

Agenda

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Audit and Governance Committee

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Wednesday 27 September 2023**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Long Room - Oxford Town Hall**

For further information please contact:

Lucy Brown, Committee and Members Services Officer,

01865 252784  lbrown@oxford.gov.uk

Members of the public can attend to observe this meeting and.

- may register in advance to speak to the committee in accordance with the [committee's rules](#)
- may record all or part of the meeting in accordance with the Council's [protocol](#)

Information about speaking and recording is set out in the agenda and on the [website](#)

Please contact the Committee Services Officer to register to speak; to discuss recording the meeting; or with any other queries.

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All public papers are available from the calendar link to this meeting once published

Committee Membership

Councillors: Membership 7: Quorum 3: substitutes are permitted.

Councillor James Fry (Chair)

Councillor Tiago Corais

Councillor Duncan Hall

Councillor Chris Jarvis

Councillor Dr Amar Latif

Councillor Roz Smith

Councillor Imogen Thomas (Vice-Chair)

Apologies and notification of substitutes received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting. Substitutes for the Chair and Vice-chair do not take on these roles.

Agenda

	Pages
1 Apologies for absence and substitutions Apologies for absence are received from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr Amar Latif, with Cllr Mike Rowley as substitute.	
2 Declarations of Interest	
3 External Auditors The External Auditors, Ernst & Young, will provide a verbal update to the Committee.	
4 Internal Audit Progress Report - September 2023 Report of: The Internal Auditor, BDO Purpose of report: To inform the Committee on progress made against the Internal Audit work plan and on the outcome of their reviews. Recommendation: To discuss and note the report.	9 - 24
5 Internal Audit Follow Up Report - September 2023 Report of: The Internal Auditor, BDO Purpose of report: To inform the Committee on the implementation of the recommendations from their previous internal audit reviews. Recommendation: To discuss and note the report.	25 - 34
6 ODS Annual Opinion for 2022-23	35 - 36
7 Annual Governance Statement Report of: The Head of Law and Governance Purpose of report: To present the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement for approval. The Committee is asked to review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances,	37 - 60

taking into account the internal auditor's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control.

Recommendation: That the Audit & Governance Committee resolves to:

1. **Approve** the Annual Governance Statement for the 2022/23 financial year

8 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Surveillance Policy and Procedure Flowcharts

61 - 66

Report of: Head of Law & Governance

Purpose of report: To present two flowcharts, for inclusion in the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Surveillance Policy and Procedure, for approval and adoption.

Recommendation(s): That the Committee approves the two flowcharts, at Appendix 1 to the report, for inclusion in the Surveillance Policy and Procedure.

9 ICT Work Programme

67 - 94

Report of: The Head of Business Improvement

Purpose of report: To update the Committee on the prioritisation of projects with ICT involvement.

Recommendation: That the Committee **resolves** to:

1. To **note** the report
2. To **confirm** the committee is satisfied with the approach

10 A&G Work Programme 2023-24

95 - 96

To review the work programme of the Committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

11 Dates and times of meetings

The Committee is scheduled to meet at 6.00pm in the Town Hall on the following dates:

- 08 November 2023

- 17 January 2024
- 08 April 2024

12 Matters exempt and part exempt from publication

If the Committee wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for the Committee to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Decisions come into effect after the latest of the expiry of the post-meeting councillor call in period; reconsideration of a called-in decision; or Council's agreement of recommendations. Oxford City Council, Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1BX Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Committee may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

13 Cyber Security Risks Update Report

97 - 112

This item includes exempt information pursuant to Paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. If the Committee wishes to discuss matters relating to the information set out in attached report to this item, it will be necessary for the Committee to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting (as set out at agenda item 12).

Report of: The Head of Business Improvement

Purpose of Report: To update the Committee on the prioritisation of projects with ICT involvement.

Recommendation(s): That the Committee **resolves** to:

1. To **note** the report
2. To **confirm** the committee is satisfied with the approach

14 Minutes of the previous meeting

113 -
122

To approve as a true and accurate record the minutes, and the confidential minutes, of the meeting held on 26 July 2023.

Information for those attending

Recording and reporting on meetings held in public

Members of public and press can record, or report in other ways, the parts of the meeting open to the public. You are not required to indicate in advance but it helps if you notify the Committee Services Officer prior to the meeting so that they can inform the Chair and direct you to the best place to record.

The Council asks those recording the meeting:

- To follow the protocol which can be found on the Council's [website](#)
- Not to disturb or disrupt the meeting
- Not to edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes not editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being recorded.
- To avoid recording members of the public present, even inadvertently, unless they are addressing the meeting.

Please be aware that you may be recorded during your speech and any follow-up. If you are attending please be aware that recording may take place and that you may be inadvertently included in these.

The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any activities that in his or her opinion are disruptive.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". The matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

Members Code – Other Registrable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing** of one of your Other Registrable Interests*** then you must declare an

interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members Code – Non Registrable Interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests, then you must declare the interest.

You must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room, if you answer in the affirmative to this test:

“Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.”

Otherwise, you may stay in the room, take part in the discussion and vote.

*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member’s spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

** Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person’s quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

*** Other Registrable Interests: a) any unpaid directorships b) any Body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority c) any Body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Oxford City Council

September 2023

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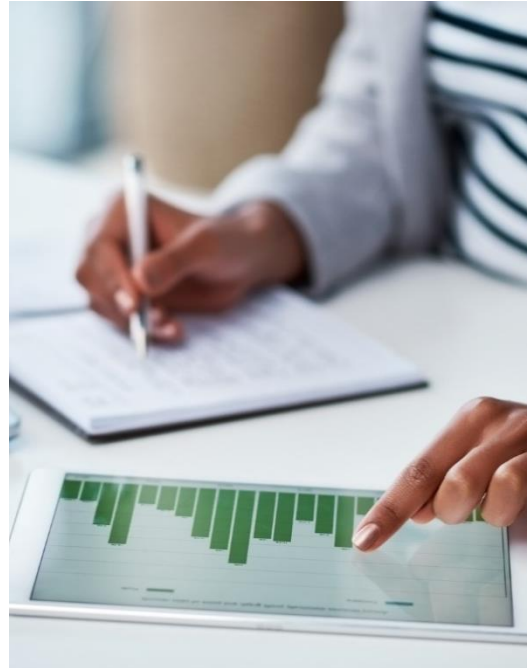
APPENDIX I 13



SUMMARY OF SEPTEMBER 2023 WORK

INTERNAL AUDIT

This report is intended to inform the Audit Committee of progress made against the 2022/2023 internal audit plan. It summarises the work we have done, together with our assessment of the systems reviewed and the recommendations we have raised. Our work complies with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. As part of our audit approach, we have agreed terms of reference for each piece of work with the risk owner, identifying the headline and sub-risks, which have been covered as part of the assignment. This approach is designed to enable us to give assurance on the risk management and internal control processes in place to mitigate the risks identified.



INTERNAL AUDIT METHODOLOGY

Our methodology is based on four assurance levels in respect of our overall conclusion as to the design and operational effectiveness of controls within the system reviewed. The assurance levels are set out in Appendix 1 of this report, and are based on us giving either 'substantial', 'moderate', 'limited' or 'no'. The four assurance levels are designed to ensure that the opinion given does not gravitate to a 'satisfactory' or middle band grading. Under any system we are required to make a judgement when making our overall assessment.

SEPTEMBER 2023 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

We are making good progress in the delivery of the September 2023-24 audit plan, and we are pleased to present the following reports to this Audit Committee meeting:

- ▶ Planning Services
- ▶ Follow-up Report.

Fieldwork is underway in respect of the following audits which we anticipate will be presented at the next Audit Committee meeting:

- ▶ Recruitment and Retention
- ▶ Health and Safety and Fire Safety
- ▶ Empty Properties and Dwellings
- ▶ Accounts Receivable
- ▶ Planned Maintenance and Refurbishment.

CHANGES TO THE INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

- ▶ As part of the July 2023 Audit Committee, it was agreed that the Private Rented Sector Review is replaced with Recruitment and Retention. Therefore, we will undertake this review in Quarter 3.

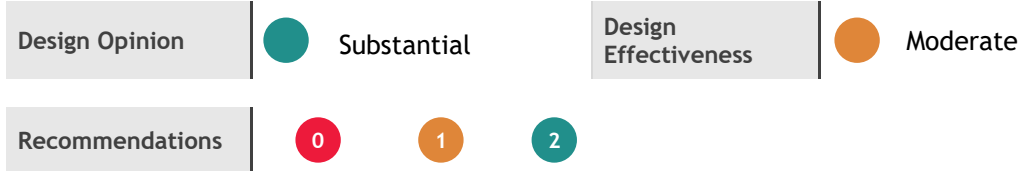
REVIEW OF 2023-24 WORK

AUDIT	EXEC LEAD	AUDIT COMMITTEE	PLANNING	FIELD WORK	REPORTING	DESIGN	EFFECTIVENESS
Audit 1: Recruitment and Retention	Nigel Kennedy	Jan 24	✓				
Audit 2. Planning Services	David Butler	Sept 23	✓	✓	✓	S	M
Audit 3. Building Control	David Butler	Apr 24	✓				
Audit 4. Selective Licensing	David Butler	Apr 24	✓				
Audit 5: Health and Safety and Fire Safety	Jane Winfield/Nerys Parry	Jan 24	✓				
Audit 6. Data Analytics	Nigel Kennedy	Apr 24	✓				
Audit 8. Empty Properties and Dwellings	Ian Wright	Jan 24	✓	✓	✓		
Audit 9. Town Hall and Community Centre Lettings	Ian Brooke	Apr 24	✓				
Audit 10. Accounts Receivables	Nigel Kennedy	Jan 24	✓				
Audit 11: QL Optimisation	Nigel Kennedy	Apr 24	✓				
Audit 12: Planned Maintenance and Refurbishment	Jane Winfield	Jan 24	✓	✓	✓		



PLANNING SERVICES

CRR REFERENCE: ENABLE AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY, DELIVER MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING



SCOPE

BACKGROUND

- ▶ Oxford City Council (the Council's) Planning Policy is supported by legislation; this mainly takes the form of Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments. Planning authorities appoint planning officers to assist with assessing planning applications. The Council's scheme of delegation enables planning officers to determine approximately 90% of applications. Major applications and applications that have been called-in are determined by the Planning Committee prior to approval
- ▶ The Council sets out their planning strategy for each major development site. These form part of Oxford's Development Plan. The programme for this is set out in the Local Development Scheme which was updated in January 2023. The Council adopted its Local Plan 2016-2036 on 8 June 2020
- ▶ The Council's Planning Team are responsible for assessing planning applications. Planning permission can be applied for via the Council's website or through the planning portal. The planning portal manages planning applications and identifies the fees chargeable to the customer in accordance with statutory levels. Residents can view or comment on existing planning applications that have been submitted on the Council's website. By statute, the Council are required to review and provide decisions on minor planning applications within eight weeks of the application being submitted, and 13 weeks for major planning applications. The Council use the Uniform system to store documentation and provide an audit trail for planning applications
- ▶ Under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Council has a duty to provide special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building, its setting or any features of historical or architectural interest when considering whether to grant planning permission
- ▶ In May 2021 the Council updated its Validation Strategy, offering guidance to applicants on common reasons that applications may be considered invalid or not accepted. This is designed to improve the success rate for applications and allow applications to be processed within statutory timescales
- ▶ The Planning Team's income is largely generated through planning application fees, which are set for residential and non-residential developments by central government. The Planning Team can set fees for pre-application services and individual agreements with large organisations such as Oxford University, who require a specialised service for planning in the area
- ▶ The Council enter into Section 106 Agreements with developers for large residential developments that impact demands for local infrastructure and resources. These are a legal agreement with contributions ring-fenced for specific projects defined within the agreement

- ▶ The Government has signalled an intention to repeal the ‘duty to cooperate’, which requires neighbouring local authorities to work together to ensure the needs (in particular housing needs) of the area are met. This is likely to be replaced with a flexible ‘alignment test’, the details of which are as yet unknown and will be subject to further consultation; in the meantime the Duty to Co-operate remains in place. The alignment test is expected to give local authorities a reduced commitment for working with its neighbouring authorities.

AREAS REVIEWED

- ▶ Assessed the Development Strategy, the Validation Strategy, and other planning service procedure documents to ensure they have been developed and approved with adequate oversight and consultation. We also assessed whether the strategy, appeals process and Ombudsman process are included within the Planning Services policies and procedures
- ▶ Reviewed a sample of 11 planning applications to assess the end-to-end process including whether:
 - Statutory time frames were met in reviewing and approving an application and whether the process was aligned to the Council’s Planning Policy
 - Sufficient documentation has been retained to support the decision made on the application
 - Planning applications are reviewed and approved by a qualified officer before a decision notice is published to the applicant
- ▶ Reviewed the income generation arrangements in place and the processes in place for income collection, recording and monitoring and assessed whether this is adequate for planning application fees and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106) fees
- ▶ Reviewed the actions that have been undertaken by the Council to prepare for the repeal of the ‘duty to cooperate’ and mitigate the impact of reduced cooperation by neighbouring local authorities
- ▶ Reviewed the governance arrangements for planning services and whether performance reports are sufficiently detailed, accurate and management maintain sufficient oversight of performance.




AREAS OF STRENGTH

- ▶ The Council have adequately prepared for the change in the ‘duty to cooperate’ requirement by evaluating the housing needs and capacity within the area, as evidenced in a joint report with Cherwell District Council. Furthermore, the Council are maintaining a level of communication with local councils at a higher level than is expected to be required through the Planning Advisory Group which has been established between Oxford City Council, Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. The purpose of the group is to provide a forum in which local authority members can discuss countywide strategic planning matters and support the delivery of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development created by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership
- ▶ The Planning Policy Officers from the Councils listed above also meet on a bi-monthly basis, known as the Oxfordshire Planning Policy Officers (OPPO), and the Heads of Planning have a similar arrangement to ensure countywide issues are dealt with consistently
- ▶ The Planning Team have developed detailed Planning Procedure Notes that cover key processes that the team are required to carry out on a regular basis and covers the planning application process from advertisement to approval. This includes distinction in processes for

major and minor applications and a Planning Troubleshooting Guide for issues regularly experienced by staff

- ▶ As part of a business process improvement (BPI) initiative the Planning Team have created a procedure note for how applications should be handled through Committee, Head of City Development or Area Planning Committees. The procedure provides criteria for which approval process is required for an application, and then outlines the steps the team is required to take in order to progress the application through these processes
- ▶ We reviewed 20 planning applications, split between minor and major applications, with decisions issued between 1 February and 30 April 2023 and confirmed that the fee had been charged correctly, the applicant was aware of the fee prior to a decision being made and all fees had been collected from the applicant
- ▶ There was adequate oversight of Planning Services by the Council’s management, producing regular performance reports. These reports were presented to the following groups:
 - The Authority Management Report: reviewed by the Scrutiny Committee on 5 December 2022 and subsequently presented to Cabinet on 14 December 2022
 - Development Management Report: presented to the Planning Committee at each monthly meeting
 - Monthly service performance reports: distributed to the Head of Planning, the portfolio holder and the management team. The Head of Planning escalates any issues raised within the reports.

Finding	Summary of Recommendations	Owner	Due Date
 AREAS OF CONCERN	It was unclear how the Council arrived at the specific contribution amount (Finding 1 - Medium).	The Council should provide a breakdown of the calculation used to justify the value Section 106 contribution and document this on the Planning Application Portal. Management Response: The Section106 agreements that were reviewed date back several years (2013, 2015 and 2018) and although the officer’s report and legal agreements are clear regarding the value and nature of contributions, there is not a complete audit trail from all other departments regarding the genesis of their contribution request. It should be noted that the legal regime governing Section 106 agreements nationally has changed significantly since 2013 (the date of one of the three agreements considered) and that current practice would be to retain all such information. The recommendation of creating a publicly accessible summary of contributions will be investigated, as part of a review of our CIL administrative system taking place this year.	David Butler & Rachel Williams 1 February 2024













**CONCLUSION**

Overall, the Council have substantial controls in place to manage its planning function, including effective procedures for processing applications within statutory timescales.

The Council has effective relationships with surrounding authorities and have investigated the housing needs of the local population and current capacity of the Council and its neighbouring authorities to meet demand. There is also effective management oversight of the Planning Team's performance, with the March 2023 Development Management Report identifying that 92% of minor and major applications have been decided within the statutory timescales.

However, areas of improvement have been identified around the transparency of the calculation of Section 106 fees and the governance of the Validation Strategy and Annual Service Plan. Therefore, we have concluded that the control design is was substantial and control effectiveness was moderate.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

QUALITY ASSURANCE	KPI	RAG RATING
High quality documents produced by the auditor that are clear and concise and contain all the information requested.	We have had three survey responses in 2023-24 where the respondent 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that the final report was clear and concise.	
Frequent communication to the customer on the latest mandatory audit standards and professional standards prescribed by the main accountancy bodies.	Sector updates were provided within the Audit Committee progress report and/or in appending reports.	
The auditor attends the necessary, meetings as agreed between the parties at the start of the contract	All meetings so far have been attended, including Audit Committee meetings, pre-Audit Committee, scoping meetings and meetings during audit fieldwork.	
Information is presented in the format requested by the customer.	No requests to change the BDO format.	
Customer satisfaction reports - overall score at average at least 3.5 / 5 for surveys issued at the end of each audit.	We have received three survey responses for 2023/24 where we had an average score of 4.25 for audit satisfaction. We will continue to issue surveys for each audit as it is finalised.	
External audit can rely on the work undertaken by internal audit (where planned)	To be clarified at year end once we have met with the new external auditors	
Positive result from any external review	In June 2021 an External Quality Assessment by the Institute of Internal Auditors reported that BDO LLP's Public Sector Internal Audit Team 'generally conforms' with the International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF) and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).	
	This is the highest of the three ratings categories.	
REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS	KPI	RAG RATING
Draft report to be produced 3 weeks after the end of the fieldwork	Draft reports have been produced within 3 weeks in the year to date.	
Management to respond to internal audit reports within 2 weeks	We have received management responses within 2 weeks for all audit reports so far in 2023/24.	
Final report to be produced 1 week after management responses	The final reports issued were released within one week of receipt of management comments for all reviews so far in 2023/24.	
90% recommendations to be accepted by management	All recommendations have been agreed with management prior to release of the final audit report and have been accepted in full.	
DELIVERY	KPI	RAG RATING
Annual Audit Plan delivered in line with timetable and Actual days are in accordance with Annual Audit Plan	Progress against the audit plan is reported at every Audit Committee, against original planned dates. All audits have been completed in line with the actual days agreed, with some dates moved back at the request of the Council.	

At least 60% input from qualified staff

Audits undertaken in 2023/24 have been undertaken by qualified staff.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR UPDATE

Our quarterly public sector briefing summarises recent publication and emerging issues relevant to local authorities that may be of interest to your organisation. It is intended to provide a snapshot of current issues for senior managers, non-executive directors and governors.

BIRMINGHAM ISSUES S114 NOTICE

The Council in the country's second-largest city has issued a section 114 notice as it faces down an £87m budget gap this year and an equal pay liability of three-quarters of a billion pounds.

Birmingham City Council has announced it cannot meet its liabilities, issuing the statutory notice stopping all non-essential spending.

The authority has faced costs and setbacks including a faltering implementation of its Oracle IT system (£100m), a share of the 2022 Commonwealth Games (£184m) and an outstanding equal pay liability (£650m-760m, on top of the £1.1bn it has already paid).

Interim director of finance Fiona Greenway has confirmed the council does not have the resources to meet the equal pay costs, and does not have any other way of paying.

Birmingham implemented spending controls in July, about a week after uncovering the latest equal pay liability, which relates to a 2012 Supreme Court ruling that found female staff had been denied bonuses given to their male colleagues. The liability is rising by between £5m and £14m each month.

"The council will tighten the spend controls already in place and put them in the hands of the Section 151 officer to ensure there is complete grip," a spokesperson said.

"The notice means all new spending, with the exception of protecting vulnerable people and statutory services, must stop immediately."

A committee later this week will be told £33m of £65m of savings needed in 2023-24 were seen as "high risk", while £29m are "medium risk" and only £3m are at "low risk" of not being achieved.

<https://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2023/09/birmingham-issues-s114-notice>

FOR INFORMATION

For the Audit Committee Members and Executive Directors

A survey found that three of 14 SIGOMA member councils had recently considered or were considering issuing a notice this year - and two who did not respond have separately publicly warned they are at risk.

Six more SIGOMA members told the organisation they think S114 notices are possible in future years - three in the survey and three separately.

At least nine more councils - not members of SIGOMA - have had S114 concerns of their own reported in the media.

This makes 12 this year (not including Woking Borough Council, which issued a notice in June) and nine next year - and the possibility of there being many more besides remains real.

Councils said the lack of dedicated funding for children's care has piled pressure onto already-stretched budgets, reducing reserve balances and putting financial stability at risk, SIGOMA said.

SIGOMA chair Stephen Houghton said: "The funding system is completely broken.

"Councils have worked miracles for the past 13 years, but there is nothing left.

"The government should provide additional in-year funding to relieve inflationary pressure, including for the pay deal this year.

<https://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2023/08/there-nothing-left-sigoma-warns-s114-risks>

FOR INFORMATION

For the Audit Committee Members and Executive Directors

HUGE COSTS ARE STIFLING COUNCILS, LGA WARNS

Energy, Social Care and Inflation part of spiralling costs

Local government is facing multiple cost pressures and needs billions of extra funding, the LGA has warned.

Its leader warned the huge spikes in inflation and energy costs, plus wage costs and extra demand for social services have left the majority of councils on the brink.

“Inflation, the National Living Wage, energy costs and increasing demand for services are adding billions of extra costs just to keep services standing still,” said LGA chair, Cllr Saun Davies.

His comments came in response to a BBC investigation which concluded local authorities are set to spend £1.1bn of reserves this year to stay afloat.

It also forecast that the sector will need £5bn of extra funding just to keep services going.

And its research concluded that the average deficit for councils will be £33m by 2025-26.

But the drivers of extra demand are not evenly spread across the country - and some councils have specific issues that are not their responsibility.

A group of councils are lobbying the Home Office over how they can resolve the small boats crisis as they are either a first point of contact for arrivals or are housing an increasing number of asylum seekers and their budgets do not reflect this.

Kent County Council has written to the Home Office asking for action to resolve the support for unaccompanied children.

The incentivised funding scheme, in place throughout 2023-2024, will provide local authorities with an additional lump sum of £6,000 for each child transferring within five working days from a dedicated children’s hotel.

<https://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2023/08/huge-costs-are-stifling-councils-lga-warns>

FOR INFORMATION

Audit Committee, Executive Directors, and Non-Executive Directors

COUNCIL SET TO WIND DOWN HOUSING COMPANY

Rising interest rates and government restrictions on commercial developments have prompted Mid Devon District Council to begin winding down a housing subsidiary.

Levelling up minister Lee Rowley confirmed that David Smith, former chief executive of South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, has been appointed as a managing director commissioner.

Smith will fulfil the role of a chief executive for the authority, and will be responsible for its day-to-day operations until the council appoints a replacement, joining Essex County Council on the commissioning team.

Council leader Mark Coxshall said: “Dave brings with him great experience and expertise having held senior positions across a number of local authorities in England.

“I look forward to working hand in hand with him as we drive forward our recovery to ensure Thurrock Council has a future in which it is sustainable and is the best it can be.”

Commissioners, the first of whom were appointed in September, will also have new powers over the scrutiny of council decisions; how services are designed and run; hiring and firing senior officers; overseeing an audit of the authority’s governance; and the development of a senior management performance framework.

“Having carefully considered the best value inspection report, and the representations I have received about the intervention, I am satisfied that Thurrock Council is continuing to fail to comply with its best value duty,” Rowley said.

Details of the authority’s financial woes became clearer in November, when a £452m funding gap emerged in this year’s budget due to the impairment of four assets and a significant increase to MRP to comply with local government guidelines.

<https://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2023/08/council-set-wind-down-housing-company>

FOR INFORMATION

Audit Committee, Executive Directors, and Non-Executive Directors

FINANCE NAMED AS MAJOR BARRIER TO ICS SUCCESS

Unexpected cuts and other financial pressures have been listed by integrated care system leaders as being among the biggest issues they face, despite them being proud of the work done so far.

NHS Confederation released a report looking at the state of the systems one year after they became operational, optimistically subtitled “riding the storm”, following a survey of leaders.

They have faced challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis, significant winter pressure, industrial action and a huge backlog of care.

Nearly half (45%) named 'lack of funding for social care' or 'current financial position of the NHS' in their top three barriers over the coming two years - only below 'pressure on and morale of the workforce' (53%) among concerns.

"ICS leaders are proud of the progress they've made in really tough conditions but they are deeply frustrated by some of the potentially soluble barriers that are hindering the extent to which they can get on with transforming services for their local communities," said director of NHS Confederation's ICS network Sarah Walter.

"They want to see these tackled urgently if ICSs are to fulfil their full potential."

In March, NHS England told integrated care boards they should plan for a 30% cut in their running costs by 2025-26 - even before adjusting for inflation, which means the real-terms cut could be closer to 40%.

<https://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2023/08/finance-named-major-barrier-ics-success>

FOR INFORMATION

Audit Committee, Executive Directors, and Non-Executive Directors

NAO REPORT: WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTS 2020-21

The NAO has published the C&AG's audit certificate and report on the Whole of Government Accounts 2020-21 (WGA). The financial statements were qualified due to:

- The non-consolidation of 155 components designated to the public sector;
- The definition and application of the accounting boundary;
- The inconsistent application of accounting policies;
- Qualifications in relation to the underlying statutory audits of bodies falling within the accounts including two that are significant - the Department of Health and Social Care, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;
- The consolidation of components with non-coterminous year ends; and
- The consolidation of components whose accounts have not been audited.

[Whole_of_Government_Accounts_202021_Final_Version_for_laying_and_publishing.pdf](#)

FOR INFORMATION

Audit Committee, Executive Directors, and Non-Executive Directors

HMICFRS - POLICE PERFORMANCE: GETTING A GRIP

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has published Police performance: Getting a grip which focuses on the findings the police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy 2021-22 inspection programme, which assesses the performance of the 43 police forces in England and Wales.

Part 1 of the report examines national themes and Part 2 of the report explores problems with performance management and areas for improvement.





Police performance: Getting a grip - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

FOR INFORMATION




Audit Committee, Executive Directors, and Non-Executive Directors

APPENDIX I

OPINION SIGNIFICANCE DEFINITION

LEVEL OF ASSURANCE	DESIGN OPINION	FINDINGS REVIEW	FROM	EFFECTIVENESS OPINION	FINDINGS REVIEW	FROM
 Substantial	Appropriate procedures and controls in place to mitigate the key risks.	There is a sound system of internal control designed to achieve system objectives.		No, or only minor, exceptions found in testing of the procedures and controls.	The controls that are in place are being consistently applied.	
 Moderate	In the main, there are appropriate procedures and controls in place to mitigate the key risks reviewed albeit with some that are not fully effective.	Generally a sound system of internal control designed to achieve system objectives with some exceptions.		A small number of exceptions found in testing of the procedures and controls.	Evidence of non compliance with some controls, that may put some of the system objectives at risk.	
 Limited	A number of significant gaps identified in the procedures and controls in key areas. Where practical, efforts should be made to address in-year.	System of internal controls is weakened with system objectives at risk of not being achieved.		A number of reoccurring exceptions found in testing of the procedures and controls. Where practical, efforts should be made to address in-year.	Non-compliance with key procedures and controls places the system objectives at risk.	
 No	For all risk areas there are significant gaps in the procedures and controls. Failure to address in-year affects the quality of the organisation's overall internal control framework.	Poor system of internal control.		Due to absence of effective controls and procedures, no reliance can be placed on their operation. Failure to address in-year affects the quality of the organisation's overall internal control framework.	Non compliance and/or compliance with inadequate controls.	

RECOMMENDATION SIGNIFICANCE DEFINITION

RECOMMENDATION SIGNIFICANCE	
 High	A weakness where there is substantial risk of loss, fraud, impropriety, poor value for money, or failure to achieve organisational objectives. Such risk could lead to an adverse impact on the business. Remedial action must be taken urgently.
 Medium	A weakness in control which, although not fundamental, relates to shortcomings which expose individual business systems to a less immediate level of threatening risk or poor value for money. Such a risk could impact on operational objectives and should be of concern to senior management and requires prompt specific action.
 Low	Areas that individually have no significant impact, but where management would benefit from improved controls and/or have the opportunity to achieve greater effectiveness and/or efficiency.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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**INTERNAL AUDIT FOLLOW UP
OF RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT**

25 OXFORD CITY COUNCIL
2023/2024

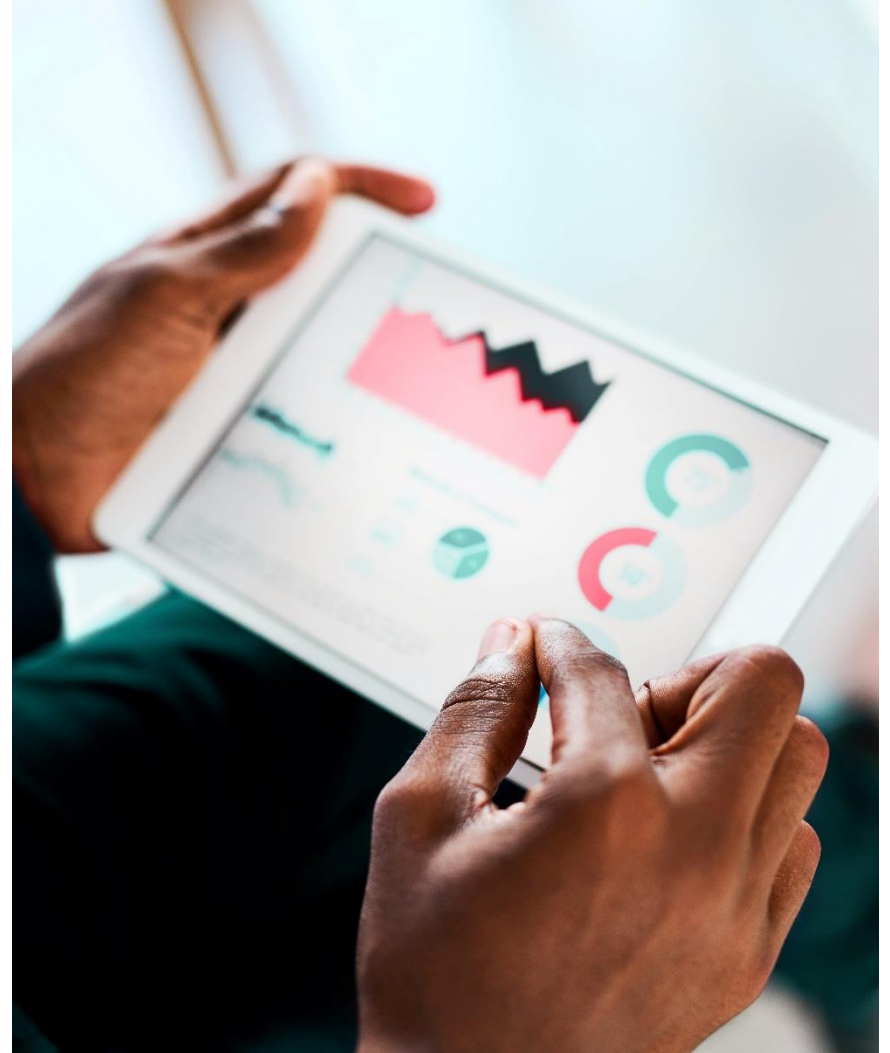
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IBDO

Agenda Item 5

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SUMMARY

2023/2024	Total Recs to follow up Sept 23	H	M	Complete		Incomplete	
				H	M	H	M
Project Management	6	-	6	-	6	-	-
Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	7	-	7	-	6	-	1

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2023/20243	Total Recs to follow up Sept 23	H	M	Complete		Incomplete	
				H	M	H	M
Change Programme	2	-	2	-	-	-	2
Housing Rents	1	-	1	-	-	-	1
Enforcement Restructure	2	-	2	-	2	-	-
Total	5	-	5	-	2	-	3

SUMMARY

2021/2022

Please find below a summary of the status of implementation of recommendations arising from reports issued in 2023/2024.

- ▶ Six medium recommendations (Project Management) have been successfully implemented by the Council
- ▶ One medium recommendation is incomplete and have been issued more than two revised due dates (Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery).

2022/2023

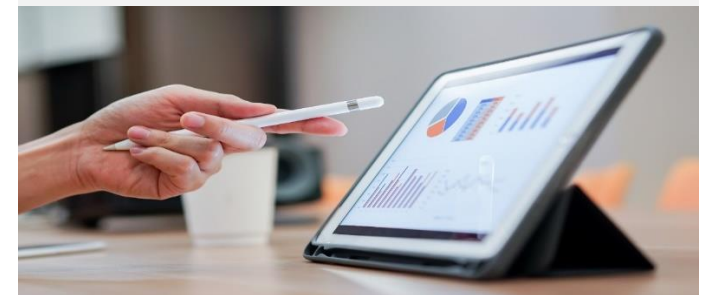
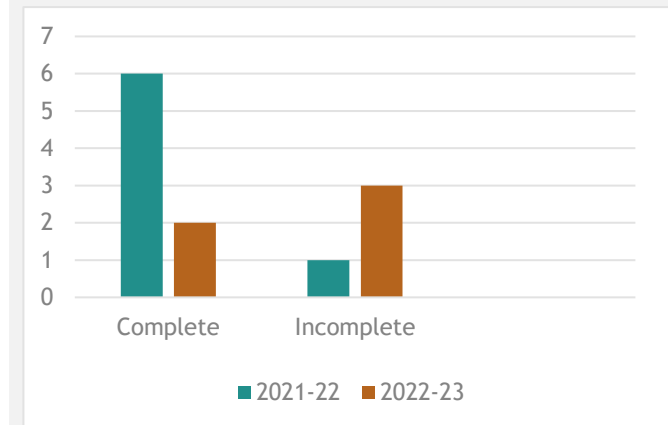
Please find below a summary of the status of implementation of recommendations arising from reports issued in 2023/2024.

- ▶ Two medium recommendations for Enforcement Restructure have been successfully implemented
- ▶ Three medium recommendations (Change Programme and Housing Rents) remain incomplete and have been issued with revised due dates. These recommendations were due for completion in July 2023. We have received management updates indicating that these recommendations are now substantially complete. While we are satisfied with the responses received, we will close these recommendations once we have received evidence to support their completion.





We will continue to follow up on all recommendations with revised due dates as they fall due to subsequent Audit & Governance Committee meetings.

REQUIRED AUDIT COMMITTEE ACTION:





We ask the Audit Committee to note the progress against the 12 recommendations due for September 2023 Audit Committee.



RECOMMENDATIONS: COMPLETE




AUDIT	ACTIONS AGREED	PRIORITY LEVEL	MANAGER RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	CURRENT PROGRESS
2021/22. Project Management	The PMO Team should provide refresher training or arrange a workshop to inform staff of the reporting requirements including variance analysis on the project (see finding 3 for further details).	Medium 	PMO Lead	31/07/2022 31/12/2022 30/09/2023	Management Comments: The PMO Team have provided refresher training on Capital Projects which outlines the reporting requirements including variance analysis. Training sessions began in March 2023 with sessions provided on a monthly basis. Internal Audit Comments: We reviewed the training slides and deem this recommendation as complete.
2021/22. Project Management	The onus should be placed on the Project Managers to review variances and ask questions where they are unsure on how to narrate these.	Medium 	PMO Lead	31/07/2022 31/12/2022 30/09/2023	Management Comments: Smartsheet issues an automated update to Project Managers to remind them to provide an update to the CMT/Development Board on the progress. The message states that Project Managers must 'check the forecast spend is up to date, and raise any queries' with the Management Accountant. Internal Audit Comments: We reviewed the Smartsheet update and confirm this recommendation is complete.
2021/22. Project Management	To formalise and better promote a lessons learnt process, which involves the PMO Team to report the lessons learnt log to the Development Review Group on a quarterly basis. The PMO Team should consolidate the lessons learnt into a report and distribute to Project Managers for wider learning. The Development Review Group should monitor the lessons learnt and ensure that actions are taken to mitigate the issues from occurring in the future.	Medium 	PMO Lead	31/07/2022 31/12/2022 30/09/2023	Management Comments: The lessons Learnt log sheet was shared with the Development Review Group in June 2023. The minutes display that lessons learnt are monitored and actions are identified to mitigate issues. Internal Audit Comments: We reviewed the minutes of the Development Review Group and deem this recommendation as complete.
2021/22. Project Management	To amend the lessons learnt log to include an action, a responsible Officer, and a date for the completion of actions where applicable for monitoring purposes.	Medium 	PMO Lead	31/07/2022 31/12/2022 30/09/2023	Management Comments: The lessons Learnt log has been updated to include action, responsible Officer and progress update. Internal Audit Comments: We reviewed the Lessons Learnt Log and confirm this recommendation is complete.

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<p>2021/22. Project Management</p>	<p>The PMO Team should provide refresher training or arrange a workshop to inform staff of reporting requirements.</p>	<p>Medium </p>	<p>PMO Lead</p>	<p>31/07/2022 31/12/2022 30/09/2023</p>	<p>Management Comments: Refresher training courses has been provided which highlights the lessons learned on reporting. The Council have a lessons learned and project closure process guidance available on the intranet for staff to review. Internal Audit Comments: Review of the training slides and guidance documents confirm this recommendation is complete.</p>
<p>2021/22. Project Management</p>	<p>The PMO Team should design a training session or a workshop which demonstrates how Smartsheets, the Council’s main risk register and the lessons learnt web-form should be completed and monitored. Refresher training should be aimed at existing and new staff who complete work for the Capital projects. Training resources should be uploaded onto the Council’s intranet for staff to revisit and which should include examples of best practice for guidance.</p>	<p>Medium </p>	<p>PMO Lead</p>	<p>31/07/2022 31/12/2022 30/09/2023</p>	<p>Management Comments: On the Councils intranet, guidance documents are available on a series of topics related to PMO, including Smartsheet guidance. Internal Audit Comments: Review of the guidance documents confirm this recommendation is complete.</p>
<p>2022/23 Enforcement Restructure</p>	<p>To assist informed operational decisions the Regulatory Services & Community Safety service KPIs Smartsheet report should be verified to ensure that it holds the correct data. In addition including an ‘actual year to date’ column will establish how close the KPI is to achieving its annual target; which can then be monitored throughout the year.</p>	<p>Medium </p>	<p>Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety</p>	<p>30/04/2023</p>	<p>Management Comments: The Smartsheet where KPIs are reported on has been updated to include the ‘actual year to date’ and an ‘actual month to date’ reporting column. This will be used to establish how close the KPI is to achieving the annual target. Internal Audit Comments: Review of the Smartsheet documents confirm this recommendation is complete.</p>
<p>2022/23 Enforcement Restructure</p>	<p>a) The corporate KPI procedures should be updated to reflect the current target, then shared with relevant members of the team. b) Other team members should be trained to run the relevant reports and calculate the KPI.</p>	<p>Medium </p>	<p>Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety</p>	<p>30/04/2023</p>	<p>Management Comments: A procedure has been created and placed on the Teams channel used by Team Managers and PLOs within relevant teams. The Team has confirmed that training on how to produce the data for the KPIs was provided, officers are able to run Power Bi system reports post the procedure/training. Internal Audit Comments: A review of the procedure notes and confirmation of training received by staff confirms this recommendation is complete.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS: IN PROGRESS

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AUDIT	ACTIONS AGREED	PRIORITY LEVEL	MANAGER RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE	CURRENT PROGRESS
2021/22. Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery	Management should look to arrange a full end-to-end disaster recovery test on one or more business systems with SCC on a regular (annual) basis, in order to ensure that arrangements are feasible and can be effectively relied upon. This should be clearly documented within the disaster recovery plan.	Medium 	Chief Technology and Information Officer	30/04/2022 30/04/2023 31/12/2023	Management Comments: The Team are in the process of identifying the servers in scope are due to carry out the Disaster Recovery test in September 2023. Internal Audit Comments: We have revised the due date for this recommendation and will follow up for the next Audit Committee.
2022/23 Housing Rents	The Council should ensure a robust policy is in place in cases of succession of tenancies, clear guidelines should be established on this including an inspection of the property should this fall in the above category.	Medium 	Landlord Services Manager	31/07/2023 31/12/2023	Management Comments: As part of the Transformation work in Landlord Services, succession has been identified as a key area to improve on. Processes have been updated to ensure swift contact with the bereaved has been made to ensure a quick discussion is made (following triage) on whether there is a succession or not. Internal Audit Comments: Whilst Management deems this recommendation as complete, evidence was not provided to support this. We will follow up the recommendation for the next Audit Committee.
2022/23 Change Programme	A. Financial savings and efficiency targets should be recorded for each project, where applicable, on the Benefits Tracker, showing the contribution of savings towards the workstreams and the Fit for the Future Programme. We would expect that for projects that have been developed to achieve financial savings, the following information would be reported to the Change Board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Completion Date • RAG Status of each saving/efficiency to identify whether it is on target • Updates on the progress/implementation of the project 	Medium 	Head of Business Improvement	31/07/2023 31/12/2023	Management Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The ability to record financial savings is set up on the benefits tracker, including all of the columns requested in the recommendation. Some work streams are reporting progress as part of their update. Request for work stream leads to review progress with delivering their financial savings and re-present at the next board B. A summary report was presented to the Organisational Change Board on 05.09.23 showing expected savings and their status. Internal Audit Comments: Whilst Management deems this recommendation as complete, evidence was not provided to support this. We will follow up the recommendation for the next Audit Committee.

- Financial efficiencies obtained from the project compared to the business case
 - Details of non-financial efficiencies from the project.
- B. The financial savings from each work stream should be calculated and reported to the Change Board to identify whether the workstreams are meeting the savings targets.

2022/23
Change Programme

- A. Critical success measures should be developed for each workstream by the workstream lead to monitor the effectiveness of projects in delivering efficiencies and financial savings. These critical success measures should be SMART
- B. The critical success measures from each workstream should be reported to the Change Board quarterly to oversee the impact of project on the overarching critical success measures and escalate any issues where projects benefits have not materialised as expected.

Medium



Head of Business Improvement

~~31/07/2023~~
31/12/2023

Management Comments:

- A. SMART critical success factors developed for some work streams and reported at Organisational Change Board on 05.09.23. Request for work stream leads to review their critical success factors and re-present at the next board.
- B. The critical success measures report and template is set up and workstream lead are expected to record progress and we have agreed these will be reported on each month.

Internal Audit Comments: Whilst finding b is marked as complete, we did not review evidence to support this. We will follow up the recommendation for the next Audit Committee.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Director, Public Sector

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Statement from Catherine Pridham, Chair of ODS Audit Committee to Oxford City Council Audit and Governance Committee on 27 September 2023

Annual Audit Opinion ODS 22/23

- The Internal Audit function for ODS is provided by BDO. As in prior years, due to the size of the internal audit engagement undertaken, they were unwilling to offer an overall audit opinion for work they have undertaken for ODS.
- The internal audit plan for 22/23 was amended to provide additional scope to the contract management audit because of FOI requests received and as a result the planned review of Data Input Controls has been rescheduled into the 23/24 audit plan.
- The Audit Committee / Board are happy to provide assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of ODS's governance, risk management, and system of internal control based on the work of BDO and further assurances gathered. Action has been taken with regards to the limited assurance provided by the Contract Management audit. ODS can demonstrate its' compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and high-risk areas of spend have been expedited to ensure good practice.
- In their Annual Report BDO confirmed that management have responded positively and appropriately to recommendations made and none are overdue.
- **Governance and Risk Management Assurance:**
 - Governance structures between OCC and ODS are in place and allow for oversight by officers and members and ODS non-executive Directors now attend all Shareholder meetings.
 - All Heads of Service completed the OCC 22/23 Governance Questionnaire. Areas of strength included the priority given to Health and Safety, gaining external accreditations, robust absence management, good training programmes, risk management, complaint handling processes, support from procurement officers and the importance given to 'doing good'. Areas of challenge, unsurprisingly, focussed on the fallout from the QL implementation problems and the need to ensure the flow of accurate financial information. It was pleasing to see, however, that many respondents noted that once properly implemented, QL was an effective resource. Other areas of concern noted included staff recruitment and the need for more streamlined processes.
- BDO conducted a Risk Maturity advisory review during the year and they highlighted the changes made to risk management process and culture over the last 18 months and the positive impact that this has had on employees' understanding of the importance of risk management to the organisation.

- Anti-fraud, money laundering and whistleblowing policies are in place and training continues to be delivered.
- The gifts and hospitality reporting process has been reviewed, updated and communicated across the business.
- Complete financial oversight continued to be challenging due to the impact of QL implementation issues however with the 'go live' of the sales order process during the year the automation of reporting sales directly into the correct business is now resolved.
- Accreditations
 - ISO9001 quality management system accreditation maintained.
 - ISO14001 environmental management system accreditation maintained.
 - ISO45001 health and safety system accreditation achieved.
- As is typical every year and as part of the Quality Assurance Framework, all areas of the business reviewed their ISO modules which included legislation and environmental compliance, successfully retained accreditation with a handful of minor non-conformities identified, which have since been corrected.
- The Board has received monitoring updates on H&S at every Board meeting and on a monthly basis between meetings.

- **Internal Control Assurance**
- The BDO review of manual financial reporting controls put in place during the QL implementation was finalised. In areas where operational effectiveness could not be evidenced to BDO ODS conducted additional assurance work to satisfy the Board and the 21/22 accounts have subsequently been signed off by the external auditors.
- A GDPR internal audit resulted in moderate assurance with one high priority recommendation concerning the incomplete record of processing activities. A review of each business unit's information asset registers, data flows and processing activities will be completed by Feb 24.
- An OCC review of Car Parking related to the ODS control environment resulted in substantial assurance being given for both the design and effectiveness of the controls in place.
- Quality Assurance Audits took place on all areas of the business and no major non-conformances were found.

Catherine Pridham
Chair of ODS Audit Committee

To: Audit & Governance Committee
Date: 27 September 2023
Report of: Head of Law & Governance
Title of Report: 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement for approval. The Committee is asked to review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account the internal auditor’s opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and control.
Recommendation(s): That the Audit & Governance Committee resolves to:	
1. Approve the Annual Governance Statement for the 2022/23 financial year	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

Introduction and background

1. The preparation of the Annual Governance Statement (“the AGS”), to support the Annual Statement of Accounts, is a statutory requirement (Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015) for local authorities. Its purpose is to demonstrate and evidence that there is a continuous review of its control environment - the effectiveness of the Council’s internal control, performance, and risk management systems. This allows an assurance on their effectiveness to be provided so that users of the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts can be satisfied that proper arrangements are in place to govern spending and safeguard assets. The process also enables the production of a corporate action plan to address any identified weaknesses.
2. The AGS also explains what governance challenges the Council is facing and how it is addressing those challenges and seeking improvement in how its functions are exercised. As part of the process of identifying issues self-assessment information is collated for all Service Areas through annual

governance questionnaires. The responses to the questionnaires are analysed to identify recurring governance challenges.

The Annual Governance Statement

3. It is noted that whilst there is a legislative requirement to complete the AGS, the information provided by the exercise is of benefit to the Council as it enables an assessment of governance arrangements across the Council, and identifies where strengths and areas for development exist in those arrangements. Where significant governance issues are identified, progress can be monitored, as required, through the year (and reflected within the following year's AGS).
4. Overall the Annual Report from the Council's internal auditors provides that moderate assurance can be given that there is a sound system of internal control, designed to meet the Council's objectives and controls are being applied consistently.
5. The Committee is required to consider and, if satisfied, approve the AGS. The AGS forms part of the Council's Statement of Accounts and is attached to the report as Appendix 1.

Financial implications

6. There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.

Legal issues

7. Regulation 6(1)(a) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires an authority to conduct a review at least once in a year of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and include a statement reporting on the review with any published Statement of Accounts. The Annual Governance Statement explains how Oxford City Council meets this requirement.

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Service area or department	Law & Governance
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Background Papers:	
1	Assurance Questionnaires completed by Service Heads

Annual Governance Statement – 2022/23 Financial Year

1. Executive Summary and Approval

- 1.1 Each year the Council produces an Annual Governance Statement (“AGS”) that explains how it manages its corporate governance arrangements, makes decisions, manages its resources and promotes values and high standards of conduct and behaviour.
- 1.2 The Annual Governance Statement reports on:
- How the Council complies with its own governance arrangements;
 - How the Council monitors the effectiveness of the governance arrangements; and
 - Improvements or changes in governance arrangements proposed for the forthcoming year.
- 1.3 The Internal Auditor’s opinion on the Council’s internal control environment:

Overall, for the financial year 2022/23, the auditors are able to provide Moderate Assurance that there is sound system of internal control, designed to meet the Council’s objectives and that controls are being applied consistently.

- 1.4 As the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive we have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Audit and Governance Committee and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.
- 1.5 It is our opinion, based upon the content of this AGS that the Council’s governance framework is robust and that the governance arrangements have proved to be highly effective during 2022/23.

1.6 The Council has previously recognised a number of governance issues in previous Statements, all of which have now been resolved.

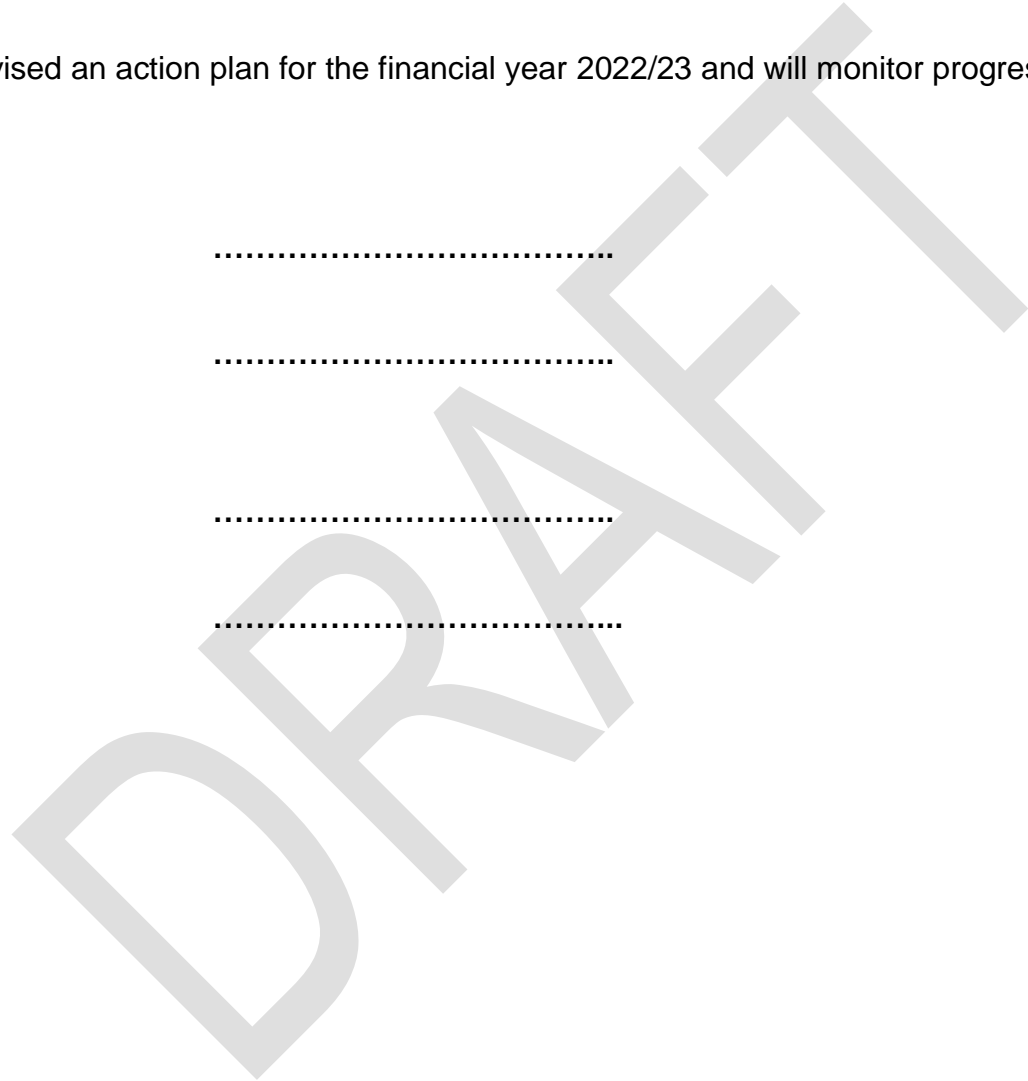
1.7 The Council has devised an action plan for the financial year 2022/23 and will monitor progress during the year.

Leader of the Council

Date

Chief Executive

Date



2. Introduction

- 2.1 Oxford City Council (“the Council”) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. It also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 2.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs to facilitate the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
- 2.3 The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (“the Regulations”) require that:-
- The Council must conduct a review, at least once a year, of the effectiveness of its system of internal control;
 - Findings of this review should be considered by the Council;
 - The Council must approve an Annual Governance Statement; and
 - The Annual Governance Statement must accompany the Statement of Accounts.

- 2.4 This statement is guided by CIPFA Bulletin 06 Application of the Good Governance Framework and describes the Council’s governance framework, the steps taken to ensure that it is effective and establishes key actions that will be put in place to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of its arrangements.
- 2.5 The Audit and Governance Committee has delegated authority to undertake these duties on behalf of the Council. This statement explains how the Council meets the requirements of the Regulations.
- 2.6 Once approved by the Audit and Governance Committee the AGS will be signed by the Leader and the Chief Executive. It will then be published alongside the Statement of Accounts.
- ## 3. The Purpose of the Governance Framework
- 3.1 The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the authority is directed and controlled and activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.
- 3.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to

achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3.3 The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31st March 2023 and up to the date of the approval of the accounts.

4. Policies, Procedures, Laws and Regulations

4.1 The Head of Law and Governance is designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer. It is the function of the Monitoring Officer to ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations.

4.2 The financial management of the authority is conducted in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution and the Council's Finance Rules. The Council has designated the Head of Financial Services as the Chief Finance Officer in accordance with section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

4.3 The Council has robust policies and procedures relating to the use of resources and the corporate governance framework, including Finance Rules, Contract Rules,

Scheme of Delegation, IT strategy, Avoiding Bribery Fraud and Corruption Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

5. The Governance Framework

Council Strategy 2020/24

5.1 The Council Strategy 2020-2024 came into force on 1 April 2020, replacing the Corporate Plan 2016-2020. The Council Strategy 2020/24 sets out, at a high level, the aims for the council and what outcomes it aims to have achieved by the end of 2024.

5.2 The strategy highlights the developments and changes the Council wants to make and as such does not include current ongoing areas of work that might be considered business as usual.

5.3 The Council Strategy 2020-2024 is a public document and is presented in a way that is easy for people to understand.

5.4 The Council's vision is "Building a world-class city for everyone". By creating successful places in which to live and work, supporting its communities and addressing the climate emergency, it aims to build a fairer, greener city in which everyone can thrive.

5.5 The Council has set four key priorities over the next four years – all of equal importance. The four priorities are all

interconnected, and the Council will work to achieve them in a joined-up way:

- Pursue a zero carbon Oxford
- Enable an inclusive economy
- Support thriving communities
- Deliver more affordable housing

5.6 The Council is committed to a “customer-first” approach. It works innovatively and efficiently as a flexible and customer-focused team offering high quality services that meet people’s needs. It works to tackle inequality through its employment practices and the ways in which services are delivered aim to provide equality of opportunity and access for all.

5.7 The Council’s investments and policy-making are all designed to address the social and financial inequalities across Oxford. The Council values diversity and seeks to build a greater sense of togetherness across the city’s communities. It wants to ensure all of Oxford’s citizens, including those who are harder to reach, have fair opportunities and a real share in the city’s future.

5.8 The Council works in partnership with others – other councils, businesses, communities, the voluntary sector, Oxford’s universities, the Government and other public sector bodies to ensure the way it shapes services and directs investments is joined-up with others.

5.9 The Council uses its commercial assets for the benefit of local people. It uses the wholly-owned companies and

the commercial properties it owns to create jobs, support the local economy and provide additional funds that support delivery of public services. This is called the “Oxford Model”.

5.10 The Council is a campaigning organisation, working actively to engage with residents, businesses, stakeholders and Government and use its influence to help achieve the aims set out in the Strategy.

5.11 For each of its four priorities, the Council has set out the outcomes it would like to see achieved over the four years, and some of the headline actions it believes will be required to help deliver this.

5.12 The Council Strategy 2020-24 is complemented by an annual business plan that sets out the key priorities and specific actions and milestones the Council will undertake for the year ahead and reports on progress against agreed key performance indicators. This strengthens the prioritisation of key areas of work and supports collaboration among officers and with external partners. Business Plans have been produced for each year of the current four-year Strategy together with an updated on progress made against the prior year’s Business Plan. All documents are published on the [Council's website](#). Work has now started to develop the next four-year Council Strategy 2024-28.

5.13 The Council makes use of 'Smartsheets' to assemble information on performance and it reports this monthly to the Corporate Management Team together with financial

information and risk with quarterly monitoring reports to Cabinet.

- 5.14 The project management process supporting the Council's Capital Programme has continued to evolve and develop. The Project Management Office (PMO) supports the Development Review Group and Asset Review Group which provide scrutiny of projects before they reach the Council's Development Board for formal decision taking. The Housing Supply Board similarly is providing reports into the Development Board which maintains scrutiny of the whole Capital Programme.
- 5.15 The Organisational Change Board has oversight of a number of projects under the Fit For the Future Programme of an ICT or transformation nature. The Board meets on a monthly basis to receive updates on projects together with receiving business cases for new projects which are subject to scrutiny through the 'front door of change' process. Feedback from this Board together with feedback from the Communities Change Board which undertakes a similar role for projects arising in the Communities Directorate, together with the feedback from the Development Board on projects of a capital nature are reported to CMT monthly for awareness and sign off.

Review of Corporate Risks

- 5.16 The Council maintains a corporate risk register that reflects strategic and operational risks that have been identified as well as proposed actions to mitigate or

manage those risks in the council's activities. The Audit and Governance Committee and the Cabinet receive a quarterly report on progress against the risk registers. A full refresh of the Corporate Risk Register is planned for 25th September 2023.

Partnerships

- 5.17 The Council works with a wide range of organisations through a number of city and county-wide partnerships to deliver its corporate objectives.
- The Leader is a board member of OxLEP. Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership ("OxLEP") which since its launch in March 2011, has played a key role in driving forward a dynamic, growing and sustainable economy for Oxfordshire. OxLEP meets quarterly.
 - The Leader and the Chief Executive represent the Council in the Oxford Strategic Partnership ("OSP") which was founded in 2003 and brings together senior representatives from the public, business, community and voluntary sectors. The OSP helps to provide direction for the city's future, respond to local priorities and engage more effectively with local concerns. This partnership for the city promotes collaboration and openness and provides opportunities to access funding and share resources more easily. Currently the partnership contains several key organisations and individuals, all with a specific interest or experience in improving quality of life across the Oxford. The OSP meets quarterly.

- The Leader of the Council is a board member of Future Oxfordshire Partnership, formerly known as the Oxfordshire Growth Board. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners and meets four times a year. Its purpose is to coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits.
- The Leader chairs the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership (which the City Council established in 2020 and provides the secretariat for), bringing together key organisations in the city to coordinate action to reduce carbon emissions.
- Both the Leader and Chief Executive attend the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership which brings together businesses and, councils and the universities to coordinate action on tackling economic inequalities.
- In 2022, the Leader participated along with other leaders from Councils within the Oxford to Cambridge region in the Oxford to Cambridge Arc Leadership Group and as one of three Oxfordshire representatives on the Arc Leadership Executive Group. In December 2022 this was replaced by the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership with the Leader as Oxfordshire's representative on the Shadow Board. The Partnership brings together leaders from local government, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Universities and England's Economic Heartland to champion the region as a world leader of innovation

and business, acting to achieve environmentally sustainable growth that brings benefits to communities now and in the future.

- The Leader chairs the Fast Growth group of councils that in 2022/23 included Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Norwich, and Peterborough, with regular meetings attended by fellow leaders and senior officers.
- The Leader serves on the Executive Board of the District Councils Network and was elected as Vice-Chair in March 2023.
- The Leader and Chief Executive also attend regular informal system-wide meetings at a countywide level with other leaders and officers.

5.18 Other formal countywide partnerships which have member representation from the Council include the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership, the Oxfordshire Health and Well Being Board, the Health Improvement Board and the Children's Trust.

The Council's Companies

5.19 During the year 2019/20 the Council's three housing companies (Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL) (Company number 10212716), Oxford City Housing (Investment) Limited (OCH(I)L) (Company number 10370637) and Oxford City Housing (Development) Limited (OCH(D)L) (Company number 10370647)) continued to develop their co-joined operation with a view to increasing affordable housing availability in Oxford and becoming a significant supplier of housing in their own right. OCHL is wholly-owned by the Council,

and OCH(I)L and OCH(D)L are both wholly-owned subsidiaries of OCHL. The company has recently rebranded itself and now trades as OX Place.

5.20 During 2021/22 the investment company OCH(I)L took handover of an additional 17 dwellings from the housing scheme at Barton Park, taking the cumulative total now managed by the company to 134 at year end. Further properties from the third phase of Barton Park are expected to be handed over in the 2023/24 financial year with the balance of the 354 social rent properties to be delivered to OCH(I)L in a final phase the following year. Gross profit for the year derived from rental income was £709k compared to £727k in 2021/22. The value of operational property held at year end was £21.6 million up from £19.6 million at the end of the financial year 2021/22

5.21 During the year OCH(D)L completed 73 units, 41 for social rent and 32 were sold as shared ownership dwellings for Oxford key workers. Profit for the year was £3.4 million compared to £4.1 million in 2021/22.

5.22 Gross profit for the OCHL group of three companies totalled £4.1 million down from £4.7 million last year. The profit was mainly derived from property sales by the development company.

5.23 With regard to the Council's two wholly-owned direct services companies – Oxford Direct Services Limited (Company number 10719214) ("ODSL") and Oxford Direct Services Trading Limited (Company number

10719214) ("ODSTL") – the year 2022/23 represented their fourth year of trading.

5.24 ODSL holds "Teckal" status, and as such can enter into contracts with the Council without the requirement to comply with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. The Council therefore let a substantial service contract to ODSL, under which many of the Council's statutory and other direct service operations are to be performed by ODSL, with effect from 1st April 2018. This involved a "TUPE" transfer of some 670 Council staff to the employment of ODSL. In return, with effect from the same date and to support ODSL's operation, the Council entered into a support services contract with ODSL under which ODSL receives a range of key support services. ODSL trades exclusively with third parties and in its first year of operation has provided commercial waste collection services to its commercial clients.

5.25 At the time of writing the AGS the accounts for both ODS and OX Place have yet to be prepared and signed off for 2022/23. Financial accounting issues arose in 2021/22 from the implementation of a replacement Housing Management System, which disrupted the availability of financial information especially in relation to housing repairs and maintenance. As a result the ODS company accounts for 2021/22 have only recently been signed off by the auditors and the preparation of the 2022/23 company accounts has only just commenced. Initial indications is that profit before tax is estimated at £3.4 million for the 2 ODS companies combined which is £1 million higher than budgeted.

5.26 The Council also is a 50% partner in Oxwed LLP with a joint 50% partner, Nuffield College Developments 1 Ltd. The Council originally set up Oxford West End Developments Limited as a joint venture with Nuffield College. During 2021/22 the work of the Company was transferred into a Limited Liability Partnership, OxWED LLP whose partners are Oxford City Council and Nuffield College Developments 1 Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Nuffield College. OxWED LLP is now tasked with formulating the development plans and seeking planning permission for the site, following which strategic infrastructure will be installed, and onward sale of plots for development of housing and commercial properties will be made, with dividends in respect of these sales forecast to be returned to the shareholders over the next 4 to 5 years. The loss in the LLP for the period 2022/23 totalled £3.2 million.

5.27 In 2011 the Council entered into a Joint Venture (“JV”) with Grosvenor Developments Ltd, known as Barton Oxford LLP (BOLLP) to enable the delivery of a new housing development at Barton Park. When construction is complete the 885 home development will include 354 homes for social rent which will be purchased and managed by OCH(I)L.

5.28 At the end of the financial year 2022/23 the first Phase of the scheme of 237 dwellings 95 of which are affordable had been completed. The second phase, of 207, homes of which 83 were affordable had commenced with 77 completed at the end of January 2023. Contracts have recently been exchanged for the

development of Phase 3 consisting of a further 435 dwellings with the final phase yet to commence.

5.29 Each of the Council’s companies held regular Board meetings throughout the year 2022/23. In addition representatives of the housing companies and the direct service companies attended periodic reporting meetings with their shareholders. For the year 2022/23 these shareholder meetings are to be regularised into quarterly reporting meetings and combined with the scrutiny function , reporting on the activities of all interests of the Council in wholly owned companies and joint ventures, at which decisions on matters reserved for the shareholder can be made.

Data Protection

5.30 Through leaving the Covid-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis and the Ukrainian refugee programme there has been a need for the Council to review its current practices and respond to new data sharing arrangements. It has undertaken the following activities in respect of data protection governance:

- Enforced the completion of the online iLearn mandatory data protection training for officers (two modules rather than one depending on type of job role held) as part of their induction and then annually.
- Engaged with county-wide local authorities on the provision of housing for Ukrainian refugees to allow for the sharing of data to provide support for both hosts and guests.

- Engaged with the Local Government Association on the response to the Covid-19 Public Inquiry.
- Established and published a revised information retention schedule, ensuring that this process is managed as the Council's ICT team migrate users over to Microsoft Office 365.
- Ensured that data is used properly whenever the delivery of further support to individuals is contemplated as part of the Council's response to the cost of living crisis

Council Housing

- 5.31 The Council owned housing stock totals 7833 units which comprises 7327 of general needs social rented properties, 57 general needs affordable rent properties, 292 sheltered accommodation units, 58 shared ownership property, 15 fixed term secure tenancy properties and 69 properties used as homeless temporary accommodation. The Council also has 15 properties leased to external organisations and a further 700 leaseholder properties.
- 5.32 During the financial year 2022/23 the Council successfully collected 102.10% of rental income due in respect of its rented housing.

Constitution

- 5.33 The Constitution sets the Council's governance framework, setting rules, principles and procedures to enable the Council to take decisions and conduct its

business effectively, including executive arrangements, committee structures, finance and contract rules, schemes of delegation and clear opportunities for public and councillor engagement in Council decision making.

- 5.34 The statutory roles of the Head of the Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer are described in the Constitution, as are the responsibilities for providing robust assurance on governance, ensuring lawful expenditure in line with approved budgets and procurement processes.

- 5.35 The Constitution is reviewed annually to take account of changes to regulations and other developments in the Council's governance arrangements. In addition, any ad hoc changes in year can be taken to Council for approval as required.

- 5.36 The revisions approved by the Council in March 2023 included amendments to implement gender neutral pronouns, basic governance arrangements for the Constitution Working Group and to ensure wording around Cabinet Member decisions complied with the law. The more significant amendments:

- Clarified the Leader's position that appointments to boards of joint ventures is the responsibility of SJVG
- Strengthened the section on conflicts to include decision making i.e. Council decision makers shouldn't be the same individuals taking decisions for the companies.

- Included a list of matters delegated by the Leader to individual Cabinet members (and date). Currently there is only one delegation to an individual Cabinet Member.
- Included provision for the Chief Executive to delegate urgency powers to an Executive Director in exceptional circumstances, when there is a conflict of interest which would preclude the Chief Executive from making the decision.

5.37 The Monitoring Officer retains delegated authority to make minor and consequential amendments to the Council's Constitution, to include correcting clerical mistakes and ensuring it follows the law. The Monitoring Officer also has delegated authority to change Part 4 of the Constitution (who carries out executive responsibilities) and Part 6 (roles of Cabinet members) to reflect the wishes of the Leader of the Council.

Standards

5.38 The Council has arrangements in place to enable the public to make a formal complaint that a councillor, parish councillor or co-opted member has failed to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct. The Council recruited four independent persons for a four year term each from 25 November 2019, and will recruit once again before November 2023.

5.39 The Standards Committee met three times during 2022/23 to oversee the numbers of complaints about councillors and any requests for dispensations, which

allow a member to participate and vote on an item notwithstanding the existence of disclosable pecuniary interest. The Committee have continued to appoint a parish council representative as a non-voting member of the Standards Committee up to May 2026.

5.40 The Standards Committee has a role in advising the Monitoring Officer on the Council's arrangements for training councillors. While the Committee did not review the training plan during 2022-2023, a draft proposal of the Member Induction Programme following the May 2024 local election will be reviewed by November 2023, and will include the continuation of the delivery of most member training and briefing sessions remotely via Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Members' Allowances Scheme

5.41 The Council's Members' Allowances Scheme forms Part 26 of the Council's Constitution. The scheme will operate for four years, until the end of March 2027.

5.42 There was an internal audit carried out of the procedures for the operation of the Members' Allowances Scheme during 2022/23 and spot checks continue to be undertaken periodically on the allowances paid to members

Dispensations for Members

5.43 The Localism Act 2011 requires that the Members of the Council must disclose Pecuniary Interests as defined in

the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012. Individual dispensations, which allow a member to participate and vote notwithstanding the existence of a disclosable pecuniary interest, can be granted at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer.

5.44 On 21 March 2022, the Council granted generic dispensations to all Members for a period of four years from 01 October 2022 in respect of:

- Determining an allowance (including special responsibility allowances), travelling expense, payment or indemnity given to Members;
- Housing: where the Member (or spouse or partner) holds a tenancy or lease with the Council as long as the matter does not relate to the particular tenancy or lease of the Member (their spouse or partner);
- Housing Benefit or Universal Credit: where the Councillor (or spouse or partner) receives housing benefit and/or Universal Credit;
- Any Ceremonial Honours given to Members - Mayor-making, conferring the title of alderman/woman or admitting freemen/women;
- Setting the Council Tax or a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 (or any subsequent legislation); and
- Setting a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme or Local scheme for the payment of business rates (including eligibility for rebates and reductions) for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 (or any subsequent legislation).

Procurement

- 5.45 The Council has an established contract register and pipeline which is updated on a daily basis and reflects the council contracts with a value exceeding £5000. The Council's Procurement Team has transferred the Council's contract register and pipeline into SharePoint to enable better contract management and monitoring of the Council spend. The register enables the Council to fulfil its obligations under the transparency agenda. The contract register and pipeline is a live document meaning that as soon as a contract is updated on SharePoint it is published on the Council's website.
- 5.46 A new Procurement Strategy was approved in November 2022 by the Council's Cabinet to run for 3 years until October 2025.
- 5.47 Officers from the Council's legal and procurement teams have recently undertaken an exercise to review the legal and procurement process flows. Part of this review will include a review of all standard forms of terms and conditions. Other contract templates are consistently reviewed and updated when required. This is on-going and will reflect updates to any regulations
- 5.48 Officers in the Procurement Team have reviewed the government's Green Paper "Transforming Public Procurement", published in December 2020 and have highlighted the potential changes and impact to the Council's Finance Panel. Officers will continue to monitor the situation – the Procurement Bill is with the Government. It is expected that the new procurement

regulations will come into effect during 2024, 6 months' notice will be provided. The Council's Procurement Team is monitoring progress and attending the Super User sessions hosted by the Cabinet Office.

5.49 Section 19 of the Constitution which contains the Council's Contract Rules has been reviewed in 2023 and will be reviewed yearly.

5.50 Transparency reporting (any spend over £500) is undertaken and published to the Council's website quarterly.

Member Training

5.51 During 2021/22 the Council conducted a review of its established framework for inducting and training councillors and adopted a Member Training and Development Scheme 2020-24. This work was overseen by the Standards Committee. The Scheme aims to equip all elected members with the basic skills, knowledge and resources they need to perform their duties and responsibilities as a councillor during their term of office.

5.52 A key change from the previous framework is the expansion of the compulsory induction programme for new members to include a wider range of training topics such as finance, safeguarding and values and behaviours. This expanded induction programme was delivered following the May 2022 local elections and sessions were well attended. A similar set of training

following the May 2024 local election is currently being organised, with an expansion to other training sessions, including Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and a robust introduction/refresher to the Council.

5.53 The Scheme also includes an indicative programme of optional training to support Members with their specific roles and responsibilities, such as training on appointments, audit, chairing, leadership, media and scrutiny.

5.54 Members are able to access externally facilitated training sessions with the agreement of their Group Leader. Advertisements from the Local Government Association (LGA) and Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) are circulated by Committee and Member Services to all members.

Officer Training

5.55 Council officers are encouraged to access internal training courses as well as specific professional development. We make use of the apprenticeship levy fund for some internal development. All new starters are required to undertake the corporate induction and to understand key policies on data protection, code of conduct and ICT security, as well as to undertake safeguarding awareness training as a minimum. Appraisals are conducted in relation to the performance of each member of staff on an annual basis and we have recently provided training for all people managers on managing and motivating performance and our next organisation-wide initiative is digital skills.

Inclusion and Diversity

- 5.56 Work is underway for the Council's workforce equalities report for the 2023 submission. Work on promoting an inclusive culture has been happening through regular lunch and learn sessions for officers with topics including Ramadan, Holocaust Memorial Day and neurodiversity. The Council is building contacts in local communities to encourage more interest in jobs with the Council as well as building relationships with local schools. A key priority for the Council is to develop more inclusive recruitment practices.

Appointments

- 5.57 The Appointments Committee is responsible for appointing Executive Directors and Assistant Chief Executives and for undertaking the recruitment and selection process for the Chief Executive and designation of Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer and recommending these appointments to Council. The Committee also receives reports from the Chief Executive on senior management arrangements, to include any change. The Committee did not meet in 2022/23 but the interim Monitoring Officer was appointed by Full Council.
- 5.58 The appointment of councillors to outside bodies such as trusts, charities and community associations is the responsibility of the Leader of Council, who chooses to seek Cabinet agreement to nominations. The Council

currently has representatives on a total of 56 outside bodies. Those appointed to charities and trusts generally serve as trustees of those organisations which comes with a particular set of responsibilities. Guidance to assist Council representatives on these organisations is provided upon appointment to ensure that all appointees understand their role and responsibilities in representing the Council on the organisation.

Decision Taking

- 5.59 All decision reports are subject to a robust clearance procedure to ensure that decision makers are presented with the best organisational advice and that the risks and legal, financial, environmental and equalities implications of proposals are identified and explained. All decision reports to the Cabinet are accompanied by a risk register and, where equalities impacts are identified, an equality impact assessment. Report writing guidelines and clear deadlines are in place to guide report authors and this guidance was updated and refreshed in 2019/20. The Council's Forward Plan provides at least a four month forward view of upcoming decisions to assist councillors and the public in engaging with Council decision making. The Council also maintains a focus on ensuring that decisions taken by officers are recorded and published on the Council's website.

Scrutiny

- 5.60 The Council has a mature Scrutiny function that benefits from the active engagement of members, dedicated

officer resource and a positive organisational culture that is conducive to effective scrutiny. The work of Scrutiny is prioritised and agreed through a work planning process while remaining flexible and responsive to emerging issues, priorities and Cabinet decisions. Where there are multiple suggestions for Scrutiny-commissioned work, the Council's TOPIC methodology is engaged to rank suggestions - with points awarded for timeliness, organisational priority, public interest, influence (the ability to) and cost. Preferential focus is given to Cabinet reports, which generate less additional officer work to produce for Scrutiny, allowing Scrutiny to navigate the balance of continuing to consider topics of particular importance whilst not overburdening the organisation.

5.61 The Scrutiny Committee has the ability to establish Standing Panels and Review Groups each year to consider selected, specialist issues in more detail. In 2022/23, the Committee re-established the Finance and Performance Panel, Housing and Homelessness Panel and Companies Scrutiny Panel; alongside the annual Budget Review Group. In addition, the Committee established a new Standing Panel – the Climate and Environment Panel – to scrutinise the Council's progress in delivering existing climate and environment work-streams and to consider their effectiveness, given the Council's commitment to Zero Carbon.

Audit and Governance Committee

5.62 The Council has an established Audit and Governance Committee with terms of reference that comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy ("CIPFA") guidance. The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for setting the Council Tax base, approving the Annual Statement of Accounts, reviewing quarterly risk management reports and noting and commenting on the work plans and reports of the Council's internal and external auditors. The Committee monitors the implementation of audit actions. In 2022/23, the Committee also approved the Council's Corruption Policy and received a briefing from the Counter-Fraud Team on its annual report, highlighting the team's success over the previous 12 months.

5.63 The Audit and Governance Committee receives quarterly reports on all allegations of fraud, corruption and money laundering once any on-going investigation is complete as well as those Ombudsman complaints for which a Public Interest Report is issued.

Financial Planning

5.64 The Council has a coherent accounting and budgeting framework which includes the monthly monitoring and publication of spend against budget. The Medium Term Financial Plan and budget setting are underpinned by the prioritisation and savings plans which are regularly reviewed and updated by the Cabinet.

Emergency Planning

5.65 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 establishes a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level. It requires the Council and other organisations to prepare for adverse events and incidents. The Council is a category one responder and as such has continued to work with other agencies to build resilience on emergency planning functions. Officers have been identified to undertake silver and gold level response roles within the Council. The emergency planning documentation held by the Council is updated as required.

5.66 During 2022/23 the Council:

- Transferred responsibility for emergency planning from the Council's Policy and Partnerships Team to the Community Safety Service within Regulatory Services and Community Safety.
- Entered a Service Level Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council's Emergency Planning Unit to receive 0.5 FTE equivalent support and expertise from a named officer in the unit.
- Finalised its Flooding Protocol, Sandbag Policy and Winter Preparedness Check in preparation for the flooding and adverse weather period.
- Reviewed and Finalised the Council's Emergency Response Arrangements (ERA)
- Delivered training to the Corporate Management Team on the ERA and Gold and Silver training

- Ensured officers across the Council's services participated in training to support the setting up of Reception Centres in an emergency
- Attended all relevant Thames Valley Local Forum Group online meetings to update and take forward actions on major incidents e.g. flooding, summer heat planning
- Responded to a major incident triggered by a water pipeline failure
- Implemented, in partnership with Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum members, the Death of a Senior Figure and city plan for the Proclamation.
- Reviewed the Operation Return plan with Oxfordshire County Council

Statutory Officer Reports

5.67 The Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer have had no cause to issue reports in exercise of their statutory powers in the 2022/23 financial year.

Whistleblowing

5.68 The Council has adopted a Whistleblowing Policy. The Policy is published within the Council's Constitution and is periodically reviewed by the Monitoring Officer and was reviewed in July 2021.

Corporate Complaints

5.69 The Council operates a comments, compliments and complaints system ("the 3 Cs").

5.70 Following the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code for registered providers of social housing, it was agreed by the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) to move from a three- stage to a two-stage procedure for all complaints across the Council and ODS. This came into effect from July 22. During 22/23, The Council received 10 "stage 2" complaints. 8 of these were not upheld and 2 were upheld.

5.71 10 complaints against the Council were received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman this year. Out of these, 2 were investigated and both were upheld. The two complaints that were upheld related to the Council's statutory homelessness services. As a consequence the Council has changed its processes concerning the prevention of homelessness, ensuring all eligible service users are now supported within the statutory framework established by the Homelessness Reduction Act; and has taken steps to ensure that offers of interim accommodation are made promptly, and when outside of Oxford are fully compliant with regulation and case-law, through new training and guidance for staff.

Fraud and Corruption

5.72 The Council's Counter-Fraud Team continued to provide an effective fraud prevention, detection and investigation capability. Charged with safeguarding Council services, the team has a remit to ensure that processes and controls are robust and protected from exploitation by fraudsters.

5.73 Working in tandem with a number of Council departments and external organisations, the Team ensures that vulnerabilities are addressed and where appropriate, civil and criminal action is taken against those who deceive and defraud the organisation. In the financial year 2022-2023, the team were responsible for preventing losses and increasing revenue, to the value of £5.1m for the Council.

5.74 The Team also tackles abuse in social housing by preventing fraudulent and irregular applications for housing from progressing, and by recovering Council owned properties that are being illegally sublet, misused or abandoned. There were 14 instances of this in the year.

5.75 In early 2020, the team formed a shared-services partnership with the Counter-Fraud Team of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council. Both teams work in a commercial manner, supplying a range of services to client organisations and each team has unique areas of specialisms. Joint working between the teams continued to thrive in the period with a range of high profile and high value outcomes achieved by the teams working in tandem.

5.76 In October 2022, the partnership was recognised by the IRRV; the Institute for Revenues, Ratings and Valuations in its Performance Awards scheme. Reigate and Banstead Borough Council won the "Excellence in Counter Fraud" award. The work of the partnership was a key feature of the awards submission.

5.77 In May 2021, the team delivered the inaugural National Investigations Conference in Birmingham which was facilitated in partnership with two private sector suppliers. Bringing together delegates from multiple organisations, the event was well received with more than 130 in attendance. In November 2022, the Team hosted its seventh Annual Fraud Conference. The conference was again held in the Oxford Town Hall with over 170 in attendance.

5.78 Throughout the year, the Team continued to work as a commercial entity, providing a range of counter-fraud services to 22 external organisations, identifying £3.7m of fraud and financial irregularity on behalf of those organisations.

Employment

5.79 The Council has a comprehensive range of policies, procedures and processes that combine employment legislation with best practice and organisational norms. Supplementary to these and for the purposes of monitoring and transparency, is a suite of reports and reporting tools. Together these inform and govern how the Council manages people related matters whilst also ensuring that the organisation achieves this in a fair, consistent and legally compliant manner. The policies and procedures cover the whole employee lifecycle, ranging from recruitment and selection and career development, to performance, conduct and capability issues and there is a regular cycle of review to ensure they are up to date and fit for purpose.

5.80 All policies and procedures are available for employees and managers to see on the Council's intranet. Additional guidance and support is accessed through the Council's People Team, who provide training, coaching and ad hoc support and advice. The People Consultancy Team and Business Partners also work closely with Service Areas to deal with people related matters in a consistent manner and in line with the agreed policies and processes. The Council is working to implement a service management platform to improve query management and access to guidance for managers and to improve the efficiency of key people processes.

Business Continuity Planning

5.81 During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council's response to a business continuity incident was tested in reality when the country went into full lockdown in compliance with Government guidelines. All Council offices were closed with most staff working from home and all work which couldn't be carried out within Government guidelines was ceased.

5.82 The Council's Corporate Business Continuity Plan anticipated that if main Council offices were not available then alternative accommodation would be needed for office based staff. Due to the nature of the pandemic, the use of alternative corporate accommodation was not possible and in the event it was proved that this accommodation wasn't needed through the use of ICT and remote working solutions. The use of a secondary

site for service delivery has now been removed from the Business Continuity Plan

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- 5.83 The Council has now moved to a hybrid working pattern with staff working from home unless there is a need to attend the office. Most of the Council's workforce are therefore now essentially home-based. The Council's corporate and service business continuity plans have been updated in line with the revised business model and the reduction in the need for office space.
 - 5.84 The hybrid working pattern places more emphasis on the Council's ICT than ever before and, especially with the risks of cyber-attacks increasing, greater emphasis is therefore placed on ICT resilience and security. Consequently an audit was performed by the Council's internal auditors and a review was also undertaken by the Council's insurers. The findings of these have fed into a number of actions which are now underway which will further strengthen the Council's cyber-resilience.
 - 5.85 Business Continuity continues to be a focus for regular review. It is intended that there will be a Business Continuity Plan exercise later in the year to be facilitated by the council's insurer Zurich Municipal.
 - 5.86 The evidence provided by the continued delivery of services to the public during the pandemic indicates that the Council's business continuity processes held up well and that the Council can adapt well and quickly to changing circumstances.

Freedom of Information

- 5.87 The Council is required to provide certain information on request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Requests are considered and, if held, information is disclosed unless an exemption or exception applies. During the financial year 2022/2023 the Council received 936 requests for information. The Council received a Practice Recommendation from the ICO in November, established an action plan, created a training module for all staff, procured an information requests system and increased the resource within the team. The Council and ODS separated their information request functions as of the 1st of April 2023.
- 5.88 It is clear that the types of request are becoming more complex with requesters using the FOI route to ask questions and opinions of officers rather than for recorded information.

6 Review of Effectiveness

- 6.1 The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of senior officers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

- 6.2 In preparing this statement each Head of Service has completed an assurance questionnaire. The questionnaire asked each Head of Service to draw attention to any matters in respect of which internal controls were not working well and required a positive assurance that apart from those areas which were identified for improvement that the controls within the service had been, and are, working well.
- 6.3 A number of actions have taken place and are planned within various of the Council's Service Areas and these are summarised in the Action Plans attached as Appendix 1 to this statement. Milestones will be added to this Action Plan as the work to achieve the tasks progresses.

7 **CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer**

7.1 In assessing the effectiveness of the Council's Annual Governance Statement the Chief Financial Officer is required to review how their role in the authority meets the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. Key to this assessment are a number of principles:

- The Chief Financial Officer ("CFO") in a local authority is a key member of the leadership team, helping it to develop and implement strategy. In the Council the CFO is a key member of the Corporate Management Team with direct access to the Chief

Executive, members, Audit & Governance Committee and internal and external audit

- The CFO in a local authority must be actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions to ensure immediate and longer term implications, opportunities and risks are fully considered, and alignment with the authority's overall financial strategy. In Oxford the CFO is responsible for Risk Management, has the ability to influence decisions through meetings and reporting to members and also has a statutory requirement to advise members of the robustness of estimates and the level of reserves and balances
- The CFO in a local authority must lead the promotion and delivery by the whole authority of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently, and effectively. The CFO has a personal responsibility for financial stewardship and their prime responsibility is to the citizens to manage resources prudently, both within the authority and extending into partnerships, joint ventures and companies in which the council has an interest e.g. Oxford Direct Services Group, Oxford City Housing Limited, Oxford West End Development Limited (OxWED) and Barton LLP
- The CFO in a local authority must lead and direct a finance function that is resourced to be fit for purpose. In Oxford the CFO currently has sufficient

resources to undertake the Finance function and this is subject to review

- The CFO in a local authority must be professionally qualified and suitably experienced. The CFO and a number of key staff within the Finance Team are suitably qualified. Deputising for the CFO on matters of financial accounting is undertaken by the Financial Accounting Manager and Management Accountancy Manager, with additional posts taking responsibility on matters relating to Procurement and Revenues.

8 Significant Governance Issues

- 8.1 The control framework described above facilitates the identification of any areas of the Council's activities where there are significant weaknesses in the financial controls, governance arrangements or the management of risk.
- 8.2 The Council's internal auditors are BDO LLP who are required to provide the Audit and Governance Committee, and the Section 151 Officer with an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, governance and internal control processes, as well as arrangements to promote value for money.

8.3 The auditors have stated that in giving the opinion it should be noted that assurance can never be absolute. The internal audit service provides Oxford City Council with moderate assurance that there are no major weaknesses in the internal control system for the areas reviewed in 2022/23. Therefore, the statement of assurance is not a guarantee that all aspects of the internal control system are adequate and effective. The statement of assurance should confirm that, based on the evidence of the audits conducted, there are no signs of material weaknesses in the framework of control.

8.4 In assessing the level of assurance to be given, the auditors took the following matters into account:

- All internal audits undertaken by BDO LLP during 2022/23
- Any follow-up action taken in respect of audits from previous periods for these audit areas
- Whether any significant recommendations have not been accepted by management and the consequent risks
- The effects of any significant changes in the organisation's objectives or systems
- Matters arising from previous internal audit reports to Oxford City Council
- Any limitations which may have been placed on the scope of internal audit – it is acknowledged that no restrictions were placed on the work.

DRAFT

To: Audit & Governance Committee

Date: 27 September 2023

Report of: Head of Law & Governance

Title of Report: Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 –
Surveillance Policy and Procedure Flowcharts

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report:

To present two flowcharts, for inclusion in the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Surveillance Policy and Procedure, for approval and adoption.

Key decision No

Executive lead member: Councillor Susan Brown - Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan Priority – Enable an Inclusive Economy, Support Thriving Communities

Recommendation(s): That the Committee approves the two flowcharts, at Appendix 1 to the report, for inclusion in the Surveillance Policy and Procedure.

Appendix 1 – Draft Surveillance Policy and Procedure flowcharts

Background

1. The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2021 legislate for the use by local authorities of covert methods of surveillance and information gathering to assist in the detection and prevention of crime in relation to and authority's core functions. On 26 July 2023 the Committee approved a refreshed Surveillance Policy and Procedure and requested that a flowchart be included in the document to show how RIPA authorisations would take place.

2. The Committee is asked to approve the two flowcharts contained in Appendix 1 to the report, for inclusion in the Surveillance Policy and Procedure.

Legal Implications

3. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Financial Implications

4. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Name and contact details of author:-

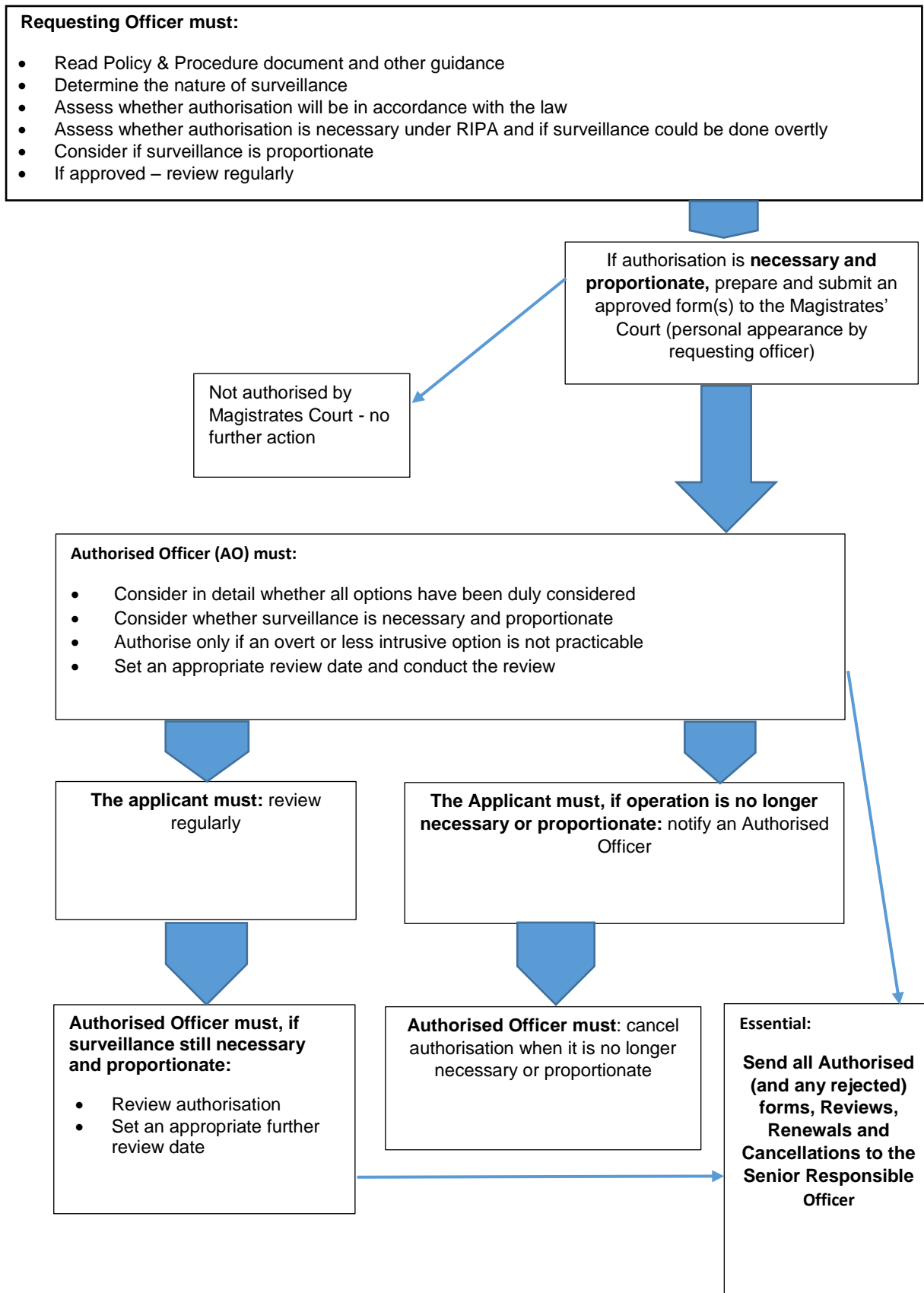
Emma Griffiths

Interim Legal Services Manager

Law & Governance

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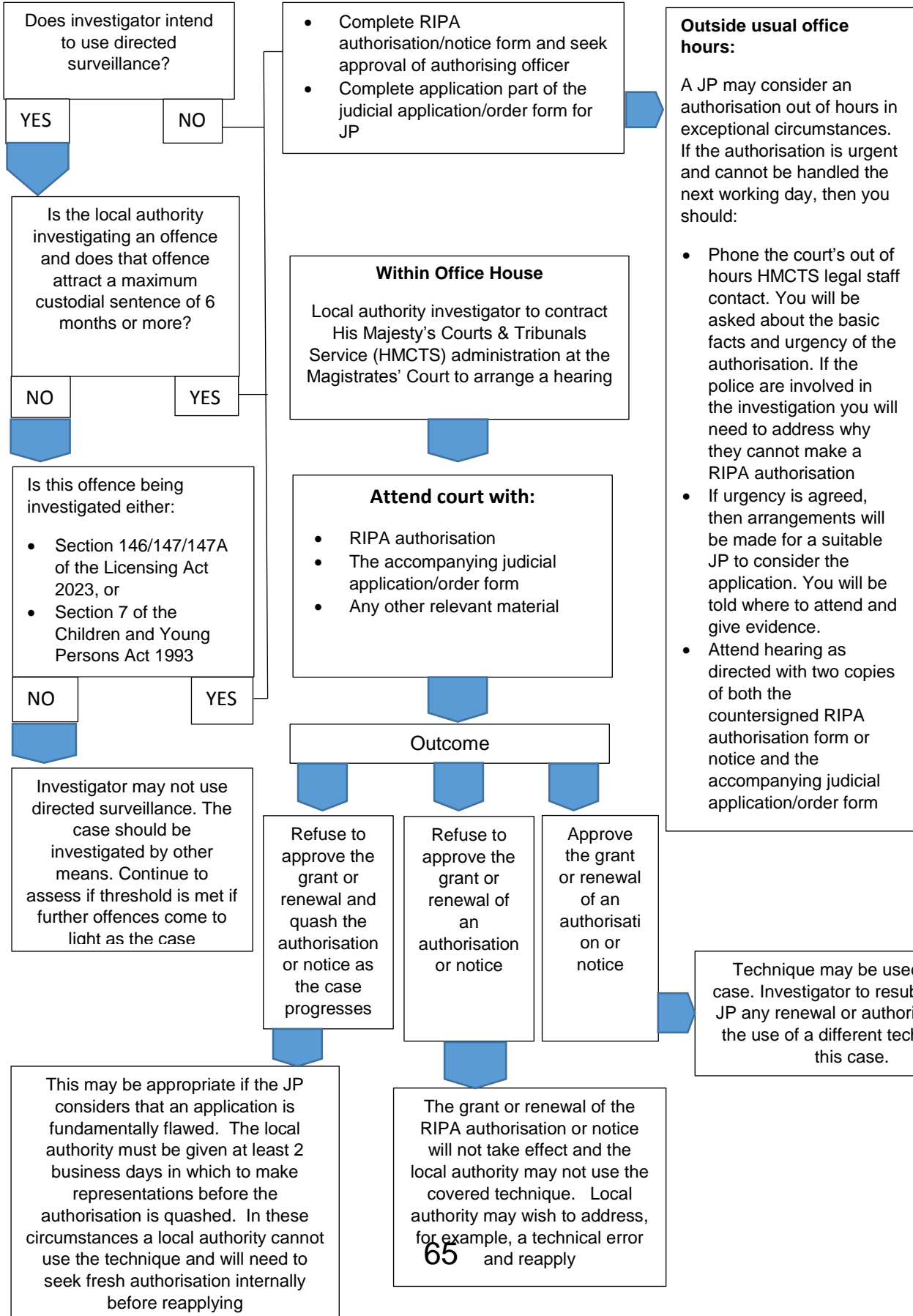
RIPA Flow Chart



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APPLICATION TO A MAGISTRATE/ JUSTICE OF THE PEACE (JP) SEEKING AN ORDER TO APPROVE THE GRANT OF A RIPA AUTHORISATION OR NOTICE

Local authority investigator wants to use a RIPA technique (e.g. directed surveillance, CHIS (covert human intelligence source) or communications data)



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To: Audit and Governance Committee
Date: 27 September 2023
Report of: Head of Business Improvement
Title of Report: Prioritisation of Projects with ICT Involvement (Update)

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update the committee on the prioritisation of projects with ICT Involvement
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nigel Chapman
Corporate Priority:	High
Policy Framework:	None

Recommendation(s): That the Committee resolves to:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To note the report2. To confirm the committee is satisfied with the approach

Introduction and Background

1. The Council's People Plan objectives around recruitment include: This document provides the Audit and Governance Committee with a high-level update on the progress of reviewing the 120+ projects involving ICT across the Council and its companies.
2. In June 2023, the Chief Technology and Information Officer (CTIO) met with OCC, ODS, and OX Place colleagues to produce a unified list of ICT-related projects.
3. The information was gathered and organised into a database, including details of preferred timelines, statuses, and relative priorities. The database includes 120+ projects.

4. For each Service Area, relative priorities (High, Medium, Low) were assigned to each project.
5. The purpose of the high-level review, now completed, was to get agreement from Service Areas on the following:
 - The relative priority of projects by individual Service Area (high, medium, or low).
 - The timeline for each project, adjusting where possible to manage capacity and highlighting when and where demand exceeds resource capacity.
 - The governance by which projects are accepted and prioritised on the work plan.
6. Having worked with managers and teams across all Service Areas, the 120+ projects were arranged in priority order, all being deliverable from an ICT perspective with the caveats listed in the section on risks at point 17.

The Recommendations

7. All new proposals with a clearly defined scope must first go through the Organisational Change Board (OCB) using the existing Front Door of Change process.
8. Before being presented to OCB, the proposal must be reviewed by ICT, including the proposed prioritisation against the work plan.
9. The chair of the OCB has delegated authority from CMT to make the final decision on whether to proceed with the proposal, the relative priority, and the timeline for delivery.
10. Where the demand exceeds organisational capacity, a decision must be taken by OCB whether to delay one or more proposals or require further capital investment to provide additional resources for the duration of the project.
11. Proposals cannot proceed to the procurement or delivery stages without agreed-upon means of funding the project and ongoing operational licensing and support, to be noted on the prioritised project work plan.

Service Improvement: Next Steps

12. Establishing corporate prioritisation is key to effectively delivering the many ICT projects. The proposed recommendations are designed to streamline the process, foster better collaboration between Service Areas and the ICT

department, and ensure optimal allocation of resources. Implementing these guidelines will improve project outcomes and enhance delivery timelines.

13. Having agreed on the prioritisation of projects, future ones will be permitted to proceed only when following the Front Door of Change process through the Organisational Change Board.

14. ICT will regularly monitor project prioritisation to identify areas for further improvement.

Legal Implications

15. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications

16. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Risk Implications

17. Failure to follow a proper process for introducing and prioritising projects can result in several risks:

- a) **Resource Overallocation:** Without proper planning, resources might be stretched too thin, affecting the quality and timeliness of all projects, including ongoing ones.
- b) **Budget Overruns:** Unplanned projects can lead to budget overages, which may require reallocating funds from other vital projects or services.
- c) **Strategic Misalignment:** New projects that are not aligned with the organisation's strategic objectives can divert focus and resources away from more critical initiatives.
- d) **Reduced Quality:** A lack of proper vetting and planning could compromise the quality of both the new and existing projects.
- e) **Low Employee Morale:** Overloading staff with additional projects without adequate support can lead to burnout and decreased productivity.
- f) **Regulatory Risk:** New projects that haven't been properly vetted for compliance can expose the organisation to legal risks.
- g) **Operational Disruptions:** Introducing a new project without adequate preparation can disrupt current operations, affecting services and potentially causing reputational damage.

- h) **Increased Complexity:** More projects mean more complexity in terms of management, communication, and delivery, making it difficult to maintain standards and consistency.
- i) **Project Failure Risk:** Without proper planning and resource allocation, the risk of project failure increases, which can have both financial and reputational consequences.
- j) **Governance Issues:** Lack of a formal introduction process can result in poor governance and accountability, making it difficult to track performance and make data-driven decisions.
- k) **Cybersecurity Risks:** New projects, if not properly assessed, may introduce vulnerabilities into the system, exposing the organisation to cyber risks.

Report author	Rocco Labellarte
Job title	Chief Technology and Information Officer
Service area or department	Business Improvement
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List of background papers: None.

Prioritisation of Projects with ICT Involvement

Oxford, 31st July 2023

Rocco Labellarte, Chief Technology and Information Officer (CTIO)

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Executive Summary

This document provides the Corporate Management Team and Audit Committee with a high-level update on the progress of reviewing the 120+ projects involving ICT across the Council and its companies.

The purpose of the review is to get agreement from Service Areas on the following:

- a. the relative priority of projects by individual Service Area (high, medium, or low).
- b. the timeline for each project, adjusting where possible to manage capacity and highlighting when and where demand exceeds resource capacity.
- c. the governance by which projects are accepted and prioritised on the work plan.

The projects have been compiled into a database which shows the relative priorities (see Appendix 1) and draft timelines for delivery (see Appendix 2), to be confirmed with Service Areas. The projects with an impact or involvement of ODS are shown in Appendix 3. For the avoidance of doubt, the criteria for differentiation small pieces of work from projects are listed in Appendix 6.

The recommendations for consideration and agreeing or noting by CMT are the following:

- a. All new proposals with a clearly defined scope must first go through the Organisational Change Board (OCB) using the existing Front Door of Change process.
- b. Before being presented to OCB, the proposal must be reviewed by ICT, including the proposed prioritisation against the work plan.
- c. The chair of the OCB has delegated authority from CMT to make the final decision on whether to proceed with the proposal, the relative priority, and the timeline for delivery.
- d. Where demand exceeds **organisational** capacity, a decision must be taken by OCB whether to delay one or more proposals or require further capital investment to provide additional resources for the duration of the project.
- e. Proposals cannot proceed to the procurement or delivery stages without agreed-upon means of funding the project and ongoing operational licensing and support, to be noted on the prioritised project work plan.

Background and Context

In June 2023, the Chief Technology and Information Officer (CTIO) met with colleagues from OCC, ODS, and OX Place (listed below) to produce a unified list of ICT-related projects. For each Service Area, relative priorities (High, Medium, Low) were assigned to each project.

• Helen Horne	• Jane Winfield	• Hollie Morgan
• Nigel Kennedy	• Maria Ecclestone	• Jubeen Ashraf
• Nerys Parry	• John Martin	• David Butler
• Richard Wood	• Jonathan Malton	• Ian Brooke
• Bill Graves	• Rhian Davies	• Tom Hook
• Mish Tullar	• Ian Wright	• Helen Bishop
• Tom Jennings	• Gail Malkin	• Ruth Wigham
		• Alison Cornacchia

Table 1 – OCC, ODS, and OX Place colleagues engaged in the prioritisation process.

The information was gathered and organised into a database, including details of preferred timelines, statuses, and relative priorities. The database includes 120+ projects. The distribution by Service Area spread is listed below:

Housing	21
Housing/ODS	18
Financial Services/ODS	1
ODS	8
Financial Services	8
Planning Services	6
Regulatory Services/Customer Services	6
Regulatory Services	5
Corporate Property	4
Citizen Experience Programme	4
Environmental Sustainability	3
Community Services	3
Community Services/Housing/Regulatory Services	1
Business Improvement (People Team)	3
Policy and Communications	3
Customer Services	2
Legal Services	1
Information Governance	1
Facilities Management	1
OX Place	1
Business Improvement (ICT Team)	22

Table 2 – Summary of the projects identified in each Service Area

Challenges to Successful Delivery

The projects have been arranged in priority order, quarter by quarter (see Appendix 1). All projects are deemed deliverable from an ICT perspective, with the caveats noted below. Projects added will require amending the timeline to avoid delays to already planned projects.

In addition to the need to establish a Front Door of Change prioritisation process, the following caveats to the timely delivery of the projects on the work plan have also been identified:

- a. Individuals who possess unique skills within the Council. Increasing resources could be considered on a permanent (revenue) or time-limited (capital) basis. The same resources across Service Areas are often called upon to deliver projects.
- b. As an alternative to additional funding, the timelines for project delivery should be reviewed to reduce pressure on staff in certain areas. Examples include the Housing/QL program comprising 40+ projects, 18 requiring Network and Telecommunications skills, and 60+ online forms needing development.
- c. The timely progression of non-ICT stages, such as requirements gathering and procurement, is important. Delays in these stages reduce the time available to carry out the work, posing challenges to timely delivery.
- d. Addressing projects that sidestep the Front Door of Change is crucial to ensure alignment with the overall project prioritisation process. For example, until recently, ODS did not subscribe to the Front Door of Change. That is changing as a result of the work carried out in recent weeks.
- e. Over 120 projects with ICT involvement are scheduled for delivery in the financial year and beyond, many without a clear funding stream. Expectations on the capacity of the organisation to manage change need to be set.

Recommendations

To support the effective implementation of the prioritisation process, we ask CMT to support the following recommendation:

All projects should adhere to the governance outlined below. No project should be permitted to advance without complying with the following guidelines.

- a. **Front Door of Change:** Projects should adhere to the existing process, initially requiring them to be presented to the Organisational Change Board (OCB).
- b. **Collaborative Prioritisation:** Before the OCB presentation, the Service Area responsible for the project should work closely with the ICT department to prioritise the project with all other projects.
- c. **OCB Review:** The OCB should review and either approve or modify the project's prioritisation and timeline for delivery, with the delegated authority granted by CMT to the chair of the OCB to make the final decision on these specific matters.
- d. **Resource Allocation:** If necessary, other projects should be pushed back to ensure there is sufficient organisational capacity to deliver the new project.
- e. **Scope Management:** Projects must have a well-defined scope, and any changes to the scope before, during, or after project delivery should be approved through the OCB.
- f. **Capital and Revenue Funding:** Projects should only proceed once the capital and revenue funding has been agreed upon.

Next Steps

Establishing corporate prioritisation is key to effectively delivering the many projects involving ICT. Our proposed solutions are designed to streamline the process, foster better collaboration between Service Areas and the ICT department, and ensure optimal allocation of resources. Implementing these guidelines will improve project outcomes and enhance delivery timelines.

- a. The next steps entail sharing and reviewing the prioritised list with the Heads of Service to reach a consensus on the overall forward plan. This is underway at the time of preparing this report and should be completed by the end of August 2023.
- b. Subsequently, no projects will be permitted to proceed without following the process through the Organisational Change Board.
- c. ICT will regularly monitor project prioritisation to identify areas for further improvement.

By adopting these measures, the Council will improve its project delivery capabilities and optimise resource utilisation, ultimately contributing to successfully delivering the most important projects.

Appendix 1 – Prioritised Projects by Starting Quarter (Page 1)

Ref	Project ID	Project Stage	Business Owner(s)	Status	Priority	Starts in Quarter	Due Date
1	Fixed Line and Mobile Telephony Replacements	10 Project Delivery	ICT	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-22	30/07/2023
2	Microsoft 365 Migration & OneDrive & Desktop 365	10 Project Delivery	ICT	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-22	28/12/2023
3	Local Land Charges	10 Project Delivery	Planning	In Delivery	02 - Med	Q2-22	24/08/2023
4	Data Centre Savings Initiatives	10 Project Delivery	ICT	In Progress	03 - Low	Q2-22	31/03/2024
5	Uniform/IDOX Replacement	06 Procurement	Planning	In Progress	01 - High	Q1-23	28/01/2024
6	QL - OCC Versaa Forms Pilot	10 Project Delivery	Housing,ODS	In Delivery	01 - High	Q1-23	31/10/2023
7	Customer Service Westgate Library Move	10 Project Delivery	Customer Service Centre	In Progress	01 - High	Q1-23	15/08/2023
8	Vodafone WAN Replacement with SDWAN	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	In Progress	01 - High	Q1-23	30/09/2023
9	Paygate BACS Replacement	09 Project Planning	Financial Services	In Progress	01 - High	Q1-23	09/10/2023
10	ASM Moving HR/People Team onto ASM	10 Project Delivery	People	In Delivery	01 - High	Q1-23	28/08/2023
11	Agresso Cloud Upgrade to 7.11 and Migration	10 Project Delivery	Financial Services	In Delivery	01 - High	Q1-23	31/10/2023
12	Online Forms (Phase 2 New/Improved Forms)	00 Saving Opportunity	Citizen Experience	In Progress	02 - Med	Q1-23	31/03/2024
13	SCC Contract Renewal	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	Not started	02 - Med	Q1-23	31/03/2024
14	Taxi Licensing - Alternative to manual prioritising of work	03 Full Business Case	Regulatory Services,CSC	Not started	02 - Med	Q1-23	31/12/2023
15	Social Value Exchange - Match My Project	90 Closed/Completed	Regeneration	In Delivery	02 - Med	Q1-23	17/07/2023
16	QL - Versaa Customer Portal: Rents & Repairs	11 UAT/Training	Housing,ODS	In Delivery	03 - Low	Q1-23	31/08/2023

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Appendix 1 – Prioritised Projects by Starting Quarter (Page 2)

Ref	Project ID	Project Stage	Business Owner(s)	Status	Priority	Starts in Quarter	Due Date
17	Netcall Contact Centre Replacement	06 Procurement	Customer Service Centre	In Progress	01 - High	Q2-23	19/05/2024
18	Mobile Working Device Roll-out x60 Devices	10 Project Delivery	Housing	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	01/10/2023
19	ODS BT Telephony Replacement Configuration Works	10 Project Delivery	ODS	Not started	01 - High	Q2-23	31/08/2023
20	ODS Mobile Device Security Refresh (3 year refresh)	00 Upgrade Required	ODS	Not started	01 - High	Q2-23	01/12/2023
21	ODS Car Park Broadband (Seacourt & Redbridge)	00 New project	ODS	Not started	01 - High	Q2-23	31/12/2023
22	Corporate Performance Monitoring (Fit for the Future)	03 Full Business Case	Citizen Experience	In Progress	01 - High	Q2-23	31/03/2024
23	Fusion Leisure Centre Replacement	00 New project	Community Services	In Progress	01 - High	Q2-23	31/03/2024
24	Implementing Cyber Security Audit Recommendations	10 Project Delivery	ICT	In Progress	01 - High	Q2-23	30/09/2023
25	QL - Managing 3C's and Member Enquiries	01 Base Req Gathering	Citizen Experience,Housing,ODS	In Progress	01 - High	Q2-23	31/12/2023
26	South & Vale HIA Contract	10 Project Delivery	Regulatory Services	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	03/01/2024
27	QL - Data Loader for Property Components	11 UAT/Training	Housing	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	31/08/2023
28	QL - Ex Versaa Customer Portal: CBL and MRI	00 New project	Housing,ODS	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	28/02/2024
29	QL - Upgrade v4.13.4	10 Project Delivery	Housing,ODS	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	31/07/2023
30	QL - Data Loader for New Properties	11 UAT/Training	Housing	Not started	01 - High	Q2-23	31/08/2023
31	Town Hall Move - Phase 1b	10 Project Delivery	Corporate Property	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	01/08/2023
32	QL - Managing 3C's in QL (Housing)	01 Base Req Gathering	Housing	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	31/03/2024

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Appendix 1 – Prioritised Projects by Starting Quarter (Page 3)

Ref	Project ID	Project Stage	Business Owner(s)	Status	Priority	Starts in Quarter	Due Date
33	QL - Ex-Versaa Customer Portal: Online Applications	96 Wait for Other Project	Housing,ODS	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	31/12/2023
34	QL - Property Services Implementation (HRA & GF)	04 Approved/Funded	Housing	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	31/12/2023
35	QL - Versaa Asset Management and Mobile Stock Condition	08 Post Contract	Housing,ODS	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	31/12/2023
36	IKEN Legal Case System Replacement	06 Procurement	Legal Services	In Progress	01 - High	Q2-23	30/09/2023
37	DRS Exemption - Upgrade to v6 (must be by end of Nov 23)	00 Contract Expiring	ODS	Seeking Exemption/Extension	01 - High	Q2-23	30/11/2023
38	Website Refresh & Content Refresh (inc. Galaxy Sites)	10 Project Delivery	Policy & Comms.	In Delivery	01 - High	Q2-23	30/09/2023
39	govDelivery Platform	10 Project Delivery	Policy & Comms.	Not started	02 - Med	Q2-23	29/06/2025
40	Oxford Free Wi-Fi Contract Renewal (Jan 2025)	01 Base Req Gathering	Community Services	In Progress	02 - Med	Q2-23	31/12/2024
41	Telephony Payments: Chip & PIN Implementation	96 Wait for Other Project	Financial Services,ODS	Not started	02 - Med	Q2-23	31/01/2024
42	Telephony Payments: PCI-DSS Implementation (Opus)	10 Project Delivery	Financial Services	Not started	02 - Med	Q2-23	31/01/2024
43	Cisco switches and network access points replacement	00 Upgrade Required	ICT	In Progress	02 - Med	Q2-23	30/09/2023
44	CAE Cisco Maintenance Support	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	Not started	02 - Med	Q2-23	28/09/2023
45	Town Hall - Phase 2	00 New project	Corporate Property	Not started	02 - Med	Q2-23	05/09/2023
46	QL - Health Checks/Data Cleansing (Tenancy Mgmt. + Rents)	01 Base Req Gathering	Housing,ODS	In Delivery	02 - Med	Q2-23	31/07/2023
47	QL - Property Services (General Fund) Implementation	10 Project Delivery	Corporate Property	In Delivery	02 - Med	Q2-23	31/12/2023
48	Windows 2012 & 2016 Server Replacement (3 years)	00 Upgrade Required	ICT	In Progress	02 - Med	Q2-23	29/03/2025

Appendix 1 – Prioritised Projects by Starting Quarter (Page 4)

Ref	Project ID	Project Stage	Business Owner(s)	Status	Priority	Starts in Quarter	Due Date
49	Vodafone PSN Connect 2Mb	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	In Progress	02 - Med	Q2-23	30/09/2023
50	ODS Workbooks CRM Implementation	90 Closed/Completed	ODS	Not started	02 - Med	Q2-23	03/03/2024
51	Office 2013 EOL Replacement	00 Upgrade Required	ICT	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-23	01/07/2024
52	Externally hosted Go Ultra Low Oxford (electric vehicle)	00 New project	Environmental Sustainability	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-23	12/12/2023
53	GIS Mapping for Electric Vehicle Planning and Tracking	00 New project	Environmental Sustainability	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-23	31/03/2024
54	Segwarp LA Security Membership	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-23	30/09/2023
55	Sharefile - Citrix	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-23	30/09/2023
56	Zoom Scale-Back	00 Saving Opportunity	ICT	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-23	31/12/2023
57	Artifax Town Hall Booking System	00 Contract Expiring	Facilities	In Progress	03 - Low	Q2-23	09/09/2023
58	EXEGESIS - HBSMR Database (Spatial Data Mgmt)	00 Contract Expiring	Planning	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-23	31/08/2023
59	FME Mapping Software (Transformation of geospatial data)	00 Contract Expiring	Planning	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-23	31/08/2023
60	Electric Vehicle Infrastructure KPI Dashboard	00 New project	Environmental Sustainability	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-23	12/12/2023
61	QL - Health Checks/Data Cleansing (Property Services)	04 Approved/Funded	Housing,ODS	In Delivery	03 - Low	Q2-23	31/07/2023
62	QL - AutoAssessor/Crohm Decommissioning	00 New project	Housing,ODS	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-24	31/07/2024
63	ODS New Website	00 New project	ODS	Not started	03 - Low	Q2-24	30/06/2024

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Appendix 1 – Prioritised Projects by Starting Quarter (Page 5)

Ref	Project ID	Project Stage	Business Owner(s)	Status	Priority	Starts in Quarter	Due Date
64	ISE Cisco Authentication Services for Wi-Fi	00 Upgrade Required	ICT	Not started	01 - High	Q3-23	30/09/2023
65	QL - Versaa Forms: Productised Tenancy Management Services	08 Post Contract	Housing	Not started	01 - High	Q3-23	30/11/2023
66	QL - Versaa Forms: Productised Versaa Tenancy Sign-up	08 Post Contract	Housing,ODS	Not started	01 - High	Q3-23	31/10/2023
67	ASM Replacement/Cloud Upgrade	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	Not started	02 - Med	Q3-23	23/06/2024
68	ModGOV	00 Upgrade Required,92 Check Status	Governance and Member Services	Not started	02 - Med	Q3-23	31/10/2023
69	QL - Versaa Productised Self Service Portal App	96 Wait for Other Project	Housing,ODS	Not started	02 - Med	Q3-23	31/12/2023
70	Telephony Payments: SIP Trunk Implementation/PCI Pal)	96 Wait for Other Project	Financial Services	Not started	02 - Med	Q3-23	31/01/2024
71	iLearn Oxford	00 Contract Expiring	People	Not started	03 - Low	Q3-23	30/11/2023
72	Duo 2FA for Citrix M365 Decommissioning	00 Saving Opportunity	ICT	Not started	03 - Low	Q3-23	11/11/2023
73	Ridgeon Network Secure FTP Hosting	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	Not started	03 - Low	Q3-23	10/11/2023
74	Intranet UTM SW FullGuard	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	Not started	03 - Low	Q3-23	30/09/2023
75	Sophos Sandstorm and InterceptX	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	Not started	03 - Low	Q3-23	30/09/2023
76	UiPath Cloud Software	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	Not started	03 - Low	Q3-23	30/09/2023
77	ODS Channel shift to cashless payments for car parks	00 New project	ODS	Not started	03 - Low	Q3-24	30/06/2024

08

Appendix 1 – Prioritised Projects by Starting Quarter (Page 6)

Ref	Project ID	Project Stage	Business Owner(s)	Status	Priority	Starts in Quarter	Due Date
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78	Civica Open Revenues Cloud Migration	09 Project Planning	Financial Services	Not started	02 - Med	Q4-23	31/03/2024
79	Wi-Fi Replacement in Town Hall & ODS Depots in 2024	00 Contract Expiring	ICT	In Progress	02 - Med	Q4-23	31/03/2024
80	iTrent Replacement	03 Full Business Case	People	Not started	03 - Low	Q4-23	31/03/2025
81	NEC Information@Work Upgrade	92 Check Status,10 Project Delivery	Housing	Not started	03 - Low	Q4-23	31/03/2024
82	New Asset Management System	03 Full Business Case	Corporate Property	Not started	02 - Med	Q1-24	31/12/2024
83	QL - Implement Sava Intelligent Energy	96 Wait for Other Project	Housing	Not started	02 - Med	Q1-24	31/07/2024
84	Civica Pay Phase 2	96 Wait for Other Project	Financial Services	Not started	02 - Med	Q1-24	31/12/2024
85	Paris Payments Decommissioning (Post Civica Phase 2)	96 Wait for Other Project	Financial Services	Not started	03 - Low	Q1-24	28/03/2025
86	Civica Collect Project	96 Wait for Other Project	Financial Services	Not started	03 - Low	Q1-24	31/03/2024
87	Metastreet - Property Inspection App (Apple iOS)	00 New project	Regulatory Services	Not started	01 - High	Unknown	
88	Taxi Licensing - Automate payments on UNIFORM	03 Full Business Case	Regulatory Services,CSC	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
89	Community centre builds	00 New project	OX Place	In Progress	02 - Med	Unknown	
90	Corporate Procurement Process Improvement	00 New project	Procurement,Planning	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
91	Housing Needs - online application form status checker	03 Full Business Case	Housing	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
92	Housing Needs - online General Register Application Form	03 Full Business Case	Housing	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
93	OCC Intranet Replacement (SharePoint)	00 New project	Policy & Comms.	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	

Appendix 1 – Prioritised Projects by Starting Quarter (Page 7)

Ref	Project ID	Project Stage	Business Owner(s)	Status	Priority	Starts in Quarter	Due Date
94	QL - Contractor Portal	96 Wait for Other Project	Housing	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
95	QL - Housing Needs - Online enhanced housing assessment	03 Full Business Case	Housing	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
96	QL - Integration between existing QL & Info@Work	00 New project	Housing	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
97	QL - RTB (Right-to-Buy) Process Review	00 New project	Housing	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
98	QL - Text Messaging	00 New project	Housing	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
99	QL - Versaa Estate Inspection	08 Post Contract	Housing,ODS	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
100	Consultation Portal	90 Closed/Completed	Legal Services	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
101	Metastreet Contract Renewal	00 New project	Regulatory Services	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
102	Metastreet Mobile App (iOS) - Enforcement	00 New project	Regulatory Services	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
103	ODS RPA for x8 Waste Forms	97 On Hold	ODS	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
104	Taxi Licensing - Improvements to Online Application Forms	03 Full Business Case	Regulatory Services,CSC	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
105	Taxi Licensing - Introduction of Online Payment facility	03 Full Business Case	Regulatory Services,CSC	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
106	Taxi Licensing - Reduce Face to Face Appointments	03 Full Business Case	Regulatory Services,CSC	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
107	Taxi Licensing - Website to be reviewed & updated	03 Full Business Case	Regulatory Services,CSC	Not started	02 - Med	Unknown	
108	Building Control online form, automation and payments	03 Full Business Case	Regulatory Services	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
109	QL - System Review Renewal/Replacement	00 New project	Housing,ODS	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	

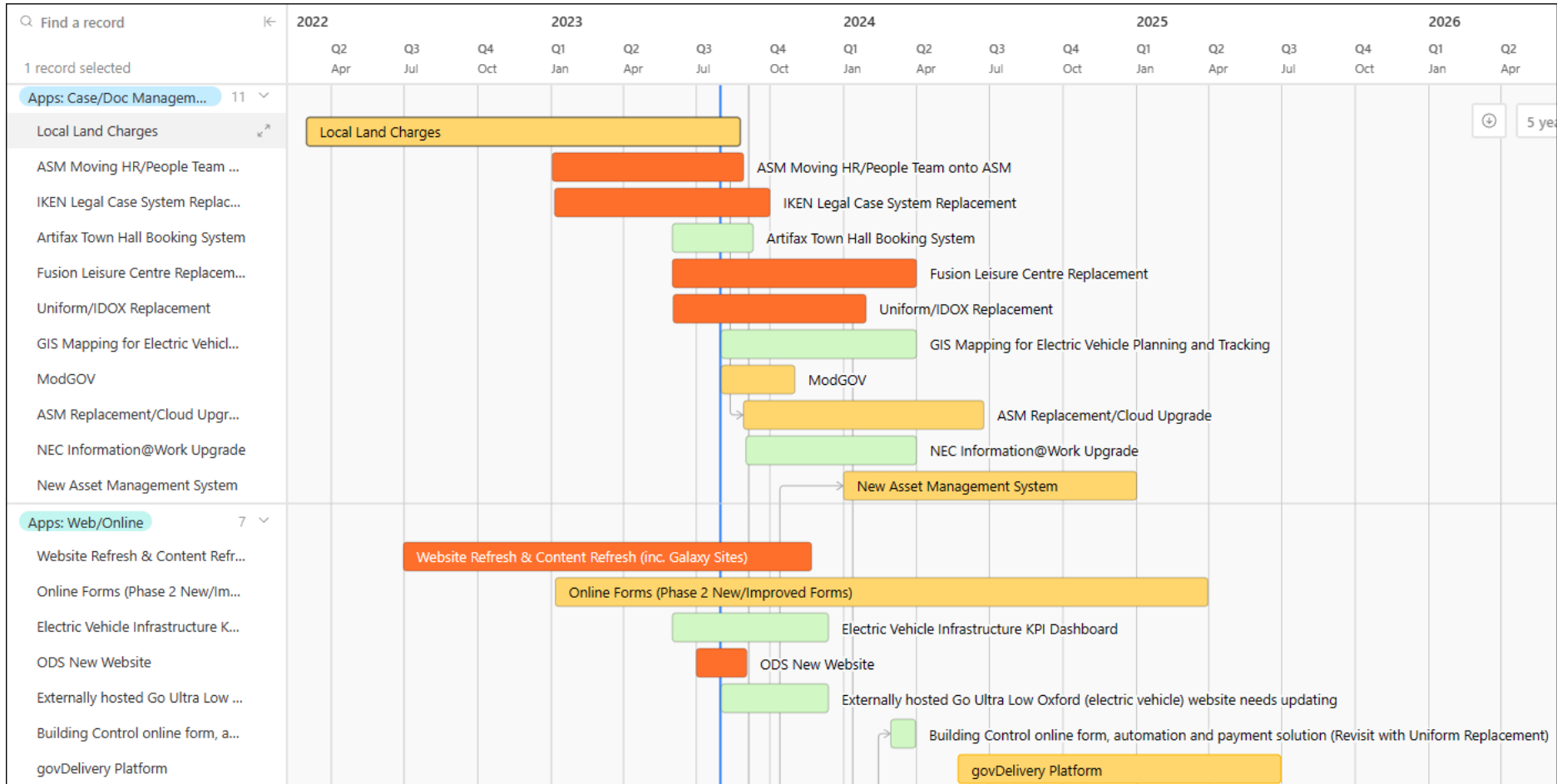
Appendix 1 – Prioritised Projects by Starting Quarter (Page 8)

Ref	Project ID	Project Stage	Business Owner(s)	Status	Priority	Starts in Quarter	Due Date
110	Bartec Waste Management System (On Hold)	00 Contract Expiring	ODS	In Progress	03 - Low	Unknown	
111	Basement Scanning	00 New project	Planning,Corporate	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
112	Caution List App - Migrate from spreadsheet	00 New project	Citizen Experience	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
113	CCTV Works	00 Contract Expiring	Corporate (Several Teams)	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
114	EOCC - East Oxford Community Centre Wi-Fi Provision	00 New project	Community Services	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
115	QL - Abritas (Choice Based Lettings) Decommissioning	96 Wait for Other Project	Housing	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
116	QL - ASBIT & CRT Review	10 Project Delivery	Housing,ODS	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
117	QL - CodeMan Decommissioning	96 Wait for Other Project	Housing	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
118	QL - Energy Advice Contracts recorded in QL	00 New project	Housing,ODS	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
119	QL - Info@Work for ASBIT and CRT	00 New project	Housing,ODS	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
120	QL - NEC Info@Work Replacement (in tandem with QL)	96 Wait for Other Project	Housing	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
121	QL - Predictive Arrears Monitoring	00 New project	Housing	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
122	QL - PRS Review	00 New project	Housing,ODS	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
123	QL - RentSense Decommissioning	96 Wait for Other Project	Housing	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	
124	QL - Tenancy Involvement Contacts recorded in QL	00 New project	Housing	Not started	03 - Low	Unknown	

83

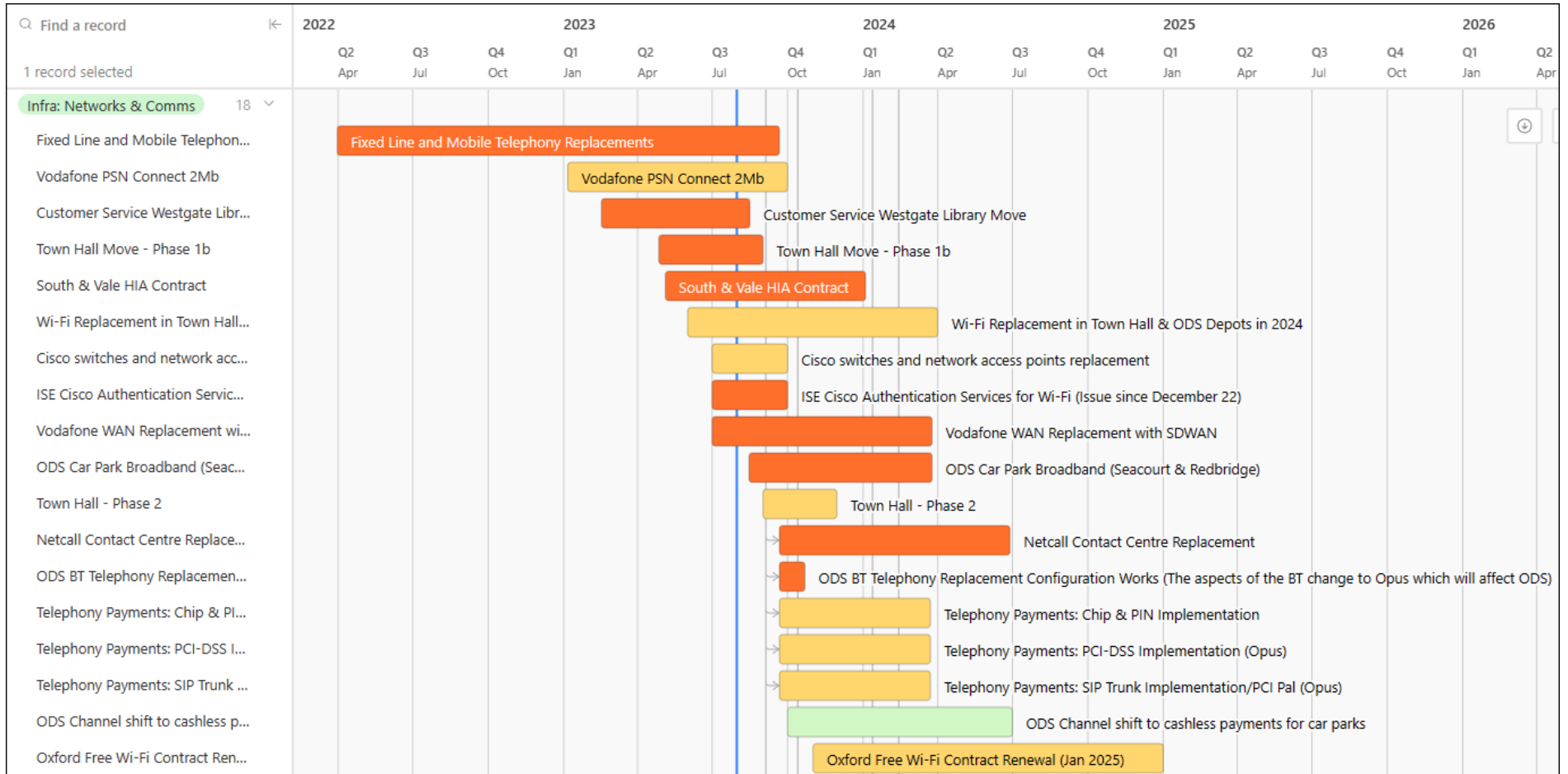
Appendix 2 – Projects by ICT Team and Priority (HML): Case/Document Management, Web and Online

84

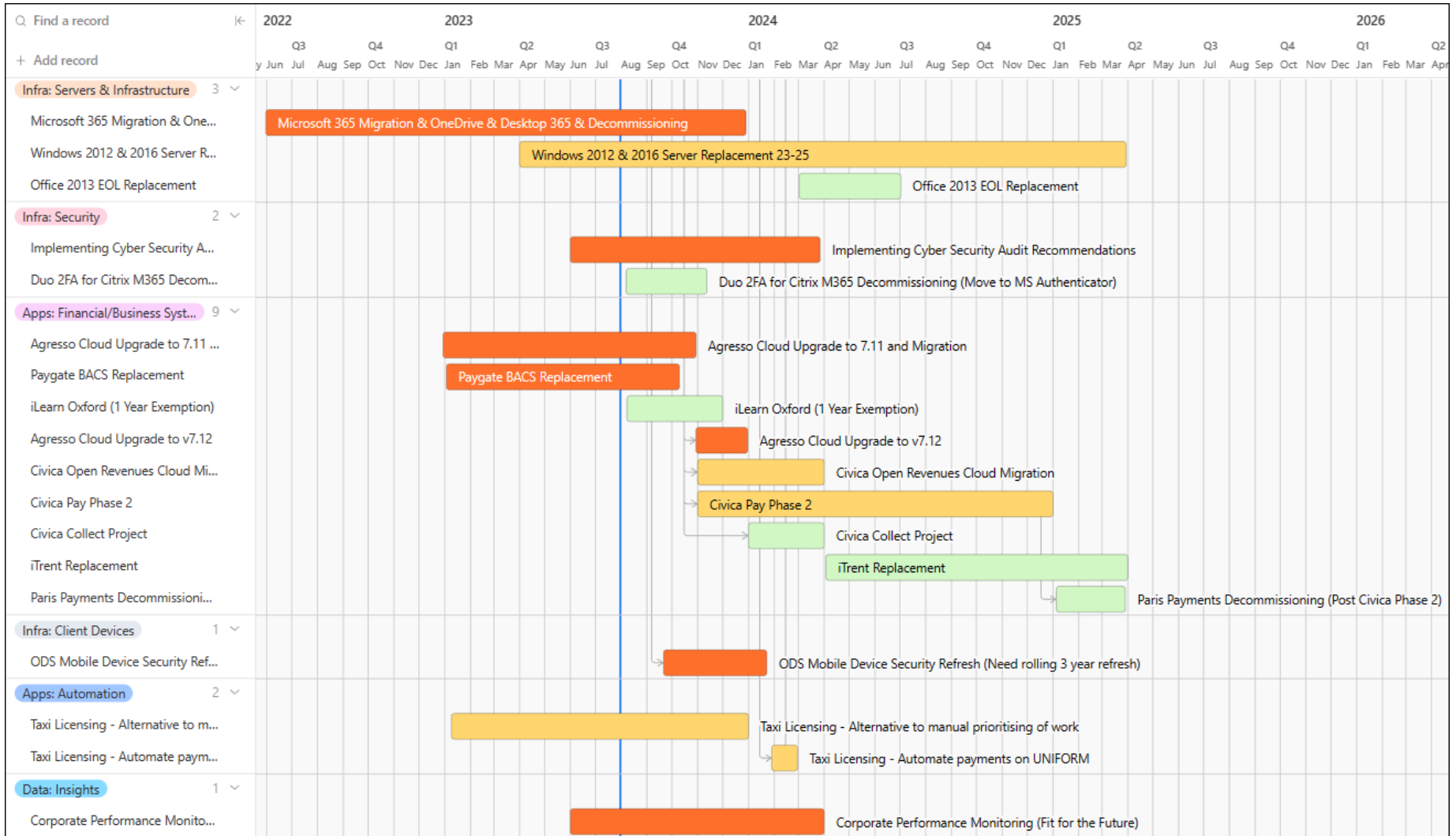


Appendix 2 – Projects by ICT Team and Priority (HML): Network and Comms

85

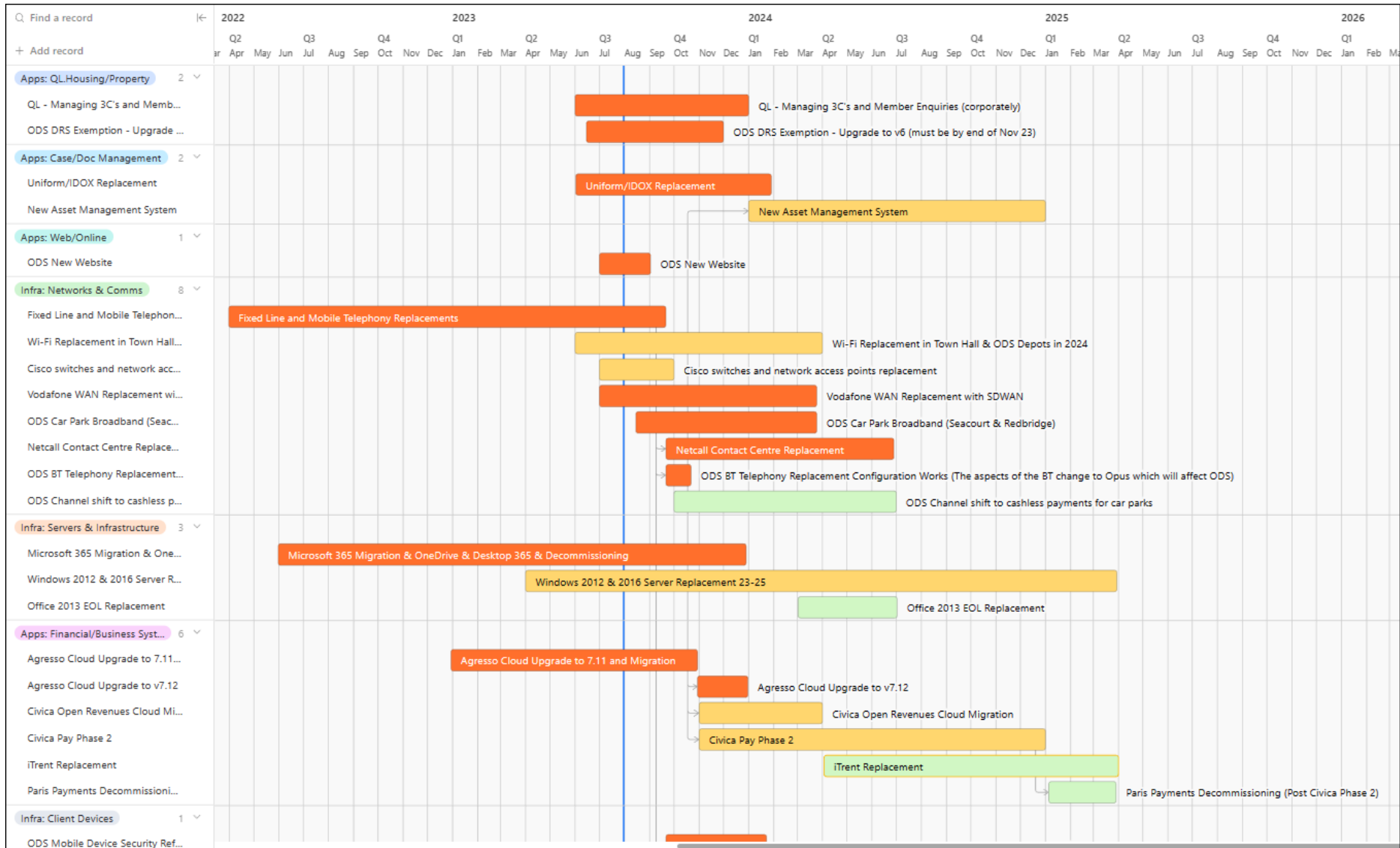


Appendix 2 – Projects by ICT Team and Priority (HML): Infrastructure, Security, Business Systems, Client Devices, Automation and Data



Appendix 3 – Projects with an impact on ODS

87



Appendix 4 – Projects with no start date identified

Find a record	2021				2022				2023				2024	
	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr
1 record selected														
Apps: QL.Housing/Property 17														
QL - Abrisas (Choice Based Letti...														
QL - CodeMan Decommissionin...														
Housing Needs - online applica...														
Housing Needs - online Genera...														
QL - Integration between existi...														
Invalid letter reviewed & updat...														
NEC Info@Work Replacement (i...														
QL - Contractor Portal														
QL - RTB (Right-to-Buy) Process...														
QL - Text Messaging (one actio...														
QL - Versaa Estate Inspection (S...														
QL - RentSense Decommissioni...														
QL - ASBIT & CRT Review														
QL - Predictive Arrears Monitori...														
QL - PRS Review														
QL - Energy Advice Contracts in...														
QL - Tenancy Involvement Cont...														

88

Appendix 4 – Projects with no start date (Page 2)

Find a record	2021				2022				2023				2024			
	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct
1 record selected																
Apps: Case/Doc Management 6																
Bartec Waste Management Syst...																
Basement Scanning (Would nee...																
Caution List App - Migrate fro...																
Metastreet Contract Renewal																
QL - Info@Work for ASBIT and ...																
Metastreet - Property Inspectio...																
Apps: Web/Online 6																
QL - Housing Needs - Introduc...																
OCC Intranet Replacement (Sha...																
Taxi Licensing - Improvements t...																
Taxi Licensing - Introduction of ...																
Taxi Licensing - Reduce Face to ...																
Taxi Licensing - Website to be r...																
Infra: Networks & Comms 3																
CCTV Works																
East Oxford, Blackbird Leys, and...																
EOCC - East Oxford Community...																
Apps: Automation 2																
ODS RPA for x8 Waste Forms																
Corporate Procurement Process...																

Appendix 5 Projects with funding not identified

06

Find a record	2022				2023				2024				2025			
	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct
Apps: QL.Housing/Property 7																
Housing Needs - online applica...																
Housing Needs - online Genera...																
Invalid letter reviewed & updat...																
NEC Info@Work Replacement (i...																
ODS DRS Exemption - Upgrade...																
QL - System Review Renewal/R...																
Mobile Working Device Roll-ou...																
Apps: Case/Doc Management 9																
Bartec Waste Management Syst...																
Basement Scanning (Would nee...																
Caution List App - Migrate fro...																
Metastreet Contract Renewal																
Metastreet - Property Inspectio...																
Fusion Leisure Centre Replacem...																
GIS Mapping for Electric Vehicl...																
ModGOV																
ASM Replacement/Cloud Upgr...																
Apps: Web/Online 10																
OCC Intranet Replacement (Sha...																
Taxi Licensing - Improvements t...																
Taxi Licensing - Introduction of ...																

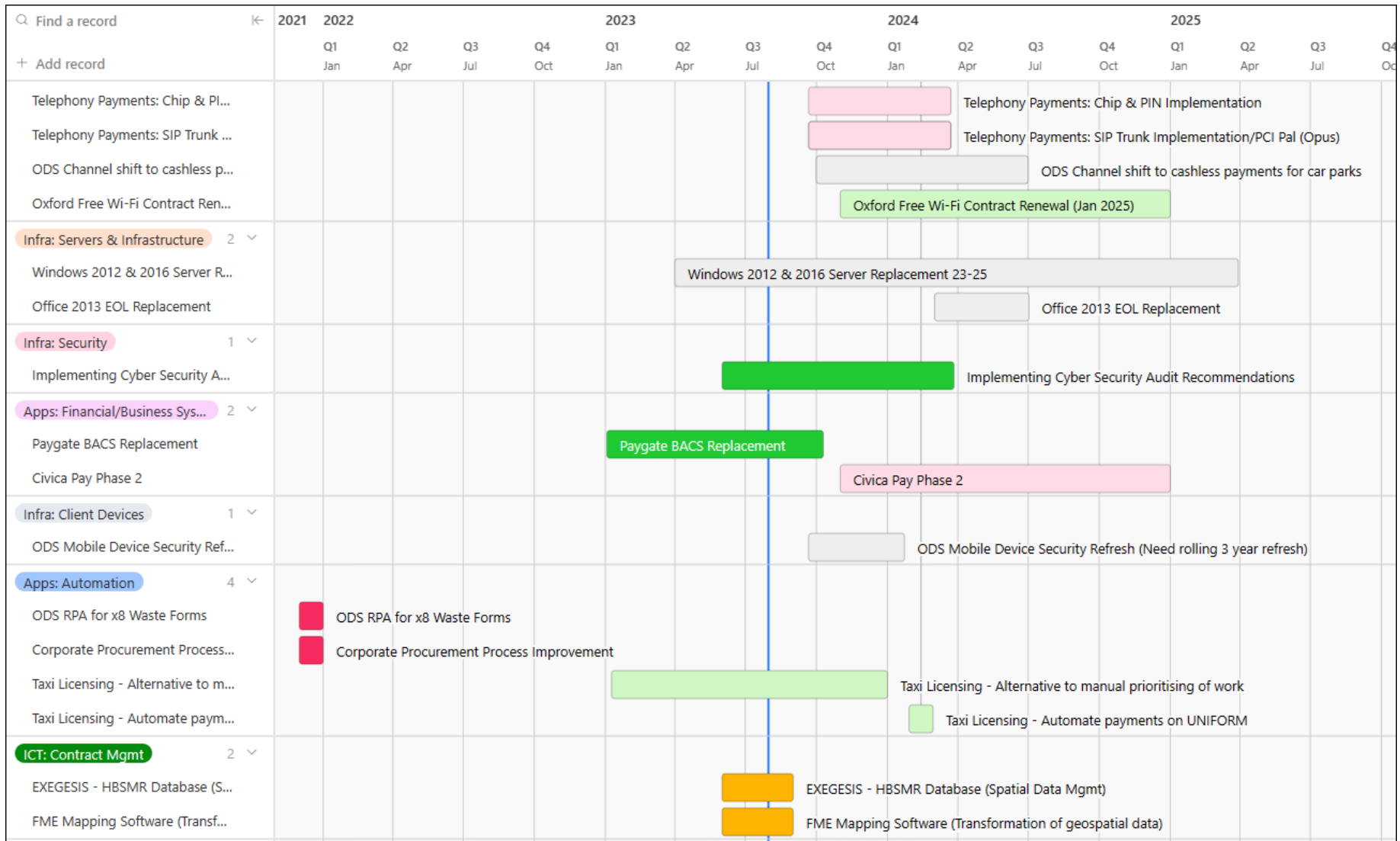
Appendix 5 – Projects with funding not identified (Page 2)

91

Find a record	2022				2023				2024				2025				
	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	Q1 Jan	Q2 Apr	Q3 Jul	Q4 Oct	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxi Licensing - Improvements t... Taxi Licensing - Introduction of ... Taxi Licensing - Reduce Face to ... Taxi Licensing - Website to be r... Electric Vehicle Infrastructure K... ODS New Website Externally hosted Go Ultra Low ... Building Control online form, a... govDelivery Platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxi Licensing - Improvements to Online Application Forms (Uniform?) Taxi Licensing - Introduction of Online Payment facility (using Civica) Taxi Licensing - Reduce Face to Face Appointments Taxi Licensing - Website to be reviewed & updated 																
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infra: Networks & Comms 13 CCTV Works East Oxford, Blackbird Leys, and... EOCC - East Oxford Community... Customer Service Westgate Libr... Wi-Fi Replacement in Town Hall... ISE Cisco Authentication Servic... ODS Car Park Broadband (Seac... Town Hall - Phase 2 ODS BT Telephony Replacemen... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCTV Works East Oxford, Blackbird Leys, and other community centre builds (See also Free Wi-Fi) EOCC - East Oxford Community Centre Wi-Fi Provision 																

Appendix 5 – Projects with funding not identified (Page 3)

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Appendix 6 – Criteria for differentiation small pieces of work from projects

From the perspective of ICT, the most common way of defining the difference between a small piece of work and a larger, more time-consuming task or project is based on the concept of effort, complexity, and resources required to complete the request. Small pieces of work would usually be submitted as a Service Request through ASM (vFire), with larger tasks going through the Front Door of Change. While there is no strict definition that universally applies, some common differentiators include:

- 1. Scope and Scale:** A small piece of work typically has a well-defined and limited scope, while a larger task or project involves more extensive requirements and broader scope, potentially spanning multiple systems or departments.
- 2. Timeframe:** Small tasks can usually be completed in a short timeframe, often measured in hours or a few days. In contrast, larger tasks or projects require weeks, months, or even longer to complete.
- 3. Resources Required:** Smaller tasks often require fewer resources in terms of personnel, equipment, and budget, while larger projects necessitate significant resource allocation.
- 4. Complexity:** Larger projects are generally more complex, involving multiple interrelated components, dependencies, and potential risks. Smaller tasks tend to be simpler and more straightforward.
- 5. Impact:** The impact of a change request can also be a factor in determining its size. Larger projects often have a more significant impact on the Council's operations or infrastructure compared to smaller changes.
- 6. Degree of Planning and Coordination:** Larger tasks or projects typically require more extensive planning, coordination, and collaboration among different teams or stakeholders.
- 7. Customisation vs. Standardisation:** Smaller tasks may involve simple configurations or changes within existing systems or processes, while larger projects might involve custom development or substantial system redesigns.
- 8. Approval Process:** The Council has different approval and review processes for small ICT changes (ASM/vFire) and large projects (Front Door of Change), with the latter requiring more thorough evaluations.

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AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME – 2023/2024

31 October 2023

1. External Auditors: Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2022
2. Risk Management Report as at 30 September 2023
3. Local Authority Benchmarking Report 2022/23

17 January 2024

1. Risk Management Report as at 31 December 2023
2. External Auditors: Draft Audit Plan
3. Setting of Council Tax Base 2024/25
4. Internal Audit Progress Report as at 31 January 2024
5. Internal Audit Follow Up Report as at 31 January 2024

08 April 2024

1. Risk Management Report as at 31 March 2023
2. External Auditors: Draft Audit results report
3. Internal Audit Progress Report as at 31 March 2023
4. Internal Audit Follow Up Report as at 31 March 2023
5. Internal Audit Plan 2024-25 and Strategic Plan 2024-26

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Minutes of a meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on Wednesday 26 July 2023

www.oxford.gov.uk



Committee members present:

Councillor Hall	Councillor Roz Smith
Councillor Thomas (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)	Councillor Hollingsworth (for Councillor Corais)
Councillor Rowley (for Councillor Fry)	Councillor Muddiman (for Councillor Jarvis)

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Lucy Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer
Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services
Bill Lewis, Financial Accounting Manager (remote attendance)
Emma Griffiths, Team Leader Lawyer (remote attendance)

Also present:

Yasmin Ahmed, Internal Auditor, BDO (remote attendance)
Greg Rubins, Internal Auditor, BDO (remote attendance)
Adrian Balmer, External Auditor, Ernst & Young (remote attendance)
Helen Bishop, Head of Business Improvement (remote attendance)
Gail Malkin, Head of People (remote attendance)
Rocco Labellarte, Chief Technology & Information Officer (remote attendance)

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Corais, Fry and Jarvis sent apologies.
Substitutes are shown above.

1. Election of Chair for 2023/24

Councillor James Fry was elected Chair for the Council year 2023-24.

2. Election of Vice Chair for 2023/24

Councillor Imogen Thomas was elected Vice-Chair for the Council year 2023-24.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. Investigation Team Annual Report 2022/23

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report which appraised the Committee of the activity and performance of the Counter Fraud Team for the fiscal year 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Scott Warner, Customer Fraud Manager introduced the report and advised that the team had been responsible for achieving fraud prevention, detection and identification values in excess of £5.1 million in the period. He reported on the successful annual fraud conference, of which was the seventh hosted by the team, aimed to help raise awareness of fraud trends, emerging risks, and to raise awareness of the services offered by the team.

The Committee congratulated the team on the remarkable results achieved by the team, which provided an extremely important service for the Council with excellent value for money.

In discussion, the numbers in table one were clarified and it was confirmed that the investigation detailed within the confidential appendix was still ongoing. Information on service area improvements identified as part of an investigation would be included in future reports to the Committee.

The Committee were **resolved** to note the report.

5. Avoiding Bribery, Fraud and Corruption Policy

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report which presented the reviewed Anti-Bribery, Fraud and Corruption Policy for approval and adoption.

Scott Warner, Counter Fraud Manager, introduced the report and advised that the policy had been reviewed to ensure that it included updated legislation to strengthen the Council's anti-bribery, fraud and corruption framework. He advised that the policy had been updated with new team members, and on approval, the updated policy would be added to the Council website, the intranet and would feature as part of the all Fraud Awareness Training delivered by the Counter-Fraud Team.

The Vice-Chair of the Committee drew the Committee's attention to part 14.15 of the policy whereby all members of the Council should take seriously and treat with confidence any concerns raised about a potential bribery, fraud or corruption. Also part 14.18, which detailed the responsibility of the Audit and Governance Committee in ensuring the policies for making sure the Council follows regulatory guidance in respect of anti-fraud and corruption and money-laundering were noted.

In response to queries from the Committee, Scott Warner advised that concerns raised through the Whistleblowing Policy are referred to this policy if appropriate, and refer to Council members only, and not Parish Councillors.

The Committee were **resolved** to approve the reviewed policy.

The Committee agreed to move agenda item 7 to the end of the agenda to enable discussion of the confidential appendix.

6. Update on 2021/22 Annual Accounts

Adrian Balmer, External Auditor, Ernst & Young, provided the Committee with a brief update received from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities,

which provided context regarding the direction of government on tackling the completion of outstanding Local Authority audits.

Bill Lewis, Financial Accounting Manager, advised the Committee that regulations would be passed that would enable audit firms to review and sign off outstanding audits to provide some assurance to the public sector accounts. He advised that there could be a knock on effect to subsequent accounting periods, however this would be considered by audit firms.

Adrian Balmer clarified that value for money conclusions and pension fund audits would be prioritised in light of financial sustainability pressures to enable further assurances to the accounts, however he had not received details on how these would be provided for.

Bill Lewis advised the Committee that the annual accounts for Oxford Direct Services Group Ltd had been finalised with their internal auditors, Mazaars, and pending Board sign off, would be incorporated within the Council's accounts for the external auditors to sign off later this year.

Adrian Balmer reassured the Committee regarding the national concerns with Section 114 notices, however advised that Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services had previously provided a report to the Committee which included helpful information to confirm the Council's position.

The Committee noted the current status of the 2021/22 and 2022/23 audits and thanked Adrian Balmer for the information provided to the Committee.

7. Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2022-23

Greg Rubins, Internal Auditor of BDO, presented the report which informed the Committee on the details of the work undertaken by internal audit for Oxford City Council and provided an overview of the effectiveness of the controls in place for the full year. He highlighted that overall they were able to provide a moderate assurance that there was a sound system of internal control, designed to meet the Council's objectives and that controls were being applied consistently.

The Committee were **resolved** to note the report.

The Committee agreed to move agenda items 10 and 11 to the end of the agenda.

8. Recruitment and Retention Audit Update

Gail Malkin, Head of People introduced the report which updated the Committee on recruitment and retention challenges and the Council's People Plan objectives. She advised that vacancy levels remained constant, the Council had recruited an in-house Recruitment Consultant who was working proactively to approach candidates for the lawyer and property roles and employee turnover was consistent at approximately 8.5%.

In response to questions from the Committee, Gail Malkin advised that employee exit interviews could now be completed online, and anecdotal data suggested that employees had left the Council mainly for other career development opportunities. Reed had been employed to provide a payroll-only service for candidates who had been sourced to temporary roles to provide a time and cost saving where the Council had been able to find candidates.

Gail Malkin also advised the Committee that apprenticeships had been recruited to many roles across the Council. They were actively working with local schools to encourage a diverse and local pool of candidates, and internal career development opportunities were also being explored.

The Committee were **resolved to:**

1. **Note** the report.
2. **Confirm** the Committee was satisfied with the approach.

9. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

Emma Griffiths, Team Leader Lawyer introduced the report which presented the revised Regulation of Investigatory Powers Surveillance Policy and Procedure for approval and adoption. She highlighted an error within the report in paragraph 3, that the report related to the Council's use of the Regulation and Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) for the period April 2017 to March 2018, and that the report in fact related to the Council's use of RIPA for the period April 2022 to March 2023, during which time the powers had not been used.

She further highlighted the strict parameters for the use of investigatory powers available to the Council in direct covert surveillance, the interception of communications data and the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources, and confirmed that the Council had not used any of these powers available for several years, and had submitted a nil return to the IPCO in its statistical return for 2022.

In response to questions from the Committee, Emma Griffiths clarified the use of CCTV for either covert or direct intelligence evidence gathering, and what considerations the Council would have before doing so. The Committee advised that a simple flowchart detailing the sequence of authorisation would be useful for inclusion within the policy, and would approve the policy subject to this being included and reported back to the next Committee meeting. (**ACTION**)

The Committee were **resolved to approve** the revised Surveillance Policy and Procedure at Appendix 1 to the report, *and delegated authority to the Head of Law and Governance to draft and include a flowchart detailing the authorisation process.*

The Committee agreed to move agenda items 14 and 15 to the end of the meeting.

10. Internal Audit Follow Up Report - July 2023

The Internal Auditor, BDO submitted a report which informed the Committee on the implementation of the recommendations from their previous internal audit reviews.

Yasmin Ahmed, Internal Auditor, BDO introduced the report and advised the Committee of the 20 recommendations due, all apart from 2 were complete or in progress. The outstanding recommendations had been provided with revised due dates and would be reported to the next Committee meeting.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the overdue recommendation regarding reviewing governance arrangements to ensure decisions taken by the Development Board, Housing Supply Programme Group, ODG and CMT did not contravene the opinions of the SG, Yasmin Ahmed advised that the Executive Director of Development had assured BDO that the recommendation was being progressed, having been presented to the Net Zero SG meeting on 24 July 2023. As the follow up

had been undertaken by BDO before this date, it would be reviewed again for the next Committee meeting. It was noted that the Executive Director for Development would be invited to the next Committee meeting to report on this recommendation if it had not been completed. **(ACTION)**

The Committee were **resolved** to note the report.

11. Matters Exempt from Publication

The Audit and Governance Committee passed a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, to exclude the press and members of the public for the following agenda items on the grounds that Oxford City Council, Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford OX1 1BX, their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

12. Internal Audit Progress Report - July 2023

The Internal Auditor, BDO had submitted a report which informed the Committee on progress made against the internal audit work plan and on the outcome of their reviews.

The Audit and Governance Committee discussed the report and its confidential appendix in private session.

The Committee **resolved** to note the report.

13. Risk Management Report as at 30 June 2023

The Head of Financial Services had submitted a report to update the Committee on both corporate and service risks as at 30 June 2023.

The Audit and Governance Committee discussed the report and its confidential appendix in private session.

The Committee **resolved** to review the risk management report and **note** its contents, *not including the confidential appendix, which would be updated for the following Committee meeting.*

14. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee agreed to **approve** the minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2023 as a true and accurate record.

15. Confidential minutes of the previous meeting

The Committee agreed to **approve** the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2023 as a true and accurate record.

16. Dates and times of meetings

The Committee noted the dates and times of future meetings.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.40 pm

Chair
September 2023

Date: Wednesday 27

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

*Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal
decision notice is issued*

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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