

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

Executive

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB
at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 10 June 2026**

PRESENT

Councillors: , , Andy Graham, Duncan Enright, Sandra Coleman, Liz Leffman, Andrew Prosser, Geoff Saul, Tim Sumner and Alistair Wray

Officers: Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance and Regulatory Services), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Maria Harper (Democratic Services Assistant), Mathew Taylor (Democratic Services Officer), Elise Chowdhury, Georgina Dyer (Head of Finance), Lucy Empson, Mandy Fathers (Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service), Gemma Moreing (Business Information and Performance Lead), Ciaran Okane (Senior Business Partner – Procurement), Emma Peacock (Communications Officer), Ana Prelici (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Si Pocock-Cluley (Environmental Services and Waste Transformation Lead)

Other Councillors in attendance: David Melvin

484 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance.

485 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

486 Minutes of Previous Meeting

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

Approval of the minutes was proposed by Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, and seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council.

The proposal was put to the vote and was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED:

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

487 Receipt of Announcements

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Councillor Sandra Coleman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, stated that the Council had been working with Getting Oxfordshire Online and had recently made a donation of used laptops. These would be distributed to individuals who needed access to IT in their daily lives but did not have access to it.

There were no further announcements.

488 Participation of the Public

Sharone Parnes, who was also a Councillor on Woodstock Town Council, asked the following question:

“I am speaking today in my individual capacity as a local resident and user of our public infrastructure.

My question is directed to the Executive Member for Leisure. By way of brief context, during a recent visit to the Woodstock open-air pool, I personally observed that a permanent wooden boundary fence and an industrial construction haul road have been installed across the site. This development has permanently altered the layout, removing a vital area of public lawn space and drastically reducing the usable amenity footprint to approximately ten chairs and four picnic tables.

Despite this significant reduction in a public asset, WODC’s official promotional updates and digital booking portals continue to present messaging that appears to suggest families still have full access to a large grassed area for sunbathing and garden games. Some of this messaging has also been endorsed and shared on social media by the District Council, alongside images of the pool grounds that may be misleading or confusing.

These omissions and potential misrepresentations are further compounded by a stark digital disconnect. Search engines and satellite mapping services, operating on historic update cycles, continue to display expansive green lawns that are no longer present. In the absence of any clear update notice or on-site warning, the public is left relying on outdated visual information and expectations, which runs contrary to the standard of transparency that residents would reasonably expect.

A number of residents have already expressed disappointment on seeing how the grounds are currently configured.

The issue of misrepresentation is not confined to online platforms. The operator has also erected what appears to be an unapproved promotional banner mounted on a makeshift frame on the verge of a public road. This is positioned dangerously close to traffic-calming measures, creating a potential highway obstruction and an apparent breach of advertising regulations.

Taken together, it appears that both factual accuracy and planning compliance have been overlooked. While I do not wish to pour cold water on the seasonal opening of the pool—particularly as it is, somewhat ironically, operating as a cold-water facility at present—endorsing promotional material that does not accurately reflect the current site, alongside the use of potentially unauthorised signage on highway verges, suggests a serious failure of contract management.”

The Leader stated that a written answer would be provided to the speaker and included in the minutes of the meeting.

489 Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Executive noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had met on 26 March 2026 and 3 June 2026.

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

Recommendations from the meeting held on 26 March 2026 had been made on Woodford Way and the Community Safety Partnership.

Councillor Geoff Saul thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their recommendations on the Woodford Way and Community Safety Partnership items, as referenced in the agenda papers. In relation to recommendations 1–4 on the Woodford Way report, Councillor Saul explained that, while the Council was undertaking much of the work related to these, it did not explicitly agree with them.

Councillor Saul stated that the Council was happy to take recommendations 5–7 forward, which were that the Executive agrees:

1. That additional parent and toddler parking spaces be incorporated into plans for the site.
2. That the Council updates the timings for parking in the Marriotts Walk multistorey car park to an all-day provision prior to commencement of the development.
3. That officers bring a further update report to the Committee prior to the planning application for the site.

Councillor Saul also explained that the Executive had agreed to the recommendations that the Committee had made on the Police and Crime Commissioner recommendations, which were to:

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1. That officers assess which priority projects would be affected by the budget reduction from the Police and Crime Commissioner, and that the Executive consider whether any of these priority projects can be funded by the Council's own discretionary resources.
2. That officers' assessment of the impacts of the cuts to funding on priority projects detail the impact in terms of the loss of officer roles rather than just cash values.
3. That the Council writes to the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner to request that they reinstate funding being cut from the CSP.

Councillor Graham explained that the further recommendations from the meeting held on 3 June 2026, as published in the supplementary papers, would be discussed under the substantive agenda items. These were the agenda items 'Supporting Community Services - Crowdfunder UK Approach' and item 11, '2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q4'.

490 Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee

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

491 Supporting Community Services - Crowdfunder UK Approach

Councillor Sandra Coleman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthier Communities, presented the item, the purpose of which was to review the proposed application and assessment processes, criteria and eligibility of the new grants scheme, which was expected to be hosted by Crowdfunder UK, and to provide an update on the progress of commissioning Crowdfunder UK as the new host of the scheme.

In her presentation, the Executive Member made the following points:

- That the new platform would streamline decision-making and enable project decisions to be made quickly.
- The Council would provide a maximum pledge of £12,000 or 15%.
- There would be no platform fee, but transaction fees would apply.
- Projects would receive decisions more quickly under the streamlined process.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, stated that the new platform was more cost-effective for projects.

With regard to recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on 3 June 2026, the Leader stated that the Executive had considered, but did not agree with, the first recommendation. He recognised the importance of supporting projects,

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but stated that creating a separate fund for start-up costs would raise the risk of projects being funded but not established. As this was not considered a significant barrier to projects, it was not deemed necessary to support their inception through a separate fund; instead, officers were available to provide advice.

The report noted that the development of the eligibility criteria had been informed by research into similar frameworks operated by other councils and grant-giving bodies. A loose framework could lead to uncertainty and inconsistency in decision-making. The decision to move to Crowdfunder UK from the previous platform provider had been approved by the Executive following a previous report. The open and transparent nature of a platform-based approach to the distribution of funds was considered a distinct advantage.

The Leader stated that the second recommendation, relating to notifying ward members, seemed reasonable and would help ward members to be aware of projects within their wards.

The recommendations in the report, alongside the additional recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, were proposed by Councillor Andy Graham.

Councillor Sandra Coleman seconded the proposals.

The proposals were put to the vote and were agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Approve the proposed application and assessment processes, criteria, eligibility and monitoring of the new grants scheme as set out in the report; and
2. Delegate authority for award decisions to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Stronger, Healthier Communities and the Executive Member for Arts, Culture and Sport; and

Agree that the Council notifies ward members when an application is submitted in their wards as part of the new grant process.

492

Publica Business Plan 2026-28

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, presented the item, the purpose of which was to consider the Draft Publica Business Plan 2026-28, produced by the Publica Board in consultation with Directors and Shareholders, and to recommend that the Leader, as Shareholder Representative, approve the plan.

In his presentation, Councillor Graham made the following points:

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- The majority of the Council's services were no longer within Publica, but Publica remained a key delivery partner, with a substantial number of services still delivered through it.
- Publica had undergone substantial change and the focus was on preparing staff and services for Local Government Reorganisation.
- The business plan and contract extension had sought to keep options open following Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Duncan Enright seconded the recommendations and stated that the staff within Publica had been excellent, particularly thanking the Managing Director, Frank Wilson, and the Chair of the Board, Christine Gore, for their leadership. Councillor Enright stated that the Council had benefitted from Publica's delivery of services and that valuable learning had also emerged from shared working, which could be utilised for Local Government Reorganisation. He asked the Managing Director to pass on the Executive's thanks to the whole Publica workforce.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Endorse the Publica Business Plan 2026-2028; and Request that the Leader, as Shareholder Representative, recommend its adoption to the Board.

493 Ubico Business Plan

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, presented the item, the purpose of which was to consider the Ubico Business Plan 2026-27, which had been produced by Ubico in consultation with the Directors and Shareholders, and to recommend that the Leader, as Shareholder Representative, approve the plan.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed the recommendations in the report. Councillor Graham stated that the plan had shifted towards a more intelligent and targeted approach, aligning with the Council's 2030 net zero aspirations. The rural characteristics of the area, including narrow lanes and bridleways, presented inherent challenges. Despite this, the number of complaints remained very low—approximately a dozen—which reflected positively on the team and its management. There was also a clear commitment to resolving issues promptly and effectively when they did occur.

Another member of the Executive thanked Ubico, stating that West Oxfordshire was one of the top recycling areas in the country and that Ubico had helped to enable this. The Executive Member thanked Ubico and stated that the Council was fortunate to have such a good recycling service.

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Alternative options considered as part of the decision included the Leader choosing not to approve the plan; however, this would risk the company's ability to deliver the savings identified in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and progress towards corporate priorities.

Councillor Alistair Wray seconded the proposals and stated that the business plan succeeded in achieving economies of scale, and commended Ubico for this.

The recommendations were agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Note the Ubico Business Plan 2025-26; and
Note that, subject to feedback from the Executive, the Leader of the Council, as Shareholder Representative, will sign the written resolution to approve the Ubico Business Plan 2026-2027 in due course.

494 2025/26 Quarterly Service Review Q4

Councillor Andy Graham presented the item, the purpose of which was to provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of Quarter Four (Q4) of 2025-26.

In his presentation, Councillor Graham made the following points:

- Overall performance was strong, with most services having met or exceeded targets and continued progress on corporate priorities.
- CIL implementation had progressed during the quarter.
- Regeneration schemes, including Salt Cross Garden Village and Carterton SDA, had continued to advance.
- Community support funding and youth initiatives were ongoing.
- Environmental investment had continued, including leisure decarbonisation and electric fleet upgrades.
- Recycling was below target this quarter due to seasonal factors, but remained in the top quartile nationally (c. 25th of 200+ councils).
- Leisure visits were below target; however, this was considered to be due to data capture issues, and annual figures showed an overall increase.

In discussing the report, other members raised the following points:

- Significant work had taken place across corporate priorities, delivered by officers in partnership with communities and external organisations.
- People and wildlife (environment priority) – Community-led nature recovery work had progressed in Carterton, alongside the Coronation and Community Orchards Scheme, now in its final delivery stage.

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- Orchard scheme delivery – 190 trees were planted in the final round, bringing the total to 392 trees across 25 orchards district-wide, with ongoing support funded (e.g. Longmead Foundation pruning workshops).
- Climate emergency response – Major progress had been made on decarbonisation of Windrush Leisure Centre, with a new heating system installed and final connection pending.
- Carbon reduction impact – The project was expected to deliver a significant reduction in district carbon emissions, noting the complexity of works within a live leisure facility.
- Housing and Council Tax Support performance had improved significantly and was now back on track.
- Positive outcomes were highlighted across housing services, including the delivery of 252 affordable homes, which would have a positive impact for families across the district.
- The housing team had prioritised reducing homelessness pressures.
- Temporary accommodation use was decreasing, with a shift towards providing more self-contained units for those in need.
- A small increase in residual household waste was noted, reflecting the dip in recycling performance; the figures remained marginal but were identified as an area for improvement.
- Strong national performance in recycling was acknowledged, together with an ongoing commitment to high recycling performance across Oxfordshire.
- The Communications Team was working with officers and Executive Members on a coordinated communications plan for the financial year, including support for countywide initiatives.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendation to include videos as part of the Council's communication strategy was partly agreed and accepted by the Executive, and the most appropriate method and channel for this communication would be considered based on best practice guidance and available resources.

Councillor Wray stated that West Oxfordshire was performing above average on waste collection and recycling figures compared with the national average. A slight increase in residual waste was noted. In response to comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was recognised that the Council was one of the top performers nationally. The Communications Team was currently working with officers during this financial year, and the best method and channel, based on best practice guidance, would be considered. Evidence would be reviewed to determine the best way to communicate this.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed the recommendations in the report, which were seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright.

The Executive voted on these and agreed them unanimously.

There were no alternative options, as the report was for noting previous operational performance only.

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The Executive resolved to:

1. Note the 2025/26 Q4 service performance report.

495 Financial Performance Report 2025/26 Year End

Councillor Andy Graham presented the item, the purpose of which was to report the financial performance of the Council in 2025/26.

In his presentation, Councillor Graham made the following points:

- The financial outturn had been better than initially budgeted, moving from an anticipated modest contribution to a £203,155 surplus.
- This improvement was attributed to strong income, notably from trade waste and development management, higher treasury returns (c. £800k additional income), and cost efficiencies, including lower one-off costs and partner refunds.
- Resources had been transferred into earmarked reserves to support the delivery of future priorities, including Local Government Reorganisation.
- There was a continued emphasis on housing delivery and climate objectives, recognising their importance to long-term community sustainability and affordability.
- The report demonstrated effective in-year financial management, proactive risk mitigation, and informed decision-making.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed the recommendations in the report.

There were no alternative options, as the report was for noting previous financial performance only.

Councillor Duncan Enright seconded the proposal.

The Executive voted on the recommendations, which were agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Note the 2025/26 financial performance.
2. Recommend to Council that it carry forward the capital budget of £4,395,180 (paragraph 5.2).
3. Recommend to Council that it approve the transfers to and between earmarked reserves as detailed in the report (section 4).

Recommend to Council that it approve the necessary budget virements related to Publica Phase 2 (paragraph 2.27).

496 Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

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Councillor Andy Graham presented the item, the purpose of which was to consider and approve amendments to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy, reflecting recent Government announcements on 100% business rate relief for electric vehicle charging forecourts.

The report was taken as read, with no further discussion.

There were no alternative options considered in the report.

Councillor Duncan Enright seconded the proposals and stated that he was particularly pleased to see the support for live music venues.

The proposals were put to the vote and were agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Approve the amendments to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy ('the Policy') as detailed in the report; and

Delegate to the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, any future amendments to the Policy in respect of electric vehicle charging points and electric vehicle forecourts.

497 Procurement and Contract Management Strategy

Councillor Andy Graham presented the item, the purpose of which was to present an updated draft Procurement and Contract Management Strategy.

In his presentation, Councillor Graham explained that the report set out how the Council delivered value for money, high-quality services, and broader social, economic and environmental outcomes, and that the strategy also responded to significant change, including the Procurement Act 2023 and upcoming Local Government Reorganisation. The purpose of the strategy was to ensure that the Council remained compliant, resilient and commercially effective.

There were no alternative options considered in the report.

Councillor Duncan Enright seconded the recommendations in the report and stated that the changes would allow the Council to further support the local economy.

The recommendations were put to the vote and were agreed unanimously.

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The Executive resolved to:

Approve the updated Procurement and Contract Management Strategy.

498 Appointments to Outside Bodies 2026-28

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, presented the item, the purpose of which was to provide a list of appointments to outside bodies for the civic year 2026/27.

In his presentation, Councillor Graham explained that the list represented the key bodies to which the Council wished to appoint a representative, or where the body had requested representation from the Council.

The report noted that the Leader was free to make such appointments as he considered appropriate in respect of executive functions.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Duncan Enright seconded the proposals.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Note the appointments to outside bodies as set out in Annex A; and
Recommend that Council notes the appointments to outside bodies as set out in Annex A.

The Meeting closed at 3.00 pm

CHAIR