

# WODC VOICE

REPORTING BACK TO YOU, OUR RESIDENTS

JANUARY 2026



CELEBRATING OUR  
ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2025  
AND LOOKING AHEAD TO  
THE CHALLENGES FACING  
OUR DISTRICT



*Also in this issue:*

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION**

The biggest change to your council in 50 years

**BACKING BRILLIANT COMMUNITY IDEAS**

Over £900k raised for communities

YOUR COUNCIL



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WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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# Welcome

Hello, and welcome to our latest edition of WODC Voice. As we begin 2026, we embark on the start of an important new chapter for West Oxfordshire. With preparations for Local Government Reorganisation underway and the development of our new Local Plan progressing at pace, the decisions we take now will shape our district for years to come.

But while change is in the air, our focus remains clear: delivering for and investing in our communities. Whether it's enhancing our leisure offer, supporting community and climate projects through grant funding, delivering the right homes in the right places, or revitalising our town centres, these priorities guide our work. We are also backing local businesses, creating training and job opportunities, supporting farmers through rural grant funding, and engaging you directly in decision-making through our Executive on Tour sessions. Together, these commitments sit at the heart of what we do, and they will remain our focus in the year ahead.

At the same time as delivering the services that matter to you, we are planning for the future. Our new Local Plan will ensure that when new homes are built, they come with the right infrastructure – schools, utilities, transport links, GP services, green spaces – to create well-connected, sustainable communities. It is about getting growth right, protecting what makes West Oxfordshire special, and moving forward in a way that supports both current and future generations.

Most importantly, as discussions around Local Government Reorganisation continue, we will make sure that West Oxfordshire's needs and ambitions are championed, so that any future arrangements strengthen – not dilute – the services and priorities that matter most to our residents.

So, while 2026 will be a year of continued change, it will also be a year of ambition. We are committed to protecting the things that matter most to you while making the changes needed to ensure West Oxfordshire continues to be a wonderful place to live, work, and visit. Together, we can seize the opportunities that lie ahead and ensure that the future of our district is bright.

In the pages ahead, you will find updates on many of the initiatives making a difference in our communities. These stories show what can be achieved when we work together with ambition and focus. I wish you all a prosperous year ahead.

And remember, this is your Council.



**Andy Graham, Leader of the Council**



West Oxfordshire  
District Council's  
Woodgreen Office

# Local Government Reorganisation

The biggest change to your councils in 50 years



## What is happening?

Big changes are coming to local government. In December 2024, the Government announced plans to simplify how councils operate across England, including abolishing the district and county councils we currently have in Oxfordshire.

That means by **2028**, all your council services will be delivered by a **new 'unitary' council** that delivers all council services in one organisation.

The Government asked existing councils to put forward proposals for how this could best work in Oxfordshire. Three options have now been submitted:

1. A single unitary council covering the current county council boundary
2. Two unitary councils. One including the current districts on Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire along with West Berkshire. The second unitary council including the current districts of West Oxfordshire and Cherwell along with Oxford City
3. Three unitary councils. One covering Oxford City but with expanded boundaries from the current city council. A second including the current districts on Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire along with West Berkshire. A third including the current districts of West Oxfordshire and Cherwell

We expect that the Government will consult on these proposals before making a decision in **early summer**.

## Why we think two unitaries is the best option for West Oxfordshire

*"This is one of the biggest changes to local government in a generation – but also a real opportunity to consider how we deliver services more effectively, how we provide more for our communities, how we make councils that truly represent and deliver for our area."*

*"We've looked carefully at all the options and come to the view that having **two unitary councils** is the best options for West Oxfordshire and the wider area. The two unitary proposal received cross party support from councillors across the districts."*

*"We felt this solution provides the best opportunity for financial savings and to fix the services you told us aren't working properly. It will make sure West Oxfordshire keeps a strong voice and protects the services you value while enabling the new council to bring more jobs and better infrastructure."*

*"The councils will be built around our communities, delivering services tailored to local needs and making sure you have proper democratic representation. It is also backed by independent financial modelling that shows the councils will deliver savings and be resilient in the future."*

*"Ultimately, people want good quality, reliable services - bins collected on time, potholes fixed, support when it's needed, and a council that plans wisely for the future. We believe the two councils makes those councils big enough to deliver those services, while also being small enough to care."*

*"The government will consult on these proposals in 2026 and we will make sure to promote that consultation so you can have your say."*

Cllr Andy Graham, Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council



Bus driving up Burford High Street



West Oxfordshire recycling bin and box



Adult social care services

You can find out more about the two unitary proposal by visiting [www.twocouncils.org](http://www.twocouncils.org)



# Putting your voice first



## BRINGING YOUR COUNCIL CLOSER TO YOU

This year, our Executive team has been out on tour across West Oxfordshire, holding workshops on council business in local village halls and community centres, and sharing those important conversations with you.

Each meeting focused on local priorities; from markets and town centre vitality in Chipping Norton, to climate and flooding in Charlbury, future growth in Carterton, and tourism in Burford.

These discussions helped shape our understanding of what matters most locally, and we've kept those voices central in our ongoing work. It's all part of our commitment to openness and working together to shape West Oxfordshire's future.

The Executive will be back out on tour soon, so look out for our next meeting near you!

We've been engaging with you!

## EXECUTIVE ON TOUR



West Oxfordshire District Council Executive 2025

# Keeping the district clean and green



Over the past four years we've delivered substantial financial and operational improvements across our waste and environmental services.

Efficiency programmes, including reviews of the street cleansing service, commercial waste collection, garden waste, and an overarching review of all services and external contracts, have resulted in over £1.5m in savings. Targeted

activity has also increased income, generating nearly £2m annually to support Waste and Environmental services in the future. These improvements reflect our commitment to smarter, greener, and more efficient operations. At the same time, we improved our on-time collection rate, achieving an excellent 99.96% collection rate.

West Oxfordshire continues to lead the way in recycling, **ranking among the top 20 councils** (out of 343) in England. **Keeping recyclable materials out of the grey bins remains a key focus:** 46% of the residual waste collected is recyclable, 26% is food waste. Disposing of recyclable material through appropriate routes brings dramatic savings. Costs of disposing material in residual waste are very high as compared to the costs of recycling, making recycling the clear financial choice in addition to providing environmental



Cllr Lidia Arciszewska alongside the Ubico EV fleet

benefits. Moreover, food waste is being processed to generate clean electricity at a rate of 388 kwh (kilowatt hours) per ton of waste. **Please keep using your food caddy, it's a small action with a big impact.**

In the last year, West Oxfordshire has worked with Cherwell, Oxford City and Oxfordshire County councils to design a modern, resident-focused model for waste and environmental services. A business case highlights opportunities for transformation through a shared company, greater efficiency, greener operations and investment in ageing infrastructure. The new Waste and Environmental Services Transformation Programme team is now leading this work and assessing the best long-term delivery model.

For tips on recycling and reducing waste, visit [westoxon.gov.uk/recycling](https://westoxon.gov.uk/recycling).

**Thank you for helping us build a cleaner, smarter West Oxfordshire.**



## KEEP GOING

Gym at Carterton Leisure Centre



## Leisure success story continues – £3.5 million investment in local leisure facilities

Over the next five years, we will be investing £3.5 million in improving our leisure centres and sports facilities across West Oxfordshire. As more people return to our centres, we're upgrading equipment, refreshing spaces, expanding classes for all ages and abilities, and creating welcoming places to meet friends, unwind, and focus on your health and wellbeing.

**Keeping local leisure facilities welcoming, accessible and fit for the future.**

# Building the right *homes* in the right *places*

Milestone Road,  
Carterton

## You said, we did

A good home changes everything, it's where family life begins. Across West Oxfordshire, we're turning that belief into action.

With house prices far above the national average and thousands on the waiting list for a place to call their own, the need for affordable homes has never been greater in our district. That's why delivering genuinely affordable, energy-efficient homes is one of the top priorities in our new Local Plan. This year, we've made strong progress towards our target of 274 new affordable homes, helping local people put down roots and look to the future with confidence.

## Woodford Way: A huge step forward for affordable living and social rented homes

Looking ahead, we are working hard on a proposal to deliver much-needed affordable homes for local people on Woodford Way Car Park. The high-quality housing development will include social rented one and two-bedroom homes which are in very short supply across the district.

The proposed scheme will still retain some on-site parking for residents to use, which will be supported by several free long-stay alternatives in the town centre, including the underused Marriotts Walk multi-storey car park, adjacent to Woodford Way.

The plans for the scheme are at an early stage and will be subject to change as designs move through the planning process. Residents will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed plan as the project progresses. The Council will also be consulting with key local stakeholders.

## New homes, new beginnings for local people

At Magpie Court in **Chipping Norton**, **12 brand new homes**, all for social rent, are now giving local families a fresh start. Each home has been designed for comfort and sustainability, featuring air source heat pumps and solar panels to keep running costs low.

Over in **Carterton**, a landmark project at Milestone Road has delivered **200 fully affordable homes**, including 105 for social rent as well as other buying options such as shared ownership. Built in partnership with Platform Housing Association and Homes England, the development has helped young families and long-time residents alike to stay local, close to their support networks and communities.

We're also proud to have worked with Cottsway Housing Association to transform a former council property into a specially adapted bungalow for 17-year-old Jacob, a wheelchair user who now has the independence he deserves. With ramp access, an accessible shower room, wider doorways and a height-adjustable kitchen, the project shows what a difference a truly inclusive home can make.



"It's going to be life changing. I don't know how to put it into words because I just feel so grateful and overwhelmed. It's just absolutely amazing, I couldn't think of anything better really. I want to say thank you to the people who've done this, because without them I wouldn't be able to be independent." - Jacob

17-year-old Jacob, outside his fully accessible new home

As we shape the next chapter of West Oxfordshire's Local Plan, our mission stays the same: to build the right homes, in the right places, for the people who need them most, creating stronger and more sustainable communities for the future.

"The Woodford Way housing project is a great opportunity to deliver the homes we know are needed for local people in the district. We are using council owned land to deliver a cost neutral scheme and provide homes the current system will not while maintaining our fantastic free parking in the town centre."

Cllr Geoff Saul

Left to right: Cllr Geoff Saul and Cllr Andy Graham at the new Magpie Court development in Chipping Norton



# Backing brilliant community ideas

Over £900k raised for communities



Since its launch in 2023, the Council's new community crowdfunding platform, Westhive, has helped people across West Oxfordshire turn their ideas into action, from new youth projects and village hubs to community gardens and local events.

28 projects hit their targets in the first four funding rounds, **raising an impressive £948,172 between them.** Nearly half a million pounds of this came from the Council and other Government funds we secured, while the rest has been made up through grants and almost **1,000 individual backers** in our community.

Westhive has gone from strength to strength, opening doors for groups who might not usually apply for council funding, and we've been proud to have helped this funding reach a range of extraordinary people and projects, giving everything from small grassroots ideas to larger community schemes the confidence to get started.

Together, these projects show the real power of community ambition. They stretch across West Oxfordshire - from new play areas and community gardens to youth clubs, warm hubs, cycling schemes, arts projects and upgrades to much-loved local spaces. Each one began with local people stepping forward to improve their neighbourhoods.



**Cllr Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities, said:** "Westhive has shown the real power of community. Local people know their neighbourhoods best and Westhive helps them make a real difference. I'm delighted that it has laid strong foundations for how we can continue to back community-led ideas in the years ahead."

At the end of last year, the Council also pledged support for a fifth round of Westhive projects, many of which still need your backing to unlock their funding. Visit the Westhive website today to donate and help bring these fantastic community ideas to life.

**Thinking of starting your own project?**  
Email [wodc.grants@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:wodc.grants@westoxon.gov.uk) or call **01993 861189** to find out if your idea could be eligible for support.

## YOUR SUPPORT, THEIR SUCCESS: The projects that have hit their crowdfunding targets so far:

- Long Mead Foundation
- Thames Valley Wildflower Meadow Restoration Project
- Nature Recovery Network
- The Kitchen Garden People
- Friends of Hailey School
- Cotswolds Arts Through Schools
- 1st Stonesfield Scouts
- Churchill & Sarsden Village Hall
- The Station Youth
- Freeland Parish Council
- Witney Mills Cricket Club
- River Day Revival
- Windrush Bike Project
- Jewins Women2Women
- North Leigh Youth Project
- FarmAbility
- Witney Vikings Youth Football Club
- Bridewell Gardens
- Swinbrook Village Hall
- SunRae Inclusive Dance
- Carterton Community Foodbank
- Witney Food Revolution
- Eynsham Allotments Association
- Aspire Oxfordshire
- Witney Dramatic Society



## Three-year grants securing the future for our communities

Through our three-year community grant scheme, we're giving local organisations the stability they need to plan ahead, grow, and keep delivering for our communities. Seven groups across West Oxfordshire are now benefiting from this longer-term funding, which provides up to **£25,000 a year** for projects that make a real difference to local lives.

From protecting our rivers and wildlife to supporting families, improving wellbeing, and strengthening rural communities, each project reflects the creativity and care that make West Oxfordshire special.

Here are just a few examples of what some of those groups are achieving:

### Bringing the Evenlode back to life

**The Evenlode Catchment Partnership** is transforming three fields of farmland near Chipping Norton into a thriving wetland landscape. The project has already created over three hectares of new wetland and three hectares of wildflower grassland, reconnected a kilometre of river to its natural floodplain and planted more than 14,000 aquatic



Upper and lower Wetland areas in West Oxfordshire

plants. As well as boosting wildlife, the work will store 25,000m<sup>3</sup> of floodwater, improve water quality and make the surrounding area more resilient to climate change.

## A lifeline for families across the district

**Home-Start** continues to play a vital role in supporting families with young children. Every week, trained volunteers visit homes across West Oxfordshire to offer a listening ear, practical help and reassurance. Their free stay-and-play groups give children a safe place to learn and play, whilst offering parents friendship and support at a time when it's often most needed. As one mum put it: "Knowing my volunteer is coming each week has made such a difference. Honestly, it's a lifeline."



Parents and baby from the Home-Start programme



The team from The Theatre Chipping Norton

## Finding hope and confidence through creativity

Arts and culture are also helping to strengthen our communities. At **The Theatre Chipping Norton**, creative workshops are supporting young people's mental health, building confidence and giving them a space to express themselves.

Between January and May 2025, four local schools took part in weekly sessions focused on creativity and wellbeing. Young people described the sessions as "happy, exciting and hopeful", with one participant saying: "I can't lie, you kind of saved my life. Thank you."

## Championing opportunities for young people across West Oxfordshire



Meet James Edney, West Oxfordshire District Council's Youth Development Officer, a role created to help communities strengthen and expand opportunities for young people.

Since starting in February 2025, James has been out across the district meeting local groups, parish and town councils, and youth providers to connect existing work and spark new ideas. He's already supported the launch of a Youth Partnership in Witney, helped deliver an activity day in

Stonesfield, and begun exploring new provision in Eynsham and Chipping Norton.

**"The best part of this role is working alongside communities who want to create something new for their young people. My job is to help those efforts grow, join the dots, and make sure young people feel heard and valued wherever they live."** - James Edney

James is also working with local sports clubs to understand how being active supports young people's wellbeing and to celebrate clubs creating inclusive, supportive spaces.

If you're involved in youth work or have an idea that could make a difference, contact James at [james.edney@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:james.edney@westoxon.gov.uk)



Young people at their sports club

# Planning together for a community-led West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043



Thousands of residents, community groups and businesses have been helping shape our Local Plan, the blueprint for where and how new homes, jobs, infrastructure and green spaces are planned for the next 15–20 years. Your feedback has guided every step so far.

## Why we're making a new Plan

We're creating a new Local Plan to keep pace with change and to make sure growth is planned, not piecemeal, with the right roads, schools, health services, utilities and green space. National policy also requires us to plan for a challenging housing target over the coming years, and having an up-to-date Plan gives the Council, and our communities, greater control over where development goes and what it delivers.



Local people left their feedback at a Local Plan drop-in event

## A Plan shaped by local voices

The process began back in 2022, when the Council first asked what issues the new Plan should address. Through every stage so far, residents have told us their priorities clearly: affordable homes,

strong local infrastructure, action on climate change, nature recovery, local jobs, and protection of the area's distinctive character.

In 2023, we took this feedback forward and followed up with a consultation on early ideas and objectives, asking how the district should grow and what balance should be struck between development and protection. That feedback helped shape the vision and objectives for the new Plan, ensuring it reflects what matters most to our communities.

Building on those foundations, 2025 saw two major stages of consultation under **Regulation 18**, both designed to give people more focused and meaningful opportunities to influence the Plan.

## Forward looking

The Local Plan has been extended to 2043, ensuring it covers at least 15 years from adoption and gives long-term certainty for residents, developers and communities.

In 2026, all the evidence and feedback gathered so far will come together in the **first full draft Local Plan**,



Residents having their say at a planning engagement session in Carterton

The Preferred Policy Options consultation (June–August 2025) explored emerging policies, our proposed approaches to issues such as housing, climate, infrastructure, the economy and wellbeing. Residents were also asked to comment on the draft vision and objectives for the Plan, helping to ensure it reflects what matters most to local people.

Later in the year, the Preferred Spatial Options consultation (November–December 2025) turned the focus to where future growth could go. It presented potential areas for new homes, employment, nature recovery, and supporting infrastructure, based on detailed evidence and the feedback received from earlier stages.

We chose to separate these two stages so each could get the focus it deserved. Residents were able to explore the big picture of how West Oxfordshire should grow and then consider in more detail where that growth might happen.

This feedback is already shaping the emerging Plan. Together, all four consultations around the new Local Plan so far have contributed one of the most open and collaborative planning processes we've undertaken, ensuring local voices continue to shape the Plan from the ground up.

## Community engagement at its best

combining everything we've consulted on so far in one document. This draft will be subject to another full public consultation before it is submitted to the Planning Inspector for independent examination.

To stay up to date and be ready to comment on the draft Plan later this year, visit [westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2043](http://westoxon.gov.uk/localplan2043).



# An ambitious new chapter for the Carterton area

A major new opportunity is taking shape for Carterton and the surrounding villages, as work progresses on a bold Carterton Area Strategy that will also feed directly into West Oxfordshire's **new Local Plan**.

This strategy will set out a long-term vision for how the area can grow in a way that brings real benefits to local people, from better transport and new jobs to improved services, green spaces and community facilities.

Alongside this, the emerging strategy will also explore the opportunity for a **new rail connection between Carterton, Witney, Salt Cross and Oxford**, in recognition of how improved transport links could unlock new opportunities and reduce pressure on local roads.

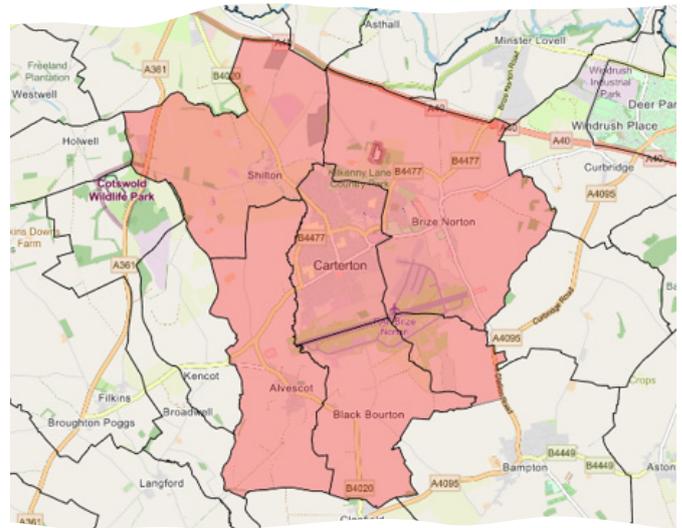
## A vibrant new future for Carterton town centre

A big part of this work is an ambitious plan to reimagine and revitalise Carterton town centre, creating a lively, welcoming place that local people can be proud of.

The regeneration plan will explore how we can:

- Bring in new shops, cafés, services and social spaces
- Create fresh job opportunities and attract new investment
- Upgrade community facilities
- Transform public spaces and improve routes for walking and cycling
- Build a vibrant town centre that feels safe, modern and full of life

This regeneration programme is a major opportunity to **attract the investment Carterton needs** to create a stronger local economy. We're laying the foundations for a brighter, more connected Carterton that supports and uplifts the wider area.



## Working in partnership

To shape this vision, the Council is working closely with Carterton Town Council, parish councils, Oxfordshire County Council, developers, landowners, Homes England and utility providers. By involving partners early and investing in the right expertise, we can create a joined-up strategy that delivers meaningful benefits for local people.

Further details on how residents and organisations can get involved will be shared soon. **Please scan the QR code to learn more:**



**“Carterton and the surrounding villages are proud, close-knit communities with a real appetite for progress. Through the Carterton Area Strategy - including the regeneration plan for Carterton town centre, bringing new retail, jobs and facilities - we have**

**a major opportunity to support local people and create an area they can feel proud of. A key factor will be working to bring investment into Carterton to make this happen.”**

- Cllr Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy



# Salt Cross Garden Village: One of the UK's first Net Zero Communities

Salt Cross Garden Village will be the site of quality homes and buildings that are energy-efficient and powered by clean energy, helping to reduce carbon emissions and keep household costs down.



## A place to grow, a space to breathe

Salt Cross is about much more than building new homes. It's about creating a community that feels part of West Oxfordshire, where people can live well, breathe easy and connect with nature. Over the coming years, Salt Cross will grow into a vibrant, inclusive neighbourhood, offering high-quality homes, schools, local shops, green spaces, walking and cycling routes, and strong transport links - including the potential for a new **rail connection between Carterton and Oxford** that would pass through the village.

The Council is preparing to adopt the **Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP)**, the detailed planning framework that will guide how the new garden village is built. It sets out everything from the mix of homes and green spaces to transport links, jobs and community facilities, and **sets an ambitious standard** for low-carbon, sustainable development.

Getting here has taken real persistence and partnership. Our ambitious Net Zero policy faced significant legal and planning challenges, but thanks to determined local residents and the Council's commitment to sustainability, it has now been found sound by the Planning Inspector. This is a landmark moment, not only for Salt Cross, but for councils nationwide working to embed climate action in their planning frameworks.

Once adopted, the AAP will pave the way for the next phase: **decision-making and delivery**. An outline planning application is already under review, alongside discussions on funding for local infrastructure and services, known as Section 106 agreements. Detailed applications for each part of the village will follow.

Construction is expected to begin by 2030, and the Council is committed to keeping residents updated as the project progresses, with opportunities for local people to get involved along the way.

So what can residents expect? Imagine **energy-efficient homes surrounded by countryside**, criss-crossed with walking and cycling paths and spaces for children to play. There will be community gardens, woodlands and orchards, allotments, a country park, and areas for events and markets. A **new science and technology park** will also bring jobs and training opportunities, while new schools will give local families more choice close to home. The development will also deliver a **25% increase in biodiversity**, creating more space for nature to thrive alongside people.

Salt Cross is a commitment to a **greener, healthier and better-connected future**. It represents the very best of what West Oxfordshire stands for: a place where people, nature and sustainability come together to create something truly special.



**“I’m delighted that the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan is now close to adoption after what has been a long and challenging journey. The legal challenges to our net zero policy only strengthened our determination to deliver a bold, forward-looking plan for West Oxfordshire’s future. I’m proud that we stood firm on our commitment to sustainability and quality of place, and now look forward to working with the developer and local community to bring this exciting new garden village to life.”**

- Cllr Hugo Ashton,  
Executive Member for Planning

Artist's impression for a Salt Cross community hub and community garden



Carterton

Witney

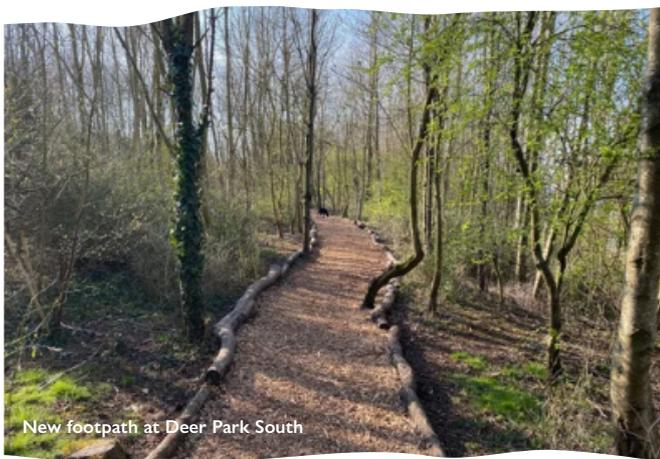
Salt Cross

Oxford

# £2 million of investment in the people, places and prosperity of West Oxfordshire



West Oxfordshire District Council has invested more than **£2 million** through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) over the last four years. Focused on projects that strengthen communities, support local businesses and improve the places we live, this funding has helped turn great local ideas into lasting improvements across the district.



New footpath at Deer Park South

## Supporting nature and local spaces

The **Nature Recovery Toolkit** helped community groups restore habitats across our villages, while the **Deer Park South Access Project** opened new paths and bridges so more people could enjoy green space on their doorstep. Insights from the Carterton Area Strategic Plan, Rural Services Study and Market Towns Study helped shape the next wave of investment.

## Backing green growth and sustainability

The **Carbon Action Fund** helped local businesses cut emissions and improve energy efficiency, offering grants of up to **£20,000** for projects like solar panels, insulation and electric vehicles — together saving an estimated **46,000 tonnes of carbon**. As more funding came through

UKSPF and REPF, support widened to programmes such as FarmAbility, which empowers adults with learning disabilities and autism; No Limits, helping young people build confidence and employability skills; and new sustainable tourism initiatives that keep our towns and villages green and vibrant.



## Strengthening local business and building long term impact

As the four-year programme enters its final phase, funding is focused on future prosperity: green and care skills training, employment support, investment in town centres, and new opportunities for start-ups like through the **OxLEP Spark Programme**. These projects leave a legacy of stronger communities, greener spaces and more resilient local businesses, demonstrating the power of targeted investment close to home.

What began as a £2 million investment has grown into something far more valuable: stronger communities, greener places and more resilient local businesses. These aren't just funded projects, they're local success stories that create opportunities close to home and strengthen pride in our district. We're proud to reflect on the past four years and the lasting difference this work has made across West Oxfordshire.

Scan the QR code to read more about our UKSPF & REPF success stories



Participants of the FarmAbility programme



# Stronger after the storm: Tackling flood risk together



Flooding can have a huge impact on our homes, roads and daily lives, and with wetter winters becoming more frequent due to climate change, we know how important it is to prepare and protect our residents, businesses and environment. Over the past year we've focused on both immediate and long-term action to minimise the impact on our communities: reducing flood risk, improving how we manage water, and making sure residents have the information they need to stay safe.



Left: Ditch clearing on New Bridge Street, Witney. Right: Fast flowing River Windrush

This winter we launched a refreshed awareness campaign to help households and businesses understand their flood risk and take simple steps to prepare. Through social and local media, we've been sharing advice, encouraging sign-up to the Environment Agency's **Flood Warning Service**, and promoting the **Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit**, an online hub full of practical guidance.



Local people identifying flood risk areas on map at the Waterways Fair

We're also working closely with **Oxfordshire County Council**, **Thames Water** and the **Environment Agency** to tackle drainage issues and keep water flowing where it should. This year, we've invested extra funding to clear blocked gullies in known flood spots, and detailed surveys have helped us map areas where surface water tends to build up. This evidence is now guiding future maintenance and identifying where better drainage or repairs could make the biggest difference, to reduce the risk of flooding and damage.

Planning for the future is just as vital. As the climate changes, we're strengthening how flood risk is managed in new developments, championing **sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)**, natural flood management and green spaces that slow the flow of water, ease pressure on drainage networks and support wildlife.

**If flooding does occur, we're ready to help.** Our team support affected residents with access to clean-up funding, recovery advice and practical assistance.

## Getting hands-on with flooding: Waterways Fair 2025



Children at the Waterways Fair exploring how rivers and waterways work through the ECP's interactive EM table

In October we held our **Waterways Fair** at the Corn Exchange in Witney, bringing local residents together for a day of learning, activities and local action. Organisations including **Witney Flood Group**, **WASP (Windrush Against Sewage Pollution)**, **Windrush Catchment Partnership** and **Evenlode Catchment Partnership (ECP)** joined us to showcase how they're protecting rivers, wetlands and floodplains. Visitors explored hands-on displays, heard from the experts and had their say on how we tackle flooding and water pollution. The fair was a fantastic opportunity to learn about flood resilience, river stewardship and wildlife conservation in a relaxed, family-friendly setting.

"Flooding can be devastating and a real challenge for those impacted to overcome. But the more we prepare, the better we can cope. We're working closely with local people and organisations to build stronger, more flood-resilient communities."

- Cllr Lidia Arciszewska,  
Executive Member  
for Environment.



For tips, tools and support, visit –  
[www.westoxon.flooding](http://www.westoxon.flooding)



Marriotts Walk shopping centre

# A great place to shop: Exciting times ahead at Marriotts Walk shopping centre

It's been a vibrant year at Marriotts Walk, Witney, and there's even more to look forward to as the centre continues to grow as a community hub in Witney, with new tenants, returning favourites and a packed calendar of events that celebrate local life.

The return of the Fine Food and Craft Market has become a monthly highlight, filling the mall with artisan bakers, makers and producers showcasing the best of local talent. Shoppers have enjoyed browsing handmade gifts, unique homewares and locally sourced treats, adding to the centre's growing reputation as a home for quality independent traders.

 Festive celebrations also played a big part in 2025's success. The Christmas Market once again brought sparkle to Marriotts Walk, offering seasonal food, crafts, live entertainment and plenty of family fun. The centre joined in with Witney's Christmas Light Switch-On, hosting late-night shopping and festive activities that helped make December a memorable month for both residents and visitors alike.

There's been good news for local businesses too. Shoezone has relocated into a larger unit, providing an even wider range for families, while Vorwerk has moved from

Thorney Leys to a new hub where Thermomix owners can enjoy workshops and open days. And in the coming months, the Scarlet River Brewing Company will open at Marriotts Walk, adding another exciting local name to the mix.



Marriotts Walk Christmas Market



Cllr Duncan Enright, Executive Member for Economic Development:

**“Marriotts Walk is contributing to the lively town centre of Witney, and transforming into a place where people come to shop, meet friends, and enjoy being part of the community. We're proud to see it growing with a great mix of local and national names, and the public realm improvements planned for next year will take it to the next level. Our vision is for Marriotts Walk to be a welcoming, vibrant space that brings people together and reflects the best of West Oxfordshire. The future here is looking very bright.”**

## Investing in a vibrant town centre

We're committed to bringing new life to Marriotts Walk in a way that truly benefits Witney. This year, a major public realm upgrade will give the centre a fresh new look, making it brighter, more attractive and more enjoyable for visitors. And this is just the start. Through ongoing investment, close collaboration with local partners and a year-round programme of activity, we're creating a space that feels lively and welcoming. Working closely with the community, we're shaping events that bring people together, from half-term fun to Easter celebrations and summer programmes.



# Turning climate goals into local action



We're also supporting innovation through **CAPZero**, a pilot project led by **Low Carbon Hub in partnership with the Council**.



Big Home Energy Day, Eynsham

Based in Eynsham and the surrounding villages, **Community Action Plan for Zero Carbon Energy (CAPZero)** is helping design a cleaner, smarter energy system for the area. As a first-of-its-kind project, the lessons we learn here will support communities across Oxfordshire to create their own local energy plans and benefit from more reliable, lower-carbon power.



CAPZero & Go Green Hanborough

Everyone deserves to live in a home that is warm, affordable to heat, and be part of a community that feels supported and resilient. That's why, over the past year, we've been laying the foundations for a more energy-efficient West Oxfordshire - planning for cleaner power, improving local buildings, and supporting projects that will help people save energy and money.

## Planning today for a cleaner energy future

A key part of this work is developing a **Local Area Energy Plan** for West Oxfordshire. The plan will set out clear, community-focused actions for how we generate, use, and manage energy locally. It will help increase the amount of renewable power we produce, strengthen our electricity grid, and cut the energy we use by improving insulation and glazing in homes and other buildings. By planning ahead, we can make sure our homes, businesses and community spaces have the right infrastructure to meet future energy needs.

Cllr Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate

## Local improvements making a real difference

As part of our own work, we're working hard to improve the energy performance of our local services. At our leisure centres, we have been installing solar panels and updating old heating systems, resulting in lower emissions, lower energy bills and a warmer, more comfortable space for visitors and staff. You may have also seen that many of our vans used across the waste, street cleansing and ground maintenance service are now fully electric.

Upgrades like these don't just save energy, they make a real difference to local people. Lower running costs mean more money can be directed to local services, while the installation work itself supports local contractors and creates opportunities for skilled employment. It's all part of our wider effort to make West Oxfordshire more sustainable, resilient and ready for the future.



## Leading the way on climate action

West Oxfordshire has been named the top performing rural district on Climate in the UK, following the release of the 2025 national Council Climate Action Scorecards. Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, commented, "This reflects a huge amount of work across the Council, and with our partners - whether it be our neighbouring councils, the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership, local organisations or our communities. And it is this collaborative work that has enabled Oxfordshire to have performed so well across the board."

We're proud of the progress made so far, including our work on climate adaptation, but this is only the beginning. Together with residents, local partners and businesses, we're building a district where homes and buildings are warmer, energy costs are lower, and communities are stronger.

# Balancing our budget, investing in our future



Cllr Alaric Smith,  
Executive Member  
for Finance

## An update from our Executive Member for Finance

### Investing in services that matter

Managing our finances carefully is central to delivering great local services and achieving our ambitions for West Oxfordshire. Like all councils, we face challenges from inflation and more than a decade of funding cuts. But thanks to our sensible and forward-thinking approach, we've been able to keep services running smoothly, invest in our communities, and deliver a balanced budget – something many councils are struggling to achieve.

### Making every pound count

Over the past year, we've identified savings and efficiencies that make every pound go further, while still improving what we do. This includes over £420,000 a year saved by renegotiating recycling contracts, increasing income from the paid business waste service and over £500,000 a year generated by Marriotts Walk shopping centre. From better waste and customer services to supporting local projects and maintaining community facilities, we're continuing to deliver real value for money. We're proud that our customer service team has been recognised as one of the best in the country, a sign of the dedication that runs throughout the Council.

### Planning ahead responsibly

Looking ahead, we know there are still financial pressures to navigate. National funding for local government continues to reduce, which means we'll keep managing our resources carefully, finding smarter ways to work, and partnering with others to achieve more together.

West Oxfordshire is a fantastic district with amazing people. By continuing to plan sensibly and invest wisely, we'll keep delivering the high-quality services you rely on and help build a bright, sustainable future for everyone.



## Make sure you're ready to vote in May 2026

### Did you know?

You now need to show a valid form of **photo ID** to vote at polling stations in elections in England. If you don't have an accepted form of ID, apply for **free voter ID online** so you don't miss out on your vote.

Find out what ID is accepted and how to apply:



You need photo ID to vote at a polling station

No ID? Apply for free voter ID now

Find out more at  
[electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID](https://electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID)

The Electoral Commission

# How you can contact us

How to contact West Oxfordshire District Council:  
Send us an email [customer.services@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@westoxon.gov.uk)

We have made it possible to access more of our services online, quickly and easily. You can still contact us by phone from 9am-2pm Monday to Friday, or visit us face to face at our Welch Way office in Witney.

Main switchboard: **01993 861000**

Out of hours: **01993 861000** For urgent issues only such as flooding, dangerous structures or homelessness  
Telephone payments\*: **01993 861045**

\*24 hour payment line for Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and Fixed Penalty Notices. You'll need the relevant bill or Fixed Penalty Notice to use this service.

3 Welch Way, Witney, OX28 6JH

How to report issues and request services online:  
[westoxon.gov.uk/report-it](http://westoxon.gov.uk/report-it)



West Oxfordshire District Council  
Executive 2025

## KEY CONTACTS:

Contact your local councillor in West Oxfordshire  
[westoxon.gov.uk/about-the-council](http://westoxon.gov.uk/about-the-council)

**Oxfordshire County Council**  
County Hall, New Road, Oxford,  
OX1 1ND  
01865 792422  
[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

**Thames Valley Police**  
Non-emergency - 101  
Emergency - 999  
[www.thamesvalley.police.uk](http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk)

**Thames Water**  
[www.thameswater.co.uk/contact-us](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/contact-us)  
Report a problem: 0800 980 8800  
[www.thameswater.co.uk/contact-us/report-a-problem](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/contact-us/report-a-problem)

**Citizens Advice**  
0808 223 1133  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

**Reducing the Risk of Domestic Abuse**  
01865 965055  
[reducingtherisk.org.uk/oxfordshire](http://reducingtherisk.org.uk/oxfordshire)

## Witney & West Oxfordshire Food Bank

To contact the foodbank, please call 07949 442342, and leave a message if you are unable to get through. Alternatively, you can email [info@witney.foodbank.org.uk](mailto:info@witney.foodbank.org.uk)  
[witney.foodbank.org.uk](http://witney.foodbank.org.uk)

## The Chippy Larder

The Guildhall, Goddards Lane,  
Chipping Norton, OX7 5NJ  
Thursday 13:00-18:00  
[chippingnorton-tc.gov.uk/the-chippy-larder/](http://chippingnorton-tc.gov.uk/the-chippy-larder/)

**Carterton Community Food Bank**  
Burford Road, Carterton, OX18 3AG  
07915 301842  
[cartertonfoodbank.co.uk](http://cartertonfoodbank.co.uk)

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Your Council: Delivering value, improving services, investing in our communities