

Issued: Tuesday 23 January 2024
Re-Issued: Wednesday 24 January 2024

Tel: 01993 861000
email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

COUNCIL

You are summoned to a meeting of Council, which will be held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB, on **Wednesday 31 January 2024 at 2.00pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Council:

Councillors: Andrew Coles (Chair), Elizabeth Poskitt (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Lidia Arciszewska, Thomas Ashby, Hugo Ashton, Andrew Beaney, Michael Brooker, David Cooper, Julian Cooper, Rachel Crouch, Colin Dingwall, Jane Doughty, Duncan Enright, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, David Jackson, Edward James, Mark Johnson, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Charlie Maynard, Martin McBride, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Lysette Nicholls, Mathew Parkinson, Rosie Pearson, Rizvana Poole, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Sandra Simpson, Alaric Smith, Ruth Smith, Harry St. John, Tim Sumner, Dean Temple, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray.

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Executive, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted. By participating in this meeting, you are consenting to be filmed.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Democratic Services officers know prior to the start of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive any Apologies for Absence from Members of the Council.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any Declarations of Interest from Members of the Council on any items to be considered at the meeting.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 26)**
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 29 November 2023.
4. **Receipt of Announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Chair, Leader of the Council, Members of the Executive, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Governance.
5. **Committee Appointments Made under Delegated Authority (Pages 27 - 34)**
Purpose:
For Council to ratify and note the appointments made to committees under delegated authority following the Council meeting on 27 September 2023 where Council reviewed the political proportionalities on committees and agreed to change the structure of overview and scrutiny committees.

Recommendations:
That Council Resolves to:
 1. Ratify and note the appointments to committees made by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the wishes of political groups.
 2. Appoint one Liberal Democrat member to the Constitution Working Group, increasing the size of the working group to 7 members (nominated member to be confirmed at the meeting).
 3. Note that there is currently one vacant Liberal Democrat seat on the Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee (for appointment by the Licensing Committee) but that all other vacancies on Committees and Sub-Committees have been filled.
6. **Participation of the Public**
There were no submissions for public participation received by Democratic Services before the deadline of 12.00pm on Monday 22 January 2024.
7. **Questions by Members**
The following questions have been submitted by Members of Council to Members of the Executive, in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules (Constitution Part 5A, Rule 12).

Oral responses will be provided at the meeting. Following receipt of the answer to their question, Members are entitled to ask one supplementary question at the meeting.

The Questions and Answers will be detailed in the minutes of the meeting.

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Q1. Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment:

Can the Executive Member for the Environment, let us know how many Garden Waste Licences were sold in the following years: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 & 2023?

Q2. Councillor Harry St. John to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:

In the light of the possible changes to Publica, and employment of staff directly by WODC recently circulated, can the cost implications in relation to Pension contributions be highlighted at an early stage if such employees (new or existing) will become members of the LGA /OCC pension scheme?

This is so that Members can compare the current position with the new scenario. There is a mention of £1m pa extra contributions made in a recent report – How much might it cost WODC?

Q3. Councillor Harry St. John to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:

I notice the Executive approved the process of Trade Union recognition of WODC staff – Has any Union previously been recognised by WODC?

Are there any cost implications for WODC and how many Members, if any, of the Executive are themselves Union members, particularly members of GMB or Unison, which are likely to be the main Unions involved?

Q4. Councillor Harry St. John to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:

Last year, at the March Council, you replied to a member of the public's question regarding the Blenheim Solar Power Station, and I quote: -

"We wish to make a fully informed judgement as to whether the harms of the proposal outweigh the benefits.

"We will carry out any assessment as considered necessary to inform our response to the Planning Inspectorate."

Our Planning Officers are about to report to the Development Control Committee being held on Monday 5 February 2024.

Can you confirm why, despite being Leader of this Council, and County Councillor for Woodstock, which Division includes a number of parishes that are currently blighted by the scheme, and in light of our Council organising a bus tour of the whole site (to better inform every member of what is involved) plus a number of walkabouts at key view points within the site, you decided not to join the 11 members (on a 40 seater bus hired, one assumes at some public expense) who did come on the tour; neither did you encourage your Executive colleagues (or indeed all Members) to all come along too.

Given the sheer scale of this proposal - roughly 2500 acres stretching over 7 miles long in our District and Cherwell, let alone more in the Vale of White Horse, this absence does seem an oversight – would you agree?

Do you think your constituents will be happy that you missed the opportunity to view the whole site and hear what your officers were saying on site? Isn't that what Leadership is about?, taking the lead on a key issue? (I fully realise that the final decision on this proposal is not going to be ours, but our initial response will carry a lot of weight

hopefully – given most of the site is in our domain!).

Do you agree that you and some of your/our colleagues could well be at a disadvantage when this matter comes to be debated at WODC's Development Control Committee, having not made your/themselves available for the tour?

As they say, I think we should be told and welcome your response.

Q5. Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:

Does he feel it's appropriate for his Deputy Leader to be now working for a communications company that is involved in work between this Council and developers given his role in the Council?

Q6. Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance:

How much is the new interim programme director costing, and is this cost coming from the £200,000 set aside for the Publica transition?

Q7. Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance:

While presenting the Draft Budget, Councillor Smith alluded to the cost of vehicle hire for waste lorries due to the ageing fleet. Can he tell us how much it has cost this council this year?

Q8. Councillor Liam Walker to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment:

Can the Executive Member confirm when the A4095 between Witney and North Leigh will have a visit from the street cleaning team to collect rubbish?

Q9. Councillor Liam Walker to Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development:

Can the Executive Member confirm what funding was used for the purchase of the Marriott's Walk shopping centre?

Q10. Councillor Liam Walker to Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects:

Can the Executive member update Council as to what progress has been made to secure sites in or around Witney for new 3G pitches?

Recommendations from the Executive and the Council's Committees

8. Recommendations from the Executive (Pages 35 - 38)

Purpose:

To agree recommendations made to Council by the Executive, from its meetings since 29 November 2023.

Recommendations:

The Executive Recommends that Council Resolves to:

1. Approve the Council Tax Base shown in Annex F of the original Executive report, calculated as £47,841.03 for the year 2024/25;
2. Authorise the Director of Finance to submit the National Non-Domestic Rates Return I (NNDR1) to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by the submission date of 31 January 2024.

9. **Council Tax Support Scheme 2024-2025 (Pages 39 - 48)**

Purpose:

To present the results of the public consultation on proposals for revising the current Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1 April 2024.

Recommendations:

That Council Resolves to:

1. Agree to increase Council Tax Support, as detailed in paragraph 2.5 from 1 April 2024;
2. Agree that any surplus in the Support Fund is transferred over to 2024/2025 for reasons detailed in paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8;
3. Approve the amendment to the Council Tax Support Policy as recommended in paragraph 2.9.

10. **Recommendations from the Constitution Working Group (Pages 49 - 68)**

Purpose:

To present a recommendation to Council, from the Constitution Working Group, relating to the adoption of a Communications Protocol into the Council's constitution.

Recommendation:

That Council Resolves to:

1. Approve the adoption of a Communications Protocol into the Council's Constitution.

Reports from Officers

11. **West Oxfordshire District Council Programme of Meetings 2024 – 2025 (Pages 69 - 80)**

Purpose:

To approve a programme of Council and Committee meetings for the municipal year 2024–2025.

Recommendations:

That Council Resolves to:

1. Approve the Programme of Meetings for June 2024 to May 2025, as detailed at Annex A and Annex B;
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme of meetings, in the event that there is any future decision of the Council to change the committee structure, frequencies of committees or sub-committees, or committee remits that impacts the programme of meetings;
3. Delegate authority to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set meeting dates for committees and sub-committees that meet on an ad-hoc basis (Performance and Appointments Committee, Development Control Committee, Licensing Committee, Licensing Panel, Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee, Standards Sub-Committee), member training, member briefing sessions, and any further working groups established by the Council.

Motions on Notice

12. **Motion A: Thames Water Sewage 'Task Force' - Proposed by Councillor Lysette Nicholls, Seconded by Councillor Thomas Ashby.**

Council notes the concerns from members of this Council, and members of public in the continuing of dumping of sewage into our local rivers by Thames Water.

This Council notes the work so far of the administration to hold Thames Water to account.

Given the continued concerns from residents across West Oxfordshire, this Council Resolves to request the Leader to:

1. Set up a cross party task force to be established to work with campaigners in helping to hold Thames Water to account;
2. Ensure the new task force meets at least once every quarter;
3. Ensure the Executive Member for Environment chairs the new group.

(END)