WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Executive
Held in the Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 9 September 2026**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham (Chair), Sandra Coleman, Liz Leffman, Andrew Prosser, Alaric Smith, Tim Sumner and Alistair Wray

Officers: Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance and Regulatory Services), Phil Martin (Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service), Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Maria Harper (Democratic Services Assistant), Mathew Taylor (Democratic Services Officer), Mandy Fathers (Head of Environmental Protection, Revenues and Benefits), Jasmine McWilliams (Head of Assets), Philip Measures (Service Leader), Gemma Moreing (Business Information and Performance Lead), Michael Rich (Regeneration Lead for the Carterton Area Strategy), Maria Wheatley (Shared Parking Manager) and Daniel Taylor (Director of Place)

Other Councillors in attendance: Dan Levy and David Melvin

519 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety.

520 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Sandra Coleman, Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities, declared that she was a Member of the Board of Chippy Community Land Trust (CCLT). The declaration was made in respect of item 16 on the agenda – Proposal for transfer of land in Chipping Norton. Councillor Coleman would therefore leave the room for the duration of that item.

521 Minutes of Previous Meeting

There were no amendments to the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 July 2026.

Approval of the minutes was proposed by Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, and seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 July 2026.

522 **Receipt of Announcements**

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, gave an update on the recent Government announcement on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Councillor Graham advised that the Government would now be reviewing the process and had confirmed that there would be a pause prior to implementing any final decisions. The pause was to allow Government time to listen to the concerns of local communities, and Councillor Graham asserted that this would include any concerns raised by local councils. The Government's commitment to reform and change had remained unchanged and the review did not signal the end of the programme and Councillor Graham expected LGR to continue in West Oxfordshire. Further information was expected from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government shortly on the scope and process of the review with indications that it would be completed quickly. Local elections in 2027 would now take place for the existing councils. In West Oxfordshire elections would be held by thirds for Councillors whose seats were last contested in 2023. In the coming weeks the Council would consider what work should continue and ensure the Council's approach aligned with the revised timetable. Councils had been asked to continue with decision neutral preparations, but immediate work and activities focused on new councils would be paused immediately. In the interim the Executive would continue to deliver services to residents in West Oxfordshire.

Councillor Liz Leffman, Executive Member for Planning and Infrastructure, informed the meeting that the consultation on the Emerging Local Plan was open. A public event had already been held at Witney Corn Exchange. Further events would take place at Carterton Town Hall on 9 September, and Chipping Norton Town Hall on 10 September. A virtual exhibition was available at the yourwestoxfordshire website for those who were unable to attend an event in person.

Councillor Alistair Wray, Executive Member for Environment, announced that a Waterways event was planned on 9 October 2026 at the Corn Exchange in Witney. Further information on the event would follow.

523 **Participation of the Public**

There was no participation of the public.

524 **Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had met on 2 September 2026 and had made no recommendations to the Executive.

525 **Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee**

The Audit and Governance Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Executive.

Executive

09/September2026

526 2026/27 Quarterly Service Review Q1

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, presented the item, the purpose of which was to provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2026-27 Quarter One (Q1).

In his presentation Councillor Smith made the following points:

West Oxfordshire District Council had delivered a strong Q1 performance, with the majority of key service indicators having met or exceeded targets.

Good progress had been reported against Council Plan priorities and had included:

- Salt Cross Garden Village had continued to progress, with updated planning and Section 106 arrangements and further planning submissions expected later in 2026.
- Carterton regeneration had progressed through the development of strategic priorities and proposals for a new Place Board.
- Town centre improvement programmes had continued across the district, and included improved Charter Markets and the Witney High Street Improvement Scheme.
- Marriotts Walk had maintained high occupancy, and only one vacant unit remained.
- The Windrush Leisure Centre decarbonisation project was nearing completion and awaited a permanent power connection.
- The new Local Plan had reached a significant milestone, with the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan having been published ahead of public consultation.

Councillor Smith noted the following key areas of strong performance

- Customer Satisfaction (100% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (94% against a target of 90%)
- Building Control Satisfaction (92% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of planning applications determined within agreed timescales 97% or better across all application types.
- Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (0% against a target of 30%)
- Percentage of high-risk notifications and food premises inspected within target timescales (100%)
- Leisure visits & gym memberships (214,820 against a target of 205,000) & (5,654 against a target of 5,650)

Improvement was required in the following:

- Land Charges, reporting 10.47% of searches completed within 10 days against a 90% target. Average search time was currently reported at 16 days. However, a recovery plan was being implemented and would improve performance in the autumn. The underlying quality of the service had always been excellent and was reflected in the service being awarded the HM Land Registry Gold Standard Accreditation.
- Affordable Housing: 6 affordable homes were delivered against a quarterly target of 69. The shortfall largely reflected the timing of developments, with additional completions expected later in the year.

There were no alternative options on this report.

Councillor Smith proposed accepting the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Andy Graham seconded the proposal and praised Council staff for their diligent work which contributed to the performance.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Note the 2026/27 Q1 service performance report.

527 **2026/27 Quarterly Finance Review Q1**

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, presented the item, the purpose of which was to detail the Council's financial performance for Quarter One 2026-2027.

In his presentation Councillor Smith made the following points:

- The Council had made a positive start to the 2026/27 financial year, had reported a favourable revenue position at Quarter 1 and had continued progress against key capital investment projects.
- At 30 June 2026, the Council had reported a favourable revenue variance of £271,344 against the profiled budget. This positive position was largely attributable to stronger than anticipated income from Development Management and Treasury Management activities.
- Key service-level variances included: Development Management, with planning application and pre-application income having generated a net surplus of approximately £228,000. Green Waste income was £169,000 below target, although the service had already achieved around 90% of its annual income target and was expected to continue making a positive net contribution of approximately £300,000 during the year. Recycling Credits income was £49,000 above budget, helping offset increased contract costs of £27,000. Bulky Waste income was performing ahead of target by £12,000. The Investment Property Portfolio was reporting an overspend of £23,636, primarily this was due to lower than budgeted rental income while vacant units continued to be marketed.
- No significant overspends had been identified across service budgets at this stage.

Capital expenditure at Q1 had totalled £1.064 million against an approved annual programme of £13.46 million, which included £4.4 million of slippage from 2025/26. Progress was being made across a number of major projects and included:

- Roof replacement works at Carterton Industrial Estate and Station Lane.

- Procurement of four electric food waste collection vehicles, expected in Q3.
- Refurbishment of eight temporary accommodation properties.
- Delivery of the Leisure Centre Improvement Programme, including works to the Windrush children's pool, roof and changing facilities.

Councillor Smith summarised that the Council's financial position at Quarter 1 was encouraging, with income performance in several key areas more than offsetting emerging pressures. Whilst the reported surplus and absence of significant overspends had provided confidence, uncertainties remained around income trends, inflationary pressures and the implications of Local Government Reorganisation. Ongoing monitoring remained essential throughout 2026/27.

There were no alternative options on this report.

Councillor Smith proposed accepting the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Andy Graham seconded the proposals.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Note the Council's Financial Performance for Quarter One 2026-2027

528 **Marriotts Walk Car Park**

Councillor Alistair Wray, Executive Member for Environment, presented the report the purpose of which was to propose a change of stay times in the Marriotts Walk Car Park

In his presentation Councillor Wray made the following points:

- The report sought approval to undertake consultation on two proposed changes at Marriotts Walk Car Park in Witney
- The main proposal was to increase the maximum stay period on Levels 6, 7 and 8 to 12 hours. This change increased long stay spaces by 50 to a total of 196.
- The longer stay provision was intended to better support town centre workers, residents and visitors, including staff working longer shifts such as those at Witney Community Hospital.
- A second proposal was to make a minor amendment to the car park boundary within the Off-Street Parking Places Order. This included a small section of pavement adjacent to Marriotts Close, where vehicles occasionally stop or park despite the area needing to remain clear for emergency access.

- The estimated implementation cost was £2,300, and comprised amended parking signage, additional signs for emergency access areas and statutory public notices.
- The proposals would improve flexibility for long-stay parking users, supported the local economy, assisted access to employment in Witney, and helped ensure emergency access routes remain unobstructed. Any changes would be subject to the required statutory consultation process.

The alternative options detailed in the report were that the Executive could choose not to make changes to the existing Off-Street Parking Order and leave the allocation of long and short stay as they were.

The Executive could also choose not to extend the boundary line to Marriotts Walk Car Park. These alternatives were not recommended.

Councillor Alistair Wray proposed accepting the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Andy Graham seconded the proposals and assured the meeting that he and the Executive had visited the car park to ensure the work would be in order. Councillor Graham felt that this would provide an improved and balanced provision for parking which would benefit users.

A non-Executive Member present suggested that signage could also be implemented on the roads into the town to direct drivers to Marriotts Walk Car Park as this was currently underused. The Executive agreed to consider this suggestion.

The proposals were put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Agree to enter into consultation to increase the stay times on levels 6, 7 and 8 to 12 hours maximum stay at Marriotts Walk Car Park.
2. Agree to enter into consultation to extend the boundary line of the plan identifying the location of the Marriotts Walk Car Park attached to West Oxfordshire District Council (Off-Street Parking Places) No. 1 Order 2021, to now include a small area of pavement.
3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Corporate Services, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment, to consider consultation feedback received in respect of the proposed variation to the existing Off Street Parking Order and decide whether to make the variation to this Order in whole or in part or to abandon the proposals.

529 Review of Commissioning – Housing, Welfare and Debt Advice Services

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, presented the item the purpose of which was to propose an extension by waiver to the current contract.

In his presentation Councillor Smith made the following points:

- The report sought approval to extend the Council's contract with West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice for housing, welfare and debt advice services for a further three years from April 2027 to March 2030.
- The service was delivering strong outcomes for residents and had supported 3,408 residents with 8,393 issues in 2024/25, rising to 4,695 residents in 2025/26. Many residents presented with multiple and complex issues, which demonstrated the importance of accessible, independent advice to help prevent financial hardship, debt problems and homelessness.
- The current contract expired in March 2027. The original procurement had attracted only one suitable provider. The report recommended extending the existing contract through an approved waiver to ensure continuity of support.
- The report proposed increasing the Council's annual contribution from £150,000 to £183,608 in 2027/28, with 3% inflationary uplifts in the following two years. The total cost of the three-year extension would be considered through the Council's annual budget-setting process.
- Without this service, there was a risk of increased financial hardship, reduced financial resilience, and higher levels of homelessness amongst vulnerable residents.
- The proposal supported the Council's priorities of Working Together for West Oxfordshire, Putting Residents First, and Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All.

Alternative options within the report were that the Executive may choose to discontinue this provision; however, doing so could lead to a greater number of residents experiencing financial hardship, increased levels of debt, and a heightened risk of homelessness among those who are already vulnerable.

The Executive may also choose to reduce the level of funding proposed; however, this could lead to a diminished level of service provision, resulting in fewer vulnerable residents being able to access the support they need.

Councillor Smith proposed accepting the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Sandra Coleman, Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities, seconded the proposals.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, commended the sensitive work undertaken by Citizens Advice, a service he noted was well used and regarded in the district. Councillor Graham considered the support of the Council to be a sound investment in communities, the benefits of which were detailed in the report. Finally, Councillor Graham noted that the duration of the contract would enable Citizens Advice to effectively plan and ensure staff retention.

The proposals were put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

That the Executive resolved to:

1. Agree a three-year extension to the current contract for Housing, Welfare and Debt Advice
2. Agree that the extension is covered by a 'waiver,' signed by the Section 151 Officer and Assistant Director Shared Legal Services; and,
3. Agree that the cost of a three-year extension, including a year-on-year inflationary increase as per paragraph 4.3, is factored into the draft budget and medium term financial strategy as part of the 2027/28 budget setting process.

530 **Developing a Carterton Area Regeneration Framework**

Councillor Liz Leffman, Executive Member for Planning and Infrastructure, presented the item, the purpose of which was to update the Executive on the development of a regeneration framework for the Carterton

Councillor Leffman thanked the Carterton Area Strategy Working Group for their work to date and reiterated the general agreement for the need for regeneration of the area, in particular in the town centre. This was noted to be especially pertinent given that extensive development was planned in Carterton and the surrounding area in the Emerging Local Plan.

Councillor Leffman advised that there were two main drivers for developing a regeneration framework for the Carterton Area: The significant growth that was proposed for the Carterton area and the fact that the town didn't currently fulfil its potential and, in particular, the need to transform the town centre offer to meet the expectations of residents, businesses and visitors.

Councillor Leffman explained that within this context, the report had two main purposes. Firstly, it provided the Executive with an update on the work that was underway and progress that had been made during the last six months. In doing so it provided an opportunity to consider the emerging strategic priorities. Secondly, the report had set out proposals for new partnership structures that could build the collaboration needed to realise the ambitions for the place. In particular, there were detailed proposals for a new Place Board, including draft memberships on which Councillor Leffman invited suggestions. This model drew on similar Boards that had been set up in towns and neighbourhoods. The Place Board would draw on existing networks, such as health, education and voluntary sectors, as well as new groups that had recently been put in place, including a new Local Business Network and a Developer Forum.

Alternative options considered in the report were that, rather than continuing to develop a framework for the Carterton area, the Council could opt to do nothing and rely on the policies in place within the new Local Plan. A do-nothing option was unlikely to result in achieving the ambition and vision the Council had for the area, since it would leave a number of the challenges and opportunities facing the area unaddressed and effectively left 'to the market' to deliver.

Other alternatives would be for the Council to either develop and deliver the framework in a more directive way itself, or to leave the programme for partners to run, with less input and investment of its own time and energy. The former approach was not preferred since it would fail to build the wider ownership and buy-in of stakeholders required for successful regeneration. Neither was taking a more hands-off approach recommended, since this failed to harness the important place-making role that the Council plays and responsibilities it had to show a leadership role in the regeneration and growth of the area. This should include paving the way for any successor unitary council to embrace the programme and its governance once it is established.

Councillor Leffman proposed accepting the recommendations in the report and restated her hope that all members agreed the importance of the regeneration.

Councillor Andy Graham seconded the proposals and suggested that the initial projects detailed in the report demonstrated the Council's vision and gave credibility to the work. The work was long overdue for Carterton and could provide a framework for such an approach in other towns. Councillor Graham also highlighted the importance of the Area Champions who would represent the Place Board in external forums. Furthermore, Councillor Graham suggested budgetary consideration would come forward to ensure projects were carried out in the Council's usual budgetary cycle and these would signal to investors that the Council was committed to regeneration and encourage them to come forward.

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, noted that it was important to harness the expertise of the local community on the Place Board. He also hoped to see the inclusion of sustainability and nature expertise on the Place Board.

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, suggested that the work would impact the local area surrounding Carterton and he therefore would like to have seen neighbouring parishes involved. This was acknowledged by Councillor Leffman who suggested that one representative from these bodies could be invited onto the Place Board.

Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Arts, Culture and Sport, stated he was pleased to see the importance of sport and leisure acknowledged in the report.

A non-Executive Member who was present concurred with Councillor Smith on the importance of local parish involvement in the work.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

That the Executive resolved to:

1. Endorse the overall content set out in the draft regeneration framework at Annex B.
2. Agree to support the establishment of a new Place Board for the Carterton Area, to be chaired initially by the Executive Member for Planning and Infrastructure.
3. Note the approach to developing initial projects and the early ideas for these set out in section 5.

531 Civil Penalty Policy

Councillor Alistair Wray, Executive Member for Environment, presented the report, the purpose of which was to propose the renewal of the Council's Civil Penalties and Enforcement Policy for Private Sector Housing Enforcement.

In his presentation Councillor Wray made the following points:

- The Policy was introduced in July 2025 prior to the enactment of the Renters Rights Act ("the Act") in the same year. With the Act now in place, it was necessary to renew the Policy to reflect this legislation and new guidelines.
- The Act had placed a much greater demand and expectation to improve standards in the private rented sector.
- The expectation of the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government was for enforcement through civil penalties where necessary, with fines received being used to support the cost of the work.
- The Policy was necessarily consistent with neighbouring councils.
- The Act had significantly expanded the powers of Local Housing Authorities against landlords and agents, with considerable fines that could be applied.
- The Council had appointed a Tenancy Relations Officer to develop the work and ensure the Council could improve service and reduce homelessness through illegal evictions.
- Monthly meetings would be held with legal services to review the enforcement work and the fines issued.

The alternative options considered in the report were that the Council may approve, amend, or reject the proposed policies as they see fit.

Councillor Wray proposed accepting the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, seconded the proposals and reiterated the importance of the Act. Councillor Prosser further noted that the penalties were important as was the enforcement and resources were needed in order to ensure that the Policy could be applied correctly.

A non-Executive Member questioned if there could be a conflict of interest as the fines issued would be used to resource the staffing. The Officer present advised that the regular consultation with the Council's legal services on fines issued, the use of national policy for assessing fines and a cautious and robust approach should alleviate these concerns. New burdens funding was available to help with recruitment. The Member queried how the Council would ensure the public were aware of this Policy. The Officer advised that promotion would take place through the Council's website.

Councillor Alaric Smith sought clarity on the appeals process. The Officer advised that a tribunal was available to consider civil penalty appeals but it was not envisaged that this route would be accessed often. Councillor Graham noted that full detail of the appeals process could be seen on page 225 of the agenda pack.

Finally, Councillor Graham suggested that, as the Policy was so comprehensive in its detail, a shortened summary may be useful and more accessible for the public, and the Officer may wish to consider this.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

That the Executive resolved to:

1. Approve the updated Housing Civil Penalties Policy.

532 Exclusion of Press and Public

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed that Executive agree to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the remaining exempt items of business, on the basis that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

The Executive Resolved in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 to:

Exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, with the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighing the public interest in disclosing the exempt information.

533 Write off in excess of £5,000

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the item the purpose of which was to seek approval for the writing off a council tax debt in excess of £5,000.

The Executive considered the recommendations in the report, the exceptional circumstances, the financial impact of the write-off and the prospect of payment.

Councillor Smith proposed accepting the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Andy Graham seconded the proposals.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Approve the write off £9,841.84 as detailed within the report

534 Proposal for transfer of land in Chipping Norton

Councillor Sandra Coleman left the meeting at 3:00pm

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the item the purpose of which was to request authority for the Council to transfer land at Walterbush Road in Chipping Norton to the Chippy Community Land Trust Ltd (CCLT) on the terms detailed in the report.

The Executive considered the recommendations in the report, the terms of the contract, the plans for the site and their alignment with Council priorities.

Councillor Smith proposed accepting the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Andy Graham seconded the proposals.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Approve the transfer of the land at Walterbush Road in Chipping Norton to the Chippy Land Trust Ltd on the terms detailed in the report;
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance, in consultation with Executive Member for Finance and the Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety to approve the final terms of the transfer of the land.
3. Approve the award of £190,000 of additional grant from West Oxfordshire in order for the scheme to be delivered as 100% Social Rent tenure

535 Options for Investment Property in Carterton - Recommendation for Lease of Unit in Carterton Industrial Estate

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the item the purpose of which was to request approval for the Council to grant a lease of an Industrial Unit in Carterton

The Executive considered the recommendations in the report, the terms and commercial viability of the lease and potential future use of the site.

Councillor Smith proposed accepting the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Andy Graham seconded the proposals.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

The Executive resolved to:

1. Approve the lease on the terms detailed in the report
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, to approve the final terms of the lease.

The Meeting closed at 3.07 pm.

CHAIR