

## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN 2023/24



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Notes and key

Each action in the plan is marked with a 'traffic light' as follows:

<b>Green</b>	On target
<b>Amber</b>	Off target but action being taken to ensure delivery (where this results in a reviewed target date, this is made clear in the table)
<b>Red</b>	Off target and no action has yet been agreed to resolve the situation
<b>Complete</b>	Action has been completed

**Completed** actions are marked as such in the 'Date' column and are shaded grey

This action plan contains actions from the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 which are coordinated and monitored by the WODC Management Team.

### Key to officers:

#### **Accountable officer (AO)**

**CEO** - Chief Executive: Giles Hughes

**CFO** - Chief Finance (S.151) Officer: Madhu Richards

**MO** - Monitoring Officer: Andrea McCaskie

#### **Publica Responsible officer (RO)**

**BM Gov** - Business Manager - Business Continuity, Risk and Governance: Cheryl Sloan

**BM Fin** - Business Manager - Finance: Georgina Dyer

**BM Comm** - Business Manager - Communications and Marketing Mark Pritchard

**BM HR** - Business Manager - People: John Llewellyn

**BP Proc** - Senior Procurement Business Partner: Ciaran O'Kane

	Key Area of Focus	Planned Actions	Responsible Officer	Completion due by	Progress
1	Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) refresh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to regularly update the MTFS to reflect the current financial forecast. The current iteration shows a significant budget gap and while some mitigations have been identified, they are insufficient to resolve the budget shortfall. The emerging Action Plan which links to the revised Council priorities will inevitably increase pressure on the budget so even more savings / additional income will need to be found in order to close the gap and balance the budget.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance & I51 Officer	31/03/24	The Council has put in place a Transformation Group to manage the budget gap identified in the MTFS. This includes asset management planning and a review of key contracts (Ubico and GLL) on its' Work Plan. The MTFS is reviewed as part of the annual budget setting process.
2	Treasury Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As the Council's cashflow becomes tighter, an increased focus on Treasury Management is required with more frequent and timely updates allowing for management of a reduced level of working capital and maximum foresight of any borrowing requirements.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance & I51 Officer	31/12/23	<p>We monitor and update daily cashflows for all 3 Councils alongside monthly actuals and monthly variance analysis. 2023/24 has not seen a significant decrease in working capital but levels are expected to drop in 2024-25.</p> <p>Regular meetings with Chief Accountants, S151's and advisors occur at a minimum of quarterly and ad hoc meetings and communication occur between the Treasury team and accountants to make sure the cashflow forecast is as accurate as possible.</p>

3	Service Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a robust review of future service delivery options to make sure the solutions needed for the Council to achieve financial stability can be achieved, given the MTFS shortfall over the years ahead. This review will examine the priorities for service delivery, options for reduction or transformation and how both the Publica and Ubico models fit into this. The review should determine which service provision is statutory and non-statutory, fits with current priorities or is legacy, and where there are opportunities to reduce even the level of statutory provision.</li> </ul>	Chief Executive Officer	31/03/24	<p>A review was completed by Human Engine with the report and recommendation taken to Executive and Overview and Scrutiny.</p> <p>Interim Programme Director has been appointed and started w/c 22 January 2024</p> <p>Local Partnerships were commissioned to deliver a transition framework which has reported back to the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny during February and March 2024.</p> <p>Officer Transition Board established along with 5 key workstreams covering Finance, Legal, HR, ICT and Communications.</p>
4	Invoice approval hierarchies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To continue the review of invoice approval hierarchies ensuring that these are appropriately reflected on Business World (BW).</li> <li>To investigate whether Business World would support the workflow of approvals thus removing the need to gather information on whether invoices should be paid or not via email or other means external to BW which does not allow for an appropriate audit trail to be preserved on the Finance system.</li> </ul>	AD, Business Services	31/03/24	<p>Ongoing regular reviews of invoice hierarchies are already in place and are aligned in the BW system.</p> <p>Our investigation of BW capabilities are ongoing and we are always looking at ways to improve the efficiency of the system and avoid having to run parallel processes.</p>
5	Aged debt and credit control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To retrain all service areas in the handling of aged debt. A review of the process</li> </ul>	AD, Business Services	31/12/23	<p>Business Managers have received training, and this will now be completed for staff</p>

		<p>has identified that processes are not being followed. These need to have a stronger focus and to be re-embedded in-service areas, supported centrally by a stronger emphasis on credit control. Much work has been done in 22/23 to assess and write off uncollectable debt but work is required on current debt processes to ensure that timely interventions are made.</p>			<p>who have responsibilities for revenue generating services and debt recovery.</p> <p>A new booklet has been produced to detail how this should be managed, along with any additional guidance and forms.</p>
6	Project and Programme reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This area has improved but more work still needs to be done to ensure that there is transparency of information and that mitigations are owned and time bounded and that the implications of delays or overruns is clearly documented and communicated.</li> <li>• Guidance on governance frameworks has been written but more work is required to ensure this is embedded.</li> </ul>	Business Manager, Governance	31/03/24	<p>All Project and Programmes for WoDC are reported on a bi-monthly basis to the Senior Management Team. This ensures transparency and ownership. This is also presented quarterly to informal Executive.</p> <p>Project and programme governance is in place and is continually being reviewed and updated.</p>
7	Roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The External Auditors have recommended that as part of the upcoming external review of Publica, there is a clarification of roles and responsibilities, where decisions should appropriately sit (in Publica / Ubico or the Council) and more clarity around not just the services being delivered but the level of those services.</li> </ul>	Chief Executive	31/03/24	<p>This will form part of the detailed transition plans as part of the Transition of Services from Publica into the Council.</p> <p>Carry over to 24/25 as part of transition work.</p>

8	Raising awareness of the contract procedure rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new Contract &amp; Procurement Strategy has been developed and is currently awaiting approval by Executive (Cabinet). A priority this year will be to rollout Management and Officer Training to ensure this new strategy is understood and embedded.</li> </ul>	AD Business Services	31/03/24	The new Contract and Procurement Strategy has been approved and briefing notes have been issued and a presentation provided to all Business Managers on their responsibilities under the new Strategy.
9	Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To review the financial procedure rules and financial processes to be completed in 2023/24 against the CIPFA Financial Management Code.</li> </ul>	Director of Finance & Section 151	31/12/24	<p>The Publica review and transition process will influence the timing and nature of any review of financial procedures and processes.</p> <p>This action will therefore carry over into next financial year and will need a more incremental approach when structures and timings are agreed.</p> <p>Carry over into 24/25.</p>
10	Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To rollout the Risk Management Training to all relevant Officers (Launched in May 2023)</li> <li>To build risk management into the new Leadership and Development Training</li> <li>To ensure the existing Risk Policy and process enables effective reporting, escalation and mitigation.</li> </ul>	AD Organisational Effectiveness	31/03/24	<p>Risk management training was launched in May 2023. New portal pages are now live for Risk Management.</p> <p>A new risk training presentation will be produced and added to IHasco mandatory training.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To continue to improve the Risk Registers and the processes by which risks are escalated to the Strategic Risk Register to ensure that all risks are escalated allowing Local Management Team and Members sight of them for monitoring and inclusion in decision making information.</li> </ul>			<p>A lot of work has been undertaken to ensure that Risks are identified, escalated, and mitigated. Risk is now taken to the Management Team meeting, and it is presented to informal Executive on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>The revised WODC Risk Register has been presented to Audit and Governance Committee and work is now being completed on the Risk Policy which will be presented early in the new Financial Year.</p>
11	Emergency Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To further increase community resilience in line with the new Resilience Framework, published in December 2022.</li> <li>● To further develop our Emergency Response Framework by putting in place a Locality Response Team for WODC who are trained and able to respond in the event of a significant local incident.</li> <li>● To ensure Statutory Officers are trained and competent in their role as Gold (Strategic) Commander in the event of a significant local incident, and relevant Officers are trained in Silver (tactical) and Bronze (operational response).</li> <li>● To ensure the Safety Advisory Group considers any implications from Martyn's Law when considering planned events.</li> </ul>	AD Organisational Effectiveness	31/03/24	<p>Advice and support is provided to interested communities as and when requested. A stronger Local Resilience Forum (LRF) bid is currently at its final stages which will include a Business and Community role.</p> <p>New Locality based response teams are now in place for coordination and rest centre management. Regular meetings are in place with the volunteers. JESIP training has been completed and further training is scheduled for the Coordination Team, Rest Centre Team and Duty Manager / Officer.</p> <p>An overview of Emergency Planning responsibilities was delivered to Statutory</p>

					<p>Officers. Duty Officer and Manager refresher training scheduled.</p> <p>This is ongoing. Work is being undertaken with the LRF to ensure we are sighted on changes.</p>
12	Portal Content Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To review the Publica Portal content to ensure it is up to date, and includes the latest versions of all policies and procedures</li> </ul>	AD Commercial Services	31/03/24	<p>Portal pages are now complete and live. This is now 'business as usual' with updates being made as and when requested by services who own each of their portal pages.</p> <p>Staff portals will need to be reviewed in light of the Publica Review and will be likely that each council will need their own portal as staff are taken back in-house and therefore each council will need its own internal comms.</p>
13	Business Continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To further develop the Business Continuity Processes (BCP) to ensure they are robust and fit for purpose</li> <li>To test the business critical Business Continuity Plans in 2023/24</li> </ul>	AD Organisational Effectiveness	31/03/24	<p>The Emergency Planning Officer has now completed BCP training, and a plan is being developed to review the Business Continuity policy to identify any additional areas for improvement. A rolling programme of BCP updates has been agreed for next financial year to enable a more detailed review of service area Business Impact Assessments and Business</p>

					<p>Continuity Plans. This action will be carried over into next financial year.</p> <p>The IT BCP was recently tested through an internal audit which assumed a successful cyber-attack and the off-premise rebuild of a business critical IT system.</p>
14	New HR Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rollout a new and revised suite of HR policies in 2023/24</li> <li>• Ensure Managers are trained in the use of the new HR Policies</li> </ul>	AD Organisational Effectiveness	31/03/24	<p>A suite of HR Policies has been reviewed and Executive recommended approval by Council, with a further suite due later in the year.</p> <p>As HR policies are approved across the three partner Councils training will be completed.</p>