



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 17 DECEMBER 2025
Subject	SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025-26 QUARTER TWO
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
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Purpose	To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2025-26 Quarter Two (Q2).
Annex	Annex A - Council Priorities report Annex B - Corporate Plan Action Tracker Annex C - Performance indicator report
Recommendation.	That the Executive Resolves to: I. Note the 2025/26 Q2 service performance report.
Corporate Priorities	• 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
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Publica Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.

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 Q2 include:

- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule was formally adopted by Full Council on 1 October. An implementation plan is now being developed, with the levy scheduled to take effect from 31 January 2026.
- Following the successful September Executive on Tour event held in Carterton, initial engagement with residents began for the Carterton Area Strategy through a focus group session, helping shape early priorities for the emerging strategy. A key milestone was the formal launch of the Economic Regeneration Lead, who will work with Cllr Sumner to drive the strategy forward.
- New commercial operators took over the management of Witney and Chipping Norton markets from 1 August, bringing a fresh approach that has revitalised the atmosphere and increased footfall. Meanwhile, specialist markets at Marriotts Walk continue to attract visitors and add vibrancy to the local offer.
- West Oxfordshire became the first district in Oxfordshire to endorse the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), following Executive approval on 10 September. Officers continue to play an active role in partnership forums and working groups to support biodiversity net gain across the district.
- Ecological surveys were completed across five council-owned sites over the summer, as part of the Council's commitment to enhancing biodiversity. The consultant's reports are now under review, with recommendations for habitat improvements and nature-based enhancements to be implemented in 2026.
- A communications strategy has been developed to support the Coronation Community Orchard Scheme, with monthly meetings between the Nature Recovery team and Communications officers to oversee delivery. Two management workshops, on tree pruning and wildflower grassland (orchard understory) management, are planned for early 2026.

- Construction is underway at Windrush Leisure Centre through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The project will significantly reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency across the site.

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

3.1 The Council's overall performance remains positive, with continued progress in key areas. Revenue collection for Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates is ahead of expectations, planning determination times remain well above target and customer satisfaction continues to be exceptionally high. Leisure services also performed strongly, with sustained engagement in gym memberships and leisure centre visits and the delivery of affordable homes significantly exceeded quarterly expectations. However, some challenges persist. Processing times for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit change events, while improving, remain above target due to the cumulative nature of the metric and operational complexities linked to Universal Credit migration. Freedom of Information response times dipped below the target and performance in Land Charges searches were affected by staffing pressures late in the quarter. Environmental performance also faces ongoing challenges, with household recycling rates impacted by seasonal factors and wider national trends.

3.2 Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (58.99% against a target of 58%)
- Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates Collected (60.59% against a target of 58%)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims (19.16 days against a target of 20 days)
- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.12% against a target of 0.35%)
- Customer Satisfaction (98.27% against a target of 90%)
- Building Control Satisfaction (100% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (81.82% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (98.21% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (97.33% against a target of 80%)
- Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (202 against a target of 138)
- 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%)
- Residual Household Waste per Household (kg) (89.58 against a target of 90)
- Missed bins per 100,000 (41.02 against a target of 120)
- (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (5,749 memberships against a target of 5,023 memberships)
- Number of visits to the leisure centres (226,202 visits against a target of 189,446)

3.3 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (9.23 days against a target of 5 days) and Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (7.8 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 Q1. However, cumulative averages remain above the respective targets of 5 days for CTS and 4 days for HB, with CTS changes averaging 9.23 days and HB changes averaging 7.8 days.

The improvement in CTS processing times was largely driven by automation enhancements and the clearance of a backlog during Q1. Around 85% of income-related changes were batch processed during the quarter, significantly accelerating turnaround times. Notably, the average CTS processing time for July to September was just 2.71 days, well within target.

While further improvements are anticipated, the cumulative nature of the metric means it is unlikely to fall within target before the end of the financial year.

Housing Benefit continues to present challenges. The team are prioritising Full Claim Reviews mandated by the DWP, which are often complex and subject to delays in receiving full supporting evidence.

The HB caseload now primarily consists of pension-age claimants and temporary accommodation cases, following the migration to Universal Credit. With fewer HB changes occurring, any delay has a more pronounced impact on average processing times.

To support residents and strengthen financial resilience, the Council continues to deliver targeted initiatives through the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT). Campaigns include:

- **Benefit Maximisation:** Identifying households not receiving their full entitlement, such as Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit, and Council Tax Support.
- **Income Deficit Support:** Targeting households in financial deficit to provide tailored advice and assistance.
- **Pension Credit Campaign:** Letters sent to 233 pension-age households resulted in 68 successful claims, unlocking over £250,000 in financial support.
- **Warm Homes Campaign:** Promoting eligibility for the Warm Home Discount among low-income households with high energy costs.

These initiatives are helping to reduce financial vulnerability and ensure residents receive the support they are entitled to.

Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (83.16% against a target of 90%)

During Q2, the Council responded to 83.16% of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests within the 20-day timeframe, a decline from 89.1% in Q1 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 Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (38.46% against a target of 30%)

As of the end of Q2, the cumulative percentage of planning appeals allowed stands at 38.46%, exceeding the Council's internal target of no more than 30%. Between 1 July and 30 September 2025, five appeals were determined, with one upheld in favour of the applicant, resulting in a Q2-specific allowance rate of 20%.

Of these five appeals:

- Three were Upland applications, none of which were allowed (0% allowance rate).
- Two were Lowlands applications, with one allowed (50% allowance rate).

As this metric is cumulative, the allowance rate may fluctuate throughout the year depending on the number and outcome of appeal decisions received.

While the general target is for no more than 30% of appeals to be allowed, the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 introduced a formal system for assessing the performance of local planning authorities. Under the designation criteria, an authority may be identified as underperforming if 10% or more of its total planning decisions are overturned at appeal.

This measure of decision quality is assessed over a rolling two-year period and is applied separately to major and non-major development categories. It's important to note that the 10% threshold is based on the total number of decisions made, not just those that are appealed. Authorities exceeding this threshold in either category may be designated, allowing applicants to submit certain types of applications directly to the Secretary of State. Currently, West Oxfordshire is below the threshold for both major and non-major appeals, sitting at around 7.9% and 1.1%, respectively.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (82.09% against a target of 90%)

The Council's performance against the 10-day target for completing official Land Charges searches declined in Q2, falling from 98.67% in Q1 to 82.09%, below the 90% target.

Performance remained strong through July and August, consistently exceeding target (97.78%), but a sharp drop in September impacted the quarterly average. This was primarily due to the long-term absence of a Land Charges team member, which reduced resilience across the service. Despite these challenges, the average turnaround time for searches was only 7.25 days, remaining below the 10-day target.

To address this, additional support has been deployed from the Customer Service and Support Service Team, enabling specialist staff to focus on completing searches. These measures are expected to stabilise performance and improve continuity going forward.

Percentage of household waste recycled (56.23% against a target of 62%)

During Q2, the Council recorded a decline in its household recycling rate of around 2.5% compared to the same quarter last year. This mirrors a broader national trend, where recycling rates have been under pressure due to seasonal and structural factors.

Despite this dip, West Oxfordshire continues to perform strongly. For the 2023/24 financial year, the district ranked among the top 20 councils in England for household waste recycling and remains within the top quartile of all English local authorities. This reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability and effective waste management.

Nationally, recycling rates continue to face challenges, and West Oxfordshire is no exception. During the summer months, the district experienced unusually dry weather, which led to a 25% drop in garden waste tonnages compared to the same period last year. Because garden waste

represents a significant share of the recycling stream, this seasonal decline has had a noticeable impact on overall recycling performance.

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. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.1 This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10 December 2025. The draft minutes of that meeting will be circulated to all Members and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to the 17 December 2025 Executive meeting.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 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.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 Contained in this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 None

9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

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

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

(END)