



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 10 JUNE 2026
Subject	SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2025-26 QUARTER FOUR
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance. Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive 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 Four (Q4).
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 Q4 service performance report.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.

High-performing front-line public services are critical to the Council's role in supporting residents, businesses and communities. By ensuring our performance framework highlights variations from expected performance at the earliest opportunity, we can trigger targeted interventions that support improvement and recovery. This, in turn, strengthens our ability to provide modern, effective services for residents, businesses and communities.

Our performance framework covers the full range of public services delivered to communities through a variety of delivery models including the Council itself and the Council's Teckal companies (Publica and Ubico). The report aims to provide the necessary information for the Council to assess whether services are being delivered in line with agreed quality standards and expectations.

I.2 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 Q4 include:

- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was successfully implemented, going live on 31 January 2026 and now applied to all relevant planning applications.
- Salt Cross Garden Village reached a major milestone, with the Area Action Plan adopted in February 2026, agreement on outline application updates, refreshed PPA, updated Section 106 schedule, and a clear work programme aiming for outline application updates by Autumn 2026.
- Town centre and regeneration activity progressed, including Witney wayfinding, award of 14 shopfront grants and advancing public realm designs. Carterton regeneration advanced, with an Interim Regeneration Lead appointed and work beginning on the Carterton Area Strategy, including green investment opportunities linked to RAF Brize Norton.
- Woodford Way scheme progressed, the latest design for the site was presented to the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Committee for discussion, the covering report outlined a medium density scheme that comprises of 55 dwellings (20 maisonettes and 35 apartments) and 84 public parking spaces, which will be Registered Provider-led, supported by £215k of earmarked viability funding.
- Household Support Funding totalling £60k to those facing financial barriers - through grants, vouchers to food groups and organisations supporting carers.
- The Windrush Leisure Centre decarbonisation project continues to progress and surpassed a major milestone in Q4 with the installation of the new low-carbon heating system and electric waste vehicles ordered. Nature Recovery Growth funding secured, and UKSPF/REPF delivery extended to September 2026.
- Westhive Round 6 was completed, with 14 community projects receiving Council and community pledges. In addition, Executive approved continuing the council's community crowdfunding approach for a further three years starting April 2026.

- Youth engagement strengthened, with a new West Oxfordshire Youth Partnership established and a Youth Voice programme progressing, supported by DCMS funding via OCC.

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 Overall, the Councils performance remained strong across many key services, with high customer satisfaction, excellent planning determination times and continued growth in leisure participation. Council Tax collection met target and despite pre-application advice targets not being met, there was strong overall financial performance in Planning, with total planning income reaching £1.71m against a £1.33m target for the year. Affordable housing delivery exceeded expectations, reaching 352 homes against a target of 274.

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 were slightly below target and Land Charges performance was impacted by both large concentrations of applications over short timescales and by staffing shortages, though early signs of recovery are evident. Recycling rates continue to reflect seasonal and national trends. Taken together, Q4 demonstrates strong and consistent delivery across priority services, with targeted improvement work in place where performance remains below expectations.

3.2 Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (98.03% against a target of 98%)
- Customer Satisfaction – Telephone (97.98% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales. All 12 were determined within target - 100% against a target of 70%
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (90.32% against a target of 65%). Of the 62 applications determined, 56 were within agreed timescales.
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (97.47% against a target of 80%). Of the 198 applications determined, 193 were within agreed timescales.
- Total Planning Income (£1,713,275 against a target of £1,330,173)
- Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (91.2% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (27.03% against a target of 30%). Thirty-seven Section 78 Appeals were determined in 2025/26, of those 37, ten were allowed
- Number of affordable homes delivered (cumulative) (352 against a target of 274)
- Percentage of high-risk food premises inspected within target timescales (100% against a target of 95%). All four notifications were inspected within timescales.
- Percentage of high-risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 95%). Six inspections were due and all inspected within timescales.
- Missed bins per 100,000 (48.58 against a target of 110)
- (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (5,864 against a target of 5,555)

3.3 Some Service Performance below target includes:

Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (6.96 days against a target of 5 days) and Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (6.10 days against a target of 4 days)

Processing times remained above target in Q4 due to ongoing case complexity, linked to Universal Credit migration, alongside delays in customers submitting evidence. Processing was impacted by internal delays in evidencing, and manual intervention requirements particularly where Housing Benefit and CTS evidence was not clearly distinguished.

While in-quarter performance showed improvement, cumulative measures remained over target. Ongoing work is underway to better identify and triage CTS and HB evidence, alongside process reviews to further improve performance.

Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.42% against a target of 0.35%)

Although the error rate is higher than expected, it is less than the national threshold of 0.48% and no penalties would apply based on the final year-end figure.

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.

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.

Pre-Application Planning Income (£44,495 against a target of £60,173)

In Q4, Pre-application income remained below target as applicants chose to bypass pre-application advice and submit speculative full applications directly. Also, the council decided to maintain current fees charged for local pre-application choosing to encourage uptake via initiatives such as redesigning pre-application forms, reviewing website content, and improve accessibility. The introduction of the Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) is also expected to strengthen this drive and strengthen income recovery.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (62.01% against a target of 90%)

During Q4, 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, which significantly reduced capacity at a point when demand remained steady. The reduction in resource led to a buildup 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 (54.79% against a target of 61%)

During Q4, the household recycling rate fell by around 1.6% compared with the same period last year. The current performance sits at 54.79%, 6.2% below the Council's target. Recycling tonnages remain steady, but there has been an increase in residual waste of 1.81kgs per household compared to the same period last year.

Alongside operational performance, the Council continued targeted communications, promoting correct recycling of packaging, wrapping paper, cardboard, and other food 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 vary significantly. In 2024/25, local authorities in England recorded household recycling rates ranging from 23.7% to 63.9%, with the provisional national average at 44.3%. This wider context highlights the substantial performance gap between leading and lower-performing authorities. Within this landscape, West Oxfordshire performed strongly, ranking 14th out of 164 waste collection authorities sampled in England for 2024–2025, achieving a household recycling rate of 57%. This places it among the top councils nationally and reflects continued commitment to high recycling performance across Oxfordshire.

Despite being below target for the quarter, the Council's current rate of 54.79% 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.

Leisure visits (255,498 against a target of 269,003)

Recorded leisure visits were below target in Q4, however, this was attributed to data-capture issues rather than reduced demand. The annual target has been exceeded with 963,766 recorded visits against a target of 843,413.

Demand for facilities remained strong, with many activities operating at or near capacity. Cleanliness remains a key performance factor with CSAT metrics from partners, GLL showing good responses.

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 3 June 2026. The draft minutes of that meeting will be circulated to all Members and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to the 10 June 2026 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)