



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE 12 MARCH
Subject	SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024-25 QUARTER THREE
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report author	Alison Borrett – Senior Performance Analyst. Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2024-25 Quarter Three (Q3).
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 2024/25 Q3 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, Assistant Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** 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.
- 1.2** A high-level Commissioning Framework was approved by the Executive in October 2020, which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica provides the necessary information, including a range of performance indicators, to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and standard.
- 1.3** 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 Q3 include:

- The Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM), commissioned through Sport England and delivered by Max Associates, was approved and adopted by the Executive in November. An action plan is currently being developed, with thematic steering groups set to guide its implementation.
- A coordinated response with the Planning team on the Science, Innovation, and Technology (SIT) Strategy was sent to the Pan Regional Partnership, aiming to attract green investment for sustainable growth.
- A draft strategy to revitalise the District's Charter Markets has been developed with a tender brief for the management of the markets currently under legal review. The brief focuses on managing traditional markets in Witney and Chipping Norton (Lot 1) while introducing innovative formats at Marriotts Walk (Lot 2) to modernise while preserving their historical appeal.
- In October, the Executive approved the purchase of three electric vans and an ultra-narrow vehicle for Ubico, expanding the Council's green fleet to six, with plans to add six more electric vehicles, including food waste and heavy goods vehicles.
- The installation of Solar PV panels at Elmfield was successfully completed as part of the decarbonisation project.
- Round 3 of Westhive concluded with four projects actively fundraising. Out of sixteen projects that have fundraised through Westhive, twelve have met or exceeded their targets, and the Council has fully allocated the annual UK Shared Prosperity Fund budget.

- 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 Council's performance this quarter has been mixed. Notable progress was made in Council Tax collection rates and the reduction of long-term empty properties, while customer

satisfaction, planning determination times, and gym memberships remain strong. However, negative trends were observed in the number of affordable homes delivered and the percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days.

3.2 Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates Collected (82.25% against a target of 81%)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims (19.19 days against a target of 20 days)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (3.09 days against a target of 5 days)
- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.28% against a target of 0.35%)
- Customer Satisfaction (98.12% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (83.33% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (93.94% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (98.68% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 90%)
- Missed bins per 100,000 (77.03 against a target of 120)
- (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (5,206 memberships against a target of 4,875 memberships)

3.3 Service Performance near target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (84.88% against a target of 85%)
- Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (89.71% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (30.68% against a target of 30%)

3.4 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (5.74 days against a target of 4 days)

During Q3, the Council saw an increase in average processing times for Housing Benefit (HB) changes. However, compared to the same period last year, processing times have overall improved, showing roughly a one-day reduction.

The rise in Q3 processing times can be attributed to two main factors: higher-than-usual team absences due to sickness, and the shutdown of the Council Offices over Christmas. Additionally, the service is awaiting updates from the Universal Credit (UC) division of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). These updates, which involve changes to the file types of the provided data, are expected to improve data capture and enhance automation of related processes.

It is also important to note that the volume of HB changes is significantly declining as applications are progressively transitioned to Universal Credit under the managed migration process. Consequently, any delays in processing applications now have a more pronounced impact on average processing times.

Building Control Satisfaction (66% against a target of 90%)

During Q3, only three surveys were received: two customers expressed satisfaction with the service, while one was partly satisfied. However, the satisfaction survey process continues to face challenges due to low response rates.

The telephone survey measures customer satisfaction across key areas, including staff helpfulness, quality of technical advice, responsiveness, value for money, and overall experience. Despite its thoroughness, the current intensive survey process has yielded limited engagement.

To address this, the team is exploring ways to improve response rates and streamline the process. One proposed solution involves collaborating with the Data Team to develop a webform. This webform will be emailed directly to customers who have received a completion certificate, providing a more convenient and accessible way for them to share their feedback.

Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (72.41% against a target of 90%)

During Q3, the Council experienced a significant decline in the percentage of land charge searches completed within the target timeframe, with performance dropping by approximately 20% compared to Q2.

The primary cause of the delays was external partners completing searches outside the target timeframe, creating bottlenecks in the process. This underscores the interdependence between the Council's performance and the efficiency of external teams involved in the process.

To address these challenges, the team has introduced a centralised dashboard to monitor turnaround times across departments involved in land charge searches. This tool provides real-time performance insights, enabling the team to promptly identify delays and implement targeted interventions. By addressing specific issues and ensuring departments have the necessary resources and support, the dashboard helps drive timely completion of searches and improves overall performance.

Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (144 against a target of 207)

Handover delays, attributed to statutory service providers and highway scheduling issues, have impacted expected completions in Carterton and Enstone. In Carterton, while the properties are constructed, they remain unoccupied due to these delays. However, 14 properties at the site are anticipated to be handed over in Q4.

It's worth noting that completion rates vary throughout the year due to the nature of housing developments, which often span multiple months or even years. Some projects may be phased over several years, contributing to fluctuations in completion numbers. The service notes several larger-scale developments are slated for housing delivery during 2025-26.

According to the 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), West Oxfordshire needs 660 homes annually through to 2031, including 274 affordable units. Since 2013–14, the Council has delivered 2,539 homes, falling short of the SHMA target of 3,152 by 613 units.

Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales (75% against a target of 90%)

The Council completed 3 out of 4 high-risk food inspections within the target timescale. To improve performance and prevent future delays, the target deadline for inspecting high-risk food businesses

has been advanced by 28 days. This proactive measure provides management with additional time to address any outstanding inspections before the original deadline, ensuring that all high-risk inspections are carried within the target timescales. To further support the team and mitigate the effects of these resourcing challenges, extra resource has been brought in to assist with the workload. As a result, the previously missed inspections have now been completed.

High-risk work is naturally prioritised, which can have an impact on lower-risk scheduled inspection rates. To improve the management of these inspections, the service has implemented a useful dashboard. This tool is instrumental in monitoring team performance and tracking the progress of lower-risk inspections, ensuring that they are not overlooked despite the focus on higher-priority tasks. With these combined efforts, the service aims to maintain a balanced approach to inspections, addressing both high- and low-risk areas effectively.

Number of visits to the leisure centres (178,574 visits against a target of 189,000)

Visits to leisure facilities saw a decline compared to both the previous quarter and the same period last year, with 10,000 fewer visits compared to Q2 and a decrease of 14,000 visits year-over-year. While overall numbers remain slightly below target for the second quarter, visits are only 1% below the expected level for this point in the year. With Q4 typically bringing a surge in visits, it is anticipated that the in-year target will be met. The decline can be partially attributed to the typical trend of lower numbers leading up to the Christmas period, as well as disruptions caused by refurbishment works within the centres, which are now completed.

3.5 A full report is attached at Annex C and should be looked at in conjunction with this report.

3.6 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. Where benchmarking data is not currently available or outdated, this is noted, and further investigations will be undertaken to look at options.

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.1 This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5 March 2025. The draft minutes of that meeting will be circulated to all Members and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to the 12 March 2025 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. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Contained in this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

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