

Member Questions and Responses for Full Council 25 March 2026

Question	Raised By	Executive Member	Response
<p>I. Residents on Madley Park are concerned about the algae and perceived overgrowth of reeds in the balancing ponds. People wonder who manages the ponds.</p> <p>I have been in contact with a council ecologist via the Estates team, who was very helpful and will take the matter forward in due course. In the meantime, please can the Executive Member</p> <p>a) confirm whether or not site visits are regular or merely responsive and;</p> <p>b) work with the communications team to inform residents that WODC is responsible for the balancing ponds and acts to manage issues when ecologists deem necessary. That way residents will have peace of mind and will know who to contact when concerns arise.</p> <p>Follow up question – Part B gives a link to the landscape management plan, please can work be done to make it more navigable from the front page of West Oxfordshire District Council and</p>	<p>Cllr Ruth Smith</p>	<p>Alaric Smith - Executive Member for Finance</p>	<p>I Thank you for your question</p> <p>I(a) The site is inspected on a monthly basis by our in house team and on an annual basis by Rospa with all recommended planned and reactive works carried out. Our grounds maintenance contractors carry out routine maintenance at the site. Our Ecology team and Flood Risk Team visit where there are management queries.</p> <p>I (b) The Assets and Ecology teams would be happy to assist our Comms team to raise awareness. For information our landscape management plans including this site and showing the extent of the Council’s ownership in the Madley Park area are on our website https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/enhancing-our-natural-capital/</p> <p>Follow up question response – An officer will be asked to look at website to make it easier to access.</p>

<p>particularly from the environment mosaic that that gets you there as it is not obvious unless you know about it.</p>			
<p>2. Data from the House of Commons Library suggests that around 10,600 households in the Witney area are not connected to the gas grid and instead rely on heating oil or LPG, leaving many rural residents particularly exposed to rising global fuel prices. Given the scale of this issue in West Oxfordshire, what assessment has the administration made of the impact of rising off-grid heating costs on residents, and will the Council advocate for targeted support such as a rural heating support payment for affected households?</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser - Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery</p>	<p>Due to the ongoing volatility in the Middle East that is impacting on fuel prices, the Government are looking at options that would be targeted to protect poorer households, however no formal schemes have been announced at this point.</p> <p>We recognise that many rural households in West Oxfordshire are off the gas grid and are particularly exposed to rising oil and LPG prices. This is a real concern, especially for those at risk of fuel poverty, and we continue to monitor the impact locally.</p> <p>However, while short-term financial support can help, it does not address the root cause of high and volatile heating costs. The Council's focus is on supporting residents to reduce their energy use and reliance on fossil fuels.</p> <p>We are promoting and supporting services such as <i>Better Housing Better Health</i> and schemes like the <i>Warm Homes: Local Grant</i> and <i>Boiler Upgrade Scheme</i>, which help households improve insulation,</p>

<p>Follow up question - How is the Council engaging with these households impacted?</p>			<p>save energy and transition to lower-carbon heating systems.</p> <p>From both a cost-of-living and climate perspective, investment is better directed toward energy efficiency and alternatives such as heat pumps, rather than subsidising rising oil prices. Follow up question response –</p> <p>As the written answer says we are awaiting the details of the Government Programme to give support in this area and the Council will, once that detailed programme is clear, take the necessary follow up steps to engage with households on that.</p>
<p>3. There is a growing issue across England of unadopted amenities on privately managed housing estates, where infrastructure such as roads, green spaces and drainage systems are maintained by private management companies rather than being adopted by local authorities. With a number of new developments being built across West Oxfordshire, this can leave residents facing ongoing estate management charges while still paying full council tax.</p> <p>Did the District Council submit a response to the Government’s recent consultation on this issue, and if so, what position did West Oxfordshire District Council take in relation to protecting residents from unfair or</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Geoff Saul - Executive Member for Housing and Social Care</p>	<p>Officers fully recognise the importance of this issue and the need to move away from the current reliance placed on private estate management companies. Having reviewed the consultation material, Officers concluded that the most effective way of addressing this matter is to put in place a clear and robust planning policy within the Regulation 19 draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 due for publication in June 2026. A working draft policy has been prepared and has been the subject of recent discussion with Executive Members ahead of being finalised as part of the overall draft plan.</p>

<p>excessive estate management fees on new housing estates?</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>			<p>The current situation has arisen from the policies of previous administrations to push these costs onto developers, and therefore homeowners, and minimise the additional costs for Councils. This has been in response to austerity policies introduced by previous national governments.</p>
<p>4. As Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council you also have the responsibility for emergency planning. Can the Leader therefore outline what role he personally played during the recent water outage which left thousands of homes across parts of West Oxfordshire without water for an extended period? In particular, when were you first informed of the situation and what actions did you take to coordinate the Council's response and support affected residents?</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Andy Graham - Leader of the Council</p>	<p>The Council offered support to help with water disruption, updating their list of vulnerable people and sharing communications from Thames Water with our residents. Incidents of this type where there is disruption to water supply are led by Thames Water, who are responsible for managing the incident and have plans in place to distribute water and identify and support vulnerable people.</p> <p>I was first made aware by Thames Water on the 3rd March that they were working on a burst pipe in Eynsham, and there was a risk to customer supply as the repairs were undertaken at that point, but no specific details as to the area or potential scale of the disruption were available at that point.</p> <p>Throughout the incident I regularly liaised with the Officers involved, who attend regular meetings with both Thames Water and Oxfordshire County</p>

			<p>Council, to offer both support and assistance where appropriate.</p> <p>As is the norm with these types of incidents an internal debrief is being organised, to help capture learning points, the outcomes of which will be shared with the Executive.</p> <p>I'd like to thank all Councillors and the local MP, who also played their part and supported the community during the incident.</p>
<p>5. In circumstances where a councillor facing serious allegations related to domestic abuse is allowed to rejoin a political group at West Oxfordshire District Council, does the Leader accept that this could risk sending the wrong message to residents who have experienced domestic abuse? What guidance or standards does the Council expect political groups to follow in such situations to maintain public confidence and demonstrate support for victims?</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Andy Graham - Leader of the Council</p>	<p>First, I want to be clear that any allegation of domestic abuse is taken extremely seriously, and that must always be the starting point.</p> <p>In this case, the councillor brought the matter to the attention of the group immediately. It was dealt with promptly and robustly — the councillor was suspended from the group the same day, pending the outcome of the police investigation. That is exactly how these situations should be handled.</p>

			<p>Upon a thorough investigation, the police found that the evidence in the case did not support the allegations. No charges were brought at any stage, and the police took no further action. The councillor cooperated fully throughout and maintained from the outset that the allegations were entirely untrue. With due process having been followed at every stage, the councillor was reinstated to the group.</p> <p>On the wider point, the Council itself does not control membership of political groups. What we do set—and enforce—are the standards of conduct expected of all councillors through our Code of Conduct. That framework exists to ensure accountability, uphold public confidence, and provide clear routes for any concerns to be properly considered.</p> <p>Supporting victims of domestic abuse remains an absolute priority for this Council. I would caution against conflating the proper handling of an individual case — in which due process was followed at every stage and the allegations were found to be unsupported — with the Council's ongoing work on safeguarding and support.</p>
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6. Can the Executive member confirm the recorded number of fly-tipping incidents for the months of November 2025, December 2025, then January, February, and March (recorded so far) of this year.

Follow up question –
Thank you for the figures. On the internal dashboard we have access to, the fly tipping is shown by locations, but the figures are not included. Please can these figures be published to the dashboard?

Cllr Liam Walker

Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment

Fly Tips	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
24-25	123	89	113	109	157
25-26	113	119	145	121	80*

* up to
20/03/26

The Fly Tips data suggests a more intense winter period in 2025–26 compared to 2024–25, with a slightly lower November (113 vs 123) followed by notably higher figures in December (119 vs 89), January (145 vs 113), and February (121 vs 109), indicating a strong mid-season peak; although March appears lower (80 vs 157), it is only partial and not directly comparable. In relation to the booking system introduced by Oxfordshire County Council on 14 January 2026, the figures do not show a clear correlation with increased fly tipping, as activity remained elevated in both January and February after implementation, suggesting demand stayed high and residents adapted to the system, though conclusions are limited by the lack of split January data and the incomplete March figures.

Follow up response –
I will give Councillor Liam Walker an answer in writing once I have discussed this with officers.

<p>7. Given over 4000 residents have now signed a petition calling for Woodford Way car park in Witney to not be built, will he now listen to residents and accept that within the allocation of 18,000 homes planned for West Oxfordshire there will already be a large percentage of social housing, therefore this key car park should remain?</p> <p>Follow up question – Would the Council consider a two-week trial by closing the Woodford Way car park to measure the true impact?</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Hugo Ashton - Executive Member for Planning</p>	<p>I can assure you that the Council is listening to local residents, many of whom are asking us to provide truly affordable housing, which is why Officers continue to work hard to design a viable scheme that strikes the right balance between providing social housing, that will be sustainable and provide easy access to both shops and transport links as well as providing public parking.</p> <p>The site is included in the current local plan which was approved by the previous administration. This administration is taking it forward, and the fact that the Council owns the land means that we can make a 100% social housing scheme financially viable.</p> <p>Once the scheme has been finalised, a full consultation exercise will be undertaken as part of the overall planning process.</p> <p>Follow up answer – Its not something we have thought about at this stage.</p>						
<p>8. In the West Oxfordshire District Council parking strategy report the document only shows the average occupancy for the Woodford Way car park. Can the council</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Car Park</th> <th>Woodford Way</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>264</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6/20/2022</td> <td>234</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Car Park	Woodford Way	Total	264	6/20/2022	234
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<p>publish the actual data that was collected in order to ascertain these averages?</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>			<table border="1"> <tr><td>07/07/2022</td><td>237</td></tr> <tr><td>7/13/2022</td><td>230</td></tr> <tr><td>7/21/2022</td><td>209</td></tr> <tr><td>7/29/2022</td><td>166</td></tr> <tr><td>8/24/2022</td><td>196</td></tr> <tr><td>9/27/2022</td><td>231</td></tr> <tr><td>10/06/2022</td><td>193</td></tr> <tr><td>11/08/2022</td><td>221</td></tr> <tr><td>12/02/2022</td><td>257</td></tr> <tr><td>01/05/2023</td><td>244</td></tr> <tr><td>02/08/2023</td><td>209</td></tr> <tr><td>03/09/2023</td><td>228</td></tr> <tr><td>04/06/2023</td><td>194</td></tr> <tr><td>06/02/2023</td><td>182</td></tr> <tr><td>Average occupancy Number</td><td>211.27</td></tr> <tr><td>Average Occupancy %</td><td>80%</td></tr> </table>	07/07/2022	237	7/13/2022	230	7/21/2022	209	7/29/2022	166	8/24/2022	196	9/27/2022	231	10/06/2022	193	11/08/2022	221	12/02/2022	257	01/05/2023	244	02/08/2023	209	03/09/2023	228	04/06/2023	194	06/02/2023	182	Average occupancy Number	211.27	Average Occupancy %	80%
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<p>9. Many businesses in Witney are concerned about the impact of the District Council building on the Woodford Way car park. Are you concerned about the impact this could have on the local economy and visitors to Witney?</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Duncan Enright - Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development</p>	<p>Many people come into the town on foot, by bicycle, or via public transport, and these journeys are completely unaffected by changes to a single parking location. The town benefits from multiple entry points and a range of parking options, meaning visitor behaviour is not dependent on a single site.</p> <p>Witney's consumers can arrive from several directions across the town's other car parks. The Marriotts Walk multistorey car park continues to</p>																																

Follow up question –
Thank you for the answer. Would Councillor Enright support the previous Conservative administration’s plan to build a multi-storey car park on the site with housing around it, replicating essentially what is at Marriots Walk.

provide significant capacity close to the retail core, alongside other long-stay and short-stay options around the town centre.
Because visitors choose parking based on convenience, duration of stay and the purpose of their trip, the change is unlikely to materially affect overall footfall. Witney’s strong retail offer, walkable layout and multiple access points mean the town remains resilient and attractive to both residents and visitors.

Follow up response –
We have just done a review of car parking across the district and with very much the business viability in mind and also looking at parking for people visiting the shops but also working in the shops. We will continue to do that and will bear that in mind during the Woodford Way development.

<p>10. Please can you confirm how many times the Chamber and committee rooms have been hired out for 25/26</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>	Cllr Michele Mead	Andy Graham - Leader of the Council	<p>There have been 95 bookings for all the rooms for 2025-26.</p> <p>The Council have not included any income associated with the hiring of the Chamber or Committee Rooms in the 2025-26 nor 2026-27 budget.</p>												
<p>11. I would like to request data regarding parking enforcement outcomes within the Witney town boundary. There are ongoing concerns regarding persistent parking issues on Corn Street and Welch Way, which are expected to escalate following the impending closure of Woodford Way.</p> <p>To assess the impact of the transition in enforcement authority from West Oxfordshire District Council to Oxfordshire County Council in 2021, please provide the annual number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued for the three years immediately preceding the transfer.</p>	Cllr Jane Doughty	Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment	<p>The transfer of on-street parking enforcement happened 1st April 2023.</p> <p>Please find below the penalty charge notices issued within Witney.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Financial year</th> <th>On Street (Roads)</th> <th>Off Street (car parks)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>614</td> <td>523</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>1540</td> <td>1024</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>1488</td> <td>816</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Financial year	On Street (Roads)	Off Street (car parks)	2020-21	614	523	2021-22	1540	1024	2022-23	1488	816
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<p>For a clear comparison of historical and current trends, please provide the data categorised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * On-street PCNs (Roadside enforcement) * Off-street PCNs (Council-managed car parks) <p>This information is vital for understanding how the change in enforcement powers has influenced parking compliance in the town centre ahead of significant local infrastructure changes.</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>			
<p>12. Over the last couple of years, you have been asked time and time again about when the Tree Management Policy is going to be reviewed. It should have been last year, and it didn't happen....</p> <p>We are now in the nesting season, which means any tree works will happen, few and far between.</p> <p>Please can I be provided a clear breakdown of all the work / maintenance that is going to take place from April 2026 - April 2027 on the District Council owned green spaces in: Deer Park, Ducklington and Curbridge. A meeting</p>	<p>Thomas Ashby</p>	<p>Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment</p>	<p>The Tree Management Policy has now been updated and approved as a delegated decision on 16th March. The updated policy reinforces the key principles that the Council will follow for managing the trees it owns / has the responsibility to maintain. This includes ensuring the tree stock is managed in a way that balances risks and resources as well as ensuring landscape, amenity, ecological, environmental and historical benefits.</p> <p>We do not own any land in Curbridge or Ducklington. In respect of Deer Park, works to the line of trees on the residential side has been scheduled for October/November. This is</p>

<p>with an Officer about such work would also be useful.</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>			<p>predominantly reducing lime trees and clearance. No other major works for the wooded areas of Deer Park are scheduled at present but there are some provisionally planned works for the Deer Park recreational grounds and surrounding woodland. Ubico also carry out general grounds maintenance in the area to a schedule.</p> <p>Officers would be happy to meet with the Member to discuss the works planned.</p> <p>Any further queries can be directed to trees@westoxon.gov.uk.</p>
<p>13. Please can you state the plans for the over £300,000 in S106 money from the Spring Meadow development in Witney that is due to be spent by late this year? Witney Town Council sent some suggestions, so I would be keen to understand what options you are looking to explore.</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>	<p>Thomas Ashby</p>	<p>Alaric Smith - Executive Member for Finance</p>	<p>The plans for this funding will support two priority projects. The first focuses on improving the public realm at Marriotts Walk. Working with a landscape designer, we aim to reimagine and revitalise the large open areas to create a more welcoming and better-connected space. Enhancements such as new seating, high- quality planting and more attractive social areas will help improve pedestrian flow, strengthen the visitor experience and encourage people to spend more time in this part of the town centre.</p> <p>The second project is a comprehensive upgrade of Witney’s wayfinding and signage. Much of the existing signage is dated or inaccurate and no longer</p>

			<p>reflects how people move around the town. By modernising and expanding the signage network, supported by additional REPF, we aim to improve navigation both within the town centre and at key entry points, including routes to destinations such as Cogges Farm. This will help visitors understand how close the town centre is and encourage greater footfall into local shops and attractions. We continue to work closely with Witney Town Council on projects and maintain a strong, constructive partnership throughout.</p> <p>The ideas Witney Town Council suggested did not fall within the geographical scope of the fund.</p>
<p>14. Garden waste licenses - Please can you provide the figures for the number of licenses purchased in the 25/26 financial year?</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>	<p>Thomas Ashby</p>	<p>Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment</p>	<p>The number of Garden Waste licenses purchase in 25/26 was 31,679.</p> <p>The Council took the decision to freeze the license fees for Garden Waste for 2026-27; it is the lowest licence fee in Oxfordshire.</p>