



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 10 JUNE 2026
Subject	PUBLICA BUSINESS PLAN 2026-2028
Wards affected	None
Accountable member	Andy Graham - Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Email: <a href="mailto:giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk">giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Report author	Frank Wilson Managing Director (Publica) Email: <a href="mailto:frank.wilson@publicagroup.uk">frank.wilson@publicagroup.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	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) approves the plan.
Annexes	Annex A - Business Plan 2026-2028
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Endorse the Publica Business Plan 2026-2028</li><li>2. Request that the Leader, as shareholder representative, to recommend its adoption to the Board</li></ol>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Putting Residents First</li><li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li></ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/	Publica Board

Consultation	Council Management Teams Shareholder Forum (Leaders) Officer Transition Board (CEO's, s.151 officers and Publica reps) Publica Transition Legal Workstream (Monitoring Officers & Legal)
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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** Publica's Articles of Association has twelve reserved matters for Shareholder Council approval, these ensure they retain the necessary control over their teckal company. Adopting or amending the Business Plan is one of the reserved matters.
- 1.2** The Business Plan proposed by the Publica Board spans a two-year time frame to tie in with the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) deadline and runs up to Vesting Day of any new councils on 31 March 2028.
- 1.3** Whilst the exact shape and size of the new unitary councils are not yet known, the clear focus of the Business Plan is how Publica, along with its shareholding councils, will prepare its people and its services for LGR – the most significant change to the local government landscape in a generation.

## **2. BUSINESS PLAN 2026-28**

- 2.1** The title of the 2025-26 Business Plan was 'Preparing for the Future' and the plan set out how we would complete the second phase of the Publica Review, transitioning phase 2 services back to council direct employment. The plan also considered the emerging landscape post the announcement of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and how we would consider the impact / opportunities for Publica and council services.
- 2.2** A clear steer was received from shareholders that council services must continue to be delivered to meet the priorities set out in their Council Plans and therefore the 2025-26 plan gave a focus on this and set out some of the key delivery priorities for Publica in respect of Customer Services, ICT and Cyber Security.
- 2.3** Looking forward from now it feels that the principles set out in the current Business Plan continue to apply – completion of the Publica Review followed by a significant period of preparation as we seek to collectively implement the final decisions of government on unitary structures. Of course, this cannot come at the expense of the services we currently deliver to our communities and delivery of priorities set out by our councils in an ever-shortening timeframe.
- 2.4** For the reasons set out above it seems appropriate to produce a two-year business plan which aligns to Unitary 'Vesting Day' – the size and shape of councils and future of Publica, as yet, remain undetermined.
- 2.5** This approach of a two-year plan allows us to clearly define to our employees what is in front of us in the run up to reorganisation – Year 1 is all about preparation whilst Year 2 moves into an implementation phase as shadow councils are formed.

**2.6** The draft plan is attached at Annex A. The key changes that are covered include:-

- Updated Foreword – reflecting the challenge facing Publica and the councils as we prepare our teams for Local Government Reorganisation whilst not yet knowing what this means in detail
- Governance changes – how we now work with councils after the Publica Review
- Priorities – how we are delivering on council priorities and maintaining service standards
- Service Offering – Key services that Publica delivers on behalf of the councils – this was felt important post the Publica Review so it is clear which services we deliver now
- Preparing for the Future – Year 1 and Year 2 priorities focused on our people and delivering service reviews ready for LGR
- Finances – 26/27 Budget and 3 year plan

**2.7** The draft plan attached has been considered by Shareholder Forum and amendments requested have been made.

### **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

**3.1** The Executive could determine not to approve the Business Plan and refer it back to the Board and Shareholder Forum.

### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1** The financial implications of service provision set out in the Business Plan have been incorporated in the councils annual budget process. Where changes in provision occur during the year these are subject to contract variations which are agreed between Publica and the council.

### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** Approval of the Business Plan is a requirement of the Members Agreement and is a reserved matter for shareholders.

### **6. RISK ASSESSMENT**

**6.1** There are no significant risks in respect of the adoption of the Business Plan. Failure to adopt the Business Plan would require further engagement with shareholder and the Publica Board.

**6.2** The Business Plan sets out how Publica will de-risk from an employment perspective any future transition to new unitary councils.

### **7. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**7.1** In carrying out the preparation for LGR Publica will follow its equality and diversity policies and ensure no disadvantage to any group of either employees or service users.

**8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1** As a silver accredited Carbon Literacy Employer it will continue to ensure that the climate and ecological emergencies are considered as part of its operations.

**9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

(END)