

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Finance Report

Meeting Date: Monday, 28th September 2026

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer

Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, by 10am on the day of the meeting to allow for a full response at the meeting. E-mail nigel.warner@witney-tc.gov.uk and copy in townclerk@witney-tc.gov.uk

The purpose of this report is to present to Members the draft management accounts for the period 1st April to 31st July 2026; and to update Members regarding investment returns, the latest bar stocktake report and risk management reports. This report also requests the Committee to give initial consideration to the revenue budget for 2027-28 and capital & special revenue projects for 2027-28 and beyond.

Background

Detailed income and expenditure statements for budgets which are the responsibility of this committee are enclosed; these are the management accounts for this committee. The period to which this report relates is 1st April 2026 to 31st July 2026.

The cost centres for which this committee has **direct responsibility** are:

Cost centre (CC)	Service
102	Langdale Hall (Property)
106	Madley Park Community Centre
401	Civic activities
407	Grants and donations
501	Property/ Investments
502	Town Hall Maintenance
505	Precept
506	Interest received
601	Works department
602	Central support
604	Works depot, vehicles , equipment etc
700	Strategic planning initiatives
701	Corporate management
702	Democratic representation and management
800	Capital Projects

In relation to the Committee's **oversight responsibilities** these are in the detailed management accounts and, for 2026-27 are as follows:

Committee	Cost centres
Parks and Recreation	201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 207, 208, 209, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 230
Stronger Communities	402, 408
Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments	103, 104, 105, 301, 302, 303, 305
Climate, Biodiversity and Planning	206, 250, 403

Cost centres, comprising three digits, typically represent a discrete service entity, to which income and expenditure is allocated against previously agreed revenue budgets.

Within each cost centre income and expenditure is then allocated to a four-digit nominal ledger code; these codes are common across the cost centres. Nominal ledger codes further define the costs associated with the cost centre and correspond to a specific type of account, such as materials or staffing costs. Codes commencing with "1" are income codes; codes commencing with "4" are expenditure codes.

A report is regularly submitted to each of the standing committees and previous reports are available on the relevant committee section of the website.

At this meeting the Committee is requested to undertake initial consideration of the revenue budget for 2027-28 and the capital/special revenue budgets for 2027-28 and beyond. This is covered by a separate section within this report.

Current Situation

Committee summary

The summary of the revenue budgets which are the responsibility of this Committee, the details shown on pages 1 to 7 is as follows

	Months 1 to 4 actual plus committed expenditure	Budget for 2026-27	Percentage of budget spent/received in Months 1 to 4 (33% of the year)	Comparable percentage for same period 2025-26
Expenditure	£178,150	£519,381	34.3%	34.7%
Income	£44,207	£149,934	29.5%	33.8%
Net expenditure	£133,973	£369,447	36.3%	34.9%

Whilst the above summary is within the range which I would expect at this time the totals will include within them numerous variations and matters which have budgetary implications and therefore a detailed commentary in relation to the management accounts will be prepared for each Committee for the November/budget cycle meetings.

The precept, shown on page 24, is paid in two instalments. The second instalment was paid earlier this month and the Council has now received the full precept of £2,427,251.

The Council has ongoing a number of capital projects and these are shown on page 23. Members previously noted my comments that capital accounting is not always straightforward to represent in these budget reports, especially in terms of funding sources, and so during the budget cycle it is likely that these reports will be supplemented by spreadsheets. During the accounting period expenditure on the West Witney Project amounted to £475,874 funded by a combination of PWLB loan, section 106 funding and earmarked reserves; appropriate entries will be made in the management accounts at project completion. The final tranche of the £1,250,000 was drawn down in September 2026, this tranche being £290,000. During the accounting period the grant of £250,000 to Courtside CIC, in relation to the Leys Multiactivity Hub was released, in two instalments, and funded from the Council's earmarked reserves as agreed.

Council summary

The summary of all Council budgets, the details shown on pages 1 to 24, is as follows

	Months 1 to 4 actual plus committed expenditure	Budget for 2026-27	Percentage of budget spent/received in Months 1 to 4 (33% of the year)	Comparable percentage for same period 2025-26
Expenditure	£1,625,824	£3,380,600	48.1%	17.9%
Income	£1,432,185	£3,111,587	46.0%	28.8%

In relation to expenditure the figures during the first four months are skewed by the major capital project expenditure, all of which is currently fully funded and during that period amounted to £737,613. Therefore in relation to "day-to-day" revenue activity a more meaningful summary is that in relation to the revenue accounts shown on pages 1 to 23. This summary also excludes the precept, which also distorts the summary due to the first half instalment being received in April.

The revenue summary (excluding precept) is:

	Months 1 to 4 actual plus committed sums	Budget for 2026-27	Percentage of budget spent/received in Months 1 to 4 (33% of the year)	Comparable percentage for same period 2025-26
Expenditure	£888,211	£2,868,042	31.0%	31.4%
Income	£218,650	£684,336	31.9%	34.8%
Net expenditure	£669,561	£2,183,706	30.7%	30.5%

Members should note that the management accounts and the Council's accounting system more generally are driven by the requirements in place for town and parish councils, including the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the National Association of Local Councils/Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) Practitioners' Guide 2026/27. The latter is the official guidance for preparing Annual Governance and Accountability Returns (AGAR) for financial years starting on or after 1 April 2026.

It is worth noting that expenditure is not necessarily incurred evenly over the course of the year. For example, most expenditure in relation to nominal ledger code 4025 (insurance) is incurred when the annual premium is paid in April and similarly many subscriptions (code 4024) are also paid early in the financial year. There will also be similar patterns on the income in particular seasonal items such as Christmas lights sponsorship. This needs to be considered when looking at individual budget lines because whilst the Council prepares its annual accounts on an income and expenditure basis, including accruals so that income and expenditure is matched to the period to which it relates, this is not done in-year.

INVESTMENT STATEMENT – AUGUST 2026

At each meeting members receive the latest updates in relation to the Council's investments.

The Council holds the following investments:

1. Public Sector Deposit Fund (CCLA Investment Management Ltd.) – Value of as of 31 August 2026 - £1,238,511 (*Value of £1,230,659 as of 31 May 2026*) an increase of £7,852, which was reinvested.
2. The Local Authorities' Property Fund (CCLA Fund Managers Ltd.) – Value as of 31 August 2026 = £57,839 (*Value as of 31 May 2026 = £58,044*). This represents a decrease in value of £205 over that period, i.e. 0.4%). Income is credited to the Council on a quarterly basis and the sum of £657.15 was credited to the Council's bank account on 31 July 2026.

Bar stocktake reports

The bar stocktake report for the period to 8th July 2026 is attached.

These reports show that the bar stock is being well-managed, with reasonable levels of stock, appropriate margins and minimal wastage. The RFO does not consider that there are any matters of concern arising from these reports.

Members are requested to note these reports.

Business risk assessments and procurement policy & procedures

The Council's business risk assessments for each financial year are normally agreed towards the end of the financial year, in March, and in line with many other councils. It was previously agreed to bring this forward and the intention is that this now come forward in either November 2026 or February 2027.

Similarly the Committee agreed at its 30th March 2026, on agreeing the Council's procurement policy, to also agree the RFO's recommendation that he produce a document which would consolidate all procurement policy and procedures into one document for clarity and ease of use. The intention was to bring this forward to this meeting but this has not been possible and the intention is that this now come forward in either November 2026 or February 2027.

REVENUE BUDGET 2027-28 AND CAPITAL & SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS 2027-28 AND BEYOND

In line with normal Council procedures, the RFO and colleague will shortly be commencing the annual review of all the Committees to prepare the Revenue budget for 2027-28. As part of this process the medium-term financial plan is being updated to cover the financial years up to and including 2031-32.

Draft budgets will be prepared based upon current activities and patterns of income and expenditure and known, previously agreed changes. Any changes to services proposed by the Council and its committees which result in changes to net revenue expenditure will be considered separately as Revenue Growth Items.

During the budget cycle the Council also considers the Capital and Special Revenue budget to identify which projects or schemes are to be implemented and undertaken during the next financial year.

In drafting budgets your officers will have due regard to the draft Strategic Plan and the medium term-financial strategy.

Members will be aware that the Council have a number of major projects in motion as well as facilities due to be transferred to the Council so there is an existing demand on financial

and staffing resources. There are potential costs relating to local government reorganisation although there are many uncertainties regarding this matter. With continuing inflationary pressures and mindful of pressures on household budgets the Council is advised to be modest in relation to any additional proposals.

It should also be remembered that additional capital projects may have staffing implications – a sum in a budget to provide a new service or facility or organise an event will also mean that officer time needs to be dedicated to deliver the project.

Members are requested to consider items to be included in next year's budget and any other adjustments in the context of the Council's existing and upcoming service commitments. This will enable Officers to obtain costings and the RFO to draft as accurate budget estimates as possible.

A number of items have been highlighted by the spending Committees during this cycle of meetings and these are listed in Appendix A.

Corporate Strategy

The Council's Strategic Plan 2025–29 sets out the Council's long-term priorities and direction, supporting its mission to 'make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.' This report contributes to the delivery of the following strategic pillar of the plan:

1. A Forward Looking Town Council

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.
- b) Biodiversity – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – whilst a sufficient budget is necessary for the Council to meet its obligations and objectives, there are no implications directly resulting from this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The provision of regular financial reports is part of the Council's risk management system.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Social value is not quantified in the financial reports but clearly the creation of social value is dependent on setting adequate budgets to meet the Council's objectives.

Financial implications

This report forms part of the Council's due diligence and a process in line with its Financial Regulations. The financial implications are detailed above and also in the attached appendices.

Recommendations

Members are invited:

1. To note and approve the report and the management accounts of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for the period 1st April to 31st July 2026.
2. To note the investment statement for August 2026.
3. To note the bar stocktake report for the period to 8th July 2026.
4. To note the item relating to business risk assessments and procurement policy & procedures.
5. To consider items to be included in next year's revenue and capital/special revenue item budgets, noting that approval of such items will be for the Council to consider in the budget cycle of meetings.

Summary of items considered by Council committees during the September 2026 meetings cycle and which have potential revenue and/or capital budget implications for 2027-28 and beyond.

Note – relevant extracts are given from minutes – please refer to minutes of the relevant meetings for further details.

Parks & Recreation Committee – 7th September 2026

Min PR413

Discussion took place regarding the operation of the **Splash Park** following the introduction of extended opening hours during the summer season. Members heard that usage levels remained positive and that expenditure was anticipated to remain within the approved budget. A Member requested that the amended operating hours be maintained and therefore considered as such in the 2027/28 budget setting process.

In considering future budget requirements, Members were referred by the Deputy Town Clerk to comments received through the **Council's Annual Residents Survey**, which had identified **requests for additional benches, bins and play equipment across recreation and play areas**. Particular reference was made to requests for **picnic benches at Raleigh Crescent Play Area and potential improvements to recreational facilities at West Witney**.

A Member also raised a request received from a constituent regarding the **possible installation of a stair rail feature at the skate park**. Officers agreed to investigate the feasibility and likely cost of such a facility and report back to a future meeting.

Min PR416

Revenue implications of the Raleigh Crescent MUGA/MUSA

Climate & Biodiversity Committee – 8th September 2026

Min CB425

That, a provisional request of £50,000 for **carbon reduction projects** be considered within the 2027/28 budget setting process, subject to future review.

Min CB429

That, a **Climate Action Working Party** meeting be held following Full Council **to review implementation priorities and budget requirements**.

Halls. Cemeteries & Allotments Committee – 14th September 2026

Minute H436

That, consideration be given, as part of the 2027/28 budget-setting process, to maintaining **an annual allocation of £50,000 for carbon reduction projects, together with the earmarking of funding for future improvements to facilities and equipment at the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall.**

Minute H438

Members received an update on marketing activities, including the introduction of a "What's On" brochure and a WhatsApp channel to promote events. It was noted that the existing publicity budget of £3,000 was largely committed to printing and event promotion. Members supported further consideration of increased marketing resources, particularly to improve engagement with older audiences through wider poster distribution, including the use of noticeboards across the town, supermarkets and the library. Officers advised that such promotion already formed part of marketing activity and that a list of poster locations would be included in a future report.

The Venue and Events Officer advised that **proposals and options for future marketing investment would be presented to the next meeting in November.**

Stronger Communities Committee – 21st September 2026

Minute SC453

That, the **replacement and upgrade of the Burford Road bus shelter** be supported in principle, subject to funding opportunities and detailed costings being identified.

Minute SC454

Members considered **future infrastructure requirements including bus shelters, grit bins and street furniture.** A Member raised the issue of future maintenance responsibilities arising from the High Street improvement works and emphasised that any future budget provision should relate to ongoing maintenance rather than capital replacement or enhancement works.

Members were reminded that Oxfordshire County Council would be expected to provide an appropriate **commuted sum** to support future maintenance when responsibility for street furniture was transferred to the Town Council. It was also noted that Oxfordshire County Council should continue to bear full responsibility for delivering and funding the proposed improvement scheme.

Members also discussed the **annual provision for maintenance of the Church Clock** and noted that this should continue within future budgets. It was further noted that any repair project would be considered separately through the work of the Project Officer.

Minute SC455

Members also considered **options for the provision of lockable noticeboards at play areas and recreational facilities**. The Committee welcomed the proposal and unanimously supported the fourth example presented within the report. It was noted that three boards would be required and that £1,500 should be included within future budget discussions to allow for their purchase.

Minute SC457

That, **provision of £1,000 be included within the 2027/28 budget process to support an additional Play Day** associated with the event (*the proposed Big Lunch event*).

Minute SC459

That, provision of £750 be recommended for inclusion within the 2027/28 budget to support activities associated with the RAF's 50th Anniversary of the Freedom of Witney.

Minute SC461

2. That, a budget of £20,000 be retained for the **Youth Services Grant Scheme in 2027/28 and;**
3. That, a budget of £12,000 be retained for **Home-Start Oxford** in 2027/28 and;
4. That, provision of £29,250, subject to inflation, be included within the 2027/28 budget for **The Station Detached Youth Service** and;
5. That, future provision for **APCAM Mental Health Drop-In Sessions** be considered once further information has been received.

Minute 462 SC462 – In Bloom

6. That, a **budget of £4,200 be included within the 2027/28 budget, including £2,200 for improvements to Unterhaching Park.**