



# Strategic Performance Report

Quarter Three 2021/22

February 2022



## CONTENTS

<u>BACKGROUND</u> .....	2
<u>STRATEGIC CONTEXT</u> .....	3
<u>PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS</u> .....	5
<u>THEME 1. PROTECT AND RESTORE THE NATURAL WORLD</u> .....	6
<u>THEME 2. OPENNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY</u> .....	10
<u>THEME 3. ACTION ON THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY</u> .....	14
<u>THEME 4. IMPROVED ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING</u> .....	19
<u>THEME 5. HOMES AND INFRASTRUCTURE THAT MEET LOCAL NEEDS</u> .....	26
<u>THEME 6. INVESTMENT THAT REBUILD OUR FINANCIAL VIABILITY</u> .....	33
<u>COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY</u> .....	37



## BACKGROUND



1. The Council monitors performance and progress towards achieving the aims and priorities set out in the [Corporate Plan](#).
2. This report provides a strategic overview of the performance for Q3 (01 October to 31 December 2021), focusing on the activity to deliver the corporate priorities in the South Oxfordshire District Council Corporate Plan 2020-24.
3. In addition to providing a performance update and assurance against the delivery of the Council's six strategic themes in the Corporate Plan, this report will also provide any strategic context relevant to the Council's operations and, given the significant impact of Covid-19 on communities, services and staff, the report will include a section on Covid-19 response and recovery.
4. This report is the third iteration, and it is expected that it will evolve in line with the new approach to Performance Management being embedded by the Council, as well as from feedback from senior officers and Members.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This quarter, there was anticipation around the 26<sup>th</sup> UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), held 31 October to 12 November in Glasgow. Significant global pressure was felt prior to and during the Conference, by the leaders and negotiators to reach agreements and set common timeframes for achieving carbon reduction targets. The resulting Glasgow Climate Pact, adopted by almost 200 countries, ramped up the call for greater action and financing for adaptation. Following COP26, South Oxfordshire District Council approved a motion, to provide clear leadership and regular guidance and information on the changes required to reach net zero carbon emissions. A reaffirmed commitment was also made to publish a Climate Action Plan, of which a final draft was created at the end of quarter three, to be heard at the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC) and Cabinet, at the beginning of quarter four.

The later part of this quarter can arguably be defined by a swift and significant rise of a new Covid-19 variant of concern, named Omicron. The identification of the Omicron variant caused a shift in the Covid-19 landscape across the Country. As a new highly contagious variant, Omicron was set to impair the steps the Country had taken since the ending of the majority of restrictions in quarter two. This period was characterised by an ever-changing picture of both new releases of scientific information regarding the variant and natural emotion in response to this, as residents looked to festive celebrations ahead and fears that long-awaited festivities with family and friends may once again not be possible, in order to protect the population's health. On 08 December, the Prime Minister confirmed England was to move to 'Plan B' in response to the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, which included measures such as the compulsory wearing of face masks, working from home mandates and the requirement of NHS Covid Passes in specific settings.

Locally, this had a particular impact on businesses who saw many cancelled social gatherings at restaurants for example, and residents increasingly staying at home to avoid contracting Covid-19. This is a stark contrast to the beginning of the quarter, where nationally the UK economy surpassed pre-Covid levels for the first time in November after recording stronger-than-expected growth, with gross domestic product (GDP) expanding 0.9% between October and November. The Office for National Statistics reported that in particular, architects, retailers, couriers and accountants had a "bumper month".

Moreover, this quarter saw a revived acceleration of the Covid-19 vaccination programme in December, as a booster vaccine was deemed one of the main defences against this latest variant. The national 'Get Boosted Now' campaign aimed to offer all eligible adults a booster by the 31 December. The campaign led to a huge increase in vaccination rates, with over 8 million top-up jabs administered in just over 2 weeks in England (between 12 December and 30 December); the highest number of vaccinations ever recorded in a single day, was reached 18 December. This quarter, the Local Government Association highlighted the integral role councils have played in the Covid-19 vaccine programmes, working in partnership and supporting the health and wellbeing of residents.

Additionally, December of this quarter saw the release of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022/23. This was released as a one-year settlement and included proposals of increased funding for councils compared to 2021/22, a 2022/23 services grant, a council tax 2% core referendum threshold and a 'roll over' of elements of the 2021/22 settlement, such as the current approach to the New Homes Bonus. A consultation launched 16 December to seek views on the proposals and will close early next quarter, 13 January 2022. In anticipation of this, this

quarter the Council completed extensive work to review spending across the council and carried out an extensive revenue base budget challenge exercise. The results of this will support the Council with their medium-term financial planning and preparation of a 2022/23 budget, to be heard at Cabinet and Council next quarter.

Furthermore, nationally, this quarter saw the removal of the uplift in Universal and Working Tax Credit. A £20 per week uplift/increase was implemented in March 2020 with the purpose of supporting families whose income would be affected, as the country faced the economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic. From 6 October 2021, the government ended this payment, which had the potential to affect 7,205 households in South Oxfordshire<sup>1</sup>. Following this, the Council pledged to write to the government to call on it to reverse the cut to the £20 Universal Credit uplift. This pledge forms part of the Council's aspiration to improve economic and community wellbeing, as detailed within the Corporate Plan.

A growing focus nationally continues to be the subject of women's safety in the community. Last quarter saw the sad emergence of particularly high-profile cases in the UK, of violence against women at night, in the community. This quarter, the Council has launched a 'Safer Streets' survey in partnership with Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxford City Council, to hear from anyone who has felt unsafe in Didcot or Abingdon town on a night out, or when returning after an evening out elsewhere. The survey aims to use resident's experiences to help shape and introduce measures to help prevent violence against women and girls, travelling at night in the district. This work will continue into quarter four and beyond. The Council's involvement in the Community Safety Partnership remains key to making progress in this area and making streets safer for women and girls.

---

<sup>1</sup> Number of households on Universal Credit in South Oxfordshire as of July 2021



## PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS



**13** public meetings (100%) were livestreamed and uploaded to YouTube



We ran **11** consultations/engagement exercises in Q3, and received **1,953** responses



We have secured **18** leases of vacant commercial properties through the Meanwhile in Oxfordshire project

We reached **72,800** people through 178 Facebook posts, and received **110k** impressions from 179 tweets



The DEFRA approved recycling rate for the district in 2021/21 was **63.6%**, making South Oxfordshire the second-best council in the league table



**209** applications received for our local Winter Support Grant scheme. Total funding for this scheme is **£1,239,551**



**6** Neighbourhood Plans passed the submission stage in Q3. They contain provisions for protecting **23** Local Green Spaces and **17** more through other forms of policy protection



**2,256** people subscribed to the Economic Development newsletter in Q3, and **80** responded to our “State of the Business” consultation survey



We have delivered **15** emergency food parcels to residents in financial hardship or self-isolating due to COVID-19



**51** new affordable homes were delivered in Q3, bringing the total for the year to date to 214



On 31 December, **zero** rough sleepers were recorded in the district for the first time since 2013. We recorded a successful homelessness prevention rate of **87%**, which is above the 80% target

## THEME 1. PROTECT AND RESTORE THE NATURAL WORLD

### Strategic Lead – Suzanne Malcolm – Deputy Chief Executive – Place

Why?

South Oxfordshire is a largely rural district, including parts of two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the Oxford Green Belt, as well as a long stretch of the River Thames. The natural world is proven to provide benefits to both mental and physical health, as well as having its own intrinsic value, and it needs our protection.

So:

We will respect and protect our natural environment, especially our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and other nature rich areas. We will champion the opportunity to restore our natural world in both biodiverse and bio-depleted areas through nature recovery networks and other means. We will connect urban communities to their local green spaces and restore nature to urban environments.



### Key Activity in Q3:

To progress the Council's aim to protect and restore our natural world, this quarter work commenced on exploring ways in which improvements can be made to enhance the biodiversity of our parks and open spaces, such as increasing the number of wildflower areas and increasing tree coverage where appropriate.

Additionally, this quarter, to further the Council's commitment to recognising and supporting the vital role of farming, officers have been working with representatives of Good Food Oxfordshire to develop the initial plans for a Food Strategy for Oxfordshire. Good Food Oxfordshire exists to support and strengthen networks in Oxfordshire to improve the area's food system and to respond to challenges within it. For example, excessive waste, carbon footprints, food poverty and wages in the farming sector.

Moreover, work has continued this quarter on improving access to green spaces in and around our towns. Officers have worked with a housing developer in Didcot to expedite the transfer of the first tranche of open spaces on Great Western Park to the council, as part of the Council's aim to reinforce access to nature as a priority for community wellbeing.

This quarter we have also progressed the work completed in quarter two, on ensuring strong foundations are in place to take forward the work of the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for Oxfordshire. This quarter, a decision regarding the hosting of the Board was made, in addition to an agreement being reached regarding its provisional budget. This will help to take forward its aims of an ambitious nature recovery programme.

Also, this quarter, the council invested just under £320,000 to upgrade a treatment plant which serves homes in the village of Moulsoford. The upgrade work has been designed with the aim to reduce the risk of flooding as well as provide a more reliable service for the connected properties.



## Performance Measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
PRN1	With partners, promote in-depth mapping and surveying of ecosystems across the district, planning for restoration of the natural world and working closely with landowners and specialist agencies	Narrative report to include information on work with partners, and Habitat and Species data + changes/trends on a 12month basis.	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Planning	No progress to report Q3 2021/22
PRN2	Celebrate, protect and enhance our natural assets, including the River Thames and the AONBs and their setting, promoting our rural district for tourism, leisure and wellbeing	Narrative report to include information on work to manage natural assets and ANOBs (both internally and with partners)	Cllr Andrea Powell	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	Economic Development finalised plans to hold a business “netwalking” event at the Earth Trust. This event is scheduled for Q4 2021/22 and will bring together partners from the business world to explore the site alongside colleagues from the council.
PRN3	Encourage the use of natural processes to combat risks arising from climate change, such as meadows and trees to reduce flooding	Narrative report to include direct and indirect information on use of natural processes to combat risks of climate change. This should include new policy development and direct activity undertaken by the Council.	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	<p>The Parks team are currently reviewing all elements of their current practices and procedures to ensure that they meet the council's environmental and climate change objectives.</p> <p>In addition, officers are exploring ways in which improvements can be made to enhance the biodiversity of our parks and open spaces. This work includes looking at options for increasing the number of wildflower areas that South manages and optimising the tree planting budget to increase tree coverage where appropriate.</p> <p>Early-stage advice has also been offered to an eco-tourism development proposal in South Oxfordshire.</p>

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
PRN4	Recognise and support the vital role of farming in economic and ecosystem resilience, local food provision and the recovery of soils and natural processes	Narrative report on activity undertaken with partners to encourage and support the vital role of farming in economic and ecosystem resilience (where possible, although this may be implicitly included in the information above).	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	In Quarter 3 2021/22, the Economic Development team met with representatives of Good Food Oxfordshire to discuss/support the initial plans for a Food Strategy for Oxfordshire report. This report will focus on the importance of resilient food networks.
PRN5	Call for the establishment of a Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire to promote an ambitious nature recovery programme, including tree and meadow planting, rewilding and providing habitats for wildlife including wildlife corridors	Narrative report - accepting that much of the activity to support PRN3 will be relevant here.	Cllr David Rouane	Head of Policy and Programmes	During Quarter 3 2021/22, the Local Nature Partnership Board was formed. Discussions at the Future Oxfordshire Partnership - Executive Officers Group also informed the decision that the Partnership should be hosted by West Oxfordshire District Council. In addition, an agreement was reached regarding its provisional budget.
PRN6	Work in partnership with the Earth Trust, Chilterns Conservation Board, North Wessex Downs AONB, the Environment Agency and others to improve access to green spaces in and around our towns, reinforcing access to nature as a priority for community wellbeing	Narrative report on activity with partners (including those named, and others), with a particular focus on work supporting the link between green spaces and community wellbeing.	Cllr Pieter-Paul Barker	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	During Q3 2021/22, officers worked with Taylor Wimpey to expedite the transfer of the first tranche of open spaces on Great Western Park to the council. Once this work has been completed, discussion on the potential of using a partnership approach to manage them will resume with Didcot Town Council and the Earth Trust.

## THEME 2. OPENNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### Strategic Lead – Adrianna Partridge – Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

#### Why?

The complexity of modern society and local government structures can be hard to navigate. Many services are delivered as part of external partnerships, so it can be hard for residents to see what we do and how we do it. There are some groups within our district with whom we have little engagement or interaction, so the diversity of our district is not always recognised and supported.

#### So:

We will maintain and improve high levels of satisfaction with the services we provide and will reach out to all sectors and age groups to foster a culture of openness, participation, and representation. We will use our influence to champion inclusion, diversity and transparency across all elected and unelected bodies in our region. We will empower and invest in our staff and conduct our operations with the highest level of integrity and accountability.



#### Key Activity in Q3:

This quarter, as part of the council's commitment to maintaining and improving the services it provides, Cabinet approved a Customer Services Strategy. This strategy sets out an ambitious programme of work, for all of the council's departments to work together to create a single customer experience. It is envisaged that this will progress the Council's commitment to delivering the best outcomes for residents.

In the Council's efforts to champion transparency and participation, this quarter we continued to livestream 100 per cent of public council meetings. Not only did this ensure a greater degree of accessibility for residents, but also allowed them an insight into the Council's decision-making processes. This practice also continues to embed this activity of livestreaming and uploading as common practice across each quarter.

Additionally, this quarter, in order to promote the Council's commitment to diversity and inclusivity, a draft diversity calendar was produced. It reflects both South Oxfordshire's corporate priorities and the heterogeneous nature of the district. It is due to be publicised in quarter 4. In

addition, an initial working draft of the Council's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy has also been developed. This will aim to ensure that the Council is doing everything it can to be inclusive to all in its staff recruitment, representation and service provision.

As part of the Council's aim to increase engagement and participation, the Council continued to develop its overarching Communications and Engagement Strategy this quarter. This document will not only help to guide South Oxfordshire's approach to interacting with residents but also allow us to reach out more effectively to a more varied range of individuals, groups and communities.

Additionally, with the intention of increasing accountability and improving our decision-making processes, this quarter, training was delivered to councillors on the constitution and good decision-making principles. The intention is for this to be rolled out to officers during the next quarter, to embed this practice across the council.



## Performance Measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
OA1	Enhance trust and accountability in democratic decision-making, including live-streaming and recording of meetings, ensuring full accessibility of facilities and monitoring progress in an open and transparent way	Narrative update to include information on the performance management framework, communications update on Cabinet/Council decisions, IAG around the operations/activity of the Council  % of Public Council meetings within 12 months available online	Cllr Andrea Powell	Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations	During Quarter 3 2021/22, monthly strategic communications meetings continued to be held with the Cabinet Member and the Leader of the Council to agree top line messaging for committee decisions and to share opportunities for positive publicity.  100 per cent of public meetings were broadcast during Q3.
OA2	Ensure that Council departments work collaboratively to deliver best outcomes for residents	Narrative report detailing significant, non-recurring examples of inter-departmental working which have secured concrete outcomes for residents	Cllr Andrea Powell	Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations	During Quarter 3 2021/22, South Cabinet approved a Customer Services Strategy. This sets out an ambitious programme of work for all of the council's departments to work together to create a single customer experience.  In addition, departments also participated in budget setting activity designed to ensure that financial resources are directed to deliver the best outcomes for residents and businesses within the district.
OA3	Embed an organisational culture that celebrates diversity, inclusion, and respect	Narrative report on work undertaken to celebrate diversity, inclusion, and respect. Should include standard recurring activity, one off supporting activity. This should be a joint report primarily from HR/Comms but include comments from others	Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers	Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations	During Q3 2021/22, work has been undertaken to draft the council's diversity calendar – it will be publicised during Q4. We have also promoted the council's efforts to support Afghan refugees. An initial working draft of the council's overarching Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is also being developed.
OA4	Apply good governance and transparency in all our working and decision-making, exploring optimal structures and mechanisms for best practice in local government	Narrative report on significant change initiatives which have resulted in restructures/new processes to deliver local govt services.	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Legal & Democratic	During Quarter 3 2021/22, the Monitoring Officer delivered training to councillors on the constitution and good decision-making principles – this is scheduled to be rolled-out to officers during Q4. Work has also commenced on updating the Annual Governance Statement to reflect the most recent CIPFA framework.  In addition, officers are considering potential options to enable meetings to be held remotely.

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
OA5	Engage effectively with residents, Parish and Town Councils and other community organisations, using plain English in our communications and using appropriate methods and technologies to ensure equal and fair access for all	Narrative report on activities communications/engagement specific activities	Cllr Andrea Powell	Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations	<p>During Quarter 3 2021/22, work continued on communications plans to support the council's corporate priorities on climate action and housing. They are currently in the process of being finalised.</p> <p>The council's overarching Communications and Engagement Strategy has also nearly been completed.</p> <p>42 press releases have been issued.  3 town and parish newsletters sent.  6 Infocus newsletters have been sent to help district councillors share important news with their communities  178 Facebook posts with a reach of 72,800.  179 Tweets resulting in 110,000 impressions.  11 consultation/engagement exercise resulting in 1953 responses.</p>

#### Individual Cabinet Member Decisions - 01 October – 31 December 2021

Date	Description
01/10/2021	Councillor Covid-19 Grants Scheme
11/10/2021	OXLEP Appointment
13/10/2021	Draft Planning Design Guide
27/10/2021	Outside Body Appointments
01/11/2021	Additional Restrictions Grant
22/11/2021	Household Support Fund Grant Policy
14/12/2021	Waste Contractor Performance in 2020
20/12/2021	Allocation of Contain Outbreak Management Funds
22/12/2021	Purchase of Microsoft Enterprise Agreement
<b>TOTAL: 9</b>	

## THEME 3. ACTION ON THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

### **Strategic Lead – Suzanne Malcolm – Deputy Chief Executive – Place**

Why?

The greatest challenge we face as a society is the Climate Emergency and our ability to adapt our lives and our behaviours to ensure a safe and resilient future. While statements and targets are welcome, the challenge for our district is to take action, transform our operations and inspire our residents and businesses to do the same. Aspects of our lives will need to change, but we have a duty to make this transition fair for all parts of society.

So:

We will show leadership by developing and implementing a climate change programme to make the Council net carbon neutral by 2025. We will help our communities to plan a fair transition to a future that will be defined by climate change.

### **Key Activity in Q3:**

This quarter, to progress the Council's aim to develop and implement a climate change programme to make the council net carbon neutral by 2025, extensive engagement took place with members in relation to the Climate Action Plan (CAP). A final draft of the plan was created at the end of this quarter, to be heard at the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC) and Cabinet, at the beginning of quarter four.

Additionally, to further our aim of being carbon neutral in our own operations, council officers have continued throughout quarter three to research and identify government grant schemes which could support work to reduce carbon emissions from the Council's leisure centres – these being responsible for almost half of the council's total Carbon emissions, a significant proportion.

Moreover, to progress towards our aspiration for South Oxfordshire to be a carbon neutral district by 2030, engagement with the business community is key. During November and December, the Council ran a 'Digital Carbon Footprint Reduction Campaign' which included a launch

webinar and the publication of a step-by-step guide for businesses. To increase its effectiveness, a case study is being prepared showcasing the impact of the campaign, highlighting the actions of local businesses and learning for future campaigns.

December of this quarter also saw the publication of South Oxfordshire's official recycling rate for 2020/21, which was 63.6 per cent. Positively, this percentage makes South Oxfordshire the second-best performing district in England for recycling, and thus contributes towards the Council's aim of promoting waste minimisation.

Following preparatory work in quarter two, quarter three saw the Council run several campaigns aimed at positively changing behaviour with regards to promoting recycling and improving the environment. These included using seasonal events such as Halloween and Christmas as opportunities to promote 'reduce, reuse and then recycle' campaigns, as well as launching an air quality superhero campaign aimed primarily at children. These sat alongside wider campaigns to reduce fly tipping and littering and a continued commitment to promote the use of the district's Repair Cafés, on our website and through social media. Communication campaigns are central to meeting our commitment to support our communities in making the changes necessary, as we move forward into a future defined by climate change.



## Performance Measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
ACE1	Achieve our own zero carbon target by 2025 and support others to achieve the district target of zero carbon by 2030	Narrative report on strategic projects which will help to deliver net zero carbon for 2025/2030. This should be split between Council specific and District specific activities.	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	<p>During Quarter 3 2021/22, the Leisure team continued to work with Policy and Programmes to identify any HM Government grant schemes which would support work to reduce carbon emissions from the district's leisure centres.</p> <p>Progress also continued to be made on finding ways to reduce the CO2 footprint of South's property assets.</p>
ACE2	Develop an annually approved climate emergency programme and adequately finance it	Quantitative measure - delivery of an annual CEP Y/N	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Policy and Programmes	In Quarter 3 2021/22, extensive engagement took place with members in relation to the Climate Action Plan (CAP). An initial draft was distributed in November, with a follow-up drop-in session on 11 December. The CAP will form a key part in delivering the council's Climate Emergency programme.
ACE3	Deliver Council-owned net-zero homes and use grants, planning policy and advocacy to ensure the same standards throughout the district	Narrative Update on the current activities which will result in the delivery of Council owned homes (and details of those homes where possible)	Cllr Robin Bennett	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	No progress to report Q3 2021/22
ACE4	Promote and encourage behavioural change with informational campaigns and leading by example	Narrative update to include the number of communications campaigns undertaken which promote/encourage behavioural change (with examples).	Cllr Andrea Powell	Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations	<p>The majority of the behavioural change work in Q3 2021/22 was focussed on preventing the spread of Covid-19. This aimed to encourage people to have their vaccines/booster jabs and to follow Plan B restrictions.</p> <p>The council also ran 48 campaigns - 11 promoted diversity and inclusion, 28 promoted behavioural change, and 9 promoted events and new information. The behaviour change campaigns directly supporting this action included Halloween and Christmas reduce, reuse and recycling campaigns, an air quality superhero campaign aimed primarily at children and ones to reduce fly tipping and littering.</p>

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
ACE5	Take positive action on single-use plastics, air quality improvement measures and sustainable transport	Suggested combined narrative update on Comms relating to single use plastics/comms relating to AQ initiatives and metrics relating to AQ (with an appreciation that this data will be skewed in 2020 due to lockdown(s))	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Housing & Environment	December's Cabinet briefing considered a report on future waste services. This paper summarised the proposals set out within the Environment Act and assessed how waste and recycling services will operate in the future. It is scheduled to go before Joint Scrutiny during Q4 2021/22
ACE6	Mitigate climate change through planning and land use, enhancing biodiversity on our own land and strengthening the planning system to enforce environmental standards	Narrative update to focus on planning initiatives which support the potential deliverables where possible (primarily the development of the joint 2041 Local Plan, the joint Design Guide and carbon reduction in planning (DES8/10))	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson	Head of Planning	Annual Target - No response submitted Q3 2021/22
ACE7	Promote the circular economy (reduce, re-use and recycle), including in our waste management contracts	Narrative measure on comms activity relating to waste/recycling  Quantitative information on recycling rate, contamination rates, % of residual waste to landfill	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Housing & Environment	South Oxfordshire's official recycling rate for 2020/21 was 63.6 per cent (figures verified by Defra and published in December). This placed South Oxfordshire second in the league table – the top performing council scored 64.2 per cent. (South Oxfordshire has been in the top three since 2010/11).  During Quarter 3 2021/22, the Waste Team continued to promote messages encouraging households to “reduce, re-use and then recycle” through social media and a specific Christmas leaflet.
ACE8	Support and encourage local businesses to respond to climate change and nature recovery	Narrative update on the influencing work undertaken to support and encourage local businesses relating to climate change and nature recovery	Cllr Robin Bennett	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	The Economic Development team ran a “Digital Carbon Footprint Reduction Campaign” during November and December 2021. It included a launch webinar, a step-by-step guide, six weeks of social media posts and case studies showcasing the progress made by some businesses as a result of the campaign. Over 50 companies were engaged with the process.

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
ACE9	Promote waste minimisation initiatives such as Repair Cafés	Unless specific activity relating to Repair Café's and Freecycle can be reported on, suggest that this is covered in previous narratives	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Housing & Environment	The council continued to promote the use of Repair Café's on our website and through social media platforms.
ACE10	Work with Oxfordshire County Council to build on our commitment to active travel including walking, public transport and cycling infrastructure	<p>Narrative update on work with Oxfordshire County Council</p> <p>Optional Quantitative metrics on the amount of new footpaths/cycle paths</p>	Cllr Pieter-Paul Barker	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	Annual Target - No response submitted Q3 2021/22

## THEME 4. IMPROVED ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING

**Strategic Leads – Suzanne Malcolm - Deputy Chief Executive – Place**  
**Adrianna Partridge – Deputy Chief Executive Transformation and Operations**

Why?

South Oxfordshire has a large number of small and micro businesses and is well placed to adapt to changes in the economy, but support will be needed for it to remain a healthy and vibrant place to live and work. The Coronavirus pandemic has shown the strength of the community but there are areas of isolation and deprivation in our district, and the benefits of access to culture, leisure, and community for all has been made clear.

So:

We will reimagine our high streets, helping independent small businesses to thrive and to encourage cultural well-being for all. We will encourage clean local economic development and support our business hubs, centres of scientific excellence and our educational establishments to become leaders in sustainable technology, innovation, and enterprise. We will help our community groups to strengthen cohesion, reduce social isolation and tackle areas of deprivation.



### Key Activity in Q3:

This quarter, to progress the Council's aim to improve economic and community wellbeing, we continued to promote the rollout of the employment support scheme 'Kickstart', which aims to create new job opportunities for 16- to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. We also made progress on community employment plans for new developments. Both projects are part of our plan to ensure that South Oxfordshire remains a healthy and vibrant place for residents and workers.



Moreover, this quarter, the Council continued to provide professional advice to local businesses, especially with regards to business space, employment schemes and the availability of support grants. To support small, independent businesses that were hit hard by the COVID-19 restrictions and encourage economic recovery, the Council helped to deliver the Winter Support Grant scheme. This is a local scheme funded through the Additional Restrictions Grant fund. A total of 209 applications were received, with payments to be completed next quarter. Total funding for this support scheme is £1,239,551, which will directly help local businesses to rebuild resilience.

Furthermore, collaboration with the independent company 'Airband' around the 'Broadband for Rural Businesses in Oxfordshire' (BiRO) project continued this quarter and a detailed update was provided to members. The BiRO project aims to bring reliable broadband to businesses in rural areas, thus reducing digital exclusion and enabling home working. The Council also launched two virtual 'Networking in South and Vale' events in November that were attended by 86 people. These events were designed to support businesses to build agility and resilience at a difficult time for trade and giving them direct access to economic development officers.

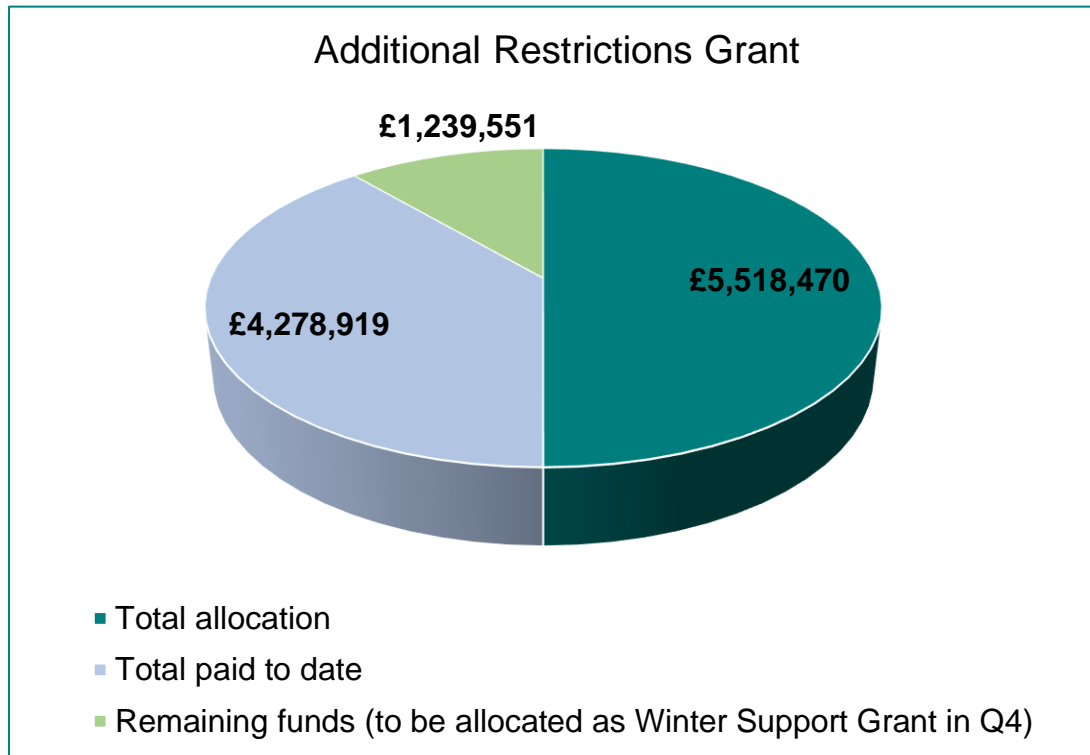
As part of the Council's aspiration to use planning powers to preserve green spaces in South Oxfordshire for the benefit of local communities, so far in 2021/22 the Council have encouraged and overseen the adoption of eight neighbourhood plans. Six of these designate a combined total of fifteen Local Green Spaces, which are granted the highest level of protection possible by planning policy. Access to green spaces will continue to support resident's health and mental wellbeing.

To make sure that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds are maximised and achieve the best possible outcomes for the community, this quarter the Council established a member/officer working group, agreed terms of reference and held its first two meetings. This group will ensure there are strong foundations in place for making recommendations on the allocation of CIL funds in the 2022/23 provisional capital programme.

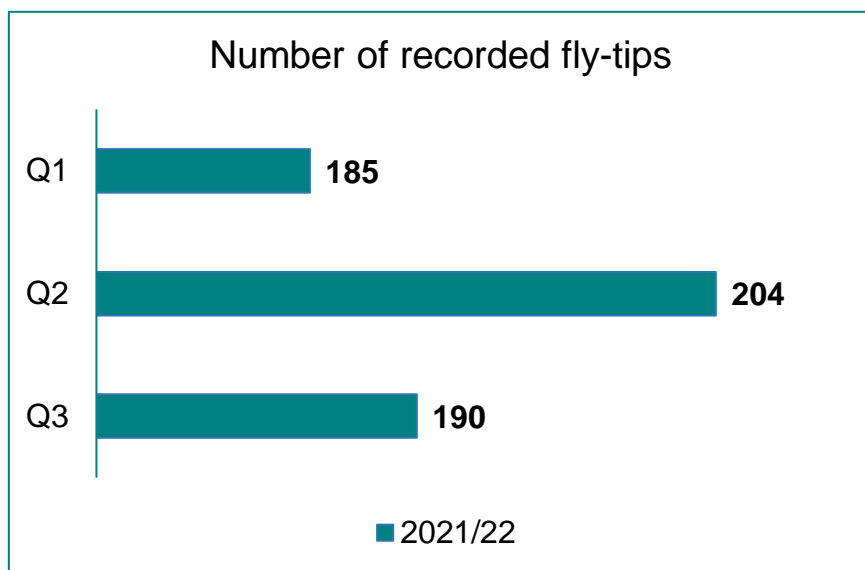
Additionally this quarter, to progress the Council's commitment to community wellbeing, work to define the principles of the new Community Wellbeing Strategy began. It is envisaged that this Strategy will incorporate provisions for strengthening community cohesion and tackling areas of isolation and deprivation.

## Performance Measures

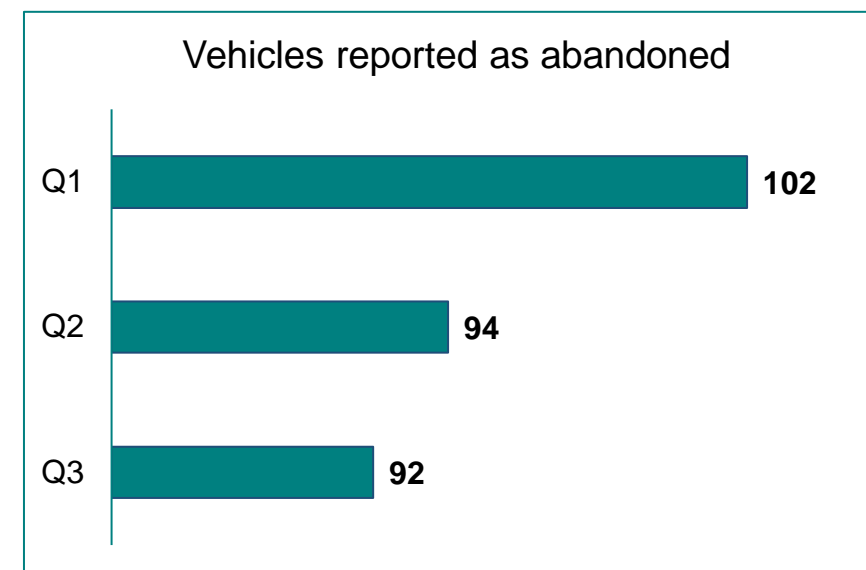
Chart A ECW2: Financial support to businesses



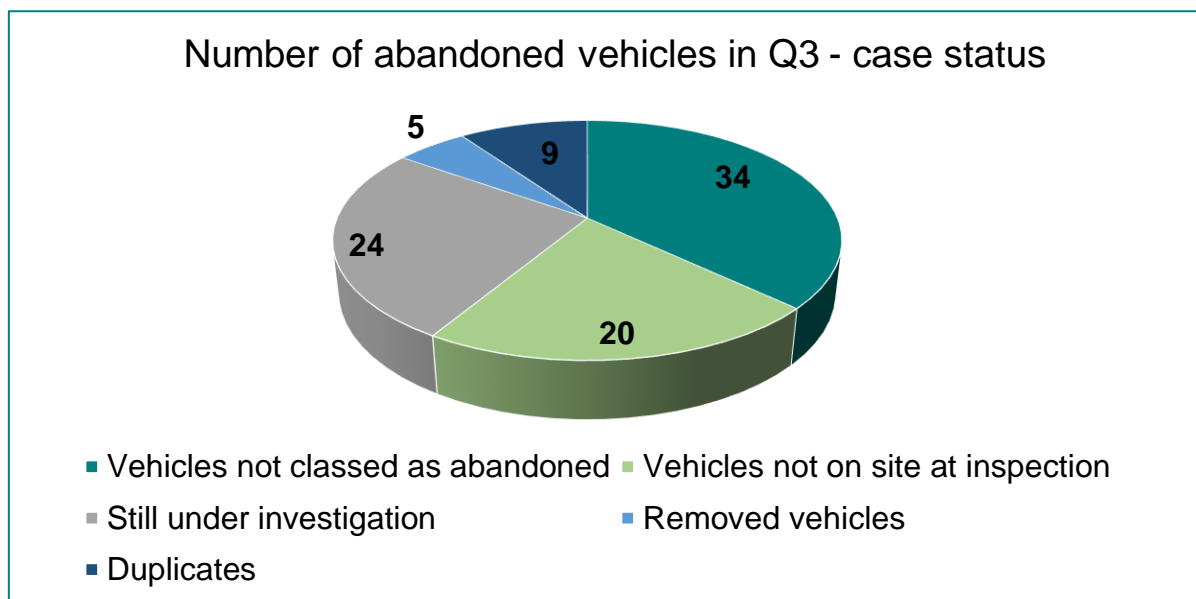
**Chart B.1 ECW7: Fly-tipping activity**



**Chart B.2 ECW7: Number of abandoned vehicles**



**Chart B.3 ECW7: Number of abandoned vehicles in Q3 and actions taken**



## Performance Measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
ECW1	Partner with regional agencies to ensure economic recovery, quality employment, thriving businesses and vibrant communities, avoiding the blight of "dormitory towns"	<p>Narrative report on work with partners in this area</p> <p>Quantitative metrics relating to employment rates (trends, actuals) - unemployment rate, trajectory/trend, earnings information</p>	Cllr Pieter-Paul Barker	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	<p>During Quarter 3 2021/22, the Economic Development Team continued to support the rollout of employment support schemes such as Kickstart. They also progressed to completion a number of Community Employment Plans for new developments.</p> <p>Job retention rates in South Oxfordshire looked to be responding well following the closure of HM Government's furlough scheme, with the total number of unemployment claimants returning to near pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, figures from organisations registered in Economic Development team's FAME database suggests that there was some reduction in job numbers (594) during December – this was, however, offset by gains in October (1,505) and November (31).</p> <p>The average wage in Oxfordshire as a whole was also registered as having moved beyond £35,000 for the first time during Q3 2021/22.</p>
ECW2	Provide advice on access to grants, training and diversification programmes, helping local businesses to build agility and resilience	Quantitative measures - number of businesses we engage with, social media hits, newsletter subscribers, clickthrough rate, numbers of business grants awarded	Cllr Robin Bennett	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	<p>During Quarter 3 2021/22, there were a total of 2,256 subscribers to South and Vale's economic development newsletter. A grand total of 29,335 newsletters were sent, resulting in 15,250 opens and 3,301 clickthrough – the open and clickthrough percentages remain healthy compared to industry averages.</p> <p>The Economic Development team launched virtual "Networking in South and Vale" events during November. 86 attendees came along to the two sessions that were held.</p> <p>A significant number of enquiries were received by the Economic Development team during Q3 2021/22. Until the emergence of the Omicron variant (and a subsequent increase in enquiries regarding the availability of grant support), these requests were dominated by the themes of business spaces needs and employment scheme advice.</p> <p>Quantitative stats for month:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>365 enquiries were received direct to the business support inbox (it is not possible to accurately quantify between those for Vale and those for South).</li> <li>Eleven enquiries were logged with Tractivity as requiring complex economic development attention – eight of these were for South-based businesses.</li> <li>Of 80 respondents to South and Vale's Autumn "State of Business" Consultation Survey, 52 per cent were from South-based businesses.</li> </ul> <p>The council also helped to deliver the Winter Support Grant Scheme during Q3 2021/22. This ran from 25 November to 16 December and attracted 209 applications from South-based businesses – administration and payments will be completed in Q4 2021/22. The total funding is £1,239,551 and it is anticipated that it will all be allocated during this round (see chart A ECW2 on page 21).</p> <p>HM Government announced a further top-up of £350,175 Additional Restrictions Grant funds in late December. South Oxfordshire are, however, still awaiting an offer letter from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.</p>



Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
ECW3	Plan for communities connected by walking & cycling networks, with sustainable, accessible and affordable public transport and reliable Broadband, learning the lessons from the Covid-19 experience and enabling more home-working.	<p>Narrative update on work to support reliable broadband (where possible)</p> <p>Narrative update on transport initiatives</p> <p>Quantitative - new footpath/cycle paths delivered</p>	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	<p>South Oxfordshire continues to collaborate with Airband, the independent broadband company, to support their work on the Broadband for Rural Businesses in Oxfordshire (BiRO) project.</p> <p>A detailed update providing information (via In Focus) on the wider rollout of broadband across the district was circulated to members in October 2021. A member briefing on further progress is scheduled to be held during Q4 2021/22.</p>
ECW4	Launch a new community wellbeing strategy to encourage and support culture, leisure and the arts	Approval/Launch of 'Community Wellbeing Strategy' Y/N (document should encompass large parts of information above)	Cllr Maggie Fillipova-Rivers	Head of Policy and Programmes	In Quarter 3 2021/22, work began on defining the scope and principles of the new Community Wellbeing Strategy. To help further this activity (and to provide additional clarity), discussions have taken place between members and officers.
ECW5	Use our planning powers to preserve our valuable green spaces, particularly in urban areas	Number of Neighbourhood Plans implemented/green spaces secured	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson	Head of Planning	<p>Eight Neighbourhood Plans have been adopted in South Oxfordshire during 2021/22. Six of these designated a combined total of 25 Local Green Spaces (these offer the highest level of protection possible in planning policy). In addition, three of these Neighbourhood Plans included policies to protect 13 public open green spaces (these are sites which, while not meeting the tests to be designated as Local Green Spaces, are still considered to be worthy of protection from harmful development).</p> <p>The council has six more emerging Neighbourhood Plans which have passed submission stage. These contain proposals to protect 23 green spaces through local green space designations, and 17 green spaces through other forms of policy protection.</p>
ECW6	Work with our communities to maximise Community Infrastructure Levy funds and to allocate these to achieve best outcomes for residents in the District	<p>Narrative update about work in this area to include detail of new CIL spending strategy, communication with parishes</p> <p>Quantitative elements - CIL Spend broken down by type, by parish</p>	Cllr Robin Bennett	Head of Finance	<p>During Q3 2021/22, a member/officer CIL working group was established. At meetings in November and December, terms of reference were agreed to and recommendations were put forward for the allocation of CIL funds in the 2022/23 provisional capital programme. The next meeting(s) of the Group is scheduled for Q4 2021/22.</p> <p>The council has also successfully secured Planning Advisory Service support on developer contribution governance in relation to working with communities to deliver required infrastructure.</p> <p>The Infrastructure Funding Statement for 2020/21 was published in December.</p> <p>£1,087,091.02 in CIL funds was released to parish councils in October.</p>

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
ECW7	Take enforcement action on fly-tipping and dog fouling	<p>Small narrative on Fly Tipping/dog fouling activity (with Comms input on any campaigns)</p> <p>Qualitative data on fly tipping - what we collect, where from, how much, nature of enforcement action undertaken, hotspot map.</p>	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Housing & Environment	<p>There were 74 fly-tips recorded in September</p> <p>In Q3 there were 190 fly-tips compared to 212 for the same period in 2020. This was a 10.3% reduction on the same period last year.</p> <p>8 littering FPNs which were issued during three litter patrols.</p> <p>A total of 92 abandoned vehicles were reported and inspected in Q3. Of these 92, 20 were not on site, 34 were not classed as abandoned, 5 vehicles were lifted (removed) and a further 9 were duplicates.</p> <p>8 waste crime FPNs were served during Q3</p> <p>The enforcement team completed a joint operation with TVP targeting illegal waste carriage.</p> <p>The team completed two waste crime prosecutions and have a further nine prosecutions pending.</p>
ECW8	Work with local partners to introduce civil parking enforcement as a district responsibility	Narrative update on progress	Cllr David Rouane	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	Annual Target - No response submitted Q3 2021/22

## THEME 5. HOMES AND INFRASTRUCTURES THAT MEET LOCAL NEEDS

### Strategic Lead – Suzanne Malcolm – Deputy Chief Executive – Place

Why?

The average price of a home is many times higher than the average salary, particularly for the young, and renting is also expensive. The pressure to build new homes in our district sometimes outweighs local wishes. Infrastructure like roads, schools and GP surgeries have not kept up with housing development. Too many houses being built today are not fit for a low carbon future.

So:

We will strive to ensure that new homes and infrastructure in South Oxfordshire meet local needs, are sustainable, zero carbon in their build and operation, and high quality in design. We will provide homes that people can afford to live in. New developments will be accessible with walking, cycling and public transport a priority. Neighbourhood plans and local participation will sit at the heart of our planning process. We will work with partners to ensure that development is appropriate for our communities.



### Key Activity in Q3:

This quarter, the Council has continued to deliver a range of work to eliminate homelessness and rough sleeping across South Oxfordshire. For example, the number of rough sleepers recorded in South Oxfordshire on 31 December 2021 was **zero**. This is the first time since 2013 that no rough sleepers were recorded. Also, at 87% this quarter, the homeless prevention rate continues to be above our 80% target. Targeted prevention and early intervention measures used by council officers help residents at risk, avoid homelessness.

A key challenge for South Oxfordshire in terms of housing, is providing new homes that people can afford to live in. Year to date, 242 affordable homes have been delivered, leaving the Council just 38 properties short of our target for the year 2021/22. Major sites currently under construction include Great Western Park (Didcot), Benson, Henley, Rotherfield Greys and land west of Wallingford.

Furthermore, the Council's involvement in Oxfordshire's Meanwhile Project is helping to bring empty properties back into use. We are currently supporting the project to deliver commercial units and are looking to secure the lease for a demo unit within South Oxfordshire. If successful, this

could attract six figure refurbishment funding for a vacant building within the district. Despite major barriers, such as rising building costs, the demand for vacant commercial units remains strong. The Strategic Property Review also highlighted possible sites in council ownership which may be suitable for residential development. Further work is now being undertaken to investigate and assess these options, which will continue into the next quarter.

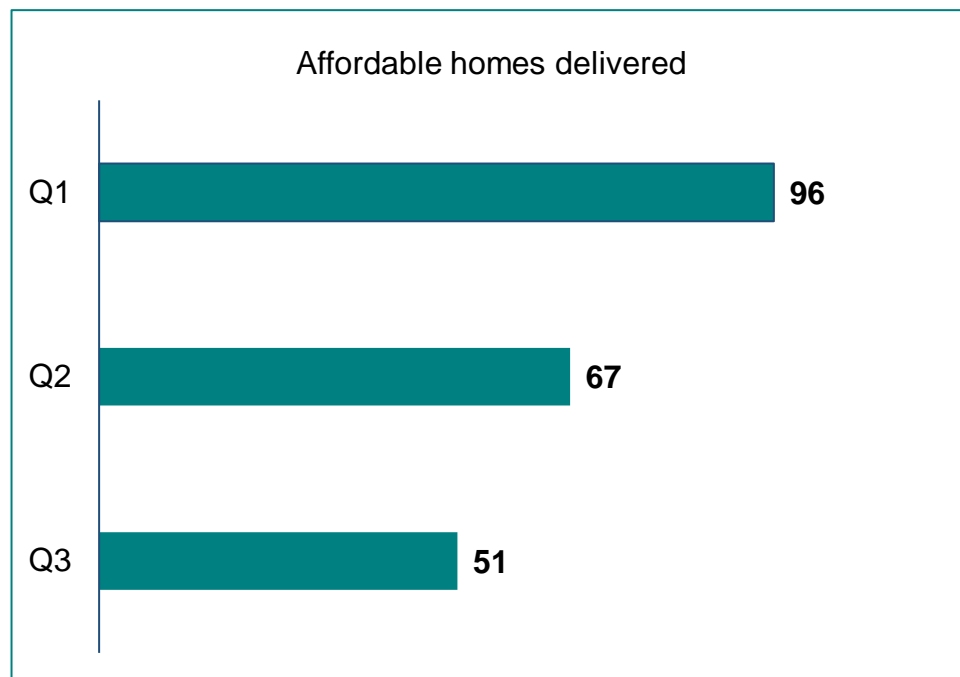
Work has also continued this quarter on the development of the new Joint Design Guide (JDG) Supplementary Planning Document, which incorporates new guidance on zero and low carbon construction. The JDG is due to commence its public consultation at the beginning of next quarter. This document will help to support our aim that new homes and infrastructure in South Oxfordshire meets local needs, is sustainable, zero carbon in their build and operation and high quality in design. It will also build on and complement the progress made with the publication of a DES10 (Carbon Reduction) Guidance Note in quarter two.

In addition, this quarter the Council commenced scoping work on the potential for purchasing temporary accommodation. Plans have also been initiated evaluating the potential for a Council delivery vehicle for affordable homes, these projects will also help progress the Council's aim to ensure that new homes and infrastructure in South Oxfordshire meet local needs.

Moreover, as part of a project to increase sustainable transport solutions, the Council are enhancing Electric Vehicle capacity in order to help reduce car dependency and air pollution. This quarter, we entered a contract with 'EZ-Charge' to provide electric vehicle charging points in five car parks across the District, which are expected to be in use by the end of next quarter.

The Council continues to work with partners to ensure that development is appropriate for our communities and to influence the development of such opportunities. For more effectively embedding public health, wellbeing and sustainability in spatial planning, we responded to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 (2) consultation this quarter. The consultation document set out a range of policy options on health, wellbeing and sustainability.

**Chart C HILN10: Number of affordable homes delivered**



## Performance Measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
HILN1	Didcot Garden Town priority projects as identified by the Advisory Board, specifically a sustainable plan to redevelop the Didcot Gateway site, a public transport and active walking and cycling network, community facilities and accessible green spaces for Didcot residents	Narrative update against the stated aim, to include as many of the potential deliverables as possible, but not limited in scope to this.	Cllr Robin Bennett	Head of Policy and Programmes	<p>At its meeting on 25 October 2021, the Didcot Garden Town Steering Board were appraised of progress on several key projects (Didcot Gateway, the Housing Infrastructure Programme, the Local Walking &amp; Cycling Infrastructure Plan and the Summer programme). They also received updates from the three sounding boards.</p> <p>The team responsible for Garden Communities has moved to the Policy and Programmes service in Q3, and a detailed review of the current position of Didcot Garden Town (and Garden Communities in general) is being undertaken. This will ensure that appropriate resources are in place, and delivery of the priority projects identified can continue at pace.</p> <p>In respect to the Gateway project, design work continued on the detailed design of the new office accommodation. Assessments of the scheme's viability and financing arrangements were also progressed. Furthermore, the masterplanning is substantially complete, but has not yet been signed off.</p>
HILN2	The transformation of Berinsfield into a thriving Garden Village with improved facilities that are developed in line with the community's needs and aspirations	Narrative update against the stated aim, to include as many of the potential deliverables as possible, but not limited in scope to this.	Cllr Robin Bennett	Head of Policy and Programmes	<p>During Quarter 3 2021/22, the Garden Communities team was placed within the Policy &amp; Programmes service area. A detailed review of their work is currently being undertaken to ensure that appropriate resources are in place and that the prioritisation of tasks will support the efficient delivery of key projects.</p>
HILN3	New Council-owned homes with a focus on quality of design, affordability and local requirements	Narrative Update on the current activities which WILL result in the delivery of Council owned homes (and details of those homes where possible). Also reporting on progress of Design Guide.	Cllr Robin Bennett	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	<p>During Quarter 3 2021/22, scoping work commenced on the potential for South Oxfordshire to purchase temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Plans to evaluate the potential for a council delivery vehicle for affordable homes have also been initiated.</p> <p>In addition, the Strategic Property Review highlighted possible sites in council ownership which may be suitable for residential development. Further work is now being undertaken to investigate and assess these options.</p> <p>The Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document is due to commence its public consultation in January 2022 with adoption expected in Q1 of 2022/23.</p>



Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
HILN4	Support and encouragement for the retrofit of our existing housing stock for low-carbon performance and to eliminate fuel poverty	Narrative update on current/completed activities and influencing activity.	Cllr Sue Cooper	Head of Policy and Programmes	During Quarter 3 2021/22, South Oxfordshire, through its membership of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Environment Group, was able to influence neighbouring authorities in relation to the issue of retrofit. At the Group's meeting in November 2021, members received an update on the actions being taken by the county's councils in respects to domestic retrofitting and discussed potential ideas for a future programme of work.
HILN5	Elimination of homelessness in our District	<p>Narrative update on progress in this area</p> <p>Quantitative information on homelessness rates, homeless cases and TA numbers, length of stay in TA and effectiveness of interventions (avoided homelessness)</p>	Cllr Maggie Fillipova-Rivers	Head of Housing & Environment	<p>For the first time in recent years, South Oxfordshire recorded zero rough sleepers as of 31 December 2021.</p> <p>The number of homeless households in temporary accommodation (TA) in December was five. The average length of stay in emergency TA was 40 nights, which is below the ceiling target of 42 nights.</p> <p>Five of the six Housing First phase 2 rough sleepers have now been accommodated and are successfully maintaining their tenancies. The sixth is due to move in early February.</p> <p>In the year-to-date, the rate of successful homelessness prevention is 87.0 per cent. This is above the target of 80.0 per cent.</p> <p>South Oxfordshire continues to actively participate in delivering the countywide homelessness and rough sleeping strategy. It was also a member of the commissioning group that procured new adult homelessness services in Oxfordshire from April 2022.</p>
HILN6	Bringing empty properties back into use	Narrative update on any relevant initiatives to reduce the number of empty properties and any data on empty property levels in South Oxfordshire	Cllr Robin Bennett	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	<p>The Meanwhile in Oxfordshire project has secured 18 leases across the county. While the project was initially due to end on 31 March 2022, the project partners are now seeking an extension until June 2022. The Economic Development team are currently supporting the project contractors in looking to secure the lease for a demo unit within South Oxfordshire ahead of this deadline. If successful, the project could attract six figure refurbishment funding for a vacant building within the district.</p> <p>Although demand for vacant commercial units remains strong, there are major barriers to bringing forward available premises for Meanwhile in Oxfordshire. These include: rising building costs, the availability of both materials and contractors, and a continuing lack of revenue funding.</p>

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
HILN7	Ensuring that our teams are ready to access or signpost to any Government schemes or funding that is made available	Narrative update on signposting activity and if possible, update on take-up.	Cllr Robin Bennett	Head of Policy and Programmes	<p>While Insight and Policy continue to provide support in highlighting external funding opportunities, the council is looking to further enhance capacity in this area. Therefore, during Q3 2021/22, a job description for an External Funding Lead was produced. This role is currently being advertised and will be subject to recruitment in Q4.</p> <p>The External Funding Lead will not only support service delivery but also help the council identify new funding opportunities and grant schemes that will progress corporate priorities.</p>
HILN8	New homes are future-proofed, meeting the highest environmental standards and enhancing nature through sensitive, high quality design	Narrative update around refresh of the design guide, local plan, and information around DES10	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson	Head of Planning	The Joint Design Guide (JDG) Supplementary Planning Document, which incorporates new guidance on zero and low carbon construction, is scheduled to commence its public consultation in January 2022. It is anticipated that the JDG will be adopted during Q1 2022/23.
HILN9	Spatial planning embeds public health, wellbeing and sustainability	Narrative update on work around planning reinforcing wellbeing and sustainability. This should include 'health-based planning data' where possible - information on public gym equipment - footpaths, cycle paths etc.	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson	Head of Policy and Programmes	In October 2021, South Oxfordshire responded to the Oxfordshire Plan Regulation 18 (2) consultation. The consultation document set out a range of policy options on health, wellbeing and sustainability.
HILN10	Changes over time in our stock of homes meet local needs	<p>Narrative update based on information available from 3rd parties and the impact this has on the local area</p> <p>Bedroom mix in new developments breakdown every 6 months</p>	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson	Head of Planning	<p>During October and November of 2021, 51 affordable properties have been reported as delivered, bringing the yearly total (Apr-Nov) for 2021/22 to 214 affordable homes (see chart C HILN10 on page 28).</p> <p>The size and type of units delivered in Q3 is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 6 x 1 bed flats</li> <li>- 7 x 2 bed flats</li> <li>- 27x 2 bed houses</li> <li>- 9 x 3 bed houses</li> <li>- 2 x 4 bed houses</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that over the life of a development, different dwelling and tenure types will be delivered at varying rates, depending on the developer's build programme.</p>

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
HILN11	Sustainable transport solutions prioritise walking, cycling and public transport to reduce car dependency and air pollution	Narrative update on overall progress relating to sustainable transport solutions - particularly EV elements.	Cllr Pieter-Paul Barker	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	The council entered a contract with EZ-Charge to provide electric vehicle charging points in five car parks during Q3. The intention is for this work to be completed by the end of March 2022.

## THEME 6. INVESTMENTS THAT REBUILD OUR FINANCIAL VIABILITY

### Strategic Lead – Simon Hewings – Head of Finance

Why?

Coronavirus has cost, and lost, the Council money. Many years of austerity before that, as well as a failure to increase Council tax in line with growing costs, makes it hard to balance the books. The future funding picture for Councils from Government remains unclear. In order to deliver a progressive and ambitious agenda, we need to reduce the gap between income and expenditure in our Medium-Term Financial Plan.

So:

We will invest to save and act responsibly and ethically with our financial resources. We will work with other Councils for fair funding and will investigate new viable sources of revenue in order to maintain and improve vital services. We will ensure all financial operations and reporting support effective decision making and strong, ethical governance.



### Key Activity in Q3:

To invest, save and act responsibly and ethically with our financial resources, the Council undertook a revenue base budget challenge exercise this quarter. This helped to identify transformation delivery programmes and priorities for the next 12 to 18 months which have now been incorporated into South Oxfordshire's budget papers.

Moreover, the Council approved the Strategic Property Review this quarter, in October. Subsequently, work can now commence on the next stage of this project: a review of the Council's future property requirements. In addition, the first meeting of South's Asset Management Group

was held in December 2021. The Group intends to assess the council's land ownerships in a holistic manner and consider opportunities for their development, usage or disposal.

Masterplanning for the Didcot Gateway project, work on the detailed design of the Council's new office accommodation and assessments of the scheme's viability and financing arrangements, progressed this quarter. The proposed new building will help the Council make significant strides to becoming carbon neutral, and the long-term rental income from the commercial offices will also help put the council on a stronger financial footing in a time where ongoing finances for councils are filled with uncertainty. Located opposite Didcot train station, the site will be more accessible than the current offices at Milton Park and will, therefore also help to encourage sustainable commuting.

In addition, this quarter, South Cabinet considered the Council's IT Strategy, noting the progress that had been made in this area and approving an updated implementation programme and a Customer Services Strategy, which sets an ambitious programme of work for all of the council's departments to work together to create a single customer experience. Both strategies outline the Council's commitment to improving the use of technology, access to services and overall effectiveness.

In order to maximise external funding opportunities to support the Council's services and to enrich the district's leisure, sporting and community activities, a job description for an External Funding Lead was produced this quarter. This role is currently being advertised and will be subject to recruitment next quarter. This post will look to support teams across the organisation in the preparation of new bids whilst also horizon scanning for new funding opportunities and grant schemes as they appear.

## Performance Measures

Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
IRFV1	Develop and implement an innovative Transformation Strategy to diversify our revenue streams, improve our effectiveness and secure our on-going viability	<p>Narrative measure relating to the development of an overarching Transformation Strategy and any overall narrative linking to potential deliverables</p> <p>Quantitative data - Income relative to Net expenditure (in context), this could be broken down by service.</p>	Cllr Leigh Rawlins	Head of Finance	<p>As part of the budget challenge sessions completed during Quarter Q3 2021/22, transformation delivery programmes and priorities were identified for the next 12 to 18 months. These have been incorporated and referenced within South Oxfordshire's budget papers.</p> <p>In addition, during Q3, South Cabinet considered the council's IT Strategy. They noted the progress that had been made in this area and approved an updated implementation programme. They also agreed a Customer Services Strategy which sets an ambitious programme of work for all of the council's departments to work together to create a single customer experience. Both strategies outline the South Oxfordshire's commitment to improving the use of technology, access to services and overall effectiveness.</p>
IRFV2	"Invest to save" for the District, including the delivery of sustainable new Council offices – on time and within budget – to realise future operational efficiencies	Narrative on progress of the Corporate Office project, including data on current spend on office accommodation which will no longer be spent once project completed. Further narrative to discuss impact of new building finances.	Cllr Leigh Rawlins	Head of Finance	Design work on the detailed design of the delivery of the new council offices continued during Q3 2021/22. This followed the Full Council's confirmation, at its meeting on 7 October 2021, of the budget envelope. Assessments of the scheme's viability and financing arrangements have also been progressed. Furthermore, the masterplanning is substantially complete, but has not yet been signed off.
IRFV3	Exercise strong Stewardship of all Council assets including property and financial investments, optimising their performance for the benefit of our residents	Narrative update on the progress of the SPR, in the initial period detailing the scope and scope, then once SPR has been delivered, the outcomes and future measures (quant element)	Cllr Leigh Rawlins	Head of Development & Corporate Landlord	<p>South Oxfordshire approved the Strategic Property Review in October 2021. The next step is for a study to be undertaken of the council's future property requirements.</p> <p>During Q3 2021/22, the terms of reference for the Asset Management Group (AMG) were agreed to and its first meeting was held – in December. The AMG intends to assess the council's land ownerships in a holistic manner and consider opportunities for their development, usage or disposal.</p>



Corporate Plan ID	Stated Aim/Project description	Measure	Cabinet Lead	Officer Lead	Performance Update
IRFV4	Maximise external funding opportunities to support our services and to enrich our leisure, sporting and community activities	<p>Narrative update relating to external funding utilisation, both funding received direct to the Council, and projects which have received part external funding or are in progress if not already delivered.</p> <p>Specific elements which should be included - Proportion of spend on leisure/community facilities vs amount funded by Council.</p> <p>CIL/106 spend broken down by type/parish</p> <p>Externally funded Capital schemes</p> <p>Total external funding received figure - narrative should be clear that this is not the total figure.</p>	Cllr Maggie-Fillipova Rivers	Head of Policy and Programmes	During Q3 2021/22, a job description for an External Funding Lead was produced. This role is currently being advertised and will be subject to recruitment in Q4. This post will look to support teams across the organisation in the preparation of new bids whilst also horizon scanning for new funding opportunities and grant schemes as they appear.
IRFV5	Invest responsibly and ethically with the Climate Emergency at the heart of what we do	Narrative update detailing changes which have included climate elements into regularised decision making.	Cllr Leigh Rawlins	Head of Finance	Annual Target - Environmental, social and governance criteria are continuing to be discussed with the Council's treasury management advisors. It remains a work in progress.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Covid-19 has been an unprecedented challenge which required the Council to react quickly to changing circumstances in order to support local businesses, the economy, the voluntary and community sector and local residents. We have worked hard to maintain essential services whilst redeploying staff to new areas of work to help deal with the crisis. The Council developed a Community Hub team during the pandemic to work effectively with voluntary sector partners and volunteers, the work of the Hub is ongoing.

The team also continue to collaborate with our partners at a County-wide level. More specifically, facilitating coordination and good communication between the County, City and District Councils, with the NHS and OxLEP, to support vulnerable people and encourage vaccination uptake in the district. During Q3, 178 test and trace payments were made to residents in South Oxfordshire. This is a slight reduction on the number made in Q2 but remains significantly higher than the number of payments made in Q1. See chart D, page 38.

### COVID-19 Community Hub Support distributed between 01 October to 31 December 2021:



**Chart D: Test and Trace Payments**

