













West Oxfordshire District Council Strategic Risk Register
Jan-25

ID	Risk Title	Description of risk / opportunity / Impact	Risk Owner	Initial Risk		Existing Control, Mitigation or Contingency	Previous		Current		Change in residual risk since	Follow on Action (if required)	Update comments	Direction of Travel since previous review		
				Impact Likelihood	Score		Impact Likelihood	Score								
Internal Risks																
IR 1	Financial Stability of WODC	There is a risk that the Council's finances become unsustainable. The future funding available to the Council remains extremely uncertain and the Council is particularly exposed to pending changes to retained business rate growth and new homes bonus income. Commercial income streams are also subject to some volatility. There are also significant cost pressures as a result of inflation. The Council's General Fund Balance is currently healthy but will fall below minimum levels without further action, as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).	Finance Director S151	Extreme	Probable	20	Major	Probable	16	Major	Probable	16	0	Continued in year budget monitoring and reporting. The 24/25 Budget approved with an updated MTFS reviewed by Executive and Council. Review of earmarked reserves. Further consideration of options - particularly in areas of Waste, Leisure, Homelessness and Asset Management with a view to bridging the financial gap identifies within the MTFS. In addition, more member training to be considered to increase profile of budgetary challenges. Work is underway on 2025/26 budget. The latest version of the budget is a balanced budget however the five year MTFS (five year view) still shows that funds will be deleted over the life of the MTFS and therefore this risk is still shown as a red. The risk is still scored a high / red, as the risk has been scored on the MTFS, not on the council's in-year position.		
IR 2	GDPR / Information Management	If the council is not compliant with the General Data Protection and does not have robust processes in place for Information Management then there is a risk of financial penalties, reputational damage and impact on resources	AD Business Services (PM)	Major	Probable	16	Major	Possible	12	Major	Possible	12	0	All emails received from at risk location are quarantined and inspected by ICT staff before being released. New cyber security software installed. See also risk P5 on cyber security. 98% of staff now trained in cyber awareness and final 2% being reviewed. PSN renewal underway, and paperwork to be submitted this month. New data protection training is currently being rolled out to all staff. This is a mandatory course and it is also intended to roll it out to Members New Governance Officer now appointed and will be in post from early 2025. Work will commence on closing out areas for improvement raised in the internal audit for data protection.		
IR 3	Health & Safety	If the council and its contractors / partners are not compliant with the Health & Safety at Work Act, it is at risk of a serious Health & Safety incident / accident leading to financial penalties, reputational damage and risk to services.	AD Business Services (PM)	Major	Possible	12	Major	Remote	8	Major	Remote	8	0	Health & Safety Board in place to monitor compliance and report back to the Shareholder. Accidents and incidents remain low. Ongoing service area H&S internal audits being undertaken to ensure compliance. Data analysed and protective action taken to address any trends.		
IR 4	Legislative Compliance	If the Council and its contractors / partners is not compliant with relevant legislation, it is at risk of not meeting its statutory duty, reputational damage and financial impact	Monitoring Officer	Moderate	Possible	9	Minor	Possible	6	Minor	Possible	6	0	Work ongoing to ensure we remain compliant with current legislation and future legislation. Annual Manager declaration completed with no concerns raised. Legislation which is changing this year, such as the procurement regs are captured in the AGS Action Plan. Manager Assurance statement will be going out in early 2025 for completion.		
IR 5	Shareholder Review of Publica Phase 1 Transition of Services	The review of Publica by Human Engine commissioned by the four shareholder Councils has been published at Cabinet with a recommendation to in-source the majority of services. This is subject to a detailed transition plan and financial costings. Staff have been informed through a briefing prior to the recommendation being published. If the detailed transition plan is not published soon providing assurance to those impacted by the decision, there is a risk that service delivery could be impacted due to loss of staff, inability to recruit, and low staff morale. If detailed costings are not undertaken, there is a risk that in-sourcing the services could increase the cost of delivery and not achieve savings / efficiencies.	CEO (GH)	Moderate	Possible	9	Moderate	Probable	12	Moderate	Probable	12	0	The Phase 1 transition of services was completed on 1/11/24. There are a few areas to address, such as business world access for some employees, but this is in the majority, all now business as usual. Work is now focused on the embedding of services and development of the councils people strategy and culture. Recommendation to close Risk.	Proposed to close risk and replace with Phase 2 transition (IR6) and embedding council services (IR7)	

IR 6	Phase 2 Transition of Services	<p>Phase 2 Transition of Service</p> <p>Shareholder Councils have committed in principle to transferring services by mid-2025.</p> <p>If there is not the political appetite or options are unaffordable there is a risk to service delivery, retention and recruitment of staff.</p> <p>If detailed options are not developed, costed and risk assessed to enable informed decisions to be made, there is a risk that in-sourcing these service could lead to significant cost increase, reduced service delivery, cuts to services, loss of key resources and reputational damage.</p> <p>If detailed costings are not undertaken, there is a risk that in-sourcing the services could increase the cost of delivery and not achieve savings / efficiencies.</p>	CEO (GH)	Major Probable	16	Service delivery options are currently being developed and costed to enable due diligence to be completed and informed recommendations made on the future delivery of these services.	Moderate Remote 6	Moderate Remote 6	0	<p>Due diligence to be completed on option appraisals.</p> <p>Recommendations to be made on the future delivery of each service.</p> <p>Detailed Transition Plan to be developed with costed options and recommendations for Executive approval.</p> <p>Implementation plan to be developed with realistic timescales for delivery.</p> <p>Employee communications plan to be developed to ensure those impacted by the proposals are informed and consulted.</p> <p>Phase 2 transition of services to be considered in light of recent government White Paper on Local Authority Devolution.</p>		New Risk
IR 7	Embedding of services which have transitioned under Council delivery and management	<p>If the council do not provide sufficient focus on embedding the services back into the council, including working with employees on a people strategy and developing the culture for WODC, there is a risk to staff retention, morale and service delivery.</p>	CEO (GH)	Moderate Possible	9	Work is already underway to work with employees who have transferred on the people strategy and culture. This includes developing new values and behaviours. The is being undertaken in consultation with our employees to ensure buy-in.	Moderate Remote 6	Moderate Remote 6		<p>This is an ongoing piece of work. Cultural change will be over at least the next 24 months.</p> <p>Further work will also be required dependent on what services transfer under phase 2.</p>		New Risk
IR 8	English Devolution White Paper - Local Government Reorganisation / Mayoral Combined Authorities	<p>The White Paper announces that the Government will facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation for two-tier areas. The Government will invite proposals for reorganisation from all of these areas.</p> <p>This will see the amalgamation of councils into one Unitary Authority. As with any change, this can create uncertainty and may have an impact on recruitment, retention, staff morale and a risk to the delivery of longer term projects.</p>		Major almost certain	20	<p>The English Devolution White Paper was published on 16/12/24 and invites proposals for reorganisation from all two-tier areas.</p> <p>As this has only just been published, work will need to be undertaken to fully understand what proposal is required, timescales etc.</p>	Major almost certain 20	Major almost certain 20		<p>The first Mayoral combined elections have timeline of May 2026. Proposals will need to be developed for our area, with indicative dates for new Unitary Authorities from 2027 and 2028. The council is involved with discussions with partners in Oxfordshire and neighbouring areas to explore potential mayoral combined geographies.</p> <p>The council is working with other councils in Oxfordshire to explore Unitary options and will also need to consider how the services delivered by Publica will reflect new geographical areas.</p> <p>Regular communications will be provided to our employees and our partner employees to ensure they are kept abreast of any plans, timelines and how this will effect them, as well as providing support during this process.</p>		New Risk

External Risks														
ERR1	Cyber Attack	If the ICT network is not adequately protected then it is susceptible to a Cyber - Security Attack leading to loss of systems and data, significant downtime, reputational damage and impact on service delivery and resources	AD Business Services (PM)	Extreme Probable	20	Blocking of USB and other devices. PSN compliance. Revised policies. Staff awareness training. Business Continuity Plan in place, reviewed and tested. Enhanced encryption software and other specialist cyber tools. Investment in cyber training for the ICT Team and specialist officer/s in post. Cyber Essentials re- accreditation submitted. Ongoing network Internal & External Penetration checks. Continual Password Audits across our network to evaluate weak password.	Major Possible	12	Major Possible	12	0	98% of staff now trained in cyber awareness and final 2% being reviewed, this will be followed by Phishing emails to test understanding and awareness following the training. Ongoing investment in cyber team with dedicated team now in place. Regular review of User Privileges and Information Asset Register. Cyber updates being presented to Council Audit & Governance committees, Publica Audit & Risk Committee (ARAC) and Governance Meetings. Preparation underway to submit latest PSN submission.		
ERR2	Global Pandemic	If there was another global pandemic, then there is a risk to the delivery of council services due to lack of resource availability, impacting on costs and reputation	CEO (GH)	Moderate Possible	9	New risk to replace Covid specific risks, as Covid is now BAU. Lessons learnt from previous pandemic, Council and partners are now setup to work remotely and able to continue to deliver services in the midst of a pandemic. There is an effective framework in place with Oxfordshire partners.	Moderate Possible	9	Moderate Possible	9	0	Watching brief should a further pandemic be predicted		
ERR3	Fraud & Corruption Risk	If the Council does not have controls, checks and measures in place when commissioning and procuring goods, works and services, there is a risk of fraud and / or corruption which may impact on cost, reputation, and services.	CEO (GH)	Major Probable	16	Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit (CFEU) in place to manage Fraud and Corruption and ensure that the Council and its employees understand the risks and have controls, checks and measures in place to mitigate this activity. CFEU report to the Council's Audit and Governance Committee. Employees receive regular training. CFEU test controls to ensure fit for purpose	Moderate Possible	9	Moderate Possible	9	0	CFEU currently developing service risk registers for fraud to further improve awareness and controls. Any changes to processes / controls will be monitored / managed for any services which may transition from Publica to direct Council delivery.		
ERR4	Refugees / Asylum Seekers	If there is an increase in refugees / asylum seekers into the District, the Council may need to find alternative accomodation which may impact on the Council in terms an increased demand on housing support and services services. There is a risk of disorder / disruption and increase in community tension around the placement of refugees / asylum seekers	AD Business Services (PM)	Moderate Probable	12	Migrant hotels are currently in place, however, this may be changing which may have an impact on housing support and services.	Moderate Possible	9	Moderate Possible	9	3	WoDC is working with Cottsway Housing to provide additional properties using the LA Housing Fund from the Home Office. Numbers are decreasing as families move into private rented accomodation, social housing or return to their home country. No additional demand expected currently from ARAP/ACRS. New cohorts of refugees is BAU. Monitoring potential risk of increased homelessness if asylum seekers granted permission to remain. This risk was increased to reflect the recent unrest. During this time, TVP and MOD along with companies that run housing revived security arrangements. TCGs were stood up to monitor and manage current tensions being seen across the country. Risk has been reduced, to reflect that the unrest is now undercontrol.	Risk updated and increased to reflect current UK wide tensions.	

Strategic Risks														
SR1	Major Civil Emergency	District Councils are required to provide rest centres for the Public during a Civil Emergency. If staff are unwilling to come forward and volunteer with the running of a rest centre, there is a risk that the Council will be unable to fulfil its duty in providing a safe rest centre. If the Council is unable to provide a sustained response to a major civil emergency, the Council would be failing in fulfilling its statutory duty to assist and care for those affected.	BM for Emergency Planning (CS)	Major Possible	12	Emergency planning team in place. Emergency Planning Process in place, with defined roles and responsibilities. Staff trained in their roles. 24/7 callout in place. Ongoing work with the Local Resilience Forum.	Moderate Probable	12	Moderate Probable	12	4	WoDC Coordination Team and Rest Centres teams now in place, which is then supported by wider shared resource across Publica. Refresh Training completed for Coordination Team, Rest Centre Team and Duty Officers and Managers. All documentation updated and transferred to 365. Plans tested during recent floods due to Storm Bert when Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) stood up and a locality team to complete door knocking, onsite presence to obtain local information, coordination of sandbags and response. Lessons learnt currently being undertaken. The transition of services has impacted on the 365 emergency cover arrangements. Work is now underway to recruit to a locality based team with a target date for implementation of 1/04/25. A s113 arrangement is in place across the three partner councils from 1/11/24. Risk reduced to reflect the agreement of a short and long term solution.	Difficult to reduce as likely to be caused by natural disaster e.g., flooding or major incident. Therefore, it is about our ability to respond and meet obligations under Civil Emergencies Act.	
SR2	Climate Emergency and Climate adaptation (reworded risk)	The Council has declared climate and ecological emergency and pledged to become carbon neutral by 2030. Failure to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 would result in the Council not meeting this commitment. Failure to prepare adequately for climate change impacts through climate adaptation is likely to result in damage to the council's assets and may also impact on the services we provide. Some carbon reduction and climate adaptation may require significant investment, particularly if the UK Government does not provide sufficient funding to support project delivery. Increasing cost of investment and capital expenditure is likely to make business cases difficult.	CEO (GH)	Moderate Probable	12	The Council has approved the Carbon Action Plan 2024-2030. The Council's updated Climate Change Strategy includes climate adaptation actions. External funding will be secured as far as possible to deliver carbon reduction and climate adaptation projects	Moderate possible	9	Moderate possible	9	0	Progress against climate projects is reported through the councils Project Governance Process		
SR3	Compliance and Regulations	If the council does not comply with legislation, regulations, laws and industry standards, there is a financial risk of penalties and a risk of reputational damage	Director of Governance	Moderate Possible	9	The council understands what laws, regulations and standards it must comply with and has processes in place, such as internal and external audit, manager assurance, and governance arrangements to ensure it remains compliant. Processes, procedures and controls are in place to effectively comply and officers received updates and changes to relevant laws to ensure we remain compliant.	Moderate Possible	9	Moderate Possible	9	0	Ongoing checks are undertaken to ensure compliance through internal and external audit processes		
SR4	5 Year land supply	WODC being unable to demonstrate that it has an adequate 5-year supply of deliverable housing land in accordance with national policy. This position has been exacerbated and confirmed through the publication of the revised NPPF in December 2024 which introduced a new standard method for assessing housing need that has increased WODC's per annum requirement from 549 homes per year to 905 homes per year. This has had a direct effect on the Council's housing land supply position – effectively worsening it and thereby clearly engaging the 'tilted balance' set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF whereby there is a presumption in favour of planning permission being granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The result is expected to be greatly increased pressure from speculative development and a much greater likelihood of 'planning by appeal'.	Director of Governance	Major Probable	16	Member Briefings / training to raise awareness. Proactive engagement with site promoters to obtain evidence of anticipated delivery. Local plan review to identify new site allocations Preparation of updated Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA).	Moderate Possible	9	Moderate almost certain	15	6	Member Briefings / training to raise awareness. WODC to continue to work with OCC in relation to proposed A40 improvements in order to provide greater clarity to developers and landowners. Continued engagement with developers and landowners of existing allocations and permissions to obtain clear and defensible information on anticipated delivery trajectories and to understand/potentially unblock any key constraints to delivery. Potential additional legal support to ensure timely completion of Section 106 agreements on larger sites. Preparation of updated Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) to identify 'long-list' of potentially suitable sites. Timely progression of the new Local Plan to identify new draft site allocations drawing on the long-list referenced above. Progression of the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) to adoption by securing greater clarity from Government in relation to national policy on energy efficiency in new buildings and the status of the current Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) on this. Local Plan infrastructure evidence to identify necessary upgrades (e.g. foul water capacity) to help avoid the need for Grampian conditions.	Risk increased as NPPF was published on 12/12/24 and the housing target for WODC has nearly doubled	
SR4	APSE Litigation Claim	Thurrock Council is currently claiming £40m compensation claim over allegedly "negligent" valuations provided by APSE in relation to solar farm assets. The claim has been issued in High Court against 23 Local Authority Members. Currently WODC is not defendants to the claim, but if we were to become parties with the rest of the other parties, we would be looking at apportionment of any financial damages (and legal costs) between all members of APSE (circa 230 members). Compensation claims at between £42 - £54m	Director of Governance	Major Remote	8	Ongoing monitoring of the situation being undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and Legal Services	Major Remote	8	Major Remote	8	0			New Risk

Partnership Risks													
P R 1	Partnership deliverables (Ubico waste provider)	<p>If the waste and environmental services partner (Ubico) does not meet their obligations under key contracts then it could lead to a fall in service standards, reduced customer service, a failure to meet legal requirements or an increase in costs to the Council and reputational impact</p> <p>Waste and Recycling - shortage of qualified HGV drivers, lack of loaders, could result in Ubico being unable to meet its obligations for waste, recycling collections and environmental services.</p>	AD Commercial Services (B.O)	Major Possible	12	<p>WODC is a shareholder of Ubico, with significant control and influence over the company ensuring ongoing financial viability and affordability for the Council.</p> <p>Contract Management in place to ensure Ubico deliver the service in-line with agreed specification and standards.</p> <p>Performance reports presented to Council.</p>	Major possible	6	Major possible	12	0	<p>A review of the service has been completed and will be reported to The Executive and Council in January 2025</p>	
P R 2	Failure of Leisure provider and partnership deliverables (GLL)	<p>If the leisure provider does not continue to deliver operationally including maintaining and improving operational performance, ensuring staff retention, maintaining financial stability, and retaining and growing its' customer base, there is a risk to the management fee, contract delivery and public dissatisfaction with the service.</p>	AD Communities (AB)	Major Probable	16	<p>Work continues with GLL to make the service sustainable and affordable in the medium term.</p>	Major possible	12	Major possible	12	0	<p>Working collaboratively to market services.</p> <p>Funding secured through Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund. Strategic Leisure Manager now in post at WODC to focus on the mitigation of this risk.</p> <p>Monthly & Quarterly meetings in place with leisure provider.</p> <p>Monitoring and management of KPIs.</p> <p>Retention strategy being developed to retain employees.</p> <p>Financial monitoring in place, as well as asset management.</p> <p>Preparation underway to review options as we near the end of the current contract term (Sept 25).</p>	
P R 3	Partnership Deliverables (Publica)	<p>If Publica do not deliver the Future Publica Savings, this will add additional financial pressure on the Council, also if delivered as a cutting exercise, it could impact on service delivery.</p> <p>If Publica are unable to recruit/retain suitably qualified staff - impact on quality of services delivered, financial impact</p> <p>Services are not able to adequately discharge their (legal) obligations leading to failure - this may not be reported through the quarterly performance reports</p>	CEO (GH)	Major Possible	12	<p>Financial incentives (market force supplement scheme)</p> <p>Review of pay and benefits package.</p> <p>Introduction of career grade structures in Planning and Project Management</p> <p>Recruitment improvement plan in place</p> <p>Investors in People</p> <p>HR programme in place</p> <p>Shareholder Forum in place to hold Publica to account.</p>	Moderate Probable	12	Moderate Probable	12	0	<p>Services identified under phase 1 have now been transferred from Publica to WODC. Work is now underway on phase 2 (See IR6) which is more complex.</p> <p>The future shape and size of Publica needs to be agreed to enable certainty to be provided to Publica staff, and for Publica to be able to progress with the development of future business plans, and people strategy.</p> <p>See IR5 and IR6 for more detail.</p>	
M R 1	Failure to deliver WODC programme of major projects	<p>If the Council does deliver on it's major projects, this could result in non delivery of Council priorities , cost increases, financial pressures and reputational damage</p>	CEO (GH)	Major Possible	12	<p>All projects require a detailed business case and sign off before proceeding.</p> <p>Project Manager appointed to manage all major projects</p> <p>Project reporting in place, including risk reporting on a monthly basis.</p>	Moderate Possible	9	Moderate Possible	9	0	<p>Due to inflation, project costs are increasing for major projects and the cost of borrowing is impacting, in some cases on the viability of businesses cases. This is being monitored on a case by case basis</p>	