



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 11 MARCH 2026.
Subject	SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025-26 QUARTER THREE
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 Three (Q3).
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 Q3 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 Q3 include:
- Key lettings at Marriotts Walk progressed during the quarter, with agreements secured for Units 6, 14a and 11a. Based on square metreage, current occupation now stands at just below 97%, with only one unit remaining vacant and continued work is underway on public-realm design improvements.
 - The Salt Cross Area Action Plan moved closer to adoption, following receipt of the Planning Inspector's final report, with Full Council consideration expected in February 2026.
 - The Windrush Leisure Centre decarbonisation project continues to progress and surpassed a major milestone in Q3 with the installation of the new low-carbon heating system and removal of the asbestos boiler. Additional decarbonisation measures are scheduled for future phases of the programme.
 - Community grant delivery advanced strongly, with a Food Officer appointed for January 2026 and 22 projects approved through the Witney Community Insight Profile grant round.
 - Westhive Round 5 was completed, with 10 community projects receiving Council and community pledges. In addition, Executive approved continuing the council's community crowdfunding approach for a further three years by moving to a new platform, building on experience from the previous provider.
 - Market town support continued to scale, with 14 Shop Front Improvement Grants on track for award and additional grants expected to assist up to 19 local businesses.
 - Development of the Woodford Way business case has progressed, supported by a revised site layout that integrates housing and parking. The proposal was endorsed by the Executive in January, including an initial timetable, design approach, parking solutions, and the planned planning and consultation stage.
- 2.2** The Council Priority highlight report is attached at Annex A with an overview of progress against all actions in the Corporate Plan is attached at Annex B.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

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

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

3.1 Service performance above target:

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

3.2 Service Performance near target:

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

3.3 Service Performance below target:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. DELTA DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS SCORECARD

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

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

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

5. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** Contained in this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1** None

10. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

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

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1** None

(END)