



West Oxfordshire District Council Strategic Risk Register

Reviewed: May 2026

Next Review: June 2026

ID	Risk / Opportunity Title	Description of risk / opportunity / Impact	Existing Control, Mitigation or Contingency	Previous Residual Score					Current Residual Score					Change since previous review	Follow on Action (if required)	Target delivery date / Status	Management Strategy	Update comments	Status: Open, Hold, or Closed	Direction of Travel since previous review
				Impact category	Impact score	Likelihood category	Likelihood score	Score	Impact category	Impact score	Likelihood category	Likelihood score	Score							
Internal Risks																				
IR1	Financial Stability of WODC	There is a risk that the Council's finances become unsustainable. The future funding available to the Council remains uncertain beyond the recent three year funding settlement. Commercial income streams are also subject to some volatility. There are also significant cost pressures as a result of inflation. The Council's General Fund Balance is currently healthy but declining. Continued monitoring and strategic planning are required to maintain long term stability.	General Fund Reserves are currently healthy. 2026/27-Budget updated to include known cost pressures. Budget monitoring in place throughout the year.	Major	4	Probable	3	12	Major	4	possible	3	12	0	Continued in year budget monitoring and reporting. -Further consideration of options - particularly in areas of Waste and Asset Management with a view to bridging the financial gap identified within the MTFS. In addition, more member training has been carried out to increase profile of budgetary challenges. The final version of the 2026/27 budget is a balanced budget, following the final Funding Settlement announced on 9 February 2026, however the five year MTFS still shows that funds will be depleted over the life of the MTFS and therefore this risk is still shown as amber. The risk has been scored on the MTFS, not on the council's in-year position.	Ongoing	Risk Reduction	This risk is scored based on the MTFS for the council, which is a 5-year financial plan. Whilst there is now a more positive three year financial settlement, taking the Council up to the proposed date for the creation of Unitary Councils, anything beyond this date, remains uncertain. If this risk was scored on the in-year financial position for WODC, the risk scoring would be lower.	Open	➔
IR2	GDPR / Information Management	If the council is not compliant with the General Data Protection and does not have robust processes in place for Information Management then there is a risk of financial penalties, reputational damage and impact on resources	Policies and procedures in place for Data Protection Compliance Data Protection Officer and team in place. ICT systems compliant with Data Protection with PSN accreditation Mandatory training for all staff Data Protection Privacy notices in place. Data sharing agreements in place Data breach processes in place	Major	4	Possible	3	12	Major	4	Possible	3	12	0	All emails received from at risk location are quarantined and inspected by ICT staff before being released. See also risk P5 on cyber security. PSN renewal underway, and paperwork to be submitted this month. Work is ongoing on closing out areas for improvement raised in the internal audit for data protection. Work now underway to update the data retention policy and this will then feed into a new data base which will monitor updates, changes, privacy statements etc. New Data Breach reporting policy now in place and quarterly reporting is being presented to SMT. Comms has gone out on the new data breach policy, and this is being used. Data protection renewal training will be rolled out shortly for employees and members. Work underway on bodyworn camera DP process and updating CCTV processes. Second data breach internal audit completed which closes actions identified in first internal audit. Data retention audit actions also now complete and signed off.	Ongoing	Risk Reduction		Open	➔
IR3	Health & Safety	If the council and its contractors / partners are not compliant with the Health & Safety at Work etc Act and other relevant legislation, there is an increased and significant risk of a major accident and work related ill health through occupational disease leading to possible criminal prosecution/financial penalties, enforcement action, reputational damage and risk to the provision of council services.	Health & Safety Board in place to monitor compliance and report back to the Council. Schedule of H&S internal compliance audits by service area completed by Business Lead for H&S, this is resulting in increased focus and compliance. H&S stats are reviewed monthly quarterly and mitigating actions/solutions agreed taken and acted upon to address trends identified. HSE Asbestos Management inspection took place 1 & 2nd Dec 2025 - HSE Notice of Contravention activities in progress to meet extended deadline of 15th April to close out multiple aspects of the notice of contravention issued. Update to be provided upon completion. being issued - risk score amended to Amber - actions in hand to ensure full compliance. Asbestos Mgt surveys being commissioned for all properties WODC has a duty to manage. -New Publica HSBP recruited and in post since 23rd March directly supporting WODC. Intros and familiarisation with places and people and systems has progressed New post to provide coverage for a closer role with WODC Property/Assets Team Compliance took place on 12th February. In the interim the H&S Team will continue to support WODC directly and proportionately with competent H&S management and advice. Newly acquired/in process of acquiring temporary accommodation for Housing Team in WODC workstream in progress and being supported with collaborative activities with WODC Assets Team.	Major	4	Possible	3	12	Major	4	Possible	3	12	0	Health & Safety Board in place to monitor compliance and report back to the Shareholder. Accidents and incidents remain low. Ongoing service area H&S internal audits being undertaken to ensure compliance. Data analysed and proactive action taken to address any trends.	Ongoing	Risk Sharing	An improved asbestos control and management system has been introduced following collaborative activities between the H&S Team, which is now fully staffed following the appointment of a The H&S Business Partner appointed to the role to support the Publica H&S management has established a good collaborative working relationship with and the WODC Assets Team and supporting them to deliver safe and compliant newly acquired temporary accommodation for the Homelessness Team. This system is being rolled out across the whole building portfolio.	Open	➔
IR4	Legislative Compliance	If the Council or its contractors / partners are not compliant with relevant legislation, there is a risk for the council of not meeting its statutory duty, reputational damage and financial impact due to press mention and / or legal challenge against the council	Individual Heads of Service, Leads, ADs and BMs responsible for Legal compliance within their respective areas with an annual declaration in place to monitor compliance. Audit process in place to check compliance. Service areas receive updates on legislation for their service areas. Review of legal services being completed. The rate of new legislation has increased. LGR will provide the added challenge of a reduced legal team with local knowledge, although mitigation is already being put in place to make sure local knowledge is retained on Vesting Day	Moderate	3	Possible	3	9	Moderate	3	Possible	3	9	0		Ongoing	Risk Reduction		Open	➔
IR7	Embedding of services which have transitioned under Council delivery and management	If the council does not provide sufficient focus on embedding the services back into the council, including working with employees on a people strategy and developing the culture for WODC, there is a risk to staff retention, morale and service delivery.	Work is already underway to work with employees who have transferred on the people strategy and culture. This includes developing new values and behaviours. The is being undertaken in consultation with our employees to ensure buy-in.	Moderate	3	Remote	2	6	Moderate	3	Remote	2	6	0	This is an ongoing piece of work. Cultural change will be over at least the next 24 months. WODC staff engagement session took place on Monday 3rd November to further development the employee strategy and culture for WODC, another staff engagement session is being planned.	Ongoing	Risk Acceptance & Retention	Recommendation to remove as services are now embedded	Open	➔

IR8	<p>English Devolution White Paper - Local Government Reorganisation / Mayoral Combined Authorities - Impact on West Oxfordshire District Council</p>	<p>WODC is working with Oxfordshire Councils to remove two tier councils, and establish Unitaries as required under the English Devolution White Paper - Local Government Reorganisation. This is a significant programme of works, with a deadline of 2028. If this programme is not run effectively, this will create uncertainty resulting in an impact on recruitment, retention, staff morale and a risk to the delivery of council. If we do not retain our employees, this places the delivery of services in the new Unitary at risk.</p>	<p>The English Devolution White Paper was published on 16/12/24 and invites proposals for reorganisation from all two-tier areas. Workstreams have been established to undertake the work required to support the drafting of the proposal and the initial feedback from MHCLG has been received, which will also be fed into the proposal.</p>	Major	4	Possible	3	12	Major	4	Possible	3	12	0	<p>The first Mayoral combined elections have timeline of May 2026. Proposals will need to be developed for our area, with indicative dates for new Unitary Authorities from 2027 and 2028. The council is involved in discussions with partners in Oxfordshire and neighbouring areas to explore potential mayoral combined geographies. The council is working with other councils in Oxfordshire to explore Unitary options and will also need to consider how the services delivered by Publica will reflect new geographical areas. Proposals need to be submitted in November and the Government will make their decision by mid 2026. Regular communications is being -provided to our employees and our partner employees to ensure they are kept abreast of any plans, timelines and how this will effect them, as well as providing support during this process.</p>	Ongoing	Risk Reduction	<p>The formal consultation exercise ended on the 25th February, work continues to ensure the relevant data and information has been collected ready for the Government decision in June / July</p>	Open	
IR9	<p>With removal of two tier councils and the creation of new Unitary Council's, a decision is required on the future of our shared service provision / teckal company arrangements</p>	<p>WODC currently is a shareholder for Publica and Ubico. There remains a number of options available, however a decision by the Shareholders is required to ensure future certainty is given to the employees and ensure that a programme of works is in place for the preferred option to protect employees. If there remains uncertainty there is a risk around recruitment, retention, staff morale and a risk to the delivery of council services. If we do not retain our employees, this places the delivery of services in the new Unitary at risk.</p>	<p>Publica have put forward potential options and have sought legal advice on each option at the request of the shareholder. Work is being undertaken to derisk, protect employees and ensure the best value solution for the Unitary councils.</p>	Major	4	Possible	3	12	Major	4	Possible	3	12	0	<p>Publica continue to work with WODC and other partner councils to seek best solution for our employees, the new unitary and the company. It is very early stages of thinking as we will not know what the Unitary Councils are until mid 2026. Regular communications is being provided to our partner employees to ensure they are kept abreast of any plans, timelines and how this will effect them, as well as providing support during this process. A Publica all staff briefing took place in October and a number of possible scenarios for Publica were presented, however, Publica employees continue to be in a period of uncertainty about what will happen with Publica until a decision is made. An all staff briefing took place in April where an update was given on the work being undertaken to prepare for LGR and any potential decision on the future of Publica. A new staff survey is currently out for completion to understand current morale. From the last staff survey, it is evident that this is having an impact on staff morale. Reviews for each service area are being undertaken to look at how services and employees can be aligned to Unitary Council's to ensure TUPE is applied. Risk reduced to reflect work being undertaken to mitigate any future risk. Another all staff briefing took place in April to provide another update to Publica employees.</p>	Ongoing	Risk Reduction		Open	

External Risks																				
ER1	Cyber Attack	If the ICT network is not adequately protected then it is susceptible to a Cyber - Security Attack leading to loss of systems and data, significant downtime, reputational damage and impact on service delivery and resources	PSN compliance. Revised policies. Staff awareness training. Business Continuity Plan in place, reviewed and tested. Enhanced encryption software and other specialist cyber tools. Investment in cyber training for the ICT Team and specialist officer/s in post. Ongoing network Internal & External Penetration checks. Continual Password Audits across our network to evaluate weak passwords. Detailed review of Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery Plans in light of recent cyber attack on neighbouring council.	Major	4	Possible	3	12	Major	4	Possible	3	12	0	98% of staff now trained in cyber awareness and final 2% being reviewed. Ongoing investment in cyber team with dedicated team in place. Regular review of User Privileges and Information Asset Register. Cyber updates being presented to Council Audit & Governance committees, Publica Audit & Risk Committee (ARAC) and Governance Meetings. Preparation underway to submit latest PSN submission.	Ongoing	Risk Reduction		Open	➔
ER2	Global Events	There is a potential risk to the delivery of Council services arising from resource constraints, which may impact cost efficiency and reputational standing. In extreme cases, this could affect the Council's ability to fully meet its statutory duties to support and safeguard those affected.	New risk to replace Covid specific risks, as Covid is now BAU. Lessons learnt from previous pandemic, Council and partners are now setup to work remotely and able to continue to deliver services in the midst of a pandemic. There is an effective framework in place with Oxfordshire partners.	Moderate	3	Possible	3	9	Moderate	3	Possible	3	9	0	Watching brief should a further pandemic be predicted. Emergency Planning exercise currently taking place in Oxfordshire to test plans for a potential pandemic. Comprehensive and regularly tested plans are in place, supported by dedicated resources and ongoing resilience training. These measures ensure the Council is well-positioned to respond effectively to incidents, with no anticipated risk to the delivery of its statutory duties.	Hold	Risk Acceptance & Retention	Business Impact Assessments and Business Continuity Plans are being redone. Training took place on 10th February and new Business Impact Assessments are being developed although a number remain outstanding for WoDC at the end of April. Business Continuity Plans will now be developed. These will cover Pandemic scenarios.	Hold	➔
ER3/IR9	Fraud & Corruption Risk	If the Council does not have controls, checks and measures in place when commissioning and procuring goods, works and services, there is a risk of fraud and / or corruption which may impact on cost, reputation, and services. If the Council does not have controls, checks and measures in place to prevent and detect fraud, bribery and corruption, there is a risk of financial loss and reputational impact.	Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit (CFEU) in place to manage Fraud and Corruption and ensure that the Council and its employees understand the risks and have controls, checks and measures in place to mitigate this activity. CFEU report to the Council's Audit and Governance Committee. Employees receive regular training. Work plans are developed annually to include prevention activities, proactive drives and resource to investigate reactive referrals. Work plans include a focus on high risk areas as identified nationally or through the partnership workstreams. CFEU test controls to ensure fit for purpose	Moderate	3	Possible	3	9	Moderate	3	Possible	3	9	0	CFEU currently developing service specific risk registers for fraud to further improve awareness and controls. Fraud Risk Strategy under review and Fraud Response Plan to be drafted. Any changes to processes / controls will be monitored / managed for any services which may transition from Publica to direct Council delivery.	Ongoing	Risk Reduction		Open	➔
ER4	Refugees / Asylum Seekers	If there is an increase in refugees / asylum seekers into the District, the Council may need to find alternative accommodation which may impact on the Council in terms an increased demand on housing support and services. There is a risk of disorder / disruption and increase in community tension around the placement of refugees / asylum seekers	Migrant hotels are currently in place across the County, the numbers in the hotel in the district have started to increase churn is still relatively high, which may have an impact on housing support and other services but additional resources are now available to any additional demand as a result of this.	Moderate	3	Remote	2	6	Moderate	3	Remote	2	6	0	WoDC is working with Cottsway Housing to provide additional properties using the LA Housing Fund from the Home Office. The numbers now in the hotel are increasing following a period of stability and we continue to see considerable churn as the HO speeds up the processing of Asylum Claims, which is placing pressure on our housing teams and we have increased the capacity to meet this. No significant additional demand expected currently from ARAP/ACRS. New cohorts of refugees is BAU. Due to protests at Asylum Hotels in some parts of the country, which are largely driven by national politics and media the risk rating has been increased and Officers are working closely with TWP to safeguard staff who are supporting individuals in the hotel along with changing working practices and procedures.	Ongoing	Risk Reduction	The Home Office have just confirmed that the Witney hotel will be closing earlier than mid-June. All the agencies involved in providing support are co-ordinating activities to minimise the impact on the people still living in the hotel during the close-down period. The HO are responsible for relocating any individuals who do not have their status confirmed during this period and the Council has no involvement in this process. Recommendation that this risk be removed in light of the closure of the hotels on 27 May 2026, which has eliminated the Council's responsibilities in this area.	Open	➔

Strategic Risks																				
SR1	Major Civil Emergency	District Councils are required to provide rest centres for the Public during a Civil Emergency. If staff are unwilling to come forward and volunteer with the running of a rest centre, there is a risk that the Council will be unable to fulfil its duty in providing a safe rest centre. If the Council is unable to provide a sustained response to a major civil emergency, the Council would be failing in fulfilling its statutory duty to assist and care for those affected.	Emergency planning team in place. Emergency Planning Process in place, with defined roles and responsibilities. Staff trained in their roles. 24/7 callout in place. Ongoing work with the Local Resilience Forum.	Moderate	3	Probable	4	12	Moderate	3	Probable	4	12	0	<p>WoDC Coordination Team and Rest Centres teams now in place, which is then supported by wider shared resource across Publica. Training completed for Coordination Team, Rest Centre Team and Duty Officers and Managers. All documentation updated and transferred to 365.</p> <p>Plans tested during recent floods due to Storm Bert when Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) stood up and a locality team to complete door knocking, onsite presence to obtain local information, coordination of sandbags and response. Lessons learnt currently being undertaken. The transition of services has impacted on the 365 emergency cover arrangements. In response to this, a dedicated WODC on call arrangement has been put in place. Staff are now remunerated for being on call to encourage volunteers to be part of the on call rota. All those who are on call have been trained and have been issued with on call packs. The new arrangements commenced on 4th April 2025. Work continues to review plans and work with the local resilience forum.</p> <p>5/25 Difficult to reduce as likely to be caused by natural disaster e.g., flooding or major incident. Therefore, it is about our ability to respond and meet obligations under Civil Emergencies Act.</p>	Ongoing	Risk Reduction	<p>Recommendation that these risks be consolidated into a single external risk category (ER2), to be renamed Global Events. This change broadens the scope to capture both current and emerging global disruptions, ensuring more comprehensive coverage and forward-looking risk management.</p>	Open	➔
SR2	Climate Emergency	The Council has declared a climate and ecological emergency and committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. Failure to meet this target would represent a breach in that commitment. Inadequate preparation for the impacts of climate change, including insufficient climate resilience measures, could lead to damage to Council assets, disruption to service delivery, and wider adverse impacts on local communities. Delivering carbon reduction and climate adaptation initiatives may require significant investment, particularly in the absence of sufficient funding from the UK Government. Rising capital and delivery costs may further challenge the development of viable business cases and hinder the timely delivery of projects.	The Council has approved the Carbon Action Plan 2024-2030, Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030 and Nature Recovery Plan 2024-2030. Oxfordshire local authorities are moving forward with the implementation of the Climate Adaptation Route Map. External funding, including Section 106 contributions, will be secured where possible to support the delivery of carbon reduction and climate resilience projects.	Moderate	3	Probable	4	12	Moderate	3	Probable	4	12	0	<p>Progress against climate projects is monitored and reported through the Council's Project Governance Process, and carbon account, summarising the Council's annual greenhouse gas emissions.</p>	Ongoing	Risk Reduction	<p>The PSDS 3c Windrush Leisure Centre decarbonisation project is progressing well. The temporary power supply has been energised, and the new heating system has been commissioned. An application for the permanent power supply is currently in progress.</p> <p>LGR/WESP is constraining investment in building and fleet decarbonisation, which is slowing progress toward the Council's carbon neutrality target. The Council is committed to achieving the 2030 target and will be working closely with the other Councils across Oxfordshire following the Government's announcement in July 26 to identify options for the new Unitary Authority to consider on how it can meet this.</p>	Open	➔
SR4	5 Year land supply	WODC being unable to demonstrate that it has an adequate 5-year supply of deliverable housing land in accordance with national policy. This position has been exacerbated and confirmed through is as a result of the publication of the revised NPPF published in December 2024 which introduced a new standard method for assessing housing need, that has increased WODC's per annum requirement from 549 homes per year to 905 homes per year. The new standard method has almost doubled WODC's previous annual housing need which This has had a direct effect on the Council's housing land supply position – effectively worsening it and thereby clearly engaging the 'tilted balance' set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF whereby there is a presumption in favour of planning permission being granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The result is expected to be greatly increased pressure from speculative development and a much greater likelihood of 'planning by appeal'.	<p>Member Briefings / training to raise awareness. Proactive engagement with site promoters to obtain evidence of anticipated delivery.</p> <p>Local plan review to identify new site allocations</p> <p>Preparation of updated Housing and Economic (HELAA). Updated housing land supply position statement covering the 5-year period 1st April 2026 - 31st March 2031 to be published shortly after 1st April 2026.</p>	Moderate	3	Almost certain	5	15	Moderate	3	Almost certain	5	15	0	<p>Member Briefings / training to raise awareness. WODC to continue to work with OCC in relation to proposed A40 improvements in order to provide greater clarity to developers and landowners.</p> <p>Continued engagement with developers and landowners of existing allocations and permissions to obtain clear and defensible information on anticipated delivery trajectories and to understand/potentially unblock any key constraints to delivery. Potential additional legal support to ensure Ensuring the timely completion of Section 106 agreements on larger sites.</p> <p>Preparation of updated Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) to identify 'long-list' of potentially suitable sites. Timely progression of the new Local Plan to identify new draft site allocations drawing on the long-list referenced above.</p> <p>Formal adoption of the Salt Cross AAP in February 2026 to enable determination of outline planning application for Salt Cross Garden Village.</p> <p>Progression of the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) to adoption by securing greater clarity from Government in relation to national policy on energy efficiency in new buildings and the status of the current Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) on this.</p> <p>Local Plan infrastructure evidence to identify necessary upgrades (e.g. foul water capacity) to help avoid the need for Grampian conditions.</p> <p>5/25 Risk increased as NPPF was published on 12/12/24 and the housing target for WODC has nearly doubled</p>	Ongoing	Risk Reduction	<p>The intention is for Officers to publish a new An updated 5-year housing land supply position statement for the period 1st April 2026 - 31st March 2031 is currently in the process of being finalised, shortly after the 1st April 2026. Preparatory work for this is currently underway. This will provide an up to date and robust assessment of supply set against the relevant 5-year requirement. The Salt Cross Area Action Plan was formally adopted on 25 February 2026 which should now enable the current outline planning application for the site to be refreshed and determined. Work on the new Local Plan is continuing with a view to Regulation 19 draft plan consultation taking place in June/July 2026.</p>	Open	➔

Partnership Risks																				
PR1	Partnership deliverables (Ubico waste provider)	If the waste and environmental services partner (Ubico) does not meet their obligations under key contracts then it could lead to a fall in service standards, reduced customer service, a failure to meet legal requirements or an increase in costs to the Council and reputational impact	WODC is a shareholder of Ubico, with significant control and influence over the company ensuring ongoing financial viability and affordability for the Council. Contract Management in place to ensure Ubico deliver the service in-line with agreed specification and standards. Performance reports presented to Council. New Environmental Services and Waste team in place. New performance monitoring mechanisms are being implemented. The Risk of Ubico not meeting their obligations is mitigated through a governance structure that ensures operational intelligence is regularly captured, interpreted, and escalated through the correct forums, enabling issues to be understood, challenged, and addressed at the appropriate level.	Moderate	3	Possible	3	9	Moderate	3	Possible	3	9	0	A review of the service has been completed and will be reported to The Executive and Council in January 2025. The structured information flow and separation of operational, strategic, and decision-making layers ensures risks are identified early, translated into insight, and resolved before reaching final decision forums, reducing the likelihood of obligations not being met.	Ongoing	Risk Reduction	A review of the scoring indicates that the impact is Moderate rather than Major. Focus on transparency improvement before likelihood is reduced. Transparency has improved and obligations have been met consistently over the last 12 months.	Open	