

WODC VOICE

REPORTING BACK TO YOU, OUR RESIDENTS

NOVEMBER 2023



**IF YOU CAN IMAGINE IT,
YOU CAN CROWDFUND IT**
WESTHIVE - BRINGING DREAMS TO LIFE

Also in this issue:

**WIN A £50 MARRIOTT'S
SHOPPING VOUCHER**

Take part in our #shoppingselfie competition

NOVEMBER WATERWAYS DAY

Talk to the organisations responsible
for looking after our watercourses



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**



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West Oxfordshire District Council

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Cover image: Leader of the Council (bottom right)
with Executive Members launch Westhive



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Cut out and keep

Welcome

Hello and welcome to the November edition of WODCVoice. As the year draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on what has been achieved this year. We have worked hard on the issues that affect us all, from tackling water pollution to local planning and rolling out our new crowdfunding initiative, Westhive.

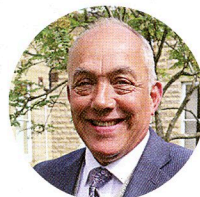
One of the most important responsibilities of the Council is to create a plan for the future. We have been working on the Local Plan which sets out how the district should grow, develop and sustain our communities for the years to come. It's a top priority for me to make sure your voice is heard and your opinion considered. We will take every comment from our recent consultation on board and we will consult with you again in the new year as the plan progresses.

Being accessible as a Council, we have been engaging with our communities and community groups to inspire some exciting projects that reflect the needs of neighbourhood; something everyone can support and get behind. To give residents an opportunity to bring their plans into reality, we launched Westhive, our crowdfunding initiative in September; a project I am personally very proud of. We have earmarked £120,000 for projects brought forward by the community, with initiatives being awarded up to £10,000. To qualify for funding through the Council, projects need the support of the community and businesses, with a proportion of the funding being raised by crowdfunding. This means that we are supporting the projects that the community think are most important.

Building on the data received in our Youth Needs Assessment last year, we will be giving our younger residents more opportunities to make their voices heard. We will be doing this by allocating £20,000 of the Westhive pledge pot towards the funding of projects aimed at, or brought forward by young people, so that they can drive the changes they want to see in their communities. Please do have a look at the exciting current projects - more information later in this edition of WODCVoice.

Engaging with our residents and involving communities in the decision making process, and to feel like they are a part of democracy is so important. To this end, we have undergone a refit of our Council Chamber; to create a modern, fit-for-purpose space that can be used by the community in a number of ways including meetings, weddings, community functions, and business events. The benefit of the refit also includes new digital technology that will enable us to broadcast our Council meetings to our website, so you can watch live debates; although we value that face to face contact too. The refit is due to complete at the end of the year. Lastly, with Christmas just around the corner, we feature some of the brilliant Christmas markets happening over the festive season. Shopping locally has so many benefits for us as a community, from reducing carbon to supporting small, independent businesses. We appreciate your feedback. After all, this is your Council.

Seasons greeting to you all from my Executive colleagues and the great staff who aim to deliver the quality services you need.



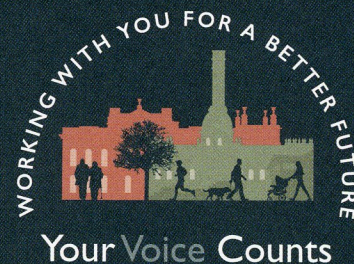
Councillor Andy Graham - Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council

Local Plan 2025-2041



Why the Local Plan matters to you

The Local Plan is one of the most important documents the Council produces. It sets out how the district should grow and develop up until 2041.



Without an up-to-date Local Plan we would be in a weaker position when planning applications from developers are determined meaning that development could happen in a way that may not be best for the district or residents. This could result in unsustainable, unplanned, piecemeal development, without the supporting infrastructure such as roads, schools and healthcare facilities.



The 2025-2041 Local Plan provides us with the opportunity to set much stronger requirements relating to climate change and the environment including zero carbon development and biodiversity net gain. We spoke to Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development why the Local Plan is so important for communities.

What have we done so far?

"We are currently at the plan preparation stage, we have recently sought views on the scope and content of the new Local Plan. An initial consultation was held last year with a further consultation taking place in the summer of this year. The 2022 consultation generated valuable feedback, enabling us to move the conversation on so that we can start to identify some preferred policy approaches. The last consultation focussed on three themes:

Draft local plan objectives - a series of draft objectives which are intended to guide the future evolution of the plan in terms of its overall approach and anticipated policy content. The objectives included:

- Tackling the climate and ecological emergency
- Healthy, safe, strong and inclusive communities
- An enhanced natural and built environment
- Attractive, accessible and thriving places
- Meeting the housing needs of all
- A vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy

Growth and prosperity in West Oxfordshire - different scenarios for how and where we might look to focus future growth in the period up to 2041.

Call for sites, ideas and opportunities - an open invitation for stakeholders (that means you!) to put forward their thoughts on how land in the district might be used in the future such as new housing, employment, infrastructure, community use, green space, nature recovery and renewable energy."



How have we consulted?

Developing a new Local Plan should be an actively engaging and flexible process. The Council wants to prevent a scenario where local communities are presented with a series of worked-up policies and proposals at a late stage, leaving little room for their input. The Plan profoundly impacts so many aspects of people's lives, therefore, we understand we can only truly reflect the needs of our residents if we consult across all corners of our community.

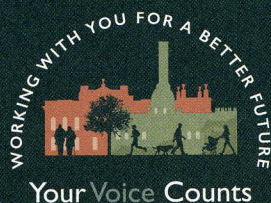
We were delighted to be awarded a share of £230,000 from the Department of Levelling Up and Communities' PropTech Fund, to improve our approach to digital engagement with residents. We procured the digital platform CitizenLab, giving us a 'one-stop-shop' for digital engagement across West Oxfordshire. The responses to the recent consultations have exceeded our expectations, with 5000 people visiting the

platform and 441 people and organisations responding during the YourVoice Counts consultation in 2022. The platform has proved a no-fuss, simple and quick way for residents to tell us what they think of the plan.

What are the next steps?

In parallel with consultation with the public and stakeholders, we are in the process of commissioning a range of supporting evidence to help inform the new Local Plan. As that evidence takes shape, we will take it into account along with the consultation responses received from the two previous consultations, and work up a series of preferred policy approaches that we aim to publish for further consultation early next year. We will then look to move towards publishing the final draft version of the plan and submitting it for examination in 2024.

Image: Listening to your views



Further advice and information

To keep up to date with news on the Local Plan and other consultations being delivered by the Council, sign up to updates on CitizenLab <https://yourvoice.westoxon.gov.uk/en-GB/>

If you require any advice or information relating to the Local Plan, please contact the Council's Planning Policy Team via email at planning.policy@westoxon.gov.uk or by telephone on 01993 861686.



Creating excellence in leisure

Across West Oxfordshire, ensuring everyone has access to a healthy and active lifestyle for all residents is a top priority for the Council. In the last year, we have been working diligently to improve our leisure facilities as part of our plans for leisure, which put you at the centre. Here, we share some of the key initiatives and developments that have been shaping our district's leisure landscape:

Making our facilities more accessible

One of our proudest achievements this year has been the implementation of the Changing Places project. Through a Government grant of £40,000, we've been able to install fully accessible toilet facilities at Chipping Norton Leisure Centre, equipped with hoists, curtains, and adult-sized changing benches, to assist those with special requirements. This is a significant step towards making our district more inclusive and ensuring that everyone can enjoy our leisure facilities. The added bonus is that all of our main leisure centres now have a changing places facility.

Sustainability and carbon reduction

Sustainability is at the heart of our strategies and recognising that Carterton Leisure Centre accounts for 33% of the Council's carbon emissions, we've embarked on an important mission to reduce the centre's carbon footprint by replacing its gas boilers with low-carbon heating solutions and installing solar PV panels. This forward-thinking approach is crucial in our wider efforts to make our leisure facilities more climate-resilient and environmentally friendly, so residents can enjoy them now and in years to come.

Woodstock Open Air Pool summer success

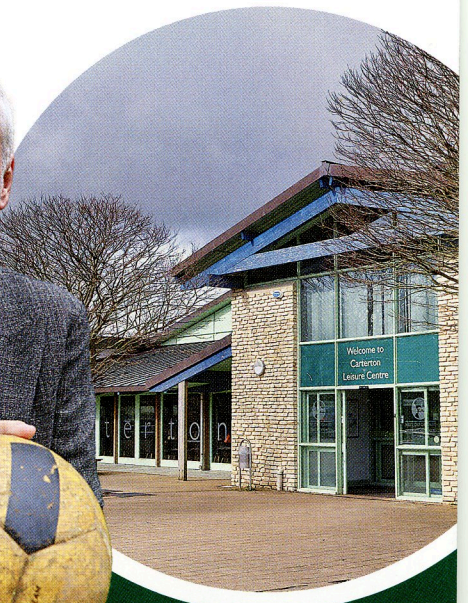
The Woodstock Open Air Pool, in partnership with leisure provider Better, enjoyed yet another successful summer season. Deviating from its usual May to September opening schedule, the pool opened exclusively for a six-week period. This not only reduced operational costs but also significantly lessened our carbon footprint. Despite some trying weather conditions, the pool's alignment with the school summer

holidays attracted families and swimmers from across the district to enjoy a range of activities, including diving lessons, one-to-one swim sessions, float sessions, poolside yoga, and even a 'bring your dog for a swim' session at the end of the season. The English weather, being what it is saw a week-long heatwave in September, and we were able to react quickly to make sure the pool stayed open so people could take advantage of the unseasonably warm weather. The pool remains a beloved hotspot for residents and visitors alike.

Fit for the future?

Our leisure facilities are not just about today's users, it's about the next generation. So, when we talk about leisure, we aren't just talking about what we already have, but thinking about what will be relevant in coming years, this could be about BMX tracks or climbing walls. West Oxfordshire District Council believes in the importance of your input. That's why we're excited to announce an upcoming leisure study later this year, to evaluate our district's leisure services and identify ways we can improve the health and well-being of residents. It will consider recent changes in leisure requirements, taking into account the impact of the pandemic, and explore the services and facilities the Council could offer in the future. Stay tuned for more details as we'll be reaching out for your valuable feedback to help shape the future of leisure in our district.

"Caring for our community and working to improve their quality of life is at the forefront of everything we do. The improvements and sustainable measures we've undertaken, or are due to undertake, in our leisure facilities are not just about bricks and mortar; they're about improving the well-being of our residents. By making our facilities more accessible, sustainable, and diverse, we're paving the way for a healthier, more inclusive, and vibrant West Oxfordshire." Cllr Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects.



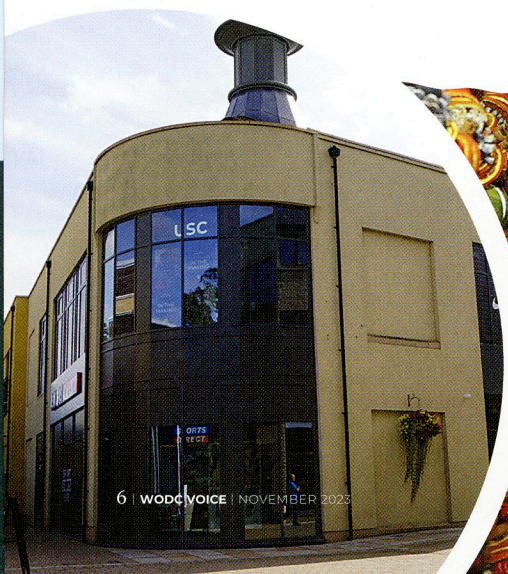


Think local, be local, shop local

Visitors to Marriotts Walk Shopping Centre in Witney will have seen some changes taking place since the Council purchased the site last December.

One of the biggest units on the site is the old Debenhams store has stood closed for over two years, but not anymore. Back in the summer, Sports Direct signed on the dotted line and agreed to move into the space which, following a month-long refit, opened its doors to the residents of West Oxfordshire in September. Seeing an excellent first week of sales, the store has become one of the 'go to' shopping experiences West Oxfordshire has to offer.

On 14 October, we were pleased to welcome the Witney Vegan Fiesta to Marriotts Walk, organised by Sparkle Vegan Events, who coordinate Vegan events across the South of England. Traders set up stalls along the shopping centre, and people from across the district came to sample vegan and eco-friendly food, skincare, gifts, and artisan goods. This was the first market of its kind to be brought to Witney, and we were delighted to see our residents coming together to try something different and celebrate the fantastic independent traders.



In the market for some Christmas cheer?

Residents are now looking to Christmas and where better to find fresh, local produce than a local market. Witney & Carterton, along with Chipping Norton have their own regular markets, but this festive season, why not look out for special markets for those special gifts?

Cogges Christmas Market in Witney

The Cogges Christmas Market in Witney, opens on 25-26 November; from 10:00am to 4pm, and offers a wide variety of gifts, artisan products, crafts, and produce. Explore two beautiful 17th-century barns and the farmyard, where newly delivered Christmas trees await. You can also enjoy the pleasure of the delicious food from Cogges Kitchen Cafe, as well as mulled wine, cider, and live music.

Witney Christmas Market by Cotswold Markets

From 8-10 December, Cotswold Markets will be proudly presenting the Witney Christmas Market, with a fantastic range of products available. Shop for handcrafted items and mouthwatering baked goods, all from beautiful wooden chalets at Marriott's Walk. This event is free and open to all who are seeking a festive shopping experience.

Woodstock Local Producer Market

At St. Mary Magdalene Church in Woodstock, you'll find gifts from over 30 local stallholders spanning the Cotswolds, Oxfordshire, and neighbouring counties. Many of these stallholders focus on ethical and sustainable products, perfect for mindful gifting. Open every 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month.

Charlbury Christmas Market

On Saturday, 16 December, from 9:30am to 11:30pm, Charlbury Market returns for a Christmas special, with a focus on local produce.

Carterton Lantern Parade and Christmas Lights

On Friday 1 December from 5:30pm, Carterton's annual lantern parade will begin at the Community College, followed by the switching on of the Christmas lights at 6pm in the town square. Families can also come and make their own lanterns at one of our

free lantern-making workshops on 18 November at the Family Centre, and 25 November at the Community Centre, Shilton Park, from 10am to 2pm.

Woodstock Christmas Lights Switch On

On Saturday 24 November, from 5:30pm, Woodstock hosts its free-to-attend Christmas lights switch on event, featuring live music, a short panto, a performance from a local school choir, food and drinks, and a special visit from Father Christmas.

Burford Christmas Lights Switch On

This year's Christmas lights switch on in Burford will take place on 2 December 2023. Admission is free and there will be entertainment and attractions for all the family. For more information, check 'Burford Buzz' on Facebook and Instagram.

Witney Christmas Light Switch On

The Witney Christmas Light switch-on event will take place in the Market Square on Friday 24 November, bringing festive cheer to the heart of Witney.

Show us your selfie & splurge at Marriotts for FREE!

Do you need some shopping inspiration? Let Marriotts Walk help with your chance to win a £50 shopping voucher to spend in the centre. Whether it's local gifts from The Shop or winter attire from M&S, you can spend your voucher wherever you want!

To enter this free competition, all you need to do is take a photo of yourself while out shopping in Marriotts Walk, upload it to social media and use the hashtag **#shoppingselfie**. We'll take a look at your shopping selfies and draw a winner out of a hat. The lucky winner will be chosen on Wednesday, January 3 and we'll contact you on your social media channel to let you know you've won!

Pictured: Cllr Duncan Enright Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economic Development takes a #shoppingselfie

Upload
your selfies to
#shoppingselfie



A day in the life

The Council is home to all sorts of different roles, from customer services to environmental health and communications. We have asked two of our staff to tell us what it's like to work for a Council and what they enjoy about their role.



Sandra Simpson - Green Councillor

I'm a Witney Green Party representative for both town and district because I care deeply about environmental issues. I've studied environmental science since the 80s and have always been concerned about climate change.

Each person can make a difference, and I want to make Witney and the wider world a better place. I'm passionate about green spaces and community gardens, like the Edible Gardens near Langdale Hall. These projects bring communities together and promote environmental awareness. I'd like to see more of these gardens or even just more fruit trees.

My day involves managing meetings and appointments, but I'm still learning the ropes with two years on the job. I rely on my trusty paper diary, a gift from my daughter, to stay organised. Mornings are for emails and addressing queries, and I seek advice from experienced Councillors when needed.

Outside of this, I enjoy staying active at Witney's Windrush Leisure Centre, playing badminton with an over 50s group. I'm also part of a ukulele group in Eynsham and sing with the West Oxfordshire Academy of Performing Arts choir. These

activities have been a lifeline, especially during COVID and when I had an injury. I encourage anyone feeling isolated to explore local groups and join in; they've been a source of support during tough times.



Hannah Kenyon - Climate Change Manager

Climate has been a passion since childhood. Growing up, regular hikes with my parents ignited a love for wild landscapes. Today, I lead a team dedicated to reducing carbon emissions to help us reach our net-zero targets. Given the urgency of the climate and ecological crises, I had to dive headfirst into this role to make sure we didn't waste any time taking action. Climate change is one of the most important issues of the modern world and time is running out. One of the more challenging aspects of my role is shifting people's mindsets on climate change. Therefore, our job is to reduce carbon emissions but also show how it can reduce costs and offer

long term benefits like better health and lower energy bills.

Seeing colleagues and residents making climate-friendly choices, tells me we're doing something right, and that climate action is becoming routine. Working on Greenlight, our online hub that invites residents to share ideas and best practice on nature and climate action, has really highlighted this. It's wonderful to see people getting involved and sharing ideas. At home, I practise what I preach when it comes to being eco-friendly. We follow a plant based diet, minimise consumption and recycle as much as we can, and I always encourage my daughter, Flora, to ride her bike or walk to school. Green and active travel is the way to go!



"Climate change is one of the most important issues of the modern world and time is running out."

Sewage Matters!

(Clean water matters more)

We are delighted to announce that, after the success of last year's event, we are holding our second Waterways Day on Thursday 23 November at the Corn Exchange, Witney.

The event will feature a series of interesting and insightful talks from organisations such as Thames Water, Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP) and Oxfordshire County Council, on important topics such as sewage pollution, water supply, nature recovery, and flood management. The day will give residents a greater understanding of the responsibilities of different organisations and the opportunity to engage with them directly. Following the success of last year's event, which saw 100 people through its doors, we have been continuing our work with TW to make it easier for residents to report issues like leaks, blockages, sewer flooding, site issues, broken manhole covers or pollution.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska Executive Member for Environment, who has championed partnership work with TW said, "Our team has been encouraging TW to set this up for some time. We have a number of sewer problem hot spots in the district. Improving communication with TW customer services will make it easier for the residents to deal with the problems." Further work with TW, with the support of WASP is ongoing to ensure that all new housing developments in the district are connected to sewers and water treatment facilities that have enough capacity to deal with the new homes.

Pictured (right): Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Cabinet Member for Environment and responsible for Waterways Day at Thames Water



If this is of interest to you, there is still time to book onto this event!



An event not to be missed!
For more information on our forthcoming Waterways Day and to book your place, please scan the QR code!





If you can imagine it, you can crowdfund it! Double your money for community benefit...

We were delighted to launch our exciting new campaign 'Westhive' community crowdfunding in September. The new crowdfunding programme is set to transform a neighbourhood near you!

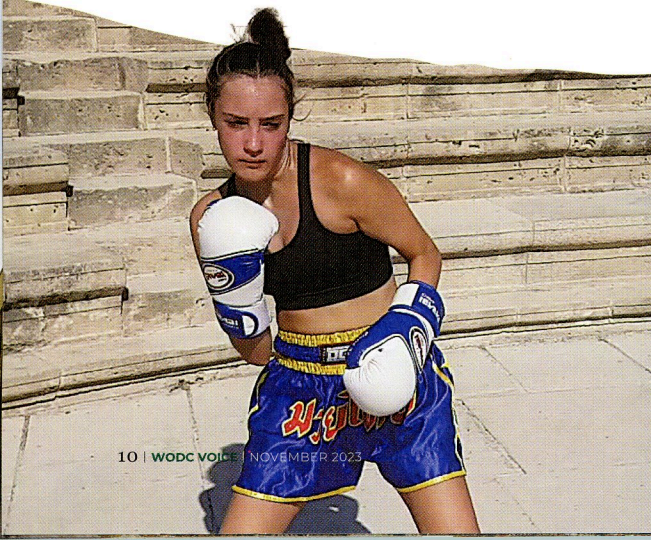
Community groups and residents are being invited to imagine a project that would benefit their community and make it happen. The Westhive programme is delivered in partnership with the UK's leading civic crowdfunding platform, Spacehive, to deliver and fund projects brought forward by the community. We have a fund of £120,000 and are looking to invest in projects that will support a number of the Council's priorities including projects that create resilient communities, protect and enhance the environment, ecological projects and climate change projects. We know that residents are best placed to understand what is needed in their community, whether it's a new play park, a wellbeing group, a community energy project or a new sports club. The beauty of crowdfunding is that the community, local businesses and organisations will be able to back projects they truly believe in, with the Council also pledging up to £10,000 for each project. We are also interested to hear from younger people who have a brilliant idea that will benefit

other young people. This could be starting a new band, or running an event that appeals to you and your friends. Or adults that have an idea for something that would make the lives of younger people better.

At least £20,000 of the pledge pot will be allocated to the funding of projects aimed at or brought forward by young people, so that they have the chance to take the driver's seat and make the changes they want to see. It is one of our main priorities to ensure our young people have a voice and are given opportunities to have their say in the future development of our district. Westhive crowdfund will support, with up to £10,000 projects that require a lump sum of capital or project funding. We want to pledge and support innovative and impactful projects, allowing residents to influence and shape their communities. People and organisations can pledge as little as £2 towards a project and contributions are only charged if the campaign hits its target.

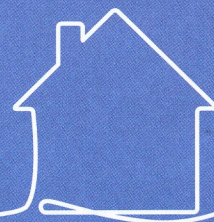
We ran our first workshop for people with ideas for projects in October, and the current projects looking for backing can be found on the Westhive page. If you have a fantastic idea to make the place you live better, then please sign up for the next workshop in January. The workshop will take you through the process of creating a project, provide tips on marketing and fundraising and experts are on-hand to answer your questions. What have you got to lose?

Pictured: Cllr Joy Aitman Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities at Westhive launch



"As a young person, getting your ideas for community projects off the ground can be challenging, particularly when it comes to raising awareness and securing the necessary funding. Westhive is a transformative opportunity for young people, providing them with the platform they need to share their ideas and campaign for the causes that matter most to them. The allocated funding for youth projects will be a real game-changer, opening the doors for them to take the lead and put their own stamp on our community. It is time for our young people to make their voices heard, and shape the future of West Oxfordshire." India Mae, WODC Youth Champion (Former 10x World Kickboxing Champion)

The right homes, for the right people, in the right places...



House prices in West Oxfordshire in 2021 were on average 11.4 times higher than average earnings, higher than the national average of 9.1 times, and that trend is still climbing today. It is not an understatement to say we are in a housing affordability crisis.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, said, "We understand the challenge this presents for our local communities with many people finding it hard to afford houses in the place they call home. As your Council we have made affordable housing a priority and we are doing all we can with the powers and resources available to us to tackle this problem. This includes working with developers to get as many affordable homes as possible built on new developments, updating our Local Plan to be as ambitious as we can be and exploring options for us to build

our own affordable homes. We have some exciting plans in the pipeline around that final point and we truly believe that through working with partners we can make a difference and help build the right homes, for the right people, in the right places."



200 affordable homes in Carterton

The new housing on Milestone Road in Carterton will include 200 affordable homes with a mix of homes available through social rent, rent to buy and shared ownership. These options will make it much cheaper to own a home. As a Council we worked hard with the developer and agreed more social rented homes than would normally be seen, something we are really proud of.

First Homes in Long Hanborough

The development in Olivers Grange will include First Homes and for these houses the buyers will be able to purchase at 30% less than the market rate with the discount protected for future buyers so the homes are always sold cheaper to those who need affordable housing.



Pictured: Leader of the Council (right) and Cllr Geoff Saul Executive Member for Housing & Social Welfare (left), at the Milestone Road site in Carterton



We're creating a space for you

Visitors to the council's offices will have seen some changes to Welch Way in Witney. This is part of an ongoing approach to improve accessibility for local residents, improve services and make Council operations more efficient. But it's not just improvements to Welch Way - the Council Chamber at Woodgreen will undergo a transformation as well.

Cllr Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, said, "We are excited to be moving ahead with the next stages of updating our buildings which includes improving our Council Chamber. Once the works are complete later this year we see the chamber becoming far more of a community space. We want to see this space being used for all sorts of events, from business events to weddings and wedding receptions to parties. The upgrade works will allow us to provide better customer service and also enable us to use the Council's current estate to generate income to pay for local services as other funding reduces. The investment in these works will not only pay for themselves, but also deliver a better service for residents."

The Council's Executive approved the update to the chamber which is the latest project as part of a plan to modernise the council buildings that has been ongoing for a number of years. This has included exploring options to reduce the carbon footprint of Council buildings and improve the Welch Way building in the centre of Witney.



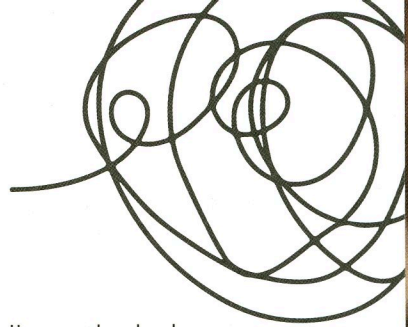
Bringing the Council to you

Every day sees more and more digital services introduced to make life easier for residents across the country and the district. During the pandemic, video conferencing became a wider known technology which the council adopted so that meetings could continue with residents being about to take part and have their say. To continue this move forward with better transparency, the Council is investing in new systems to enable members of the public to see more meetings taking place at the Council by installing equipment to live stream important meetings.

Cllr Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, said, "As we move into a digital area, and with transparency in local government of utmost importance we will install a new system to stream all council meetings, enabling these to be viewed online so anyone can see local democracy in action, without having to attend meetings in person. We will hold an open day once works are complete to show people around the new space and explore how local groups may want to use it. We expect the works to be complete by the end of the year. We look forward to welcoming you to our opening events and to our Council meetings when the upgrade works are completed."



Supporting your child's mental health: *A guide for parents...*



Ensuring the wellbeing of our young residents is a top priority for the Council, particularly in recent years as the mental health of our children has emerged as a national concern. The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruptions to their lives, affecting their education, social development, and access to essential health services. In response, we have developed a recovery plan that places a strong emphasis on safeguarding the wellbeing of our youth.

Signs your child may be suffering with their mental health

Spotting early signs of mental health struggles in your child is vital. Look out for mood swings, heightened irritability, or persistent feelings of sadness or low mood. Watch for behavioural shifts like social withdrawal or academic slumps. Changes in sleep or eating habits, along with mysterious physical complaints, could also be red flags. Social isolation, waning interest in hobbies, and distancing from friends and family are strong indicators, as is excessive worry. Keep an eye on any dabbling in drugs or alcohol.

What the research tells us

Our commitment to the mental wellbeing of our youth prompted us to conduct a comprehensive Youth Needs Assessment. This research uncovered vital insights into the sources and signals of children's mental health issues. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, our young residents bore the brunt of disruptions to their education, social lives, and limited access to essential health services. A staggering 44% of the 1473 young people we spoke to 1473 individuals shared that the pandemic took a toll on their mental health. The top responses included missing friends and family, academic struggles, and inactivity. Long-term effects revealed lingering issues such as confidence loss, loneliness, social anxiety all consistent with signs like mood swings, social withdrawal, and academic decline. Social media naturally loomed large in our conversations about mental health with young people. While they appreciated making new connections, socialising, and staying in touch, they also voiced concerns about toxicity, online negativity, body image issues, and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. Overall, the Youth Needs Assessment identified 489 young individuals grappling with significant mental health challenges,

underscoring the urgency of addressing their needs and safeguarding their wellbeing during these trying times.

How can you help?

Supporting your child's mental health might necessitate seeking professional help. Consider referring to The Mind Guide and The Youth in Mind guide, excellent directories for mental health services in Oxfordshire. Engaging in regular open dialogues with your child, creating a safe space for them to express themselves, is a constructive way to initiate those crucial conversations. Encouraging physical activity can enhance mental wellbeing. Family participation in physical activities not only strengthens bonds but also bolsters overall health. Across the district, you'll find numerous leisure facilities offering diverse clubs and activities suitable for all ages and interests. For those eligible for a YouMove membership, this initiative offers discounted rates at Better Leisure Centers and hosts various low-cost or free activities, fostering an active and healthy lifestyle for the whole family. Be vigilant about your child's social media use. If you notice withdrawal or agitation after screen time, or an unhealthy fixation on body image, these may be signs your child is struggling. While 80.1% of parents felt their child would confide in them about online bullying, and 80.6% believed they could offer guidance, the evolving challenges of modern technology means we must be even more vigilant. The Council aims to collaborate with parents to create a nurturing environment where young people can thrive. If you ever worry about your child's mental health, remember not to keep it to yourself. Talk to them, consult their teachers, and, if necessary, seek guidance from a professional who can point you in the right direction. Your child's wellbeing is our shared priority.

Find the right support for your child

- **NHS** The NHS website offers a broad support directory and is a good starting point for advice in the early stages.
- **The Mix** The Mix website has a range of support materials for under 25s on a variety of topics, including bullying and cyber bullying, drugs and alcohol, sex and relationships, university life, and finances.
- **Hopeline247** Hopeline247 has a 24/7 helpline on 0800 068 41 41.
- **Samaritans** You can reach the Samaritans via their 24/7 helpline on 116 123.
- **SHOUT** Text SHOUT to 85258 to reach the SHOUT Volunteers via an anonymous text support service, available 24/7.
- **CALM** Call the helpline between 5pm and midnight on 0800 58 58 58, open 365 days a year.
- **CAMHS** Website contains helpful resources and links to other organisations that can offer support with eating disorders, self-harm, and more.
- **Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre** OSARCC offers support to victims of sexual violence. The service is entirely free and confidential, and enquiries about support and referrals can be made at referrals@osarcc.org.uk, or by phone at 01865 725311.

44% of 1473 individuals shared that the pandemic took a toll on their mental health



Together let's end fly-tipping

We understand the detrimental and sometimes devastating impact that illegal fly-tipping can have on the environment. At best, fly-tipping is an unwelcome eyesore. But the consequences can go much further - from endangering wildlife and polluting our beautiful countryside and waterways to affecting the wellbeing of those living in the district and the livelihood of local businesses.

To tackle the problem, our Environment and Regulatory Services team follows up on incidents of fly-tipping on publicly owned land to look for evidence that could lead to prosecuting those responsible. By knowing what to do if you spot a fly-tip and understanding your legal duty when disposing of your own waste, you can help us in the fight to make West Oxfordshire a safer place for all.

If you see a fly-tip:

- Report it online: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/fly-tipping/>
- Report it to us as soon as possible, giving the location and the type and quantity of waste found
- Don't touch the items as you could disturb vital evidence and put yourself in danger from broken glass, chemicals and other toxic substances
- If you witness a fly-tip, provide the date and time of the incident and any vehicle information you may have
- Even if you're not sure whose land the fly-tip is on, you can report it to us and we'll make sure the landowner is notified if it's not ours to remove



Know who you're dealing with:

If you employ or entrust a business or an individual to take your waste away, they must hold a current waste carriers licence. You can check if someone can transport and dispose of your waste on the Environment Agency's public register:

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers>

DID YOU KNOW...
if your waste ends up fly-tipped, even if you did not commit the act, you could face a £400 fixed penalty notice!

How you can contact us

How to contact West Oxfordshire District Council:
Send us an email 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 five days a week, 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



KEY CONTACTS:

Contact your local councillor in
West Oxfordshire
westoxon.gov.uk/about-the-council

Oxfordshire County Council
County Hall, New Road, Oxford,
OX1 1ND
01865 792422
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Thames Valley Police
Non-emergency - 101
Emergency - 999
www.thamesvalley.police.uk

Thames Water
www.thameswater.co.uk/contact-us
Report a problem: 0800 980 8800
www.thameswater.co.uk/contact-us/report-a-problem

Citizens Advice
0808 223 1133
www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Reducing the Risk of Domestic Abuse
01865 965055
reducingtherisk.org.uk/oxfordshire

Witney & West Oxfordshire Food Bank

To order parcels or to contact the Supervisor Megan Gosling between 10:00-14:00 or to leave an answer phone message after these hours please ring 07949 442342
witney.foodbank.org.uk

The Chippy Larder
The Guildhall, Goddards Lane,
Chipping Norton, OX7 5NJ
Thursday 13:00-18:00
chippylarder.com

Carterton Community Food Bank
Burford Road, Carterton, OX18 3AG
07915 301842

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 West Oxfordshire District Council

www.westoxon.gov.uk



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Christmas and New Year waste & recycling collections

With Christmas just around the corner, keep up to date with when we'll be making your collections over the festive season.

Friday 22 December - collections as normal. Garden waste and bulky waste collections are suspended from Monday 25 December and will resume on Tuesday 9 January 2024.

Week commencing 25 December 2023

Food waste, recycling or refuse collections due this week will now be collected on:

Date due	Revised collection date
Monday 25 December	Wednesday 27 December
Tuesday 26 December	Thursday 28 December
Wednesday 27 December	Friday 29 December
Thursday 28 December	Saturday 30 December
Friday 29 December	Tuesday 2 January

Week commencing 1 January 2024

Food waste, recycling or refuse collections due this week will now be collected on:

Date due	Revised collection date
Monday 1 January	Wednesday 3 January
Tuesday 2 January	Thursday 4 January
Wednesday 3 January	Friday 5 January
Thursday 4 January	Saturday 6 January
Friday 5 January	Monday 8 January

Week commencing 8 January 2024

Food waste, recycling, garden waste (if subscribed) and refuse collections due this week will now be collected on:

Date due	Revised collection date
Monday 8 January	Tuesday 9 January
Tuesday 9 January	Wednesday 10 January
Wednesday 10 January	Thursday 11 January
Thursday 11 January	Friday 12 January
Friday 12 January	Saturday 13 January

CHRISTMAS TREE COLLECTION

Real Christmas trees will be collected for all households (including those without a current garden waste licence) on their scheduled garden waste collection day between Tuesday 9 January 2024 and Monday 22 January 2024. Please remove all decorations and reduce larger trees down to sections no longer than 3ft to assist crews.

Our business waste collections will also follow the revised Christmas and New Year timetable

WODC VOICE

REPORTING BACK TO YOU, OUR RESIDENTS

NOVEMBER 2023



**IF YOU CAN IMAGINE IT,
YOU CAN CROWDFUND IT**
WESTHIVE - BRINGING DREAMS TO LIFE

Also in this issue:

**WIN A £50 MARRIOTT'S
SHOPPING VOUCHER**

Take part in our #shoppingselfie competition

NOVEMBER WATERWAYS DAY

Talk to the organisations responsible
for looking after our watercourses



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**



@westoxfordshire



@WODCNews



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West Oxfordshire District Council

www.westoxon.gov.uk

Cover image: Leader of the Council (bottom right)
with Executive Members launch Westhive



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Cut out and keep

Welcome

Hello and welcome to the November edition of WODCVoice. As the year draws to a close, I find myself reflecting on what has been achieved this year. We have worked hard on the issues that affect us all, from tackling water pollution to local planning and rolling out our new crowdfunding initiative, Westhive.

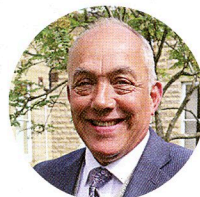
One of the most important responsibilities of the Council is to create a plan for the future. We have been working on the Local Plan which sets out how the district should grow, develop and sustain our communities for the years to come. It's a top priority for me to make sure your voice is heard and your opinion considered. We will take every comment from our recent consultation on board and we will consult with you again in the new year as the plan progresses.

Being accessible as a Council, we have been engaging with our communities and community groups to inspire some exciting projects that reflect the needs of neighbourhood; something everyone can support and get behind. To give residents an opportunity to bring their plans into reality, we launched Westhive, our crowdfunding initiative in September; a project I am personally very proud of. We have earmarked £120,000 for projects brought forward by the community, with initiatives being awarded up to £10,000. To qualify for funding through the Council, projects need the support of the community and businesses, with a proportion of the funding being raised by crowdfunding. This means that we are supporting the projects that the community think are most important.

Building on the data received in our Youth Needs Assessment last year, we will be giving our younger residents more opportunities to make their voices heard. We will be doing this by allocating £20,000 of the Westhive pledge pot towards the funding of projects aimed at, or brought forward by young people, so that they can drive the changes they want to see in their communities. Please do have a look at the exciting current projects - more information later in this edition of WODCVoice.

Engaging with our residents and involving communities in the decision making process, and to feel like they are a part of democracy is so important. To this end, we have undergone a refit of our Council Chamber; to create a modern, fit-for-purpose space that can be used by the community in a number of ways including meetings, weddings, community functions, and business events. The benefit of the refit also includes new digital technology that will enable us to broadcast our Council meetings to our website, so you can watch live debates; although we value that face to face contact too. The refit is due to complete at the end of the year. Lastly, with Christmas just around the corner, we feature some of the brilliant Christmas markets happening over the festive season. Shopping locally has so many benefits for us as a community, from reducing carbon to supporting small, independent businesses. We appreciate your feedback. After all, this is your Council.

Seasons greeting to you all from my Executive colleagues and the great staff who aim to deliver the quality services you need.



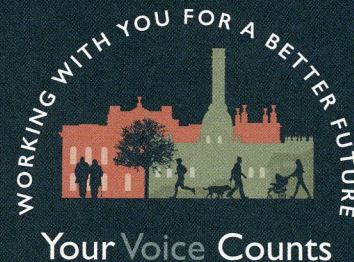
Councillor Andy Graham - Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council

Local Plan 2025-2041



Why the Local Plan matters to you

The Local Plan is one of the most important documents the Council produces. It sets out how the district should grow and develop up until 2041.



Without an up-to-date Local Plan we would be in a weaker position when planning applications from developers are determined meaning that development could happen in a way that may not be best for the district or residents. This could result in unsustainable, unplanned, piecemeal development, without the supporting infrastructure such as roads, schools and healthcare facilities.



The 2025-2041 Local Plan provides us with the opportunity to set much stronger requirements relating to climate change and the environment including zero carbon development and biodiversity net gain. We spoke to Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development why the Local Plan is so important for communities.

What have we done so far?

"We are currently at the plan preparation stage, we have recently sought views on the scope and content of the new Local Plan. An initial consultation was held last year with a further consultation taking place in the summer of this year. The 2022 consultation generated valuable feedback, enabling us to move the conversation on so that we can start to identify some preferred policy approaches. The last consultation focussed on three themes:

Draft local plan objectives - a series of draft objectives which are intended to guide the future evolution of the plan in terms of its overall approach and anticipated policy content. The objectives included:

- Tackling the climate and ecological emergency
- Healthy, safe, strong and inclusive communities
- An enhanced natural and built environment
- Attractive, accessible and thriving places
- Meeting the housing needs of all
- A vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy

Growth and prosperity in West Oxfordshire - different scenarios for how and where we might look to focus future growth in the period up to 2041.

Call for sites, ideas and opportunities - an open invitation for stakeholders (that means you!) to put forward their thoughts on how land in the district might be used in the future such as new housing, employment, infrastructure, community use, green space, nature recovery and renewable energy."



How have we consulted?

Developing a new Local Plan should be an actively engaging and flexible process. The Council wants to prevent a scenario where local communities are presented with a series of worked-up policies and proposals at a late stage, leaving little room for their input. The Plan profoundly impacts so many aspects of people's lives, therefore, we understand we can only truly reflect the needs of our residents if we consult across all corners of our community.

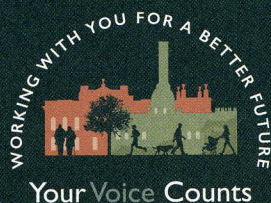
We were delighted to be awarded a share of £230,000 from the Department of Levelling Up and Communities' PropTech Fund, to improve our approach to digital engagement with residents. We procured the digital platform CitizenLab, giving us a 'one-stop-shop' for digital engagement across West Oxfordshire. The responses to the recent consultations have exceeded our expectations, with 5000 people visiting the

platform and 441 people and organisations responding during the YourVoice Counts consultation in 2022. The platform has proved a no-fuss, simple and quick way for residents to tell us what they think of the plan.

What are the next steps?

In parallel with consultation with the public and stakeholders, we are in the process of commissioning a range of supporting evidence to help inform the new Local Plan. As that evidence takes shape, we will take it into account along with the consultation responses received from the two previous consultations, and work up a series of preferred policy approaches that we aim to publish for further consultation early next year. We will then look to move towards publishing the final draft version of the plan and submitting it for examination in 2024.

Image: Listening to your views



Further advice and information

To keep up to date with news on the Local Plan and other consultations being delivered by the Council, sign up to updates on CitizenLab <https://yourvoice.westoxon.gov.uk/en-GB/>

If you require any advice or information relating to the Local Plan, please contact the Council's Planning Policy Team via email at planning.policy@westoxon.gov.uk or by telephone on 01993 861686.