



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Name and date of Committee	<b>COUNCIL</b> <b>18 JANUARY 2023</b>
Report Number	<b>AGENDA ITEM NO. 8</b>
Subject	<b>DRAFT WEST OXFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PLAN 2023 - 2027</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable Member	Cllr Andy Graham, Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
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Summary/Purpose	A review of the Council's strategic priorities has been undertaken which are presented in the Draft West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 – 2027. Five strategic priorities for the District are identified which reflect the wide ranging issues and challenges requiring focus and attention over the immediate and longer term. The Draft Council Plan has been discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and finalised in response to the views and insights given through this process. The Draft West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 – 27 is now presented to Full Council for consideration and adoption.
Annexes	Annex I – West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 – 27
Recommendation	That Council approves the Draft West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 – 27 and agrees its adoption.
Corporate priorities	The Draft West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 – 27 presents a set of five new priorities for West Oxfordshire, reflecting the issues of strategic importance to the District during the time period of the Council Plan and beyond.
Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	No
Consultees / Consultation	The Draft West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 – 27 was informed by the 'Your Voice Counts' programme of consultation, comprising: a digital consultation open to all (24 August 22 to 5 October 22) which received over 4000 visitors and generated over 400 responses, a Town and Parish Council and Village Meeting Summit and a Stakeholder Event with attendance from a range of organisations active in West Oxfordshire from across the environment, social and economic sectors.

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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. In May 2022 following the local elections a new administration was voted into power at West Oxfordshire District Council (made up of a cross party coalition, the West Oxfordshire Alliance). An early set of priorities highlighted particular issues they seek to address during their tenure.
- 1.2. The current adopted Council Plan 2020 – 2024 sets out 6 priorities established by Council under the former administration: climate action; heathy towns and villages; a vibrant district economy; strong local communities; meeting the housing needs of our changing population and modern council services and sustainable finance.
- 1.3. In July 2022 Cabinet agreed to revisit these priorities with a view to revising the Council Plan which was considered timely given the new administration, and that the context in which priorities of the Council Plan 2020 - 24 were developed had changed (not least by impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic).
- 1.4. The review provided an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including the general public, to test that the priorities in the Council Plan correctly reflect the challenges facing the District today. In order to do so, the ‘Your Voice Counts’ programme of engagement was designed to capture contributions from a wide range of stakeholders to inform both the Council Plan and Local Plan reviews. Inputs were invited from the general public via the digital platform ‘CommonPlace’ (receiving over 4000 visitors who submitted more than 400 contributions), and two in person events with Town and Parish Councils and stakeholder groups representing the environment, economic and social sectors.
- 1.5. The outputs of the ‘Your Voice Count’s programme of engagement have been analysed to ensure that the priorities in the revised Council Plan correctly reflect the challenges facing the District today and will address the issues that matter the most to those that live and work here.
- 1.6. The Council Plan will be underpinned by an Action Plan, to be reviewed annually, setting out actions to be taken by the Council to deliver the priorities in the Council Plan. These will include projects to be carried out by the Council and through working collaboratively with partner organisations. The stakeholder engagement event, held as part of the ‘Your Voice Counts’ consultation, provided an opportunity for a range of organisations active in the District with remits that relate to West Oxfordshire’s environment, economy and/or the community to share their local insight and expertise, identify where common interests lie and the potential for working jointly to deliver the priorities in the revised Council Plan. These will be detailed in the Action Plan where there is a commitment from partners to work with the Council on specific projects.
- 1.7. An up to date Council Plan will helpfully provide a corporate policy framework against which other areas of Council activity will sit, for example the review of the Local Plan (as the spatial strategy for the development of the District) and the allocation of £1,000,000 UK

Shared Prosperity Fund and £716,216 Rural England Prosperity Fund monies to projects in the District.

## 2. MAIN POINTS

2.1. The draft Council Plan sets out a vision for the District that is 'Shaping West Oxfordshire as a District which offers a fulfilling and meaningful quality of life for our residents with opportunities for all to flourish, a thriving a prosperous place for entrepreneurs and businesses, where local people and visitors can enjoy the beauty and heritage of our landscape, built, farmed and natural environment.'

2.2. Five high level strategic priorities, of equal importance, underpin the delivery of the vision above. Subject to Cabinet approval, these are:

### Putting Residents First

*Putting Residents, Young and Old, at the Heart of What We Do*

### Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All

*The Council will be a hive of activity to help build and support thriving towns and villages that provide residents with a high quality of life by supporting a vibrant local economy, homes and infrastructure that meet people's needs, excellent health and wellbeing and ensuring equal access to opportunity for all.*

### Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife

*The Council will be a progressive custodian of our environmental resources, supporting a healthy natural landscape and functioning ecosystem which is rich in wildlife and habitats that are enjoyed by and benefit all.*

### Responding to the Ecological and Climate Emergency

*The Council will be a community leader in responding to the challenges of climate change, including rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing the District and its communities for the impacts of climate change to ensure a fair transition for all to a future that will be defined by climate change.*

### Working Together for West Oxfordshire

*The Council recognises that to deliver on our aspirations and the priorities in this Council Plan for West Oxfordshire, working collaboratively with others will be essential.*

2.3. In addition to the vision and priorities above, a portrait of West Oxfordshire is included within the Council Plan to provide contextual data on a range of themes against which the priorities sit. This has been drawn from a wide range of sources including the latest Census 2021 data release and the recently published Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (October 2022).

2.4. As part of the development process for the new Plan, the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees were given the opportunity to comment on the draft document. Overview and

Scrutiny Committee Members were invited to use their local insight and knowledge to test that the scope and framing of the proposed priority policy themes correctly reflects the range of strategic issues facing the District and how the Council, either working internally or with partners, can take action to address these. The resolutions arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees informed the finalisation of the Council Plan presented at Annex I.

### **3. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

- 3.1.** After adoption of the revised Council Plan, an Action Plan will be developed specifying actions to be taken including detail on the role of the Council in this, required partner inputs, resources required and anticipated outputs with defined 'measures of success' to enable the Council to demonstrate that the Council Plan priorities are being delivered.
- 3.2.** Progress on the delivery of the Council Plan priorities will be reported in detail via quarterly performance management reports, the Annual Monitoring Report (where the progress relates to spatial development and land use) and an Annual Statement that will a detailed annual overview of progress to date and actions required to further progress delivery of the Council Plan priorities for the following twelve months.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1.** There are no legal implications arising directly from this Report.

### **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1.** The purpose of the Council Plan is to direct effort towards priority issues and this should help ensure that resources are focussed on delivering what is most important to the Council. Any significant actions will be subject to the Council's corporate risk management approach and will, therefore, be tested in terms of risk likelihood, potential impact and identification of mitigation steps.

### **6. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 6.1.** The pursuit of a revised Council Plan should have a positive effect in terms of its equalities impact. It will be appropriate to complete an informed Equalities Impact Assessment as the work is further specified following development of priorities in the Council Plan and plans for delivery are outlined in the supporting Action Plan.

### **7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1.** None arising directly from this report. Addressing the climate and ecological crisis has been identified as a priority in the Council Plan and actions towards addressing the climate and ecological crisis will be detailed in the Action Plan which will follow the adoption of the Council Plan.

### **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 8.1.** Council could choose not to adopt the new Council Plan, but this would miss the opportunity to set out its up to date priorities.

### **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1.** None.