided to the customer within 20 working days from receipt of the request to escalate the complaint to Stage 2. Stage 2 is the organisation’s final response; the complainant can then refer their complaint to the LGO.

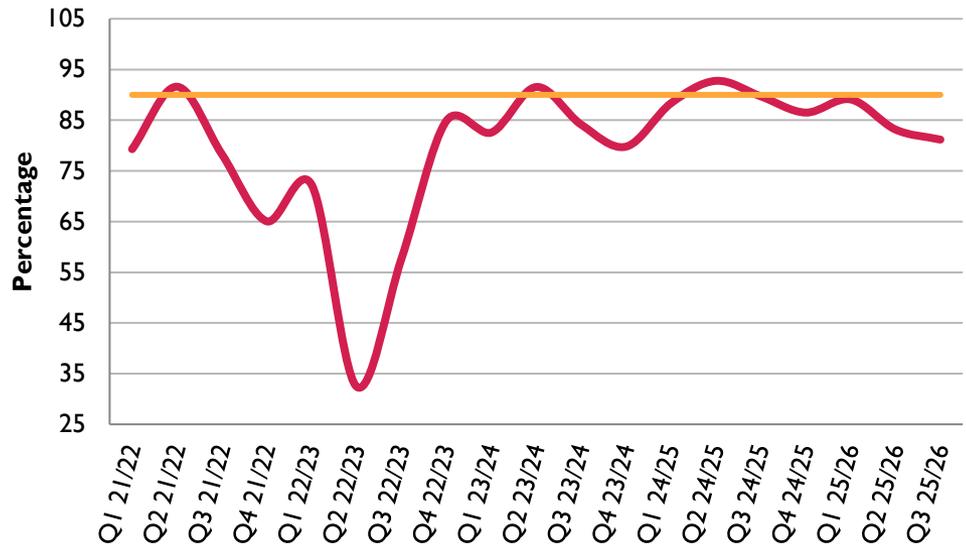
How do we compare?

There is some benchmarking available on the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman. These figures reflect cases where customers, having completed the Council’s internal complaints process, feel that the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved. However, due to the very small number of Ombudsman complaints received, the data does not provide meaningful trends or insights for this period. Figures can be found [here](#).

Complaints Upheld or Partially Upheld Breakdown

Service area	Description	Outcome/learning	Decision	Response time (days)
Revenues & Benefits	A customer moved abroad, but this was not passed on to the council tax team, so bills continued to be issued to the UK address.	It was later identified that an email had been sent to Customer Services in 2024 but was not forwarded to the revenues team. An apology was given, and enforcement fees were removed from the account.	Upheld	7

Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days



— Target

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

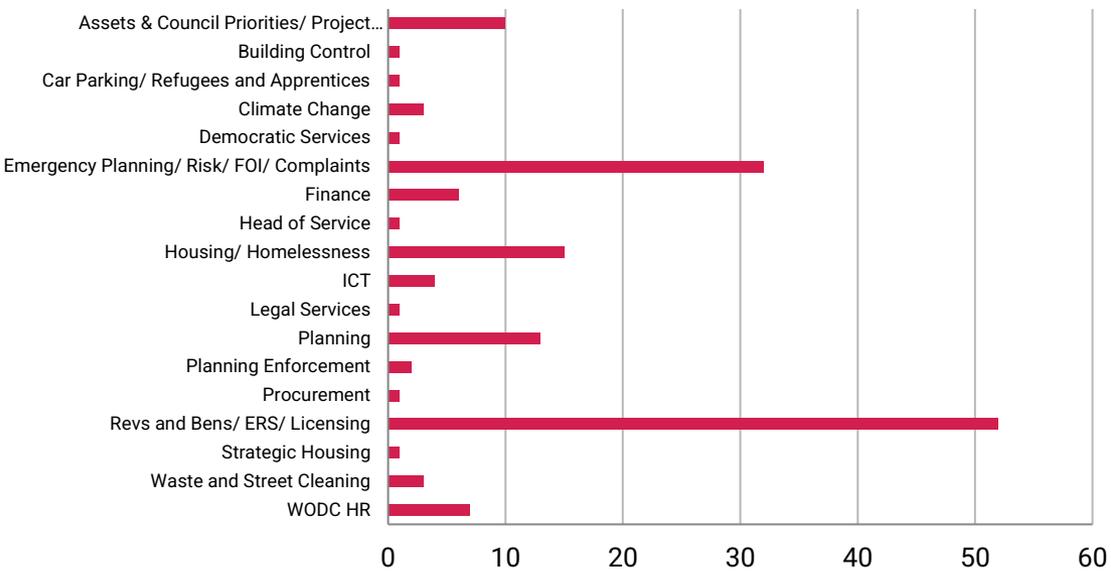
Declined since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Target	90%
Actual	81.17%

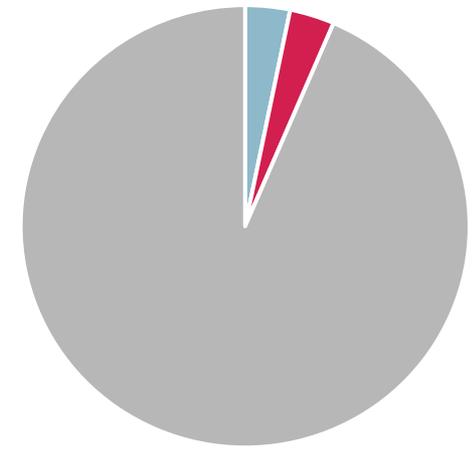
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Requests by Service Area



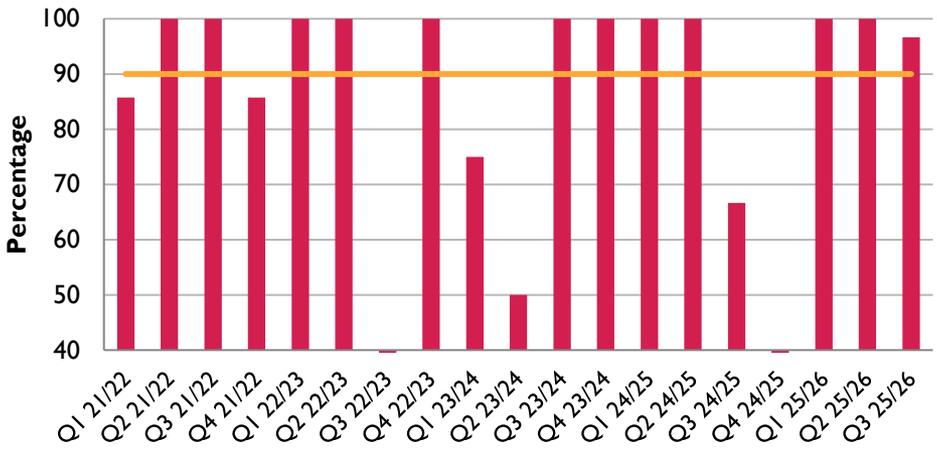
Reason FOI request was not Answered within 20 Days

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



All Freedom of Information requests for the quarter have been addressed.

Building Control Satisfaction



Target

Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Slightly decreased since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Target	90%
Actual	96.67%

Page 103

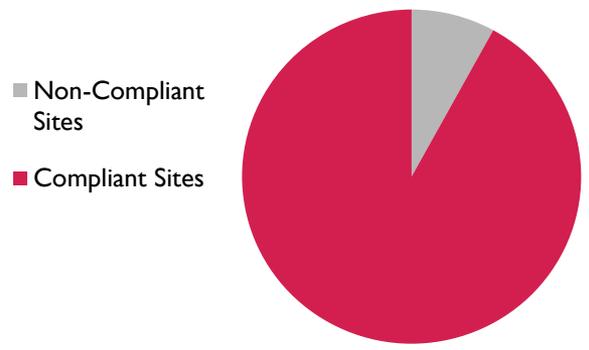
A new customer-feedback webform was introduced in October and issued with completion certificates. Early responses have been very positive, with customers praising the team’s helpful, pragmatic support and swift turnaround. Of the six responses, only one was less than 100%, noting that the requirement for a signed Declaration of Completion wasn’t made clear at the outset.

How do we compare?

Percentage of share in the market

Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Number of Apps for Quarter
77%	73%	38%	149

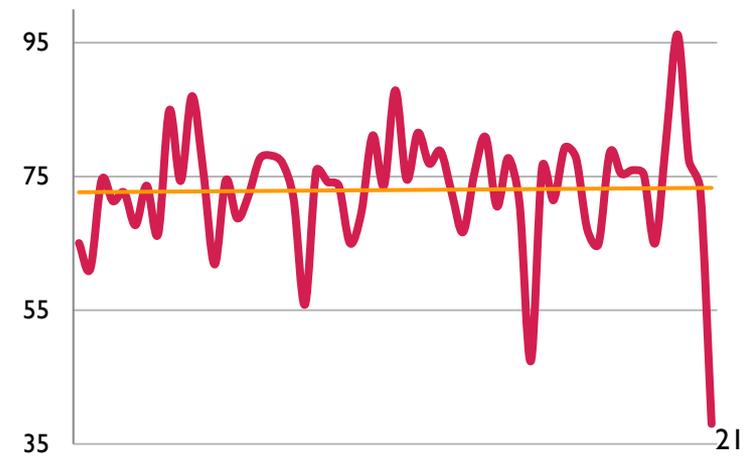
% of Sites that are Affected by Non-Compliance



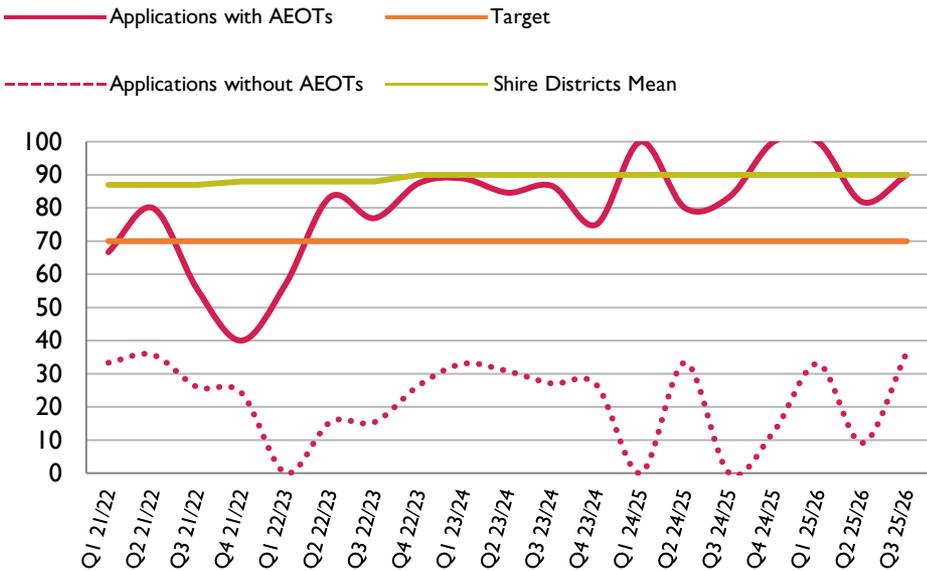
Interventions by Building Control

In Q3, the team carried out 809 site inspections, with non-compliances identified during 64 of them — 8% of all inspections. Across those 64 visits, a total of 176 non-compliances were recorded, including 16 structural issues, 30 related to fire safety, and 28 thermal issues (covering Conservation of Fuel & Power and Overheating). The Building Control service aims to guide builders and customers toward achieving compliance, but when guidance is not followed or sought, the team steps in to ensure that minimum regulatory standards are met.

The below chart shows market share over time from April 2021



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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Increased since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Target **70%**

Actual **90.01%**

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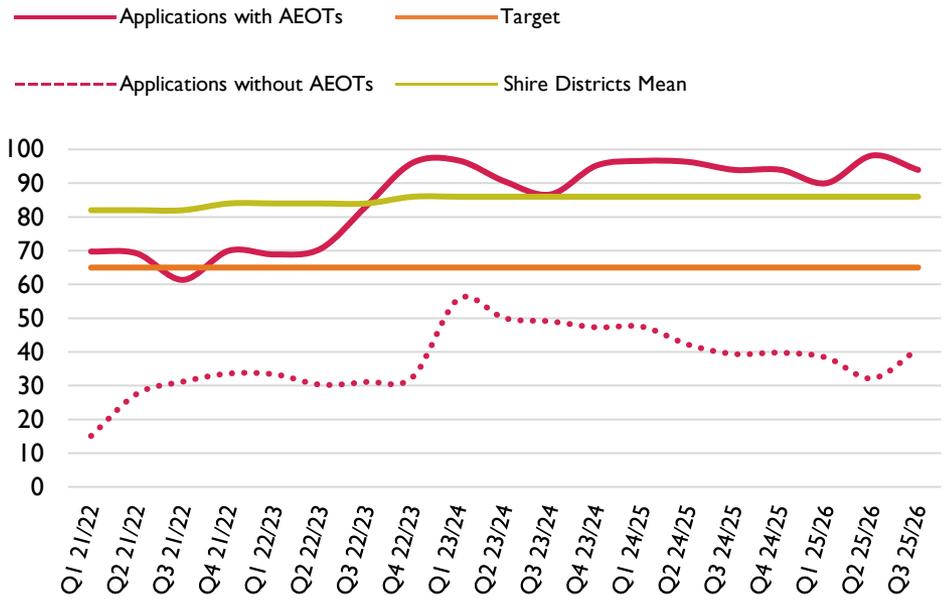
How do we compare?

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

Q2 25-26 Benchmark	%	County Rank	Quartile
Oxford	92	1/5	Top
Vale of White Horse	92	1/5	Top
Cherwell	89	3/5	Second
South Oxfordshire	88	4/5	Third
West Oxfordshire	82	5/5	Bottom

The service demonstrated consistently strong performance in Q3, with ten out of eleven Major applications processed within the agreed timescales.

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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Decreased since last quarter but steady since last year

Higher is Good

Target 65%

Actual 93.94%

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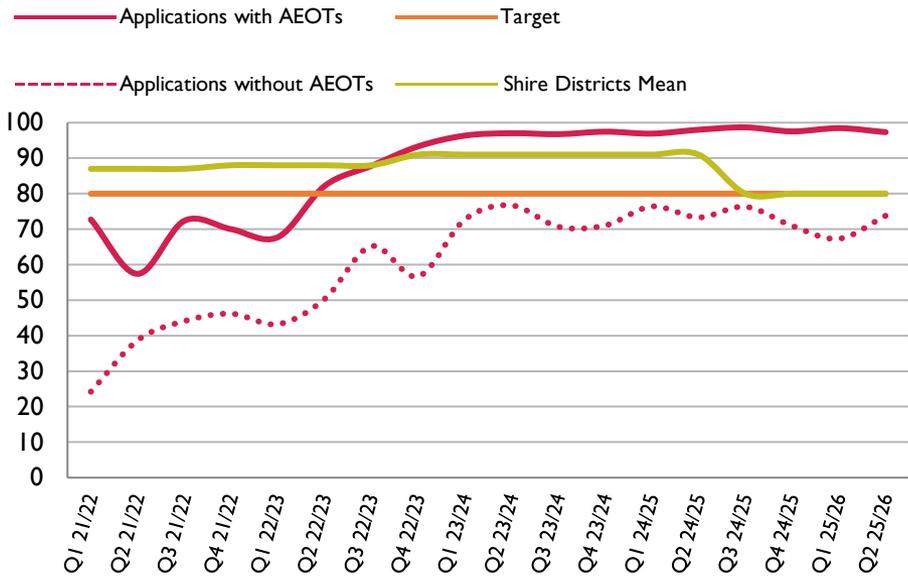
How do we compare?

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

Q2 25-26 Benchmark	%	County Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	98	1/5	Top
Vale of White Horse	91	2/5	Top
Oxford	89	3/5	Second
South Oxfordshire	82	4/5	Third
Cherwell	79	5/5	Bottom

This quarter, delays persist due to the absence of a dedicated Landscape Officer; however, recruitment has been successful, with the new officer expected to start in March. The team is also preparing for increased demand resulting from forthcoming legislative changes and the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) from February.

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



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Increased since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Target

80%

Actual

98.99%

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How do we compare?

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

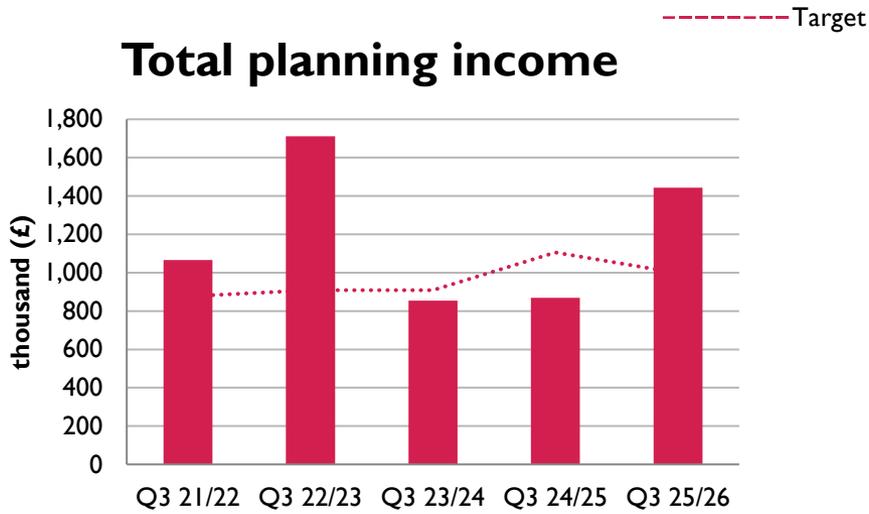
Q2 25-26 Benchmark	%	County Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	97	1/5	Top
Vale of White Horse	96	2/5	Second
South Oxfordshire	91	3/5	Second
Oxford	89	4/5	Third
Cherwell	79	5/5	Bottom

Determination times remain high, with 199 applications processed in Q3, including 197 within agreed timescales.

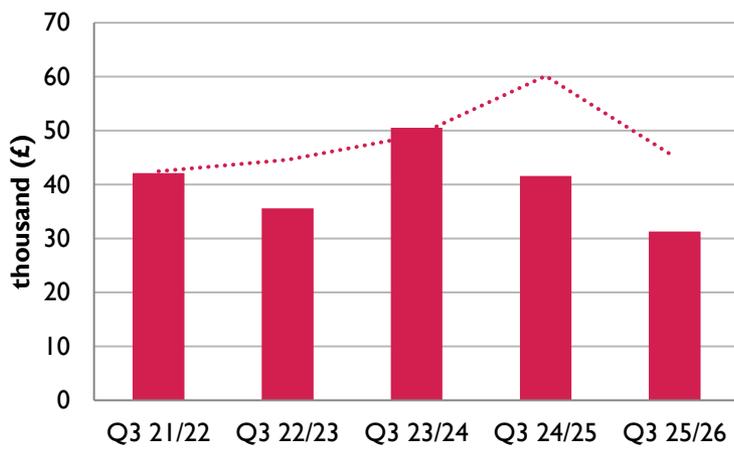
Total Income achieved in Planning & Income from Pre-application advice

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Total planning income



Pre-application income



Direction of Travel

- Total Planning Income
 - Against last Quarter
 - Against last Year
- Pre-Application Income
 - Against last Quarter
 - Against last Year

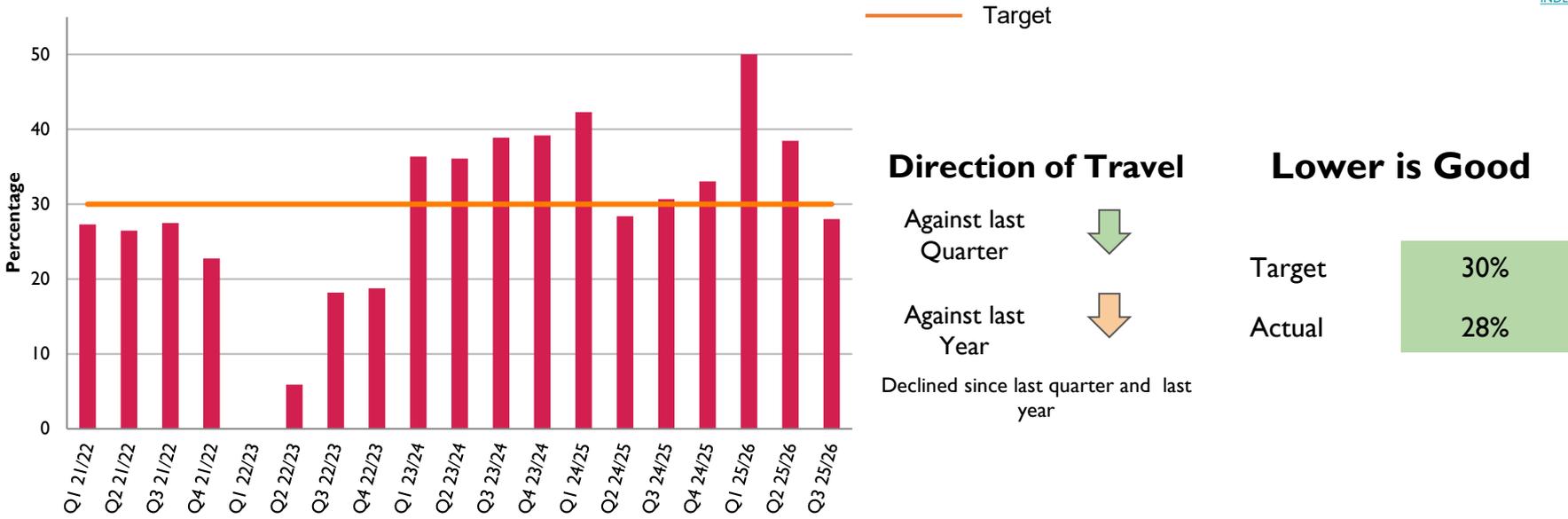
Higher is Good

Total Planning Income (£)	
Target	997,630
Actual	1,444,081
Pre-Application Income (£)	
Target	45,130
Actual	31,282

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

In Q3, the council recorded high financial performance, with strong income received during the quarter contributing positively towards the annual target. However, pre-application uptake remains low, and the team is currently exploring pricing adjustments alongside a renewed focus on Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs).

Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative)



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How do we compare?

Percentage of planning appeals allowed (Specifically Q2 2025-26)

Q2 25-26 Benchmark	%	County Rank	Quartile
West Oxfordshire	20	1/5	Top
Oxford	25	2/5	Top
South Oxfordshire	33	3/5	Second
Vale of White Horse	50	4/5	Third
Cherwell	53	5/5	Bottom

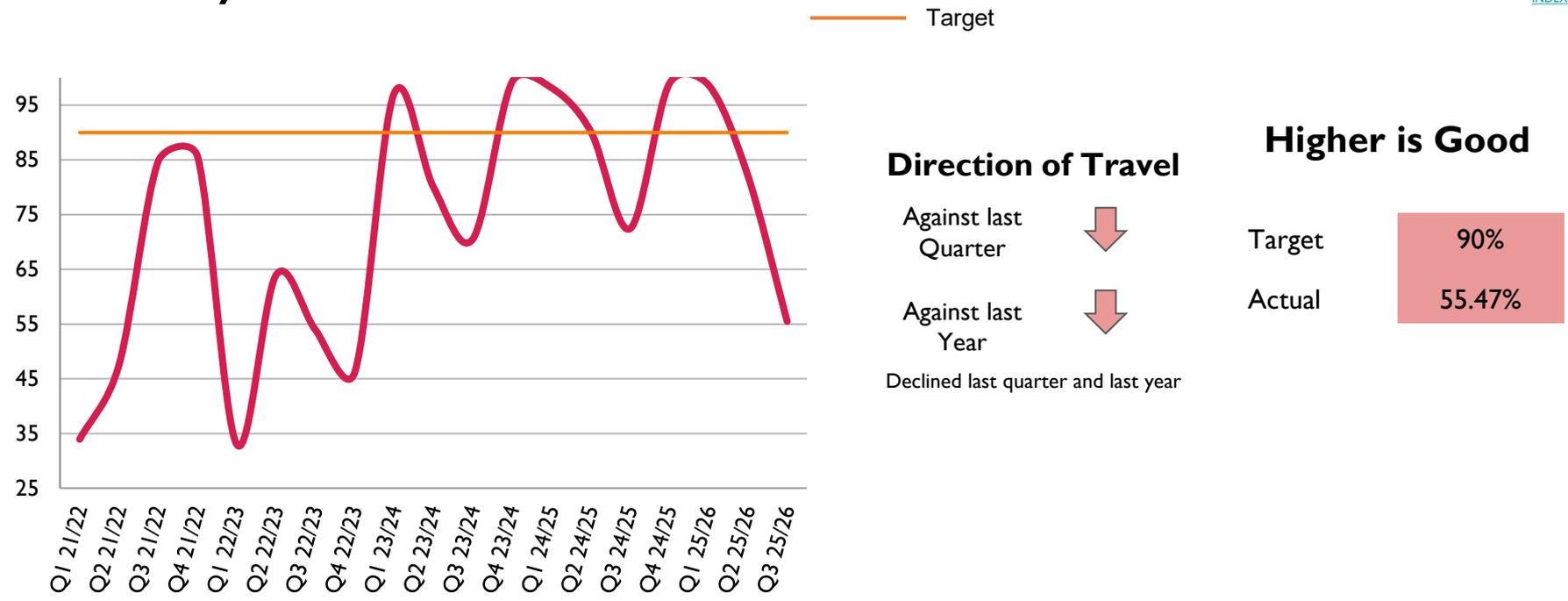
This indicator aims to ensure that no more than 30% of planning appeals are allowed in favor of the applicant, with a lower percentage being more favorable. According to the latest statistics from the Planning Inspectorate, the national average for Section 78 planning appeals granted is 28% (source: [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)).

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

	Decided	Allowed	% Allowed
Uplands	12	5	41.67%
Lowlands	13	2	15.38%

Of the seven appeals allowed, none related to officer recommendations that have been overturned by planning sub-committees.

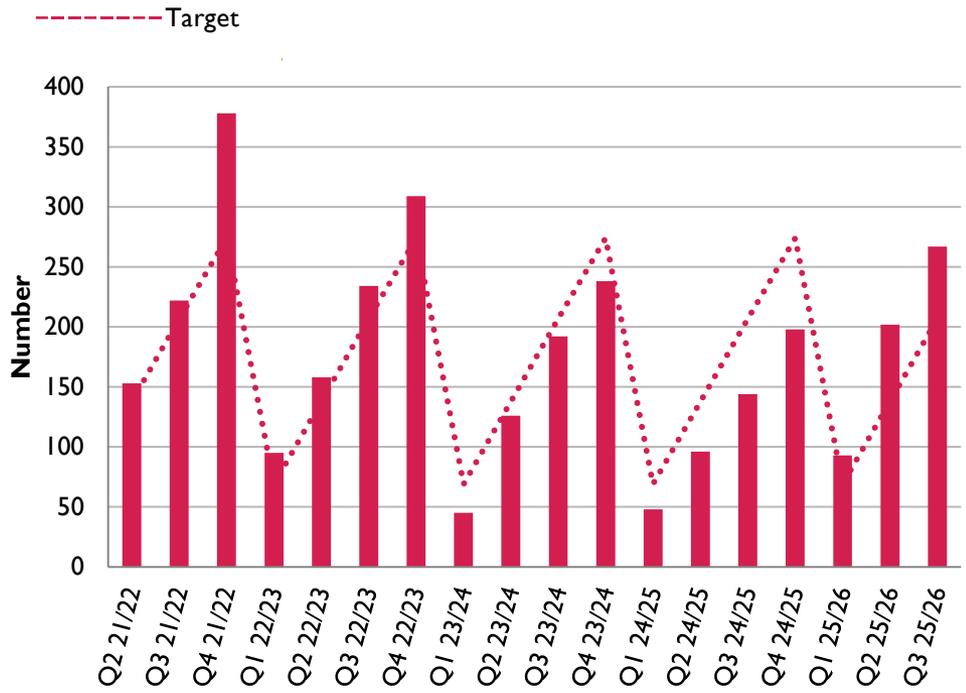
Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days



Page 109

During Q3, the Council saw a drop in performance against the 10-day target for Land Charges searches after the loss of a team member in September, which created a backlog. Additional administrative support has since been brought in to help stabilise the service and clear older cases. Early signs show the approach is working and performance is beginning to recover.

Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative)



Direction of Travel

- Against last Quarter 
- Against last Year 
- Decreased since last quarter but increased since last year

Higher is Good

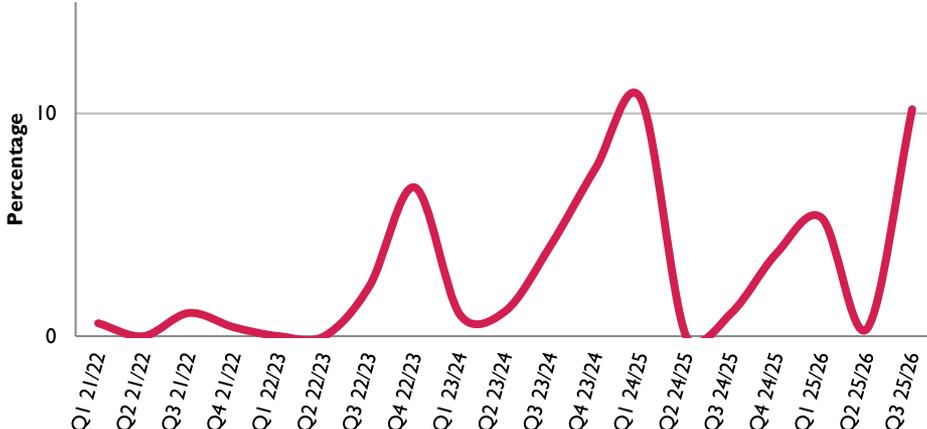
Target	207
Actual	267

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The Council delivered 65 affordable homes in Q3, bringing the year-to-date total to 267, reflecting continued strong progress across the district. A key milestone was completion of the Milestone Road development, adding a significant number of new affordable units. In addition, eight homes were acquired through grant funding in partnership with SOHA, including four designated for Temporary Housing Accommodation, boosting local capacity for households in urgent need.

Number of fly tips collected and percentage that result in an enforcement action

(defined as a warning letter, fixed penalty notice, simple caution or prosecution)



Direction of Travel

Number of Fly Tips

Against last Quarter  Number of Fly Tips Collected

Against last Year  148

Percentage Enforcement Action

Against last Quarter  Percentage Enforcement Action

Against last Year  10.19%

Fly Tips – Steady since last quarter but declined since last year
 Enforcement Action – Increased since last quarter and last year

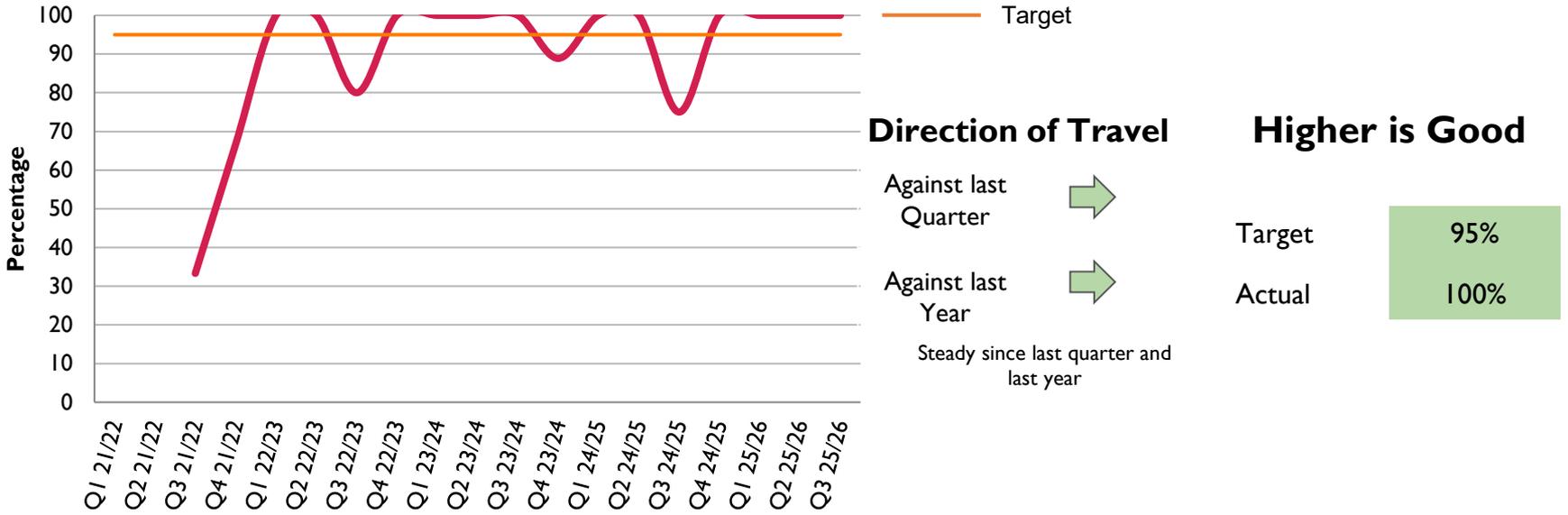
How do we compare?

Number of Fly Tips reported for year 2023-24 for Local Authorities in England – Gov.uk. The latest dataset available is 2023-24.

	Total Fly Tips	Total FPNs	% FPNs per Fly Tip	County Rank	Quartile
Vale of White Horse	445	18	4.04%	1/5	Top
South Oxfordshire	873	21	2.41%	2/5	Top
Cherwell	1101	26	2.36%	3/5	Second
West Oxfordshire	1135	13	1.15%	4/5	Third
Oxford	4959	7	0.14%	5/5	Bottom

In Q3, the team delivered its first stop-and-search with Thames Valley Police and HMRC, stopping 38 vehicles and issuing waste-carrier compliance notices, with more joint operations planned for 2026. Work has begun on a district-wide PSPO to tackle dog fouling, and the team also cleared an abandoned caravan encampment, supported rough sleeper rehoming and achieved a full reduction in fly-tipping through surveillance. Public awareness campaigns have increased, focusing on fly-tipping, Duty of Care and business waste compliance. Budget growth for an additional officer is currently awaiting member approval, which will further strengthen capacity.

Percentage of high-risk food premises inspected within target timescales

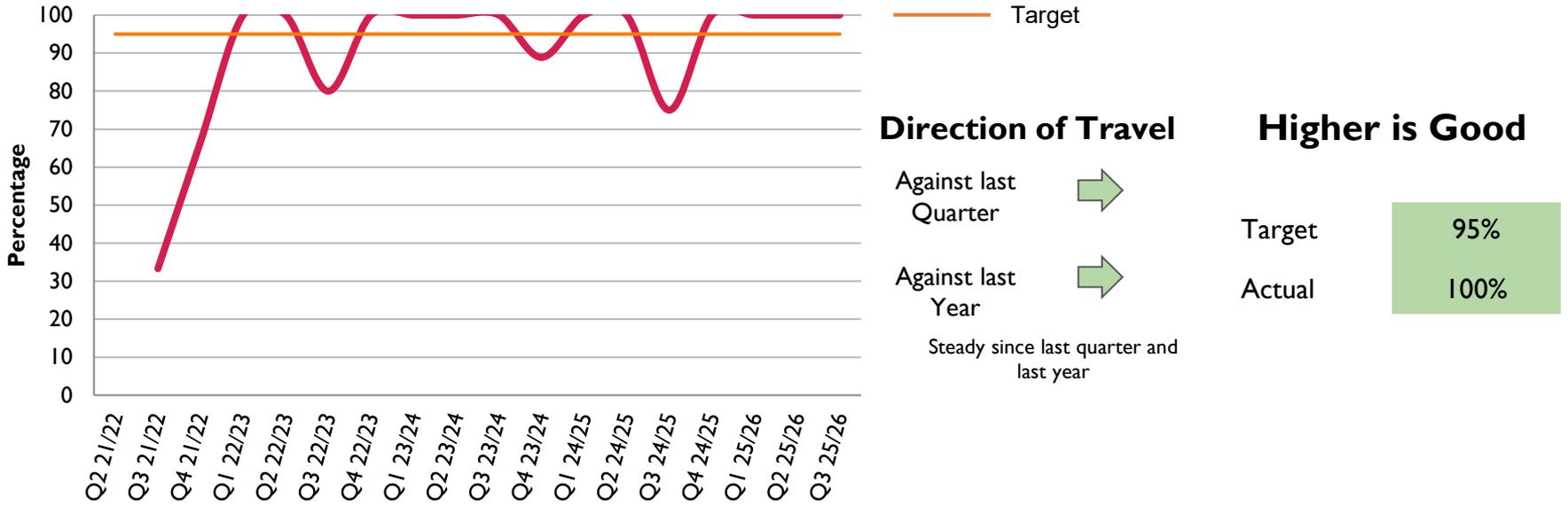


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Four High-Risk food inspection was undertaken during Q3, which were completed within the target timeframes.

% High-risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day

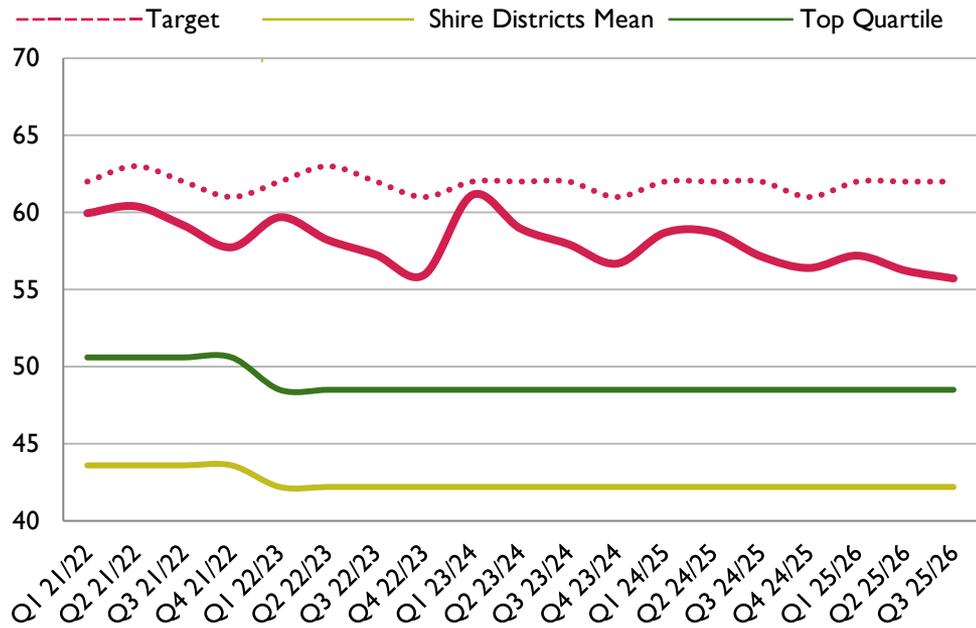
(including food poisoning outbreaks, anti-social behaviour, contaminated private water supplies, workplace fatalities or multiple serious injuries)



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Two notifications were received during Q3, both of which were assessed within one working day.

Percentage of household waste recycled



Direction of Travel

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Declined since last quarter and last year

Higher is Good

Target **62%**

Actual **55.72%**

Breakdown of Recycling

Dry Recycling 23.29%

Garden Waste 23.09%

Food 9.34%

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How do we compare?

Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting – Gov.uk. The latest dataset available is from 2023-2024.

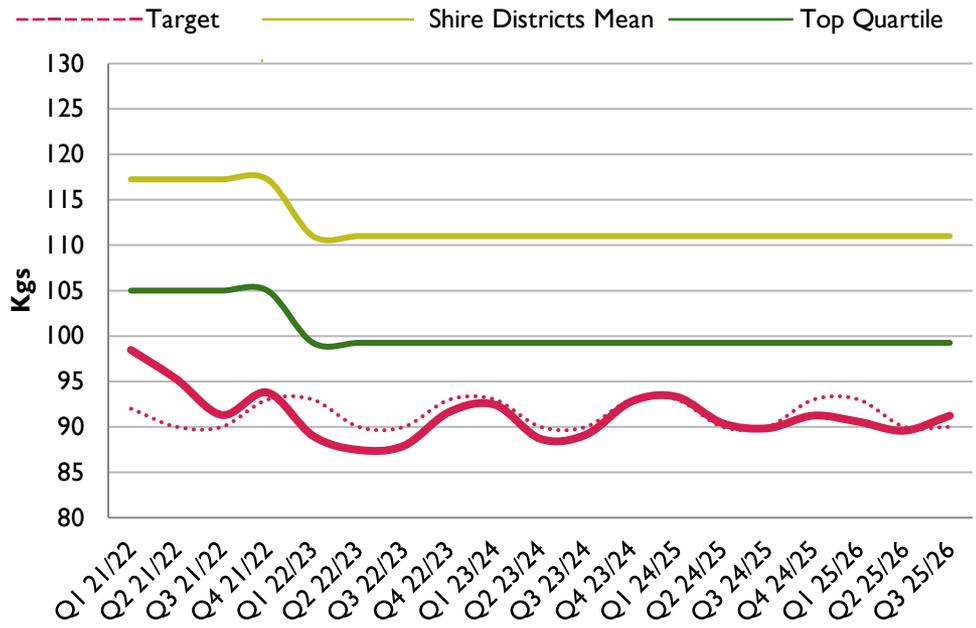
2023-24 Benchmark	%	County Rank	Quartile
South Oxfordshire	62.9%	1/5	Top
Vale of White Horse	60.7%	2/5	Top
West Oxfordshire	57.2%	3/5	Second
Cherwell	53.2%	4/5	Third
Oxford	48.3%	5/5	Bottom

During Q3, the household recycling rate fell by around 1.5% compared with the same period last year. The current performance sits at 55.72%, below the Council's 62% target.

Nationally, recycling rates vary significantly. In 2023/24, local authorities in England recorded household recycling rates ranging from 15.8% to 62.9%, with the provisional national average at 42.2%. This wider context highlights the substantial performance gap between leading and lower-performing authorities. Within this landscape, West Oxfordshire performed strongly, ranking 16th out of 197 waste collection authorities in England for 2023–2024, achieving a household recycling rate of 57.2%. This places it among the top councils nationally and reflects continued commitment to high recycling performance across Oxfordshire.

Despite being below target, the Council's current rate of 55.72% remains significantly higher than the national average and consistent with the strong regional performance across Oxfordshire, where all district councils continue to perform well above national levels.

Residual Household Waste per Household (kg)



Direction of Travel

- Against last Quarter 
- Against last Year 

Increased since last quarter and last year

Lower is Good

Target	90
Actual	91.23

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How do we compare?

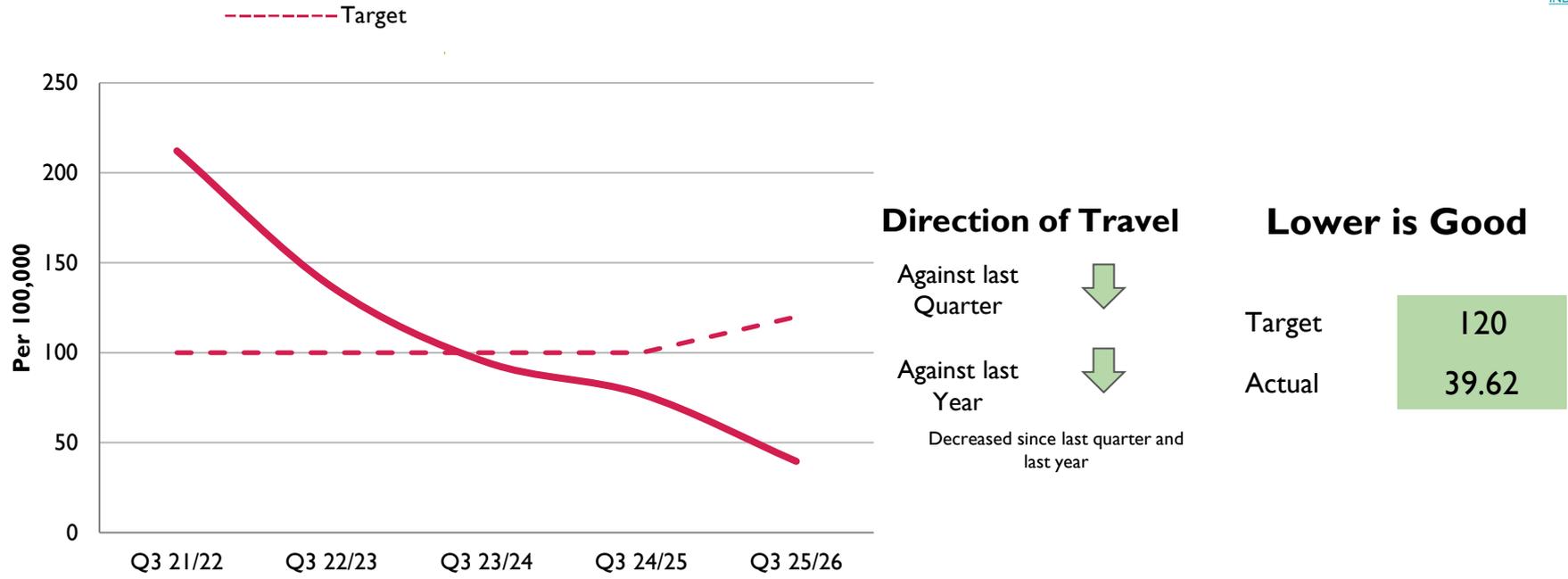
Residual household waste per household (kg/household) – Gov.uk. The latest dataset available is from 2023-2024.

2023-24 Benchmark	Kg	County Rank	Quartile
Vale of White Horse	303.2	1/5	Top
South Oxfordshire	304.8	2/5	Top
Oxford	335.7	3/5	Second
West Oxfordshire	344.7	4/5	Third
Cherwell	396.9	5/5	Bottom

Residual household waste per household is currently 91.23kg, sitting just above the 90kg target. This slight rise is expected at this point in the year, as the Christmas period typically leads to increased waste generation due to higher packaging, food waste and seasonal consumption. Despite this seasonal uplift, overall performance remains close to target, and levels are expected to stabilise as post-Christmas waste patterns normalise.

Missed bins per 100,000

Page 116



Missed bins fell to 39.62 per 100,000, remaining comfortably within target, and overall service performance has improved following recent measures. While December saw more service failures due to ageing fleet issues with procurement of new vehicles is underway, with food waste vehicles nearly finalised. Despite these pressures, communication remains excellent, misses have continued to fall, service failures are at their lowest level in years, and recovery times have improved, with 90% of failures resolved within 24 hours.

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

Direction of Travel

Gym Memberships

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Leisure Visits

Against last Quarter 

Against last Year 

Higher is Good

Gym Memberships

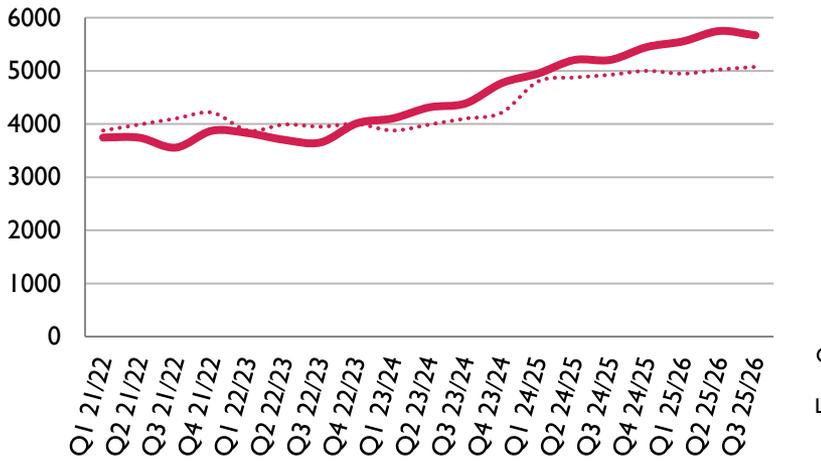
Target	5,075
Actual	5,668

Leisure Visits

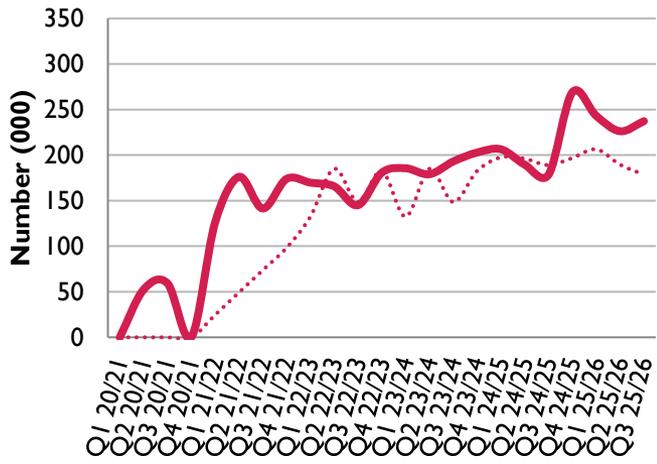
Target	178,574
Actual	237,216

Gym Memberships – Slightly declined since last quarter but increased since last year
Leisure Visits- Increased since last quarter and last year

Number of gym memberships



Visits to leisure facilities



The Council exceeded its leisure targets in Q3, achieving 11.7% above target for memberships and 32.8% above target for visits, demonstrating strong public engagement with its facilities.

Breakdown of Leisure Visits per facility:

Facility	Q1 24-25	Q2 24-25	Q3 24-25	Q4 24-25	Q1 25-26	Q2 25-26	Q3 25-26
Bartholomew Sports Centre	9,681	9,747	5,506	16,712	20,268	17,195	23,301
Carterton Artificial Turf Pitch	6,840	6,840	6,840	9,252	2796	1810	2796
Carterton Leisure Centre	70,220	62,866	57,100	64,139	57,346	63,254	62,869
Carterton Pavilion	600	600	600	600	400	320	600
Chipping Norton Leisure Centre	22,907	21,717	18,804	54,713	47,750	40,080	52,563
Windrush Leisure Centre	76,286	65,250	73,237	103,947	95,596	81,676	69,235
Witney Artificial Turf Pitch	19,320	19,320	16,487	19,640	19,557	15,724	25,852
Woodstock Open Air Pool	516	3,126	0	0	1,137	6,143	0

Where no access controls are in place, such as at Carterton Pavilion, usage is estimated by multiplying the number of pitch bookings for the quarter by the typical number of players per booking.

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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 11 MARCH 2026</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>SUSTAINING INVESTMENT INTO COMMUNITY SERVICES</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Executive Member for Stronger Healthier Communities Email: rachel.crouch@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Phil Martin - Director of Place Email: phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Heather McCulloch – Community Wellbeing Manager Email: heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk Lucy Empson – Community Funding Officer Email: lucy.empson@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Sustainability Impact Assessment outcome</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	WODC Climate Change Manager and Principal Ecologist Publica Procurement Team

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** In November 2025 the Executive agreed to commission a further three-year Community Grants Programme thus helping to safeguard support following Local Government Reorganisation in 2028. The base budget of £396,000 was also agreed.
- 1.2** This report sets out the proposed principles and timescale for commissioning the programme, which is required to be in place by April 2027. The rationale for providing 3-year funding is in order to meet the ambitions of the Council in terms of creating legacy, promoting excellence and supporting innovation.
- 1.3** In order to achieve the target date of April 2027 it is necessary to begin to prepare for the commissioning process now.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Council introduced a three-year Service Level Agreement Programme for Community Grants in 2024. There are currently eight programmes of work being delivered by seven organisations. Wild Oxfordshire submitted two applications - one was on behalf of the Evenlode Catchment Partnership - and was successful in securing funding for both.
- 2.2** The current agreements end in 2027 so are approaching the end of Year 2.
- 2.3** Funding for the 2024-2027 programme is made up as follows:

Base budget	£ 396,000
Underspend in Westhive (Round 1)	£ 90,000
COMF Funding for MH	£ 60,000
Councillor priority funding	£ 7,500
Total	£ 553,500

- 2.4** The process utilised the procurement framework; however, final decision-making involved Executive Members and Senior Management. The demand for funding was much greater than anticipated, and additional funds were secured towards the end of the process to enable a wider range of organisations to benefit from support.
- 2.5** Under a separate arrangement the Council has a three-year agreement with Citizens Advice Oxfordshire, which is due to expire in April 2027. This contract is overseen by Mandy Fathers in Publica. It is recommended that the commissioning of this service beyond March 2027 remains separate to the Community Grant commissioning process.

3. PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW THREE-YEAR COMMUNITY GRANTS COMMISSIONING PROCESS

- 3.1** Once again, we are proposing to utilise the procurement framework. We have had an initial discussion with the Procurement team. We discussed our draft timeline and learning from the previous process. A key requirement identified is the need to set a budget for the whole

programme at the outset and adhere strictly to it throughout, to protect the integrity of the procurement process.

- 3.2** The external funding secured for the 2024-2027 programme is not available for the 2027-2030 programme. The Council is asked to consider increasing the base budget to add value and capacity to the programme.
- 3.3** It is proposed that the scheme opens to applications in June 2026 and closes in September 2026. Applications will be invited for programmes of work that align with the Council's priorities. These priorities are set out in, or informed by, the following strategies and plans:
- West Oxfordshire District Council Plan 2023-2027
 - Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Oxfordshire 2024-2030
 - Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)
 - West Oxfordshire Climate Change Strategy 2025–2030 (district-wide carbon reduction and climate resilience)
 - West Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Plan 2024–2030
- 3.4** It is proposed that applications should focus on the delivery of the following outcomes:
- Lot 1 Climate Resilience** – achieving a reduction in carbon emissions and creating sustainable communities that are resilient to climate impacts, primarily flooding, extreme heat, and drought.
- Lot 2 Nature Recovery** – enhancing the natural environment to increase biodiversity, alongside providing wider opportunities for people to access it and understand its value.
- Lot 3 Community Wellbeing** – reducing health inequalities and creating more connected communities to enable people to enjoy a better quality of life
- 3.5** From the Council's perspective as a funder, measurable outcomes provide greater confidence in a proposal, demonstrating that a strategic plan is in place. Our focus will be on measuring the degree to which the proposed investment is likely to deliver tangible benefits, and well-defined outcomes can provide that assurance.
- 3.6** A maximum award of £30,000 per year, per application, is proposed. We recognise that this will support a smaller number of organisations overall but does recognise the increased costs and ensures that the funding given by the Council remains significant and impactful to the organisations receiving it. Whilst applicants may bid for less than three years funding we fully expect all applications are expected to request funding for the full three-year period. There will not be an amount of funding allocated per Lot. It is expected that applications may deliver across multiple Lots. An organisation will be permitted to submit a maximum of 2 applications.
- 3.7** Specialist officers will form a Panel to review and score all applications, following verification by the Procurement team.
- 3.8** The Panel will give priority to projects that can demonstrate:

- Partnership approaches to the delivery of the activities
- Strong links to identified needs and supporting data
- Delivery across more than one outcome/lot.
- Environmental impact – maximising carbon reduction, climate resilience and nature recovery
- Social impact – clear benefits to residents
- Neighbourhood impact – localised gains
- Commitment to improving rural access to services
- Inclusivity – tackling inequality of opportunity
- Co-benefits for climate and nature
- Deliverability and impact within the proposed timeframe
- Innovation and excellence
- Beneficiaries remain exclusively West Oxfordshire residents following Local Government Reorganisation.

3.9 Weighting will be applied to certain elements of the response - with the Method Statement being the most important part. The Panel scores will determine which applications are successful.

3.10 The following is a list of the types of programmes which might come forward:

Improving rural transport options	Habitat restoration and creation (e.g. meadows, planting trees)	Activities to enhance mental wellbeing
Community energy generation	Active travel	Community art and cultural programmes
Food equity initiatives	Improved access to greenspaces	Programmes reducing isolation
Energy efficiency initiatives	Natural flood management or extreme heat management	Activities for young people outside of school
Facilitating partnership working for nature recovery	Species conservation	Community food growing

3.11 Organisations will be deemed eligible to apply on the following basis:

Eligible	Ineligible
Constituted voluntary and community groups	Commercial organisations
Registered and excepted charities	Exempt charities
Community Interest Companies (CICs)	Town and Parish Councils

Independent statutory bodies in appropriate circumstances	Statutory bodies
	Organisations delivering a statutory service on behalf of a statutory body
	Education providers
	Religious-based organisations proposing to undertake work that includes acts of worship or religious instruction

3.12 A report setting out the funding decisions will be presented to the Informal Executive in November 2026.

4. TIMETABLE

4.1 The proposed timetable for the commissioning process is as follows:

4 March	Report to Overview and Scrutiny setting out the approach
11 March	Report to Executive setting out the approach
June 2026	Scheme opens Market - place event held
September 2026	Scheme closes
September / October 2026	Verification by Procurement team
October / November 2026	Bids circulated to the Assessment panel Assessment Panel meet
November 2026	Report to Executive to note the outcome of the procurement Inform Finance team regarding budget
December 2026	Notify applicants of the decision
January – March 2027	Legal agreements drafted, exchanged and approved Mobilisation of new providers
April 2027	Programme commences

5. COMMISSIONING COMMUNITY SERVICES

5.1 The procurement for a focussed high quality, independent housing advice, welfare and debt advice service, is being led by another department and was previously procured in a

separate competitive exercise with an alternative timeframe. The Contract for these services was for 3 years, starting 1 April 2024 and ending on 31 March 2027.

- 5.2 The current arrangements are under review, and a formal procurement process will be administered later this year to ensure a new contract is in place for 1 April 2027.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 The timeframe could be contracted as at the moment it is very generous. Options could include 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, our preference is to retain a generous timeline at this stage to allow for unexpected developments and competing demands on time. The Procurement team have confirmed that the proposed timeframe is both achievable and preferable.
- 6.2 The number of Lots could also be adjusted, either reduced or increased. Our preference is to maintain multiple focus areas, as this is likely to make the programme more relatable and accessible to a wider range of potential applicants across different sectors.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The base budget for the programme is £396k which would enable the Council to support a maximum of five projects over the three-year period.
- 7.2 The Executive is asked to consider whether growth to the base budget should be sought as part of the 2027/2028 budget setting process to add value and capacity to the programme.
- 7.3 In the previous programme demand outstretched supply considerably. It is anticipated that the 2027-2030 programme will attract a high number of strong applications, recognising that the funding environment is challenging for the voluntary and community sector. Operating costs including those relating to staff have increased significantly over the past three years.
- 7.4 In recognition of increasing costs the maximum annual award will be £30,000 per annum, per award. While this limit was previously extended for one organisation, this approach is not proposed for this programme, to allow resources to be distributed across the widest possible range of organisations.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The process will be conducted through the procurement framework, ensuring that all due diligence is completed and appropriate organisations are awarded funding. The Communities team will work closely with the Procurement team to ensure the process is followed correctly.
- 8.2 Support from the Legal team will be required to draft legal agreements with each successful applicant once decisions have been reached. This is expected to take place between January and March 2027.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1** The primary risk is not meeting the proposed timescale with the effect that organisations will be left without confirmed funding. In such an event, service delivery may be disrupted, residents could be affected, and the Council's reputation could be negatively impacted.
- 9.2** The strict adherence to the procurement framework minimises the likelihood of challenge from unsuccessful organisations.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

10.1 This report and resulting commissioning process will consider equality and inclusivity in the decision-making process to ensure that the Council meets its duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in relation to:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

10.2 Applications that demonstrate inclusivity and actively tackle inequalities will be prioritised.

11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Please see the SIAT as Annex A.

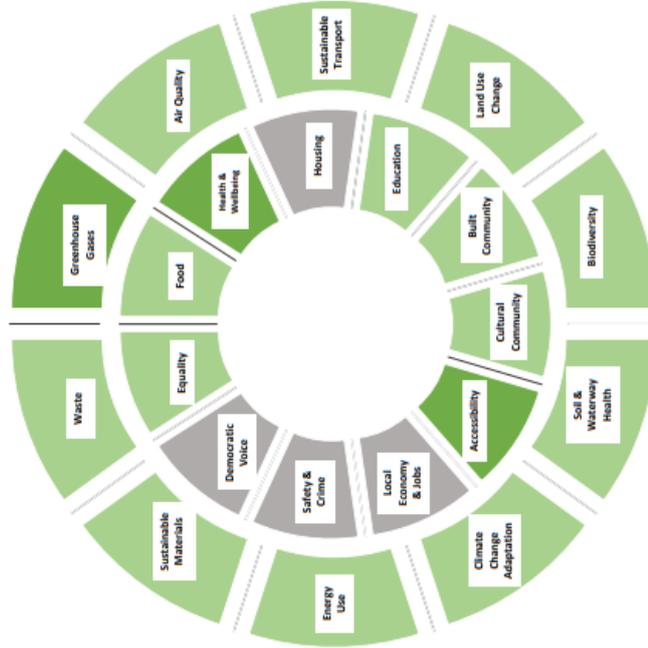
11.2 The funding will encourage and support local communities to take action on climate and nature, enabling them to realise the associated environmental and social benefits.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None.

(END)

Annex A – Sustainability Impact Assessment Outcome



Criteria	Score	Justification
Energy Use	2	The Council currently funds a project focused on delivering retrofit measures to support the use of renewable energy sources. It is anticipated that similar projects may come forward as part of this funding round, however, this cannot be guaranteed.
GHGs	4	Half of the current 3 year Service Agreement partners are leading projects including the climate and environmental emergencies. Whilst it is difficult to predict what will come forward in the future, the property portfolio has specific sources to 3 'lots', 2 of which are focused on nature recovery and climate change. I have selected 'slightly reduce' as this sets a reasonable expectation.
Air quality	2	Unclear what funding will be available in the future, but funding for this next cohort will be dedicated to projects which address climate change and nature recovery, both of which are likely to have a natural outcome of reducing air pollution in some way.
Land use change	2	Again difficult to predict but expect, based on previous experience, a proportion of projects delivering improvements to bridleways to have selected some slight impacts. Criteria will certainly encourage projects which make a positive impact on the environment.
Soil and waterway health	2	We currently fund a project focused on improving river health through partnership working. It is anticipated that similar projects may come forward as part of this funding round, however, this cannot be guaranteed.
Waste	2	As previously mentioned we cannot guarantee what projects will come forward but we supported projects which recycle and reuse in the past and would expect to support in the future given the existing criteria
Sustainable Transport	2	Again it is difficult to predict what future funds will be available and which projects will be successful, so have estimated 'slightly'. Criteria currently strongly advocate for support to projects tackling climate and environmental crises.
Biodiversity	2	Again it has been difficult to predict the impact but we have measures in place to encourage projects which make a positive impact.
Climate Change Adaptation	2	We currently fund a project focused on reducing carbon. It is anticipated that similar projects may come forward as part of this funding round, however, this cannot be guaranteed.
Sustainable Materials	2	As above it is difficult to predict but we would be encouraging the use of sustainable materials and would expect some projects coming forward where this is relevant. Not all projects will have an element of capital but may have some materials costs.
Food	2	We may have organisations come forward that directly address this issue, or do so in a way through schemes or side projects they are running such as HomeStart, and Chipping Norton Theatre 2 of our current SLA partners.
Health	4	Current SLA partner projects seek to improve health outcomes for residents either directly or indirectly and would anticipate seeing the same from future applicants.
Housing	0	I do not think that the scheme would provide any change in this area
Education	2	Current SLA partner projects seek to improve education for residents either directly or indirectly and would anticipate seeing the same from future applicants.
Built Community	2	We may see projects come through that address this but no guarantees can be made.
Cultural Community	2	Current SLA partner projects seek to improve education for residents either directly or indirectly and would anticipate seeing the same from future applicants.
Accessibility	4	Successful projects with address barriers mentioned above
Local Economy and Jobs	0	Unlikely to receive projects addressing this based on the lot specifications
Safety	0	Unlikely to receive projects addressing this based on the lot specifications
Democratic Voice	0	No obvious impact in this area
Equity	2	Positive impact on groups with protected characteristics.

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
1 MARCH 2026 – 30 JUNE 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	Complete	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	Complete	
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	Complete	March 2026

Item	Executive Member	Lead Officer	Report commissioned by
4 February 2026			
Supporting mental health initiatives	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@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
4 March 2026			
2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q3	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk	Executive
2025/26 Quarterly Finance Review Q3	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
National Planning Policy Framework: Proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves, Head of Planning chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
Approach to commissioning 3 year SLA 2027 onwards	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive

26 March 2026 - Additional Meeting			
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
Woodford Way Update	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Michael David, Housing Delivery Programme Manager michael.david@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
20 May 2026 - Annual Council day			
3 June 2026			
New crowdfunding platform programme	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
Procurement and Contract Management Strategy	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Ciaran Okane, Senior Business Partner – Procurement Ciaran.Okane@publicagroup.uk	Executive
Approval of Regulation 19 Draft Submission Local Plan for Public Consultation	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Andrew Thomson, Planning Policy Manager Andrew.Thomson@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive Council
Investment Property Portfolio Annual Report 2025/26	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richard, Director of Finance Madhu.Richards@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
1 JUNE 2026 – 31 MAY 2027

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- Drive improvement in public services

Proposed working groups

Title	Purpose	Membership	Status	Target completion date
Mental Health	Tbd- Scope and purpose to be confirmed at first meeting of the working group	Tbd – Annual Council		

Item	Executive Member	Lead Officer	Report commissioned by
3 June 2026			
New crowdfunding platform programme	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
Procurement and Contract Management Strategy	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Ciaran Okane, Senior Business Partner – Procurement Ciaran.Okane@publicagroup.uk	Executive
Approval of Regulation 19 Draft Submission Local Plan for Public Consultation	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Andrew Thomson, Planning Policy Manager Andrew.Thomson@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive Council
Investment Property Portfolio Annual Report 2025/26	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance, Madhu.Richards@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
8 July 2026			
Leisure Update	Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy - Tim Sumner	Rachel Biles, Leisure Strategy Manager rachel.biles@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2 September 2026			
2026/27 Quarterly Finance Review Q1	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
2026/27 Quarterly Service Review Q1	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk	Executive
Youth Development Work	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
14 October 2026			
Local Government Reorganisation Update	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Phil Martin, Director of Place phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
4 November 2026			
Community Grants - determination of 3 year SLA final awards	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
2 December 2026			
2026/27 Quarterly Finance Review Q2	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive

2026/27 Quarterly Service Review Q2	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk	Executive
Local Plan Annual Monitoring 2025/26	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Andrew Thomson, Planning Policy Manager Andrew.Thomson@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
6 January 2027			
Council Tax Support 2027/28	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk	Executive Council
Draft Budget 2027/28 Version 2	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
3 February 2027			
Nature Recovery Plan Progress Update	Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Melanie Dodd, Senior Biodiversity Officer melanie.dodd@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Budget 2027/28 and Medium Term Financial Strategy	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive Council

3 March 2027			
2026/27 Quarterly Service Review Q3	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk	Executive
2026/27 Quarterly Finance Review Q3	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk	Executive
Community Safety Partnership Annual Update	Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
14 April 2027			
To be Scheduled			
Private Estate Management in New Developments	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves, Head of Planning chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Waste Collection Quality Management	Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment.	Si Pocock-Cluley, Environmental Services and Waste Transformation Lead si.pocock-cluley@westoxon.gov.uk	Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME
INCORPORATING NOTICE OF DECISIONS PROPOSED TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE
SESSION AND NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MAKE A KEY DECISION
1 MARCH 2026 – 30 JUNE 2026

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 11 March 2026						
West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 - Spatial Options Consultation Summary Report and Local Development Scheme (LDS) Update	No	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Andrew Thomson, Planning Policy Manager Andrew.Thomson@westoxon.gov.uk
National Planning Policy Framework: Proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system	No	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves, Head of Planning chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk
Approach to commissioning 3 year SLA 2027 onwards	Yes	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk
Biodiversity duty report	No	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Melanie Dodd, Senior Biodiversity Officer melanie.dodd@westoxon.gov.uk
HomeseekerPlus Policy Review	Yes	Part exempt	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Caroline Clissold, Business Manager - Housing Allocations, Homelessness and Hostels Grants caroline.clissold@publicagroup.uk

Kilkenny Car Park	No	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Maria Wheatley, Shared Parking Manager maria.wheatley@publicagroup.uk
Corporate Enforcement Policy	No	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Emma Cathcart, Head of Service, Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit emma.cathcart@cotswold.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
2025/26 Quarterly Finance Review Q3	No	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Review of Public Members Agreement and Service Specifications	Yes	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Ubico Service Agreement	No	Part exempt	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Si Pocock-Cluley, Environmental Services and Waste Transformation Lead si.pocock-cluley@westoxon.gov.uk
Response to government consultation on local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire	No	Open	Executive	11 Mar 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Mark Pritchard, Head of Communications and Corporate Strategy mark.pritchard@westoxon.gov.uk

Council 25 March 2026						
Appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer	No	Open	Council	25 Mar 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services andrew.brown@westoxon.gov.uk
Recommendations from the Constitution Working Group	No	Open	Council	25 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Ana Prelici, Senior Democratic Services Officer Ana.Prelici@westoxon.gov.uk
Council 20 May 2026						
Appointment of Members to the Council's Committees, including Substitute Members	No	Open	Council	20 May 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Ana Prelici, Senior Democratic Services Officer Ana.Prelici@westoxon.gov.uk
Executive 10 June 2026						
Procurement and Contract Management Strategy	No	Open	Executive	10 Jun 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Ciaran Okane, Senior Business Partner – Procurement Ciaran.Okane@publicagroup.uk
Approval of Regulation 19 Draft Submission Local Plan for Public Consultation	Yes	Open	Executive Council	10 Jun 2026 17 Jun 2026	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Andrew Thomson, Planning Policy Manager Andrew.Thomson@westoxon.gov.uk
New crowdfunding platform programme	Yes	Open	Executive	10 Jun 2026	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager

					Rachel Crouch	heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk
Public Spaces Protection Order for Dog Fouling	Yes	Open	Executive	10 Jun 2026	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Philip Measures, Service Leader philip.measures@publicagroup.uk
2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q4	No	Open	Executive	10 Jun 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
2025/26 Quarterly Finance Review Q4	No	Open	Executive	10 Jun 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Discretionary Rate Relief Policy	No	Open	Executive	10 Jun 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Options for Property in Chipping Norton	Yes	Fully exempt	Executive	10 Jun 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Jasmine McWilliams, Assets Manager jasmine.mcwilliams@publicagroup.uk
Council 17 June 2026						
Executive 15 July 2026						
Procurement of Independent Housing, Welfare and Debt Advice Services	Yes	Open	Executive	15 Jul 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk

Council 22 July 2026						
Executive 9 September 2026						
2026/27 Quarterly Service Review Q1	No	Open	Executive	9 Sep 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
2026/27 Quarterly Finance Review Q1	No	Open	Executive	9 Sep 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Council 16 September 2026						
Executive 21 October 2026						
Executive 11 November 2026						
Council Tax Support 2027/28	Yes	Open	Executive Council	11 Nov 2026 18 Nov 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Community Grants - determination of 3 year SLA final awards	Yes	Open	Executive	11 Nov 2026	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities - Cllr Rachel Crouch	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@westoxon.gov.uk
Council 18 November 2026						
Executive 9 December 2026						

2026/27 Quarterly Service Review Q2	No	Open	Executive	9 Dec 2026	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
2026/27 Quarterly Finance Review Q2	No	Open	Executive	9 Dec 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Draft Budget 2027/28 Version 1	No	Open	Executive	9 Dec 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Local Plan Annual Monitoring 2025/26	No	Open	Executive	9 Dec 2026	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Andrew Thomson, Planning Policy Manager Andrew.Thomson@westoxon.gov.uk
Executive 13 January 2027						
Draft Budget 2027/28 Version 2	Yes	Open	Executive	13 Jan 2027	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
Council 20 January 2027						
Executive 10 February 2027						
Budget 2027/28 and Medium Term Financial Strategy	Yes	Open	Executive Council	10 Feb 2027 24 Feb 2027	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk

Council 24 February 2027						
Executive 10 March 2027						
2026/27 Quarterly Finance Review Q3	No	Open	Executive	10 Mar 2027	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Georgina Dyer, Head of Finance georgina.dyer@westoxon.gov.uk
2026/27 Quarterly Service Review Q3	No	Open	Executive	10 Mar 2027	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Council 24 March 2027						
Executive 21 April 2027						
Council 19 May 2027						
Key Decision Delegated to Executive Member						
UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund	No	Open	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 Accommodation	Yes	Fully exempt	Director of Finance - Madhu Richards	31 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.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
Leisure Planned Investment Programme	Yes	Open	Director of Place - Phil Martin	Before 31 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy - Tim Sumner	Stuart Wilson, Leisure Contracts Lead stuart.wilson@publicagroup.uk

Public Toilet Review	Yes	Part exempt	Director of Finance - Madhu Richards	Before 31 Mar 2026	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Fiona Woodhouse, Parking Projects & Contracts Officer Fiona.Woodhouse@publicagroup.uk
Street Cleansing Vehicle Procurement	Yes	Open	Director of Place - Phil Martin	Before 31 Mar 2027	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Si Pocock-Cluley, Environmental Services and Waste Transformation Lead si.pocock-cluley@westoxon.gov.u
Investment in Public Conveniences	Yes	Open	Executive Director - Corporate Services - Claire Locke	Before 31 Mar 2027	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Claire Locke, Executive Director claire.locke@publicagroup.uk