

Public Document Pack



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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.

West Oxfordshire District Council, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, OX28 1NB
www.westoxon.gov.uk Tel: 01993 861000

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)

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Council.

Held at Carterton Community Centre, Marigold Square, Shilton Park, Carterton, Oxfordshire,
OX18 1AX at 1.00pm on **Wednesday 29 November 2023.**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Coles (Chair), Elizabeth Poskitt (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, 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, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Charlie Maynard, Martin McBride, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Lysette Nicholls, Mathew Parkinson, Rosie Pearson, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Alaric Smith, Ruth Smith, Harry St. John, Tim Sumner, Liam Walker, Adrian Walsh, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Andrew Brown (Business Manager, Democratic Services), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Support Officer).

CL.109 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from the following Members:

Councillors Rizvana Poole, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Sandra Simpson, Mark Walker, Nick Leverton and Dean Temple.

CL.110 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Thomas Ashby stated that he was Scout Leader at Witney Butter Cross Scout Group. The Declaration of Interest was a non-pecuniary interest, made in relation to Agenda Item 6, where Councillor Ashby had raised a Member Question to the Leader of the Council regarding his Scout group.

Councillor Lysette Nicholls stated that she was Vice-Chair of South Leigh Parish Council. The Declaration of Interest was a non-pecuniary interest and related to Agenda Item 11.

CL.111 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 27 September 2023, be agreed by Council as a true and accurate record, and signed by the Chair.

This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Agree the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 27 September 2023, as a true and accurate record.

CL.112 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Andrew Coles, Chair of the Council, welcomed all attendees to the meeting, and stated it was pleasing to hold a meeting of the Council externally, and thanked Carterton Community Centre for hosting the meeting.

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The Chair thanked and paid tribute to Members who attended Remembrance Sunday services and parades across the district, including those Members who laid wreaths over the Remembrance period.

The Chair also thanked Sharon Ellison and Zena Holliday of WODC Electoral Services for preparing and hosting a “Halloween Spooktacular” in October, which raised £350 for charity. The Chair stated that the event was well attended by Members and Officers, and that the funds raised would be of great help to Charity.

The Chair also thanked the pupils of Tower Hill Community Primary School in Witney, for the design of the Chair’s Annual Christmas Card. The Chair stated there was lots of competition between pupils, and that the winner was worthy of selection.

The Chair also congratulated Councillors Tim Sumner and Charlie Maynard on their appointment to the Executive. Councillor Sumner had been appointed as the new Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, whilst Councillor Maynard had been appointed as the new Executive Member for Planning and Sustainability. The Chair also paid tribute to Councillor Carl Rylett, who had recently stood down from the Executive, thanked him for his service and wished him well in his new commitments outside of the Council.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, rose to advise members that Simon Hoare MP, a former Member of West Oxfordshire District Council, had recently been appointed to the Government as a Minister of State. The Leader congratulated Mr. Hoare on his appointment and stated that he would be invited to the opening ceremony of the refurbished Council Chamber at Woodgreen in January 2024. The Leader also stated that Robert Courts MP, Member of Parliament for Witney and West Oxfordshire would also be invited to the event.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, gave an update regarding events that would take place over the Christmas Period of 2023. The Deputy Leader stated that events were detailed in the recently published ‘WODC Voice’ newsletter. The events included a Christmas Market, which would take place at Marriott’s Walk in Witney between 8 and 10 December 2023, with over 30 wooden chalets, offering a range of festive fun and treats.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment, advised Council of the successes of ‘Waterways Day’, which took place on 23 November 2023 at The Corn Exchange in Witney. The Executive Member stated that there were a broad range of speakers at the event, such as the Environment Agency, Thames Water and Oxfordshire County Council, and the Executive Member gave thanks to those who attended the event.

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change, advised that the Council had been awarded £50,000 from the Coronation Orchard Fund. The Executive Member advised that across the district, the Council would be able to support 50 orchards for a variety of different fruits, and the wider, local community would be able to apply for chunks of the funding, by accessing the Council’s website. The Executive Member advised that the deadline for applications was 19 January 2024.

The Executive Member also stated that the Council had launched a consultation on the Biodiversity Action Plan, and encouraged residents to participate in the consultation to help shape biodiversity within the County of Oxfordshire. The deadline for responses was advised of being 22 December 2023 with further information available in the ‘WODC Voice’ newsletter.

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Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, advised Council that information relating to WestHive Community Funding was available on the Council's website. The Community Funding had almost reached the end of the first round, with more tranches of funding being available for bidding in due course. The Executive Member encouraged other Members to spread the word to residents about the funding, and how it could be used for projects within the district.

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, announced that the Council, in conjunction with Cottsway Housing Association, had secured an additional 23 units for affordable housing within the district, which would accommodate in the first instance, refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan. The Executive Member stated that the units had arisen from receipt of Government funding, and at no cost to local residents.

CL.113 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation at the meeting.

CL.114 Questions by Members

Questions by Members, as listed on the agenda, and the responses to those questions, which were circulated in advance, were taken as read.

The Chair invited the questioners to ask a supplementary question if they wished and then invited the relevant Executive Members to respond.

The Written Questions, Written Answers, Verbal Supplementary Questions and Verbal Supplementary Answers are detailed in a separate document appended to the Minutes of the Meeting.

CL.115 Recommendations from the Executive

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which sought agreement to recommendations made to Council by the Executive, from its meetings since 19 July 2023.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Council agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Adopt the twenty-six Employment and Health & Safety Policies (included in Annex A of the original Executive report);
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Director of Governance, to approve subsequent amendments to any West Oxfordshire District Council employment policies that may be necessary, in line with legal changes and best practice, to ensure the Councils policies remain compliant;
3. Agree to an increase in the fine levels to the maximum levels permissible, as outlined in Table I;
4. Agree an early payment discount as outlined in Table I.

Offence	Existing Fine	Fine with Discount for early payment	New fine (Payment in 28 days)	Fine with proposed % discount (Payment within 14 days)
Fly-tipping	£400	£200*	£1,000	£500
Duty of Care	£400	£200*	£600	£300
Littering and graffiti	£80	£60 **	£500	£250
Distribution of printed matter	£80	£60**	£150	£75

CL.116 Recommendations of the Constitution Working Group

Councillor Mathew Parkinson, Chair of the Constitution Working Group, introduced the report, which presented recommendations of the Constitution Working Group relating to the adoption of Budget Procedure Rules and the terms of reference of the Performance and Appointments Committee.

In debate, Members stated that an agreement had been made to keep Budget speeches succinct and to the point when presenting, rather than taking up excessive time during such meetings.

Councillor Mathew Parkinson proposed that Council agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Michele Mead, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the adoption of the Budget Procedure Rules (Annex A) as part of the Constitution (Part 5K);
2. Agree to amend the terms of reference of the Performance and Appointments Committee (Part 3C) to include responsibility for “To adopt and amend employment and health and safety policies”.

CL.117 West Oxfordshire District Council Draft Programme of Meetings 2024-2025

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which sought to approve a programme of Council and Committee meetings for the municipal year 2024-25.

The leader paid tribute to the work of the Council’s Democratic Services team, and thanked them for their hard work in producing the draft programme of meetings for consideration by Members, having taken into account different situations throughout the year, such as public holidays and school term dates.

In debate, it was highlighted that the report contained a number of minor anomalies regarding dates of meetings. Members also highlighted that the programme of meetings could clash with

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potential appeals relating to applications for development, and assurance was given that such clashes would be rare, and would be dealt with as appropriate at the time, in consultation with Planning Officers.

Members also stated that proposed meetings were drafted to be on different days of the week that had been previously agreed to, such as Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer, Max Thompson, stated that owing to the anomalies contained within the report, an updated, corrected version would be made available to Members for consideration at the next meeting of Council on 31 January 2024.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Council note the content of the report. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Note the content of the report.

CL.118 Appointment of Independent Persons

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which sought to appoint Alec Pridsam and Paul Evans as Independent Persons for the purposes of matters of Councillor conduct.

In debate, Members queried if there had been any applications to the position of Independent Persons from females, and that should the application window be re-opened in the future, it would be of benefit to the Council to have a more gender balanced attractive offer made available.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Council agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Appoint Alec Pridsam and Paul Evans as Independent Persons for a period of 4 years;
2. Delegate Authority to the Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer) to extend the appointments for further periods of one year at a time if deemed appropriate.

CL.119 Change of Name - South Leigh Parish Council

Councillor Andrew Coles, Chair of the Council, introduced the report, which sought to note, make a correction to, and amend a prior agreed name change from 'South Leigh and High Cogges Parish Council', to the Parish of 'South Leigh & High Cogges'.

The Chair advised Members that the Ward stated on the report front sheet was incorrect, and that the Parish was actually located in the Eynsham and Cassington Ward.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Council agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, was put to a vote, and was agreed unanimously by Council.

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- I. Approve the agreed name of the Parish of South Leigh, to the Parish of 'South Leigh & High Cogges'.

CL.120 Motion A: Accountability of Large-Scale Housing Developers - Proposed by Councillor Lysette Nicholls, Seconded by Councillor Michele Mead.

Councillor Lysette Nicholls introduced the motion, which requested that the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and all Oxfordshire MPs, informing them that West Oxfordshire District Council would like the criteria for large housing development, once approved, to be enforced, and for developers to incur a financial penalty for not building in the approved timeframe.

In debate, Members stated that there was wide-spread support for the Motion, and that the Council should not be held to account for delays experienced within building processes caused by developers. Members also stated that the letter would help to resolve problems experienced within the planning process and would be backed up by Section 106 agreements contained within applications for development.

Members also referenced that the Levelling Up Bill had made its way through the Parliamentary process and that the Bill made references to ways to support the planning process more generally.

Members also made reference to the importance of the Local Plan, and the work of the Council's Planning Policy Team in the community.

Councillor Lysette Nicholls proposed the motion be adopted by Council. Councillor Nicholls stated her gratitude to all Members for their support of the Motion and the importance of working together on a vital issue. This was seconded by Councillor Michele Mead, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to pass the following Motion:

- I. This Council feels that some large-scale developers (large scale development is considered to be more than 10 houses as defined by WODC's local plan) need to be accountable for failing to build houses that have been approved by planning. By failing to build in a timely manner this has had a detrimental impact on West Oxfordshire's Local Plan failing.

Council Resolves to:

- I. Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and all Oxfordshire MPs informing them that West Oxfordshire District Council would like the criteria for large housing development (defined above), once approved to be enforced, and for developers to incur a financial penalty for not building in the approved timeframe.

CL.121 Motion B: Market Gardens - Proposed by Councillor Rizvana Poole, Seconded by Councillor Rosie Pearson

Councillor Michael Brooker introduced the motion, in the absence of Councillor Poole, which requested that the Local Plan Member Working Group gives consideration to the development of a policy or policies in the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041, to positively encourage and support more opportunities for growing and consuming food locally in line with the Oxfordshire Food Strategy.

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In debate, Members stated that work was already ongoing with officers and those employed within the agricultural sector locally to enhance the importance of local food growth.

Members also stated the importance of local action groups working on the subject matter, and that policy additions to the Local Plan would be of use for generations of the future.

Members also praised the work of the Oxfordshire Food Strategy and the work of 'FarmEd' in the northwest of the County for their work in the area, particularly around sustainable farming, and also local Food Action Work Groups.

Ideas for larger scale housing developments being inclusive of recreational allotments were also highlighted, and reference was made to allotment waiting times in the town of Carterton, especially with some gardens being small in size. It was suggested that by developers including allotment space within larger scale developments, it would also help sustainability aims and reduce food waste levels simultaneously.

Members reiterated the importance of policies contained within the Local Plan, and that the Cross-Party Member Working Group would play a vital role in putting forward proposals for adoption within the new Plan.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Rosie Pearson stated the importance of local higher educational settings playing a vital role in agricultural apprenticeships offered to students, and that local employers should also take the subject very seriously.

Councillor Michael Brooker proposed that the motion as set out on the agenda paper, be adopted by Council. Councillor Brooker offered his thanks for the support to the Motion that members had expressed during the debate, and welcomed the idea of allocated allotments within larger scale housing developments. This was seconded by Councillor Rosie Pearson, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to pass the following Motion:

1. This Council notes that, nationally, we have gone from providing 82.7% of our fruit and veg in 1988 to 55.6% of vegetables and 16.3% of fruit in 2020. Small-scale, low-impact market gardening is an industry that lacks Government support. One of the aims of the Oxfordshire Food Strategy, to which we have signed up, is "to grow our local food economy through local enterprises, local jobs and local wealth creation."

This Council believes that market gardening could be a source of good long-term jobs and is an efficient use of land – In South Oxfordshire, the market gardener Iain Tolhurst produces 120 tonnes of fruit and veg each year on just 7 hectares. This Council further believes that giving priority to healthy local food production addresses at least 4 of the Council's corporate priorities:

- Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All;
- Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife;
- Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency;
- Working Together for West Oxfordshire.

Council Resolves to:

1. Request that the Local Plan Member Working Group gives consideration to the development of a policy or policies in the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041,

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to positively encourage and support more opportunities for growing and consuming food locally in line with the Oxfordshire Food Strategy.

CL.122 Motion C: Youth Assembly - Proposed by Councillor Rosie Pearson, Seconded by Councillor Andy Graham.

Councillor Rosie Pearson introduced the motion, which sought to invite all secondary schools and colleges in the District or those who took part in the Youth Needs Assessment to nominate 2 or 3 students (preferably elected by the student body, or drawn from the school's eco-group where one exists) to attend a youth assembly to take part in the Council Chamber in 2024.

The motion also sought to ask that Officers and Executive Members agree on questions to be put to the assembly for discussion, and to agree the finer details of the running of the assembly, with the aim being for assembly members to tell the Council how they would address the climate and nature emergency if they were in charge.

In debate, Members stated that the motion reminded them of previous event days at the Council called "Politics in Action". A number of Members stated their support for the motion and thanked Councillor Pearson for bringing it to Council. It was highlighted that the Council's Communities team were already working on the project, highlighting the importance of involving local schools and youth establishments, and that further information would be available in due course.

Members queried if the schools of Burford and Cokethorpe in the district had been involved in the process and if they had not, strongly encouraged them to be involved in the future, and as part of the current engagement process going forward. Members also stated that other subjects would be key to discussions, such as climate change.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Andy Graham stated his ongoing desire to engage effectively with communities within the district, and that the subject matter would go some way to help achieve this. Councillor Graham also stated that the engagement process could ultimately entice members of the youth community to consider standing for election to the District Council in the future, and that the process would also act as a catalyst to entice further participation and attendance at meetings of the Council and its Committees.

Councillor Rosie Pearson proposed the motion as set out on the agenda paper, be adopted by Council. Councillor Pearson thanked Members for their contributions and for the support of the Motion. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to pass the following Motion:

- I. This Council notes that our 2022 Youth Needs Assessment, identified that 75% of young people were worried about climate change. In the same survey, 46% of those surveyed felt their voice was not heard. The Council also has aspirations that the newly refurbished Council Chamber will become far more of a community space.

This Council believes that action taken to address climate change can also benefit other aspects of young people's lives, such as mental health, physical fitness and engagement with society. This Council further believes that it would be appropriate to celebrate the refurbishment of our Council Chamber with an event dedicated to the future of our young people.

Council Resolves to:

1. Invite all secondary schools and colleges in the District (OR, failing this, those who took part in the Youth Needs Assessment) to nominate 2 or 3 students (preferably elected by the student body, or drawn from the school's eco-group where one exists) to attend a youth assembly to take part in the council chamber in 2024;
2. Ask that Officers and Executive Members agree on questions to be put to the assembly for discussion, and to agree the finer details of the running of the assembly, with the aim being for assembly members to tell the Council how they would address the climate and nature emergency if they were in charge.

CL.123 Motion D: Barnard Gate Junction Safety Improvements - Proposed by Councillor Liam Walker, Seconded by Councillor Lysette Nicholls.

Councillor Liam Walker introduced the motion, which would request that the Leader of the Council write to the Cabinet Member for Transport Management at Oxfordshire County Council, to request that a road safety assessment is conducted at the Barnard Gate A40 junction, and to ask the County Council to act on any suggested safety improvements.

Councillor Walker highlighted the number of accidents that had occurred over recent months at the junction, and the press coverage that the incidents had created. Councillor Walker acknowledged that whilst that the location was not within his own district ward, all Members would be aware of the situations that occur from the junction, its strategic location on the A40, and that West Oxfordshire District Council is the parent local authority, and are the most appropriate body to make representation to the County Council.

Councillor Walker further highlighted an online petition in his name, and thanked those who had contributed for their support in highlighting issues and concerns that the junction raises in its current form.

In debate, many members stated their support for the motion, and members agreed that the junction requires improvements, and that safety assessments would need to be undertaken. It was also highlighted that members of the Council, who also serve as County Councillors, had made representations to the Cabinet Member responsible for the subject matter. It was further highlighted that the Motion may have been more appropriate to be taken to Oxfordshire County Council, and for engagement with Members of the particular County Division and the Cabinet Member with the aligning portfolio.

Members also stated their concerns over the safety of cyclists and pedestrians at the junction, and that they are as much affected by the junction as well as motorists.

Members also highlighted the concerns that residents of the local area have using the junction by accessing the A40 from the villages of Freeland and Hanborough, and the stretch of the A40 is also used as a major commuting route to and from Oxford, to places such as Cheltenham.

Members of the Council acknowledged the increased workload of the emergency services in relation to the junction, when attending accidents and providing lifesaving care. In addition, Members paid tribute to Councillor Michael Brooker for his professional work in this area with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS). Councillor Brooker stated that he had attended the junction numerous times whilst on duty, and that whilst the junction has a notable increase on OFRS's workload, he was in support of the motion.

Council

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Members also recognised that other junctions along the A40 in the district do have similar issues with road safety, and that roads were not the cause of accidents. Members highlighted driving habits of motorists were the main reason for the number of accidents recorded.

Members also highlighted budget constrains at Central Government level had meant that work relating to the junction had been phased and delayed.

Members also noted that the volume of accidents and near misses gained hefty traction on social media platforms connected to the County, and that issues were well documented by the public and press.

Members raised concerns regarding excess traffic within the local area when accidents occur and when the A40 is closed. Surrounding villages are known to become gridlocked as a result, and Members stated that this would need to be taken into consideration when representations are made to the County Council. Members also stated that overall journey times on the A40 were projected to increase over coming years, and that unless improvement work more generally were undertaken, the ongoing issues that are faced, would deteriorate further. It was also suggested that the proposed rail link between Carterton, Witney and Oxford would also help in this area.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Lysette Nicholls stated her gratitude for Members who had stated they would support the motion and those who were supportive of an improvement process to get underway. Councillor Nicholls also alluded to the accident statistics of the junction, and that this was a key indicator in bringing forward recommendations for safety improvement works.

Councillor Nicholls also stated the issues that impact local villages when accidents occur at Barnard Gate, and the effect this has on villages such as Standlake, Stanton Harcourt and South Leigh.

Councillor Liam Walker proposed the motion as set out on the agenda paper, be adopted by Council. Councillor Walker summed up by thanking the Members who had contributed to the debate and those who were supportive of the motion. This was seconded by Councillor Lysette Nicholls, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to pass the following Motion:

1. The junction onto the A40 at Barnard Gate has, for some time, been a collision hotspot risking the safety of drivers and cyclists, along with impacting nearby communities when the road has to be closed. This council is concerned by the safety of this junction.

Council Resolves to:

1. Write to the Cabinet Member for Transport Management at Oxfordshire County Council, to request that a road safety assessment is conducted, and to ask the County Council act on any suggested safety improvements.

The Meeting closed at 2.33pm.

CHAIR

Questions by Members – Council – 29 November 2023

<u>Written Question</u>	<u>Written Answer</u>	<u>Verbal Supplementary Question</u>	<u>Verbal Supplementary Answer</u>
Q1 – Councillor Andrew Lyon to Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities.			
<p>In July 2018, the previous administration voted to transfer the freehold of Unterhaching Park, in Witney Central ward, to Witney Town Council. It never materialised.</p> <p>At the Executive meeting in June 2023, my fellow ward representative, Councillor Andrew Coles, asked for an update on the timeframe for transfer and was told that it was 'imminent'. Could I ask the Executive Member when the transfer will be happening please?</p>	<p>Terms have been agreed for some time with Witney Town Council for the transfer of the freehold of the site, and solicitors are instructed by both parties. There have been significant challenges in respect of the legal title transfer due to pre-existing restrictions. These have been complex and difficult to overcome and the additional time has also meant that repairs were required at the site before legal matters of transfer could continue.</p> <p>The Town Council's solicitors do not wish to complete until the Deed of Release of a Routing Agreement, which is registered on the title to the site but should not apply, has been processed by the Land Registry.</p> <p>The application was submitted last October, and our legal team has requested that the application be expedited. This has been accepted. Once this is processed, a completion date can be agreed.</p>	<p>I'd like to say thank you, first of all, for the comprehensive answer, but whilst I appreciate that this problem was not of her making, can I ask her if she understands the deep frustration of residents for the length of time that this task has taken, and heed their eagerness to see an end to this?</p>	<p>Thank you. I should just say that I am on Witney Town Council, and since I joined Witney Town Council in 2019, this has been an ongoing problem, which went back years! I have never been more desperate to get this thing moving along as soon as we can. Work is ongoing to bring the site into better condition and we are just desperate for the situation to be resolved.</p>
Q2 – Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council.			
<p>Witney Buttercross Scout Group is one of the largest Scout Groups in the country with over 400 young people from the ages of 4-18. During this year, members of the Groups Trustee Board have</p>	<p>I am advised that Estates would be happy to re-engage with the Witney Buttercross Scout Group. The previous research resulted in one site of interest at Deer Park, that was not suitable due to covenants on the land preventing use other than as 'public open space' and the intention for future use for Witney Destination</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>engaged the Estates and Asset Team, as well as the Leader of the Council to try and explore pieces of land in Witney and the surrounding area which could be used for camping and outdoor activities. However, discussions have so far not progressed.</p> <p>Please can the Leader of the Council ask relevant officers to engage with members of the trustee board at Witney Buttercross Scout Group, to see if suitable land can be identified for the use of Witney's young people?</p>	<p>Play Area. Officers could now provide ownership plans showing all of the Council's ownership in Witney and work with the Scout Group to review them.</p> <p>It must be noted that most, if not all, of the open land that the Council owns is subject to S106 agreements/covenants on acquisition that prevent use other than as 'public open space'. It is possible to vary S106 agreements and covenants, but the original parties may need to be contacted and be a party to any variation. Any proposal would need detailed legal advice and Planning advice.</p>		
<p>Q3 – Councillor Jane Doughty to Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities.</p>			
<p>I am pleased that after the hard work of local residents and councillors, planning applications for the shops and sports pavilion have been approved on Windrush Place.</p> <p>As part of the Section 106 contributions, there is a significant fund for an adventure play area, which would be of great benefit, not only to young people in my ward, but also the rest of the town. Please can the Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities</p>	<p>Officers have confirmed that £878,489.59 has been received from the West Witney / Windrush Place development (planning app. 12/0084/P/OP). Of this contribution, £180,000 is allocated to the MUGA project at Raleigh Crescent. The S106 agreement specifies it has to go 'towards the construction and on-going maintenance of an adventure play area and a multi-use games area on land owned by the District Council in the vicinity of the Site'.</p> <p>In relation to the adventure play area, I am advised that Officers are working closely with Witney Town Council to determine the best route forward for its delivery. Although there are overhead cables on the proposed land</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

confirm how much S.106 contributions there are, and can they work with officers to ensure that this project begins in the next financial year?	alongside Deer Park Road, which would need to be relocated to enable the project to progress, and this is the next stage of work officers and the Town Council are looking at.		
Q4 – Councillor Jane Doughty to Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities.			
<p>In July, the Executive Member confirmed that the District Council held regular meetings to ensure that the land for a Multi-Use Games area in Deer Park.</p> <p>Please can the Executive Member provide an update about how the progress is going and whether land will be transferred to Witney Town Council in early 2024?</p>	I am advised that Officers are working closely with Witney Town Council to bring forward the MUGA at Raleigh Crescent Play Area. The Town Council are amenable to project managing the installation on Council land with the S106 funding allocated. The Town Council has met with designers to discuss design, concepts and cost. On completion ownership will transfer to the Town Council.	Thank you for answering the question. Is it possible that we could have involvement in future meetings as ward members? As you know at the Town Council this has been going on for some while, and we would really like to get this moved on? I would also like to say thank you for your support.	Yes, that's possible. The Town Council are looking at fitting some children's football pitches on the area as well. So there is some negotiation about where these pitches will go.
Q5 – Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment.			
At the last Executive meeting on 15 November 2023, you collectively agreed to raise the price of fly-tipping fines to the maximum levels allowed. I fully support this decision as like most of us, fly-tipping is in the top things complained about from residents. How many reported fly-tipping incidents in the last year have we successfully fined?	<p>The details of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) and other actions for this year is as follows:</p> <p>Fixed Penalty Notice (Duty of Care) – 1;</p> <p>Fixed Penalty Notice (Littering) – 1;</p> <p>Fixed Penalty Notice (Other) – 0;</p> <p>Fixed Penalty Notice (S33Za) – 16.</p> <p>Of the 18 FPNs, 10 have been paid so far, two are being investigated for prosecution and 6 are pending further action.</p>	Thank you for your response. Can you shed some light on how many fly tipping instances there have been altogether, because all we have here is fixed penalty notices, which is what I asked for, but it would be nice to know how many have been reported throughout the year, and do we have any provision for putting in any cameras to stop any hot spots for fly tipping? I know that we have places that are	<p>Yes, so altogether we had over 1100 instances of fly tipping in a year. That translates to 49 visits that were completed. Now obviously have very limited resources to be able to carry out the investigations.</p> <p>Everything is cleared by Ubico and all the rubbish is picked up, although some of the fly tipped material is very difficult to pick up, including some of the waste having to be picked up from the</p>

		<p>continuously fly tipped like Farmers Field and car parks in Carterton, so it would be nice to know if you're going to put some cameras up to catch fly tippers, now that we can charge them a fortune.</p>	<p>river. These things cost us a lot of money.</p> <p>We now have a new officer who is working with the team to help carry out the investigations, and if we get permission we will install the cameras in the hot spots, and will work closely with Thames Valley Police to bring the overall numbers down and to get a better outcome in our investigations.</p> <p>In October this year, we had altogether 19 investigations undertaken and 8 FPNs were issued. That compared with the last quarter of last year, we only had 2 FPNs issues. So we are doing better and making progress.</p>
<p>Q6 – Councillor David Cooper to Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare.</p>			
<p>Could the Executive Member confirm how many residents are recorded as homeless in West Oxfordshire?, and how does this compare to years 2020, 2021 and 2022?</p>	<p>West Oxfordshire currently has 2 people recorded as rough sleeping. Both are new to rough sleeping and the Council's Homelessness Team and the County Outreach team are working with both to find solutions. Historically, West Oxfordshire has maintained low numbers of people rough sleeping, preferring to take a proactive approach to find solutions at the earliest possible stage. The Council is required to undertake an annual 'snapshot' estimate and</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

	<p>these figures are recorded with the government as below:</p> <p>2019 – 7;</p> <p>2020 – 5;</p> <p>2021 – 1;</p> <p>2022 – 2.</p>		
<p>Q7 – Councillor Alex Wilson to Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Change.</p>			
<p>What plans does this Council have to install more Electronic Vehicle (EV) charging facilities in West Oxfordshire for the year 2024?</p>	<p>Oxfordshire has been allocated £3.6million of Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) to scale up the provision of public EV charging facilities across the County over the next two years. Oxfordshire County Council, as a Tier I Highways Authority, is set to receive this funding and is coordinating a county-wide plan in close consultation with West Oxfordshire District Council and other Oxfordshire District and City Councils on how this money is best spent. The priority for the funding is ‘standard’ 7kW public charging to meet the changing needs of residents who cannot easily access home charging, either by not having private parking, or perhaps living in rented accommodation. The Oxfordshire proposal will include three key work streams to meet this need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of EV charging hubs in Council owned car parks, similar to those delivered in the Park and Charge Oxfordshire project (www.parkandchargeoxfordshire.co.uk); 	<p>Thank you very much for the information in regard to the scheme. I just wanted to clarify with Councillor Prosser, how many rural areas, as opposed to Carterton and Chipping Norton will be able to receive their fair share of the scheme, and can he assure me that it won’t just turn in charging points for Witney?</p>	<p>So the allocation of sites has not been decided of yet. The final applications are being led by Oxfordshire County Council. Basically that will ensure that one of the criteria for funding for EV Chargers is allocated to rural locations where it is much more harder to economically justify the private sector bringing in charging points, so there definitely will be EV chargers in rural areas, and that will be decided in the coming months by the Government.</p>


	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with Town and Parish Councils, community halls, schools and other non-profit third parties to install up to 100 'community micro hubs' in rural and/or deprived areas where County, City and District Councils lack suitable parking estate;• Installation of on-street EV chargers on the highway where insufficient off-street car parking bays are available. <p>The overall programme is expected to deliver upwards of 1,200 new public chargers across the County, which will be spread fairly and equitably according to where the need is and will look to fill rural gaps in the network. All chargers deployed will have contactless payment facilities, and charging hubs will include a range of specialist bays for EV car clubs, disabled drivers, and van drivers to create a comprehensive network of chargers that will assist people in Oxfordshire to transition to electric more quickly. Oxfordshire also has £700,000 of LEVI pilot funding to help fund up to 500 cable gullies as an alternative solution to allow people without private off-street parking to charge safely at kerbside using a home charger.</p> <p>Getting from plans to live chargers on the ground is a long process involving feasibility studies, securing a new electrical connection and of course groundworks and testing. For this reason, a small proportion of new EV chargers</p>		
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	<p>are likely to go live in 2024 and the whole programme completed by the end of 2025.</p>		
<p>Q8 – Councillor Dean Temple to Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects.</p>			
<p>The Government, via Sport England, has awarded this council £354,000 for Witney, Chipping Norton and Carterton Leisure Centres. Can you confirm how this extra funding will now be spent?</p>	<p>The Government announced the Swimming Pool Support Fund (Phase One) in the March 2023 Budget and provided a total of £20m to Local Authorities in England as a support package for public leisure facilities with swimming pools. The fund was provided by the Government to help support facilities with swimming pools facing increased cost pressures which could leave them vulnerable to service reduction or at worst closure. The key items highlighted in the grant application were the rise in energy costs, cost of heating, and chemical costs. Subsequently the Government defined that ‘Expenditure relating to energy or chemical use for the Facility’ would be deemed as ‘Eligible Expenditure.’ Once the grant fund has been drawn down from the Government, the Council will use it to directly fund items of ‘Eligible Expenditure’ incurred by the Leisure Operator between April 2023 and March 2024 (the Grant period). The payment claims will need to be supported by evidence of expenditure through invoices and the open book accounting arrangement that is currently in place with GLL Better.</p> <p>Following the receipt of a grant award the leisure operators will also provide financial and performance information, and accurate energy data reports to Sport England to enable further monitoring of the leisure sector and an</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

	<p>evaluation of the impact of the grant funds delivery. As a successful recipient of this grant funding the Council is also required to have in place, or to obtain, a Sport England strategic plan for leisure, or Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM). The leisure team are currently working in conjunction with consultants to put together this strategy for West Oxfordshire and it is expected to be completed in Spring next year.</p>		
<p>Q9 – Councillor Martin McBride to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council.</p>			
<p>Please could the Leader confirm how much this administration has spent having Executive meetings on tour, including the cost of venues, travel and officer time?</p>	<p>As you know, this administration has taken meetings of the Executive ‘on Tour’ over recent months, in order to meet with residents of our local communities, and also to allow our residents to ask the Executive the questions they would like answers to. The ‘on-tour’ meetings have also provided the local communities in our district with opportunities to see democracy in action, without the need for them to travel to the Council Offices at Woodgreen.</p> <p>To date, the Executive has held 6 meetings ‘on tour’ in Chipping Norton, Charlbury, Woodstock, Carterton, Eynsham and Burford. Another meeting in Charlbury is planned for 13 December 2023, and Officers are routinely looking at further options for future meetings, at the request of the Executive.</p> <p>In total, the costs of hiring the venues used to host the 7 meetings mentioned above has totalled £681, plus VAT. This has taken into account venue and room hire, the setup of the</p>	<p>Thank you very much for the reply. I was a little bit surprised that we couldn’t get a cost of getting the officers to and from the venues. Once we have the changes made that you have spent £250,000 on in the Council Chamber completed, I would presume that we would not be ‘on tour’ because everything would be available for live streaming. Please could you confirm that will indeed be the situation?</p>	<p>Thank you for the supplementary question. I certainly will be considering that but as you know, at times the room will be used by other parties, such as the Planning Inspectorate, and in those situations if there is a clash, we will actually be looking into possibilities of going elsewhere.</p> <p>But let me just say to you really, this this is not just about having the convenience of a new space, but the whole idea behind this was making it accessible for the community so that they could see the whole democratic process. As for the figures provided to you for your first question, the costs are actually quite nominal, to the impacts</p>

	<p>venues by local staff and any catering costs associated with the meetings.</p> <p>Information about officer time is not readily available. Officers are able to claim 45p per mile and have, wherever possible, shared transport in order to keep associated mileage claim costs to a minimum.</p>		<p>and benefits that this has for our residents.</p> <p>So I kind of think that it would be considered, in the round, and I thank you again for your supplementary.</p>
<p>Q10 – Councillor Liam Walker to Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare.</p>			
<p>The Executive Member has the responsibility of neighbourhood policing in West Oxfordshire.</p> <p>Can he confirm if he's met with policing teams in the District, and what work is being done between the police and this Council as a result of these meetings?</p>	<p>As Chair of the Community Safety Partnership, I meet regularly with the Police, oversee the development and delivery of a Community Safety Plan designed by the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) including the Police, WODC, Oxfordshire County Council, Housing, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Probation services. A new CSP plan is being finalised which includes our response to the new Serious Violence duty.</p> <p>Operationally the Councils Environment and Regulatory Services work alongside the Police regularly on Operations – recently including Modern Slavery, Animal Welfare and Licensing. Officers at the Council also attend the Police-led operational Joint Agency Tasking and Coordination group (JATAC) and Tactical Tasking Coordination group (TTCG) meetings, and our Fraud team also works closely with the Police.</p> <p>Where appropriate we will be proactive and help the Police teams to contribute to wider discussions and connect with other agencies –</p>	<p>Thank you for the response. I wonder if he had the opportunity to attend the Woolbrine Farming Conference at Blenheim Palace recently, and if he did attend, would he be reporting back to Members?</p>	<p>I'm afraid that I wasn't able to attend the event.</p>

	<p>such as linking them with the Carterton Strategic Planning work currently underway.</p> <p>Following direct feedback from residents, I have pushed for more support around Rural Crime and am pleased to announce that the OPCC has bid for on our behalf, and been successful in securing funding from Safer Streets 5 to tackle rural crime. West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse District Councils will benefit from £201,000 to deliver interventions on neighbourhood and rural acquisitive crime.</p> <p>This will include deploying effective signage and property marking products for agricultural equipment, tools and quad bikes and the recruitment of a Rural Crime Advisor who will work across the areas to promote rural crime prevention and engage with rural communities, industries, farms and organisations such as Young Farmers and the National Farmers Union. In addition, there will be a Project Support role based at WODC.</p>		
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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>COUNCIL – 31 JANUARY 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Andrea McCaskie – Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer). Email: andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Andrew Brown – Business Manager, Democratic Services. Email: andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Committee Membership January 2024</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That Council Resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire

Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Group Leaders were asked to nominate members to vacant seats allocated to their groups.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Council is asked to ratify and note the appointments made to committees under delegated authority. Council is also asked to increase the size of the Constitution Working Group from 6 to 7 members and to appoint a Liberal Democrat member to that seat to ensure that the membership of the working group better reflects the political balance of the Council.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Council on 27 September 2023 reviewed the political proportionalities on committees and agreed to replace the three previous overview and scrutiny committees with a single committee. This resulted in a number of vacancies on committees which have been appointed to by the Monitoring Officer under delegated authority, in accordance with the wishes of political groups (Constitution Part 5A, rule 2.4).
- 2.2 The appointments were due to be ratified and noted at the next ordinary meeting of Council on 29 November 2023. However, not all vacancies had been filled at that time and further vacancies had been created by changes to the membership of the Executive. This report was delayed to the 31 January 2024 meeting to enable Council to ratify all of the appointments made under delegated authority in one go.

3. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

- 3.1 Following the 27 September 2023 Council meeting 24 members were appointed to the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the current membership for that committee is shown in Annex A.
- 3.2 Other vacancies that have arisen from the review of political proportionalities or since then have also been filled under delegated authority. The one exception is a Liberal Democrat seat on the Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee which was formerly allocated to Councillor Mathew Parkinson and remains vacant. This seat can be appointed to at the next meeting of the Licensing Committee.
- 3.3 For completeness the current membership of all committees, sub-committee and working groups is set out in Annex A.

4. CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP

- 4.1 Working Groups are informal bodies that are not subject to the political proportionality rules that apply to formal committees and sub-committees. However, it is good practice for the membership of working groups to broadly reflect the overall political balance of the Council.
- 4.2 One member of the Constitution Working Group, Councillor Mathew Parkinson, has changed political groups (from Liberal Democrat to Labour) since that working group was appointed at the Annual Council meeting. This has had the effect of changing the political proportionalities on that working group from the seat allocations agreed at the Annual Council meeting which closely reflected the political balance of the Council.

4.3 It is recommended that a second Liberal Democrat member is appointed to the working group, increasing its size from 6 to 7 members. This will ensure that the membership of the working group again closely reflects the political balance of the Council.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 The appointments made under delegated authority reflected the wishes of political groups, as required.

5.2 Council could decide to not appoint an additional member to the Constitution Working Group for the remainder of the municipal year. However, it would be good practice for the membership of that working group to better reflect the political balance of the Council.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Council has a duty to appoint Members to Committees in accordance with the provisions of Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 There is a risk that if committees and sub-committee are not properly appointed this could result in a delay in decision making for the Council or increase the risk of decisions being successfully challenged.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 There are no impacts on equalities.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no climate or ecological implications.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

(END)

Annex A: Committee Membership - January 2024

Committee (No. of seats)	Liberal Democrat Group	Conservative Group	Labour Group	Green Group	Independent (Non-Grouped)
Audit and Governance (17)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Carl Rylett - Chair 2. Elizabeth Poskitt 3. David Jackson 4. David Melvin 5. Dan Levy 6. Liz Leffman 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alex Wilson 2. Jane Doughty 3. Andrew Beaney 4. Edward James 5. Michele Mead 6. Colin Dingwall 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ruth Smith – Vice Chair 2. Geoff Saul 3. Joy Aitman 4. Rachel Crouch 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sandra Simpson 	
Development Control (24)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Julian Cooper - Chair 2. Andy Goodwin 3. David Jackson 4. Dan Levy 5. Hugo Ashton 6. Phil Godfrey 7. Lidia Arciszewska 8. Alistair Wray 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Colin Dingwall 2. Adrian Walsh 3. Nick Levertton 4. Lysette Nicholls 5. Andrew Beaney 6. Dean Temple 7. Jeff Haine 8. Alaa Al-Yousuf* 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Michael Brooker – Vice Chair 2. Andrew Lyon 3. Rachel Crouch 4. Rizvana Poole 5. Mark Walker 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Andrew Prosser 2. Rosie Pearson 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Harry St. John
Licensing (11)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Julian Cooper 2. David Jackson – Vice Chair 3. David Melvin 4. Tim Sumner 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jane Doughty 2. Jeff Haine 3. Edward James 4. Lysette Nichols 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mark Walker - Chair 2. Andrew Lyon 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sandra Simpson 	

Overview and Scrutiny (24)	1. Julian Cooper 2. Hugo Ashton 3. David Melvin 4. Carl Rylett ¹ 5. Phil Godfrey 6. Andy Goodwin 7. Alistair Wray 8. Natalie King	1. Andrew Beaney – Chair 2. Thomas Ashby 3. Nick Leverton 4. Liam Walker 5. Alex Wilson 6. Jane Doughty 7. Michele Mead 8. David Cooper	1. Rizvana Poole -Vice Chair 2. Andrew Lyon 3. Ruth Smith 4. Rachel Crouch 5. Mathew Parkinson 6. Mark Walker	1. Sandra Simpson	1. Harry St John
Performance and Appointments (5)	1. Andy Graham - Chair 2. Dan Levy	1. Michele Mead 2. Liam Walker	1. Duncan Enright – Vice Chair		

Sub-Committee Membership

Licensing Sub-Committees

Misc Licensing Committee (5)	1. David Jackson 2. <i>Vacancy</i>	1. Jeff Haine 2. Edward James	1. Andrew Lyon		
Licensing Panel (3)	Usual practice is for the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Licensing Committee to sit on the Licensing Panel Sub-Committee, together with two other Members from the Licensing Committee to be drawn on an alphabetical rota basis from the remaining members of the Licensing Committee.				

¹ Councillor Charlie Maynard was originally appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee but Cllr Maynard's subsequent appointment to the Executive created a vacancy which Councillor Carl Rylett was appointed to.

Standards Sub-Committee (of the Audit & Governance Committee)

Committee (No. of seats)	Liberal Democrat Group	Conservative Group	Labour Group	Green Group	Independent (Non-Grouped)
Standards Sub-Committee (5)	1. Elizabeth Poskitt 2. David Jackson	1. Andrew Beaney 2. Michele Mead	1. Joy Aitman		


Development Control Sub-Committees

Committee (No. of seats)	Liberal Democrat Group	Conservative Group	Labour Group	Green Group	Independent (Non-Grouped)
Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committee (14)	1. Andy Goodwin – Vice Chair 2. Dan Levy 3. Alistair Wray 4. Julian Cooper 5. Phil Godfrey	1. Colin Dingwall 2. Adrian Walsh 3. Nick Leverton 4. Lysette Nicholls	1. Michael Brooker – Chair 2. Rachel Crouch 3. Andrew Lyon	1. Andrew Prosser	1. Harry St. John
Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee (11)	1. Julian Cooper – Chair 2. David Jackson 3. Hugo Ashton 4. Lidia Arciszewska	1. Dean Temple 2. Jeff Haine 3. Andrew Beaney 4. Alaa Al-Yousuf*	1. Rizvana Poole – Vice Chair 2. Mark Walker	1. Rosie Pearson	

*Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf resigned from the Conservative Group on 24 October 2024 and now sits as a non-grouped Independent Member. A Member leaving a political group does not trigger a review of the political proportionalities on committees.

Working Group Membership

Committee (No. of seats)	Liberal Democrat Group	Conservative Group	Labour Group	Green Group	Independent (Non-Grouped)
Constitution Working Group (6)	1. Andy Goodwin	1. Michele Mead – Vice Chair 2. Dean Temple	1. Mathew Parkinson - Chair 2. Joy Aitman	1. Rosie Pearson	
Local Plan Working Group (11)	1. Charlie Maynard - Chair 2. Carl Rylett 3. Hugo Ashton 4. Elizabeth Poskitt	1. Colin Dingwall 2. Jeff Haine 3. Nick Leverton 4. Adrian Walsh	1. Ruth Smith 2. Mark Walker	1. Rosie Pearson	

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	COUNCIL – 31 JANUARY 2024
Subject	RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE TO COUNCIL
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Andrew Brown – Business Manager, Democratic Services. Email: andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk .
Report Author	Max Thompson – Senior Democratic Services Officer. Email: max.thompson@westoxon.gov.uk .
Summary/Purpose	To agree recommendations made to Council by the Executive, from its meetings since 29 November 2023.
Annexes	Annex A – Recommendations from Executive to Council.
Recommendation(s)	The Executive Recommends that Council Resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 (NNDRI) to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by the submission date of 31 January 2024.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Executive, Director of Governance, Democratic Services Business Manager.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council is required to consider recommendations made to Council by the Executive from its meetings since 29 November 2023.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The decisions recommended by the Executive, to be agreed by Council, are detailed within Annex A with hyperlinks added to signpost Members and the public to the original decisions taken by the Executive. All other decisions of the Executive were in the Executive's gift to make and no other recommendations have been made to Council at this time.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Any financial implications of the proposed decisions are as set out in the associated reports to the Executive.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any legal implications of the proposed decisions are as set out in the associated reports to the Executive.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Any risks associated with the proposed decisions are as set out in the associated reports to the Executive.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1 Any equality implications associated with the proposed decisions are as set out in the associated reports to the Executive.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Any climate and ecological emergency implications associated with the proposed decisions are as set out in the associated reports to the Executive.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS


- 8.1 None.

(END)

Annex A – Recommendations from Executive to Council.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
17 January 2024	Executive	<p data-bbox="598 389 1877 427">Draft Budget 2024/25 – Version 2 (including Local Government Finance Settlement).</p> <p data-bbox="598 475 1420 513">The Executive Resolved to recommend to Council to:</p> <ol data-bbox="647 520 2067 730" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="647 520 2067 603">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; <li data-bbox="647 609 2067 730">2. Authorise the Director of Finance to submit the National Non-Domestic Rates Return 1 (NNDRI) to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by the submission date of 31 January 2024. <p data-bbox="598 778 2067 858">*Please note that the document is incorrectly titled Annex G on the Council’s website – The link will direct to the correct information.</p>

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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	COUNCIL – 31 JANUARY 2024
Subject	COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2024
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance. Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing – Assistant Director, Resident Services. Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk
Report author	Mandy Fathers – Business Manager, Environmental, Welfare and Revenues. Email: mandy.fathers@westoxon.gov.uk
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
Annexes	Annex A – Consultation Responses
Recommendations	That Council Resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Full public consultation including consulting major precepting authorities. Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer, Interim Head

	of Legal Services. Assistant Director, Director of Finance (Publica).
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At its meeting on 13 December 2023, the Executive resolved to recommend to Council to:
- Agree the increase in Council Tax Support, as detailed in paragraph 2.4, from 1 April 2024;
 - Agree that any surplus in the Support Fund is transferred over to 2024/2025, for reasons detailed in paragraphs 2.6 and 2.7;
 - Approve the amendment to the Council Tax Support Policy as recommended in paragraph 2.8.
- 1.2 Councils are required to review their Council Tax Support (CTS) schemes each year for those people of working age and decide if they want to make any changes. Before any changes can be implemented, they must be subject to public consultation. In August 2023, officers proposed changes to the scheme, which Executive approved to be consulted upon.

2 MAIN POINTS

- 2.2 The Council implemented its own local CTS scheme to help those people on low incomes pay their Council Tax in April 2013. Further changes were made in April 2020 introducing the income banded scheme.
- 2.3 Since 2021 household income had increased which resulted in some households being moved into a higher income band, and therefore receiving a lesser percentage of support, so in 2022 proposals were made to amend income band 2 by £10.00 a week, income band 3 by £15 a week and income bands 4 to 6 by £25 a week. The Council approved these amendments in February 2023. The scheme was based on the following bands:

Income Band	Single £	Couple £	Lone Parent £	Couple with Children £	Maximum % Entitlement
1	0 - 125	0 - 140	0 - 175	0 - 225	100
2	125.01 - 185	140.01 - 200	175.01 - 210	225.01 - 285	80
3	185.01 - 240	200.01 - 255	210.01 - 265	285.01 - 340	60
4	240.01 - 295	255.01 - 310	265.01 - 320	340.01 - 395	30
5	295.01 - 350	310.01 - 365	320.01 - 375	395.01 - 450	10

6	350.01 +	365.01 +	375.01 +	450.01 +	0
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2.4 With inflation around 6% in August, it is anticipated that national benefit payments will increase by this amount from April 2024. Without changes to the CTS scheme, this would result again in more households being moved into a higher income band and therefore having to pay a higher share of the Council Tax for their property.

2.5 Following discussions with Citizens Advice, and to support residents, proposals were made to: -

- Increase income band 1 by 6%, which in turn would increase all subsequent income bands;
- Increase the maximum entitlement in band 4 from 30% to 40%, and band 5 from 10% to 20%;
- Expand all bands to account for larger families with more dependent children, as follows;
- Extend backdating of claims from one calendar month to six calendar months, where 'good cause' is demonstrated.

Income Band	Single	Couple	Lone + 1	Lone + 2	Lone + 3	Maximum % Entitlement
1	0 - 132.50	0 - 148.40	0 - 185.50	0 - 206.70	0 - 227.90	100
2	132.51 - 192.50	148.41 - 208.40	185.51 - 220.50	206.71 - 241.70	227.91 - 262.90	80
3	192.51 - 247.50	208.41 - 263.40	220.51 - 275.50	241.71 - 296.70	262.91 - 317.90	60
4	247.51 - 302.50	263.41 - 318.40	275.51 - 330.50	296.71 - 351.70	317.91 - 372.90	40
5	302.51 - 357.50	318.41 - 373.40	330.51 - 385.50	351.71 - 406.70	372.91 - 427.90	20
Income Band	Lone + 4	Couple + 1	Couple + 2	Couple + 3	Couple + 4	Maximum % Entitlement
1	0 - 270.30	0 - 238.50	0 - 259.70	0 - 280.90	0 - 323.30	100
2	270.31 - 305.30	238.51 - 298.50	259.71 - 319.70	280.91 - 340.90	323.31 - 383.30	80
3	305.31 - 360.30	298.51 - 353.50	319.71 - 374.70	340.91 - 395.90	383.31 - 438.30	60
4	360.31 - 415.30	353.51 - 408.50	374.71 - 429.70	395.91 - 450.90	438.31 - 493.30	40
5	415.31 - 470.30	408.51 - 463.50	429.71 - 484.70	450.91 - 505.90	493.31 - 548.30	20

- 2.6 A consultation took place for a six-week period between 11 September 2023 to 22 October 2023. A summary of response to the consultation can be found in Annex A, attached to this report.
- 2.7 In 2022/2023 the Council implemented a Hardship Fund to support those residents who were struggling financially and provided the Council with evidence of financial hardship. This fund was created with financial support from Oxfordshire County Council, and West Oxfordshire District Council. The fund was originally set at £100,000. To date there remains in excess of £90,000.
- 2.8 Recommendations are being made to transfer any funding surplus into the financial year 2024/2025 to ensure the Council continues to support those residents in financial hardship.
- 2.9 To protect the finances of the authority and in the interests of all council taxpayers, it is also recommended that an amendment to section 101 of the CTS Policy, Counter Fraud and Compliance be made to include:
- Where the Council has evidence of fraud and/or error, it reserves the right to withhold and/or recalculate Council Tax Support whether or not the customer is in receipt of a benefit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 2.10 This amendment will avoid delays within administration as well as the council recalculating CTS claims based on evidence obtained.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.2 The criteria for the CTS scheme are at the Council's discretion, and therefore various alternative and options are open to the Council; however, any amendments must be consulted on, and the scheme must be approved by 11 March 2024.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.2 The Council administers a Council Tax Support Scheme with an annual expenditure of £5.7 million. In 2013/2014, the government reduced the level of funding for the local scheme effectively creating a grant reduction of 10% a year across all the precepting authorities.
- 4.3 With effect from 2013/2014 the scheme was funded through Formula Grant rather than direct subsidy and consequently the government has transferred the risk, and therefore the cost, of increased take up within the scheme to the local taxpayer, from the national taxpayer. An increase in cost will lead to a reduced tax-base and therefore reduced income to the precepting bodies.
- 4.4 The proposed changes increase the cost of the CTS scheme by £170,726. This will be reflected in a decrease in the council tax base and council tax recognised in the collection fund. The decrease in income will be spread proportionately across the major precepting authorities (Oxfordshire County Council, The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and West Oxfordshire District Council as well as Town and Parish Councils) Making these proposed changes will decrease the total tax base by around seventy-seven band D properties and a loss of income as follows:

Financial Year	OCC	Police	West Oxfordshire	Town/Parish	Total
2024/2025	134,085.80	19,817.14	9,231.18	7,591.88	170,726

4.5 Any surplus funding from the Hardship Scheme will be rolled into 2024/2025.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.2 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit and instead required each authority to design a scheme specifying the reductions, which are to apply to amounts of council tax.

5.3 The CTS scheme is required under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (“the Act”), as amended. The Act states that for each financial year, Billing Authorities must consider whether to revise their CTS scheme or replace it with another scheme. The prescribed regulations set out the matters that must be included in such a scheme. Before making any changes, under Section 40 of the Act, the Council must:

- Consult with any major precepting authorities
- Publish the draft scheme
- Consult other parties likely to have an interest in the scheme

5.4 The deadline for making decisions is 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to take effect (under paragraph 5, schedule 1A of the Act). If the council does not make/revise a CTS scheme by 11 March 2024, a default scheme will be imposed on the Council, which will be effective from 1 April 2024.

6 RISK ASSESSMENT

6.2 There are two risks to consider:

- That the benefit caseload increases significantly, resulting in expenditure exceeding the levels estimated within this report;
- That the administrations, collection and recover costs (including the costs for write-offs) could increase as a result of creating additional and relatively small liabilities.

7 EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 To ensure compliant with the Equality Act 2010 an Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted which concludes there is no negative impact on any of the protected characteristics.

8 CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None

(END)

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Annex A

	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Don't know	
Do you agree that this would be a fair way to help people on low income and with larger families?	45.45%		18.18%		9.09%	27.28%	
Under the current scheme we restrict backdating of claims where good cause is shown to one calendar month. We are proposing extending this to six months to help people who may have exceptional circumstances	45.45%	27.28%		18.18%	9.09%		

Responses	Currently in receipt of Council Tax Support	
	Yes	No
	36.36%	63.64%

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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>COUNCIL – 31 JANUARY 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Mathew Parkinson – Chair of the Constitution Working Group. Email: mathew.parkinson@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Andrea McCaskie – Director of Governance. Email: andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Max Thompson – Senior Democratic Services Officer. Email: max.thompson@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To present a recommendation to Council, from the Constitution Working Group, relating to the adoption of a Communications Protocol into the Council’s constitution.</p>
<p>Annex</p>	<p>Annex A – WODC Council Communications Protocol</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That Council Resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Approve the adoption of a Communications Protocol into the Council’s Constitution.
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>Constitution Working Group, Director of Governance, and Business Manager for Communications and Marketing.</p>

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report recommends and proposes that Council adopts a Communications Protocol in to it's Constitution. The recommendation arises from the latest meeting of the Constitution Working Group. Adopting the protocol will help clarify for staff, members and the corporate communications team, as to how communications are conducted by the organisation in compliance with relevant laws and best practice.

2. BACKGROUND AND MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are taken and the procedures which are followed to ensure that decision-making is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.
- 2.2 The Council has a legal duty to publish a Constitution, which should be reviewed at least annually. The Council has an established, cross-party Constitution Working Group, which meets regularly and makes recommendations to Council regarding amendments to the Constitution, keeping it up to date with changes to legislation, governance practice and the wishes of the Council.
- 2.3 The Constitution Working Group met on 9 January 2024 to discuss the Protocol. The recommendation arising from the meeting is detailed in this report.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Council could choose not to adopt a Communications Protocol into its Constitution, however this option is not recommended to Council.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 If Council does not adopt a Communications Protocol, there is a risk that communication output may not have the appropriate due diligence assigned to it, and that the reputation of the Council may be open to hindrance from outside sources.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1 There are no equalities impacts.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no climate and ecological impacts.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

(END)

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Communications Protocol

Constitution Working Group

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1. Introduction

1.1 West Oxfordshire District Council is committed to communicating with the public, keeping residents, businesses and partners informed, and involving them in the process of local decision making. Our communications activity should be guided by best practice and must respond to the requirements of the law on local government publicity.

Good communication and engagement creates a positive experience for those who interact with the Council. It helps residents, businesses, employees, partners, and the media understand the Council's objectives, values, services, challenges and achievements. It also helps protect and improve the reputation of the Council and the work of local authorities more generally.

Without clear protocols, the reputation of West Oxfordshire District Council is vulnerable. These protocols form part of the Code of Conduct for employees and Elected Members. They have been developed to support and govern communications and marketing activity within the Council, including press relations. They are based on protocols seen across the country with other local authorities.

1.2 The objectives of the protocols and principles are:

- To establish, promote and embed effective working protocols to govern and guide the way West Oxfordshire District Council communicates and engages with a range of stakeholders
- Present a professional, accurate, co-ordinated and consistent approach that is resident centric and supports our audiences and services
- Provide guidance for all employees and Members to mitigate risk and promote council services and activity
- Ensure that all council communications is delivered in line with laws and best practice

1.3 The Communications and Marketing Team aims to provide guidance and leadership on communications and marketing activity. It will take responsibility for promoting and monitoring the communications protocols and principles, including highlighting instances when the protocols have not been observed and provide evidence to monitor the impact, which may include supporting any resulting investigation or disciplinary procedure.

1.4 The Council's Monitoring Officer will oversee the communications protocols and principles and will provide advice and guidance to The Communications and Marketing Team and Elected Members.

2. Scope

2.1 These protocols apply to any Council communication, including:

- Published press releases and statements to the media
- Digital content including web copy, visual/ audio content and social media

- Any communication or document prepared by West Oxfordshire District Council services for public consumption, including advertising, leaflets, newsletters, reports, posters, banners, flyers or websites
- Any document or publicity with which West Oxfordshire District Council is associated with, even if the publication is produced in partnership or is a joint document then the communications protocols and brand guidelines still apply
- Any publication or work prepared for the public domain, by consultants or contractors when working on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council
- Internal communications to employees, Elected Members and partners

2.2 The protocols apply to everyone who works for West Oxfordshire District Council in any capacity, or who represent the organisation in some way, including:

- All Elected Members
- All employees working on behalf of the council, including those directly employed by the council, employed by Publica, employed by another council and working on behalf of this council, an agency, freelance or consultant basis
- Volunteers working with Council service teams
- Partners, providers and suppliers (including contracted or commissioned services) that may want to refer to West Oxfordshire District Council in publicity material.

2.3 Employees should refer to the communications and marketing pages on the staff portal for other communication resources which include brand guidelines, style guide and templates.

3. Legal framework

3.1 A legal framework binds publicity or public statements issued by West Oxfordshire District Council. The Council must operate within the Local Government Act (1986), [The Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity](#) and the [Explanatory Memorandum](#) to the Code. This section of the protocol covers the aspects of how this legal framework impacts on council communications and sets out the principles of all council communications.

3.2 The Code is grouped into seven principles for local authorities to follow. A council's publicity should:

- be lawful
- be cost-effective
- be objective
- be even-handed
- be appropriate
- have regard to equality and diversity
- be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

3.4 The Code covers the full range of publicity, including where it is used to comment on controversial issues, or where there are arguments for or against the views or policies of the

Council. The Code states that when communicating around these issues the Council “should seek to present the different positions in relation to the issue in question in a fair manner”.

3.5 Where the term ‘publicity’ is used it refers to all corporate council communications across the various channels used by the council to communicate including the local press, social media, newsletters and leaflets. The definition is “any communication in whatever form, addressed to the public at large or a section of the public”.

3.6 The Code states that where publicity is used to comment on the policies of central government, other local authorities or other public bodies, it should be ‘objective, balanced, informative and accurate’. It should aim to set out the reasons for the Council’s views and “Such publicity may set out the local authority’s views and reasons for holding those views, but should avoid anything likely to be perceived by readers as constituting a political statement, or being a commentary on contentious areas of public policy”. Political parties can choose to issue their own communications stating their political views on such issues if they so wish but it should be clear it is the view of a political party and not the Council as an organisation.

3.7 The attribution of marketing, promotional and advertising materials that reach the public unsolicited should be clearly laid out. It should be clear that the Council is responsible for the event or service, so the correct inclusion of the Council’s corporate branding as described in the brand strategy is a prerequisite.

3.8 Publicity campaigns are appropriate in most circumstances. They can form part of consultation processes where local views are being sought, promote the effective and efficient use of local services and facilities, or influence public behaviour or attitudes on such matters as health, safety, crime prevention or equal opportunities. Publicity campaigns can also provide an appropriate means of ensuring that the local community is properly informed about a matter relating to a function of the local authority and about the Council’s policies in relation to that function and the reasons for them. However, the Code states, “Local authorities should not use public funds to mount publicity campaigns whose primary purpose is to persuade the public to hold a particular view on a question of policy”. The Council Communications and Marketing Team may communicate decisions made by the Council as part of the formal democratic process which form a particular view on a question of policy as long as the communications follows the principles of the Code.

3.9 When the Council is negotiating a commercial transaction or conducting enforcement activity, employees or Elected Members will not weaken the Council’s position by disclosing it publicly or to the press. To do so would compromise a number of statutory obligations including the duty of care we have to council tax payers who rightly expect the Council to protect its financial position. In these circumstances only the Communications and Marketing Team, working with Legal Services, will communicate with the press. If this is not observed, it may result in disciplinary action in the case of employees, and a Code of Conduct investigation in the case of Elected Members.

3.10 Case law has established that the public interest, and what interests the public, is not the same thing. The Council has a duty to act in the public interest. The press may often be

concerned with what interests the public. When these are in conflict, the Council will always act in the public interest.

3.11 There is a general prohibition on local authorities producing “party political publicity”. Council publicity should never attack or appear to undermine generally accepted moral standards. Section 2 of the Local Government Act (1988) prohibits local authorities publishing any material which in whole, or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. Also, councils should never use advertising as a means of giving financial support to any publication that could be associated with a political party. Publicity should reflect the tradition of a politically impartial service, and the fact that local authority staff are expected to serve the authority as a whole, whatever its composition from time to time.

3.12 Publicity may include information about the Administration’s proposals, decisions and recommendations where it is relevant to their position and responsibilities within the Council. All such publicity should be objective and explanatory, and whilst it may acknowledge the part played by individual Members as holders of particular positions in the Council, personalisation of issues or personal image making should be avoided.

3.13 Whilst it may be appropriate to describe policies put forward by an individual Councillor which are relevant to her/his position and responsibilities within the Council, and to put forward her/his justification in defence of them, this should not be done in party political terms, using political slogans, expressly advocating policies of those of a particular political party or directly attacking policies and opinions of other parties, groups or individuals.

3.14 The Communications and Marketing team will seek legal clearance where appropriate for any issues that may be contentious, subject to a legal dispute, or part of a regulatory process.

4. Protocols for Members

4.1 It is important Elected Members are supported and confident in communicating Council processes, priorities, services and decisions. However, there is often a need for Elected Members to distinguish between when they represent West Oxfordshire District Council in the press, on social media, and in public or when they are representing their personal views, those of their political group, or those of other groups of which they are members.

Members should also have regard to the [Member Code of Conduct](#), the [Member/ Officer Protocol](#) and the other elements of the [Council Constitution](#).

Members should be aware of the legal framework and political dimension relating to communication as covered in section 3 of this document.

Working with the media

4.2 To assist Members and to provide the most effective communications, protect the organisations reputation and support compliance with the protocol on use of council resources and the Member Code of Conduct, a Member should not issue a press release, statement, letter for publication, or organise a press conference on behalf of West

Oxfordshire District Council, without notifying the Communications and Marketing Team in advance and obtaining their agreement.

Members can independently issue communications of a political nature and political groups will have their own arrangements for issuing communications on behalf of their group.

Members wishing to make comment as ward councillors are not required to notify the Communications and Marketing Team in advance, but should ensure it is clear they are making such comment in a personal capacity and should be careful not to be seen as spokespeople for the organisation. If a Member is uncertain they should contact the Communications and Marketing Team for guidance.

4.3 If a Member is contacted directly by a local or national journalist and asked to speak on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council Council, they should refer the journalist to the Communications and Marketing Team and should not respond to the journalist on behalf of the organisation, even in an 'off the record' capacity. For specific issues and issues relating to Members' wards, Members are able to refer to the Communications and Marketing Team for support. This helps ensure consistency and accuracy.

4.4 Elected Members have obligations both individually and collectively. If they breach the requirements of the Members Code of Conduct – for example by 'leaking' confidential information to the press or by bringing the Council into disrepute – this may lead to referral to the Council's Monitoring Officer, who will deal with the complaint.

Working with outside bodies

4.5 Appointees to outside bodies should refer to the body's own communications protocols. Statements or queries about West Oxfordshire District Council's approach to the outside body should be directed to the appropriate Executive Member, or in some cases a Member 'champion' or a Councillor in a formally appointed role. If an appointee is asked to make a statement, or wishes to do so proactively, they should first engage the Communications and Marketing Team.

When acting on behalf of other organisations, Councillors should give thought to the fact that comments made by them will reflect on West Oxfordshire District Council and should maintain the responsibility to protect the reputation of the Council.

Internal communications

4.6 If Members wish to share a message with staff or across the organisation they should approach the Communications and Marketing Team who will be able to support with sharing the message. Members should not directly message the whole organisation or groups of staff (Publica or council employees) without consent from the Communications and Marketing Team or the Chief Executive or lead officer for a partner organisation.

Use of Council materials in personal or political capacity

4.7 Members are encouraged to make use of Council imagery, videos or other materials in a personal or councillor capacity to help inform and communicate with residents and build engagement. This could include sharing council social media posts on their own channels or in those of local community groups.

4.8 However, Members should not make use of Council imagery, videos or other materials as part of political materials or use it in a way that is intended to influence people to a particular political point of view. This includes any materials produced by employees or published by the Council.

4.9 Elected Members should not ask employees to take any part in producing political materials. In the context of this protocol this may mean asking an officer to take a photo, arranging a politically motivated event or providing material that could be used for political material.

4.10 When communicating for political or personal purposes, Councillors should not use Council email addresses or any other Council property. Council emails and resources should only be used for Council business in the role of a councillor.

Social media

4.11 Elected Members should refer to the [Social Media Guidance for Councillors](#) in the Council's constitution and should not use West Oxfordshire District Council social media channels to make political comments. This includes commenting on Council social media posts either using a personal account or any other account owned or managed by the Councillor.

Use of campaign materials during council business

4.12 Elected Members will at times be campaigning for their political party, either for elections for West Oxfordshire District Council, or for other bodies such as Government. To maintain the objectivity of the Council, Councillors should avoid displaying campaign materials in official meetings or in places/ activity which may compromise officer neutrality such as attending a meeting with partners as a council representative alongside officers.

5. Protocols for employees

5.1 These guidelines provide the protocols and principles for employees across the organisation and sets out their role in regards to managing corporate communications. Individuals and service areas should seek advice from the Communications and Marketing Team on any of the topics below if further clarity is required.

Working with the media

5.2 Service areas should notify the Communications and Marketing Team in advance of positive or negative issues that may be of future press interest. Statements or media releases can be prepared by the Communications and Marketing team in advance of enquiries, to help protect the reputation of the service and the organisation.

5.3 Employees writing reports for council meetings will inform the Communications and Marketing Team of potential news items or matters which may attract negative or positive publicity, as early as possible. The Communications and Marketing Team will likewise ensure that it is aware of events and issues and will keep up to date with pipeline reports in the Forward Plans to identify any potential issues so that they can be dealt with proactively.

5.4 Employees of West Oxfordshire District Council will often be asked by the Communications and Marketing Team to respond as quickly as possible to media requests for interviews or background operational information, providing the employee with a deadline. This request will be in the form of an email and be followed up with a phone call. Those asked by the Communications and Marketing Team to assist in responding to press enquiries should do so as quickly as possible, so that press deadlines are met and to help support the reputation of the service and the Council.

5.5 All approaches by the press should be directed to the Communications and Marketing Team. No employees should respond to a journalist's enquiry or provide information outside of the Communications and Marketing Team. If an employee is contacted directly by a local or national journalist, the protocol is:

- Advise the journalist to contact the Communications and Marketing Team in the first instance by email
- Take the name of the journalist, the publication they represent and their telephone number. Notify the Communications and Marketing Team and provide the journalist's contact details

The Communications and Marketing team will follow up with the journalist directly and identify the most suitable person to respond to the request.

Social media

5.6 The employee code of conduct applies both online and offline. An employee must not bring the Council into disrepute via their own social media activity (either as part of or outside of work). Failure to adhere to the code of conduct may result in disciplinary procedures.

5.7 No individual or service area may undertake a social media account as representing a service area of or representing as West Oxfordshire District Council, without prior agreement from the Communications and Marketing Team.

5.8 Employees of the Council may be asked by the Communications and Marketing Team to respond quickly to social media queries. Those asked to assist in responding to social media enquiries should do so as quickly as possible, to help support the reputation of the service and the organisation. The request will be in the form of an email and be followed up with a phone call.

5.9 Usage of corporate social media accounts will be monitored by the Communications and Marketing Team. Any employee's access to platforms or services may be suspended as part of a performance management or disciplinary process. Reference is made to the employee code of conduct, which also applies to online activity.

Websites

5.10 The Communications and Marketing Team will work in conjunction with the ICT Team to manage the websites from a functional perspective but services areas are responsible for managing the content relating to their area.

5.11 All content should adhere to the brand guidelines and style guide. All content and copy should be in Plain English and avoid the use of jargon and acronyms. All images should be cleared with the Communications and Marketing Team and if possible, be locally relevant.

5.12 All content must adhere to accessibility laws. The design of the website is built around the recognised Government standard to meet accessibility guidelines and the Communications and Marketing Team regularly review content for accessibility. The Council is also regularly audited by the Government Digital Service to ensure we are meeting the legal requirements. Service areas are responsible for ensuring any content they wish to publish is in line with accessibility guidelines.

5.13 Services will be responsible for checking the accuracy and relevance of their web pages every month to ensure content is current and correct. The Communications and Marketing Team are responsible for ensuring all web content is useful and usable.

5.14 When necessary, and with support from the Communications and Marketing Team, services may produce dedicated websites to help support a sub-brand, service or business outcomes. A clear business case and objectives should be set when working with the Communications and Marketing Team to decide on potential return and the level of investment of funding and officer time.

Internal Communications

5.15 The Communications and Marketing Team will be responsible for identifying key audiences and circulating information to the wider organisation. The Communications and Marketing Team will also help all services include key council messages in communications internally.

5.16 If staff have a message they wish to share with staff they should approach the Communications and Marketing Team for advice on how that message should be shared.

6. Protocols for corporate communications

6.1 Corporate communications is managed by the Communications and Marketing Team and encompasses materials issued on behalf of the council across a wide range of channels including press, social media, newsletters and print media.

6.2 Adherence to the protocol will ensure consistency of standards, accuracy of information and appropriate Elected Member and officer input with a view to protecting and enhancing the reputation of the Council so that it is seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner.

6.3 The Communications and Marketing Team provides advice and support to all services and Elected Members. Its main roles are to manage and maintain relationships and reputation, as well as to promote pro-active publicity on Council policy, local authority partnerships, paid for services, local initiatives/achievements and other issues affecting the Council and the district.

6.4 The Communications and Marketing Team communicate on behalf of the organisation. As part of the Council's Constitution, an Executive is formed that sets the strategic direction and priorities for the Council and therefore the corporate communications will largely communicate the decision-making, strategic direction and views of that Executive and its Elected Members in their formal role along with Council and committee decisions. It does not constitute 'political' communications to communicate the views and activity of the Executive regardless of whether or not the members are all of one political party, and it is important to distinguish between the political allegiances of an administration and their activity in a formal council role - which is the focus of corporate communications. The communications should however, not fall foul of the legal framework set out in Section 3 of this protocol and the Communications and Marketing Team can not provide any support to Executive Members in a political capacity.

Spokespeople for the Council

6.5 The following roles will act as spokespeople for the Council on activity conducted by the Council or in response to media enquiries:

- The Leader of the Council - on combined portfolio and/or high profile issues
- Executive Member – on subjects relevant to their portfolio including policy, decision making and council activity
- The Chairman of the Council - on civic matters
- Chairman of any committee – on the business of the committee where it is not appropriate for the relevant Executive Member to respond
- Individual Members of the Council – may express a personal view but should not speak on behalf of the Council other than as above. If they are making representations on behalf of constituents or communities they should make clear that this is the case.

Where an Executive Member may not be available to take part in communications regarding their portfolio, the Leader of the Council, or another Executive Member may step in.

6.6 Where the relevant Member is not available to take part in communications, employees may act as spokespeople in their place. This will first be offered to senior employees such as the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer or Section 151 Officer.

6.7 Elected Members may delegate to an officer to act as a spokesperson where the officer may be better placed to speak on a topic. This would require the consent of the officer to act in that capacity and the Communications and Marketing Team would provide support.

Media releases

6.8 The Council values the press as one of its key partners in communication and aims to forge strong professional links with local, regional, and national media. It is committed to being transparent and maintaining a positive working relationship with the media and respects the right of the media to report on any given topic.

Positive press coverage supports the reputation of the Council. When issuing proactive media, all content will follow a corporate style appropriate for the media being targeted, and a central record will be maintained. All releases will accurately reflect the corporate view of

the Council, contain relevant facts, and include an approved quotation from the appropriate councillor. This will in most cases be the relevant Executive Member.

6.9 All official Council news/press releases will be placed on the Council's website within one working day of issue wherever possible.

6.10 The Communications and Marketing Team will consider the timing of releases carefully with each case being decided on its merits. Issuing press releases when, or just after, meeting papers are published can help the Council drive the narrative of an issue from an early stage, or it may be preferable to issue press releases after meetings.

6.11 Should the media publish / broadcast an inaccuracy relating to Council business, policy or process, a quick decision will be taken on any action necessary to correct it. The issue will be discussed with the appropriate senior officer and a plan of action agreed. It should be noted that in the case of minor inaccuracies which have little or no impact on the message being conveyed, it can sometimes be counterproductive to complain. Each case must be judged individually.

6.12 The Council will publish media releases relating to Council legal and enforcement activity once it is concluded to demonstrate the Council's action and to help deter people from breaking the law. In the case of these releases, the content will be led and signed off by the relevant specialist officers and will follow a different format to ensure they present the legally correct wording in context.

Media enquiries

6.13 The Communications and Marketing Team receives a significant number of enquiries from local, national, and international TV, radio, newspaper and news website organisations. All media enquiries should be referred to the Communications and Marketing Team in the first instance. This enables the service to make a judgement about whether an enquiry should be answered and by whom. Sometimes it is not in the best interest of the organisation to respond. If a response is required it can often be handled with a written statement prepared by the Communications and Marketing Team in conjunction with relevant employees or a statement may come from a relevant Executive Member if it is of strategic importance.

6.14 Responding to media enquiries can be time-consuming and often, responses are requested within a short timeframe. The Communications Team will manage these requests and establish realistic response times in conjunction with employees, Members and the media organisations concerned. At all times, the Communications and Marketing Team will seek to protect and enhance the Council's reputation.

6.15 When an inquiry is received, the Communications and Marketing Team will ask the most appropriate officer for the information required and formulate a response. The normal response will be attributed to an 'WODC spokesperson' or relevant Executive Member if they wish, however, there may be occasions when a deadline must be met, and an 'WODC spokesperson' will be quoted. The response will be approved by the relevant Service Head and a Senior Leadership officer (Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer)

6.16 Occasionally, requests for interviews are received from media organisations. Defined spokespeople will be asked by the Communications and Marketing Team if they wish to be interviewed, and a pre-interview briefing can be supplied on request. Media training will be offered to all Executive Members and senior officers to assist with this.

6.17 The Communications and Marketing Team will make every effort to ensure that employees and Elected Members are informed before they are exposed to significant issues through the media. However, in an increasingly fast and pervasive communications environment, particularly given the speed and ease of dissemination on social media this will not always be possible.

6.18 In the event that the media requests a comment on an open investigation either being conducted by the Council, or by a partner, the Communications and Marketing Team will seek guidance from the relevant specialist team or partner organisation to ensure any Council response (or other communication) does not compromise the investigation while still adhering with the principle of being open and transparent.

Social media

6.18 The Council has several active social media channels which are used to promote operational matters, and strategic priorities which have been agreed by the Administration. Given research is showing more and more residents are relying on social media it is important that the council proactively engages on these channels

6.19 Where the Council issues a press release the Communications and Marketing Team may look to develop social media content to sit alongside and compliment those releases. The Elected Member(s) quoted in the press release may be included in the content.

6.20 Social media calls for a different approach to content to keep it engaging to audiences. As such, social media content will include a range of Elected Members, employees, partners and residents. The Communications and Marketing Team will use their professional judgement to ensure content complies with the other relevant points in this protocol.

6.21 The Communications and Marketing Team will manage comments and feedback on the council social media accounts in line with the approach below. This is published on the accounts where possible:

“To protect your privacy, we may delete posts that contain personal data. We strongly advise you NOT to publish any personal data. If you need to send us these details, please email [correct email provided].

“We do not accept obscenities, bullying, insults, trolling, misinformation, fake news or political comments. We will also not tolerate discrimination or unfair treatment on the basis of certain personal characteristics as set out in law. We reserve the right to remove any posts containing any of this material on our page. We also reserve the right to block any individuals who post the content.”

Photos and Video

6.22 Photo and video are crucial to providing engaging content for residents. It is important that the right Elected Members and employees are included in images/ videos so it is clear to residents who is responsible/ associated with the communications being issued.

6.23 When a photo is taken as part of communications around a Council decision or policy, the relevant Councillor spokesperson will be the key focus of the image/ video. This can also include key employees who have/ will be delivering the work in question. Other Elected Members may be included in the photo/ video if the topic of the photo affects their ward and they have taken an active/ official role in the topic being communicated. However, it is often challenging to organise a time/ place for everyone involved to be included. In this case the Executive Member will be included along with whoever else is available. All efforts will be made to be inclusive.

Communications during emergencies

6.24 There will be instances where the Council is required to respond to civil emergencies. This will either be as a Category 1 responder in a formal civil emergency/ major incident or in reaction to events that do not trigger a formal response but do have a large impact on the district, residents and businesses. In either scenario The Communications and Marketing Team will work to the separate communications protocol set out in the Council's Emergency Response Guide and in line with national best practice and laws around emergency response.

7. Communications around elections

7.1 Communications during the run-up to elections may be particularly sensitive and there are restrictions contained with the [Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity](#). To ensure the continued political impartiality of West Oxfordshire District Council and its employees, the restrictions on communications apply to District Council elections and also to national, County Council and PCC elections.

7.2 The period of restriction in question relates to the day when formal notice of a local or national election is given, up to and including the day of the election – this is known as the pre-election period (formerly known as 'purdah'). Corporate communications activity will continue as normal until the pre-election period starts and will recommence the day following the election.

7.3 Any local authority is prohibited from publishing any material that appears to be designed to affect support, positively or negatively, for a political party. Careful consideration should be given to the style, content, timing of material and the likely effect it will have on the audience. Material is prohibited if:

- It refers to a political party of a person identified with a political party
- It promotes or opposes a point of view on a question of political debate or controversy
- It supports a view or issue identifiable as the view of one political party and not of another
- It identifies with individual Elected Members or groups of Members
- It is part of a campaign associated with a political view

- It contains quotes from politicians outside of the Council, such as members of parliament, who are clearly identified as part of a political party.

7.4 However, even during the run up to a local or national election, communications and marketing can continue as follows:

- It is acceptable for the Communications and Marketing Team, on behalf of the Council, to distribute press releases, social media content, newsletters, etc provided the content is factual and not party political. This can include corporate narrative that was used before the pre-election period
- Press releases can be issued but can not quote Elected Members during this period. senior officers will instead be quoted.
- It is admissible for Elected Members of the Council holding key positions to comment in an emergency or where there is a genuine need for a member level response to an important event outside the authority's control.
- It is admissible for the Chair of the Council to be included in communications regarding civic events and activities

7.5 All these restrictions apply to other organisations that receive local authority funding and employees should check with community groups they fund and with third sector organisations that may be planning publicity around election time.

7.6 In general the question to ask of all publications, documents or events is; 'can it wait?' And if not, 'will the subject matter be regarded as influential on voting behaviour?' This will be the case with controversial subjects and needs to be avoided altogether.


7.7 If an Elected Member asks an employee of the Council to publish something that the employee considers to be inappropriate or is against communications protocols, the concerns need to be raised with the Monitoring Officer and the Communications and Marketing Team. If something cannot be distributed as a Member has suggested then the employee should explain why. Guidance and support is available through the Communications and Marketing Team and the Monitoring Officer and the Monitoring Officer will make final decisions on contentious decisions.

7.8 If the document has a high corporate profile or deals with a strategic issue then the Chief Executive or a Director should approve the final version.

7.9 Political parties should avoid using any straplines or key messaging from Council campaigns, policy or other activity to avoid the association of the Council with the political activity of a single political party and maintain the neutrality of the Council.

7.10 During a pre-election period it is likely that the local media and other organisations will use material published by the Council before the pre-election period. For example this could result in a story in the local paper being printed during the pre-election period based on a media release issued before the pre-election period began. The Council can not control the activity of external organisations and their activity is not covered by pre-election guidance. As long as the Council published the information before pre-election it is lawful.

7.11 The pre-election period only applies to the publication of new communications. It is neither practical, nor legally required, for officers to remove any material published before the pre-election period from platforms where they can be viewed by the public.

 <p style="text-align: center;">WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>COUNCIL – 31 JANUARY 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS JUNE 2024 – MAY 2025</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes – Chief Executive. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Max Thompson – Senior Democratic Services Officer. Email: max.thompson@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To approve a programme of Council and Committee meetings for the municipal year 2024–2025.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Programme of Meetings for June 2024 to May 2025 (Calendar Format). Annex B – Programme of Meetings for June 2024 to May 2025 (Listed Format).</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That Council Resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Services Business Manager; • Senior Democratic Services Officer, Cotswold District Council; • Future Oxfordshire Partnership; • Oxfordshire County Council.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Council is responsible for setting the dates and times of Council and Committee meetings.
- 1.2** This report recommends a schedule of Council and Committee meetings from June 2024 until May 2025 inclusive. Dates for meetings of the Executive are a matter for the Leader of the Council, and are included in the programme for completeness.
- 1.3** A previous report on the subject matter was considered by Council on 29 November 2023. Members and Officers found that after initial publication, the report contained minor anomalies. As a result, Council resolved only to note the draft programme of meetings for the upcoming municipal year, with a revised, corrected programme of meetings considered by Council at its next meeting.
- 1.4** Setting meeting dates in advance, allows for good governance, open, efficient and effective decision making, helping members and officers to plan their workloads & availability.

2. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR JUNE 2024 TO MAY 2025

- 2.1** The programme of meetings for 2024-2025 has been formulated on a similar basis to recent municipal years, and is based on the current committee structure. Council is recommended to approve the programme of meetings as set out in Annexes A & B. Should Council decide to make changes to its committee structure in future, a revised programme may need to be prepared and circulated. It is recommended that authority is delegated to the Director of Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme as required following any such decision.
- 2.2** The principle used in timetabling meetings is that business needs to take place in a timely manner, but that the broader needs of members will be taken into account. Oxfordshire school holiday dates have been avoided wherever possible, so that it does not adversely affect the overall meetings programme or the cycle of meetings.
- 2.3** Meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee are scheduled to be held on the Wednesday prior to meetings of the Executive. This is to embed the role of Overview and Scrutiny in the Council's executive decision-making process, allowing time for recommendations to be produced and responded to by the Executive. Executive reports are subject to a robust internal clearance process. The timing of the process is such that Executive reports will not normally be cleared for publication when the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda is published and will need to follow as late papers a couple of days later.
- 2.4** District Councillors may also serve as County Councillors and/or Town/Parish Councillors. Meetings of Oxfordshire County Council have been set up to May 2025, with most meetings of that authority starting at 10.30am, 1.00pm or 2.00pm. There are no clashes of Cabinet and Council at Oxfordshire County Council, with Executive or Council at West Oxfordshire District Council respectively.
- 2.5** Given that many of the officers who deliver the work of the Council and attend meetings are currently employed by Publica Group, and work across at least two other local authorities, care has been taken to avoid Council and Committee meetings at West Oxfordshire District

Council clashing with major meetings of Forest of Dean District Council and Cotswold District Council. The avoidance of clashes means that some Committees (e.g., Audit and Governance Committee) do not always meet on the same day of the week. The programme of meetings across the three councils is very busy, meaning there is limited scope to move or add meetings without creating potential clashes for officers. The Budget Council meeting is scheduled to be held on the same date as Cotswold District Council meeting; 26 February 2025. However, the two meetings are likely to start four hours apart and this should not cause logistical difficulties for many officers.

- 2.6** A meeting of the Development Control Committee will take place on Monday 5 February 2024. As part of the business for that meeting, the Democratic Services Business Manager will present a report, enabling the Committee to consider the frequency of Area Planning Sub-Committees. It is recommended that authority is delegated to the Director of Governance, to make changes to the programme of meetings as required following any decision taken by the Development Control Committee.

3. ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 3.1** Local Elections for one third of seats on West Oxfordshire District Council, along with the election of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner, will take place on 2 May 2024, and the Annual Meeting of Council following those elections has previously been set for 22 May 2024. This date allows sufficient time between the elections and the Annual Council meeting for the formation of groups and the nomination of members to committee seats.

- 3.2** In May 2025 there are County Council elections but no seats on West Oxfordshire District Council are due for election. The Annual Meeting of Council in 2025 is recommended to be held on 21 May 2025.

- 3.3** Council is responsible for appointing committees, in accordance with the requirements of political balance. The responsibility for appointing sub-committees rests with the “parent” committee. The intention is to hold meetings of the parent committees immediately after the Annual Council meetings on 22 May 2024 and 21 May 2025, so that those committees may elect chairs and vice-chairs and appoint sub-committees at the beginning of the municipal year:

- Audit and Governance Committee (for the Standards Sub-Committee);
- Development Control Committee (for the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee and Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committee); and
- Licensing Committee (for the Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee).

4. COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES THAT MEET AS REQUIRED

- 4.1** The following committees and sub-committees will generally only meet when there is specific business to consider, and this report seeks a delegation to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set meeting dates for these committees and sub-committees as required:

- Performance and Appointments Committee – Responsible for matters relating to the appointment, performance, and dismissal of the Council’s statutory officers;

- Licensing Committee – Responsible for considering licensing policies and determining certain licensing applications where representations have been received;
- Development Control Committee – Responsible for determining applications which in the opinion of the Senior Officer with responsibility for Planning, are of significant local importance, e.g. major housing development, or where either the Uplands or Lowlands area sub-committee proposes to make a decision which would be unlawful, seriously undermine policy, set adverse precedent or result in substantial costs being awarded against the Council.
- The Standards Sub-Committee – Responsible for dealing with matters relating to standards and ethics and to sit in the capacity of a hearing panel to, in consultation with an Independent Person, hear allegations that Members have failed to comply with the Member Code of Conduct. Two meeting dates are included in the programme but further meetings will be required if the sub-committee needs to meet as a hearing panel.
- Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee and Licensing Panel meet as required to determine certain licensing applications. Regular dates are included in the programme which can be used for sub-committee meetings or panel hearings. These will be cancelled where there is no business and at times additional dates may be needed outside of the regular cycle of scheduled meeting dates.

5. FUTURE OXFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP

- 5.1** The Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) is a joint executive committee comprising the leaders of the six councils of Oxfordshire, together with key strategic partners working together to deliver a better future for the county. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel is an informal panel comprising three non-executive members from each of the six councils and exists to provide oversight of the work of the FOP. The Council does not set meeting dates for the FOP or the FOP Scrutiny Panel, however the expected meeting dates are included in the draft programme at Annexes A & B for completeness. Meetings of the FOP start at 1.00pm and virtual meetings of the FOP Scrutiny Panel start at 6.30pm.

6. MEETING START TIMES

- 6.1** No changes are proposed in this report to the current start times of meetings. Under the Council Procedure Rules of the Constitution, committees and sub-committees may vary the timing of their meetings at their first meeting of the municipal year. The existing start times are as follows:
- Council meetings are held at 2.00pm;
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings start at 5.30pm;
 - Audit and Governance Committee meetings are held at 6.00pm;
 - Development Control Committee meetings start at 10.00am;
 - Area Planning Sub-Committee meetings are held at 2.00pm;

- Licensing Committee, Licensing Sub-Committee and Licensing Panel meetings start at 10.00am;
- Standards Sub-Committee meetings start at 10.00am;
- Executive meetings start at 2.00pm, however that is a matter for the Leader rather than Council.

7. TRAINING AND BRIEFING DATES

- 7.1 This report seeks a delegation to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set dates for member induction, training and briefing sessions.

8. MEMBER WORKING GROUPS

- 8.1 The Council may establish informal cross-party member working groups to perform particular tasks. Recent examples include the Constitution Working Group and the Local Plan Cross-Party Member Working Group. This report seeks a delegation to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set meeting dates for current and future member working groups.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 9.1 Should Council wish to consider alternative proposals, it could request that a further report is presented to a future meeting.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Members are entitled to claim mileage expenses for attending meetings and such costs can be met from existing budgets. The number of meetings within the recommended meeting programme is similar to previous years, and this incorporates the changes made to the Overview and Scrutiny Model in November 2023. It is anticipated that the majority of training will be delivered internally and will not therefore have a financial impact. Council has allocated a budget of £4,000 per annum which is available to fund externally delivered training sessions and members' attendance at external training courses. There are no further direct financial implications.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The responsibility for setting meeting dates for Council and Committee meetings rests with Council under the Local Government Act 1972 (Schedule 12). In a year of ordinary elections the Annual Council meeting must be held on the eighth day after the retirement of councillors, or such other day within twenty-one days of the date of retirement. In non-election years the Annual Council meeting may be held on any date in March, April or May.

12. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 12.1 If Council did not agree a programme of meetings for 2024/25, there is significant risk that decision making would not be able to take place in a timely, effective and open & transparent manner. There are no other significant risks in relation to this report.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT

13.1 The recommendations are not expected to differentially impact any groups with protected characteristics. Meetings are held in accessible venues.

14. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

Members are required to attend meetings in person, which will result in emissions associated with journeys to and from meetings. Members have the right to choose to have paper copies of agenda packs, however where possible, Members are strongly encouraged to access papers using the Modern.gov App or the Extranet.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

(END)

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Programme of Meetings 2024/25

Jun-24					Jul-24					
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	
3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	
		O&S					O&S			
10	11	12	13	14	8	9	10	11	12	
Lowlands	FOP Scru	Executive			Lowlands		Executive			
17	18	19	20	21	15	16	17	18	19	
Uplands	Lic Sub / FOP				Uplands	Lic Sub / FOP Scru				
24	25	26	27	28	22	23	24	25	26	
			Audit			FOP	Council			
					29	30	31			
Aug-24					Sep-24					
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	
				1	2	2	3	4	5	6
							O&S			
5	6	7	8	9	9	10	11	12	13	
					Lowlands		Executive			
12	13	14	15	16	16	17	18	19	20	
Lowlands					Uplands	Lic Sub	FOP Scru			
19	20	21	22	23	23	24	25	26	27	
Uplands	Lic Sub					FOP	Council	Audit		
26	27	28	29	30	30					
PH										
Oct-24					Nov-24					
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	
		1	2	3	4					1
		O&S								
7	8	9	10	11	4	5	6	7	8	
Lowlands		Executive			Lowlands		O&S	Standards		
14	15	16	17	18	11	12	13	14	15	
Uplands	Lic Sub				Uplands		Executive			
21	22	23	24	25	18	19	20	21	22	
						Lic Sub / FOP Scru				
28	29	30	31		25	26	27	28	29	
						FOP	Council	Audit		

Dec-24					Jan-25					
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	
	2	3	4	5	6			1	2	3
Lowlands		O&S					PH			
	9	10	11	12	13	6	7	8	9	10
Uplands		Executive				Lowlands		O&S		
	16	17	18	19	20	13	14	15	16	17
	Lic Sub					Uplands		Executive		
	23	24	25	26	27	20	21	22	23	24
		PH	PH				Lic Sub / FOP Scru			
	30	31				27	28	29	30	31
							FOP	Council	Audit	
Feb-25					Mar-25					
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	
	3	4	5	6	7	3	4	5	6	7
Lowlands		O&S						O&S		
	10	11	12	13	14	10	11	12	13	14
Uplands		Executive				Lowlands	FOP Scru	Executive		
	17	18	19	20	21	17	18	19	20	21
	Lic Sub					Uplands	Lic Sub / FOP			
	24	25	26	27	28	24	25	26	27	28
		Council						Council	Audit	
						31				
						Standards				
Apr-25					May-25					
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	
		1	2	3	4				1	2
									Local elections	
	7	8	9	10	11	5	6	7	8	9
Lowlands						PH				
	14	15	16	17	18	12	13	14	15	16
Uplands	Lic Sub	O&S		PH						
	21	22	23	24	25	19	20	21	22	23
PH		Executive						Council		
	28	29	30			26	27	28	29	30
Lowlands						PH	Uplands			

West Oxfordshire District Council

Listed WODC Programme of Meetings 2024/2025



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

June 2024

Weds 5 June 2024	Overview and Scrutiny (5.30pm)
Mon 10 June 2024	Lowlands (2pm)
Tues 11 June 2024	Future Ox Partnership Scrutiny (6.30pm)
Weds 12 June 2024	Executive (2pm)
Mon 17 June 2024	Uplands (2pm)
Tues 18 June 2024	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)
Tues 18 June 2024	Future Ox Partnership (1pm)
Thurs 27 June 2024	Audit and Governance (6pm)

August 2024

Mon 12 Aug 2024	Lowlands (2pm)
Mon 19 Aug 2024	Uplands (2pm)
Tues 20 Aug 2024	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)

October 2024

Weds 2 Oct 2024	Overview and Scrutiny (5.30pm)
Mon 7 Oct 2024	Lowlands (2pm)
Weds 9 Oct 2024	Executive (2pm)
Mon 14 Oct 2024	Uplands (2pm)
Tues 15 Oct 2024	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)

July 2024

Weds 3 July 2024	Overview and Scrutiny (5.30pm)
Mon 8 July 2024	Lowlands (2pm)
Weds 10 July 2024	Executive (2pm)
Mon 15 July 2024	Uplands (2pm)
Tues 16 July 2024	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)
Tues 16 July 2024	Future Ox Partnership Scrutiny (6.30pm)
Tues 23 July 2024	Future Ox Partnership (1pm)
Weds 24 July 2024	Council (2pm)

September 2024

Weds 4 Sept 2024	Overview and Scrutiny (5.30pm)
Mon 9 Sept 2024	Lowlands (2pm)
Weds 11 Sept 2024	Executive (2pm)
Mon 16 Sept 2024	Uplands (2pm)
Tues 17 Sept 2024	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)
Weds 18 Sept 2024	Future Ox Partnership Scrutiny (6.30pm)
Tues 24 Sept 2024	Future Ox Partnership (1pm)
Weds 25 Sept 2024	Council (2pm)
Thurs 26 Sept 2024	Audit and Governance (6pm)

November 2024

Mon 4 Nov 2024	Lowlands (2pm)
Weds 6 Nov 2024	Overview and Scrutiny (5.30pm)
Thurs 7 Nov 2024	Standards (10am)
Mon 11 Nov 2024	Uplands (2pm)
Weds 13 Nov 2024	Executive (2pm)

December 2024

Mon 2 Dec 2024	Lowlands (2pm)
Weds 4 Dec 2024	Overview and Scrutiny (5.30pm)
Mon 9 Dec 2024	Uplands (2pm)
Weds 11 Dec 2024	Executive (2pm)
Tues 17 Dec 2024	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)

February 2025

Mon 3 Feb 2025	Lowlands (2pm)
Weds 5 Feb 2025	Overview and Scrutiny (5.30pm)
Mon 10 Feb 2025	Uplands (2pm)
Weds 12 Feb 2025	Executive (2pm)
Tues 18 Feb 2025	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)
Weds 26 Feb 2025	Council (2pm)

April 2025

Mon 7 April 2025	Lowlands (2pm)
Mon 14 April 2025	Uplands (2pm)
Tues 15 April 2025	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)
Weds 16 April 2025	Overview and Scrutiny (5.30pm)
Weds 23 April 2025	Executive (2pm)
Mon 28 April 2025	Lowlands (2pm)

November 2024 (Continued)

Tues 19 Nov 2024	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)
Tues 19 Nov 2024	Future Ox Partnership Scrutiny (6.30pm)
Tues 26 Nov 2024	Future Ox Partnership (1pm)
Weds 27 Nov 2024	Council (2pm)
Thurs 28 Nov 2024	Audit and Governance (6pm)

January 2025

Mon 6 Jan 2025	Lowlands (2pm)
Weds 8 Jan 2025	Overview and Scrutiny (5.30pm)
Mon 13 Jan 2025	Uplands (2pm)
Weds 15 Jan 2025	Executive (2pm)
Tues 21 Jan 2025	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)
Tues 21 Jan 2025	Future Ox Partnership Scrutiny (6.30pm)
Tues 28 Jan 2025	Future Ox Partnership (1pm)
Weds 29 Jan 2025	Council (2pm)
Thurs 30 January 2025	Audit and Governance (6pm)

March 2025

Weds 5 March 2025	Overview and Scrutiny (5.30pm)
Mon 10 March 2025	Lowlands (2pm)
Tues 11 March 2025	Future Ox Partnership Scrutiny (6.30pm)
Weds 12 March 2025	Executive (2pm)
Mon 17 March 2025	Uplands (2pm)
Tues 18 March 2025	Licensing Sub-Committee (10am)
Tues 18 March 2025	Future Ox Partnership (1pm)
Weds 26 March 2025	Council (2pm)
Thurs 27 March 2025	Audit and Governance (6pm)
Mon 31 March 2025	Standards (10am)

May 2025

Weds 21 May 2025	Annual Council (2pm)
Tues 27 May 2025	Uplands (2pm)

Notes: (1) Unless otherwise stated, meetings held at the Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney; (2) Programme subject to change - for further information contact Democratic Services: Tel: 01993 861000 or email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk; (3) O&S = Overview & Scrutiny Committee; (4) The Leader of the Council may call additional Executive meetings if required; (5) To view agendas, reports and minutes, see: www.westoxon.gov.uk/meetings.