

Public Document Pack



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Tuesday, 14 May 2024
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ANNUAL COUNCIL

You are summoned to the annual meeting of Council, which will be held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 22 May 2024 at 2.00 pm.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Giles Hughes".

Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Council:

Councillors: Andrew Coles (Chair), Elizabeth Poskitt (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Thomas Ashby, Hugo Ashton, Andrew Beaney, Michael Brooker, Adam Clements, David Cooper, Julian Cooper, Steve Cosier, Rachel Crouch, Jane Doughty, Genny Early, Duncan Enright, Roger Faulkner, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, David Jackson, Edward James, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Paul Marsh, Charlie Maynard, Martin McBride, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Rosie Pearson, Rizvana Poole, Andrew Prosser, Nigel Ridpath, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Sandra Simpson, Alaric Smith, Ruth Smith, Tim Sumner, Sarah Veasey, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh, Alex Wilson, 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. **Election of Chair for 2024/25**

Purpose:

To elect a Councillor, other than a Member of the Executive, to be the Chair of Council.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to

1. Elect a Chair of the Council for a term of office extending to the start of the Annual Council meeting in May 2025.

2. **Election of Vice-Chair for 2024/25**

Purpose:

To elect a Councillor, other than a Member of the Executive, to be the Vice-Chair of Council.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

1. Elect a Vice-Chair of the Council for a term of office extending to the start of the Annual Council meeting in May 2025.

3. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive any Apologies for Absence from Members of the Council.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any Declarations of Interest from Members of the Council on any items to be considered at the meeting.

5. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 22)**

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of Council, held on Wednesday 13 March 2024.

6. **Receipt of Announcements**

To receive any announcements from the Chair, Leader of the Council, Members of the Executive, the Chief Executive Officer, the Director of Governance and the Director of Finance.

7. **Vote of thanks to the retiring Chair and Vice-Chair**

To give a vote of thanks to the retiring Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council.

8. **Report of the Leader**

Purpose:

To receive a report from the Leader covering:

- The appointment of the Deputy Leader;
- The appointment of Executive Members and the allocation of portfolio responsibilities;
- Appointments to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and its advisory groups (environment, housing, infrastructure and planning);
- Confirmation that the Executive Scheme of Delegation is as set out in Parts 3D and 4 of the Constitution;
- The appointment of any Member Champions.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

1. Note the Report of the Leader.

9. **Returning Officer's Report on Elections held on 2 May 2024 (Pages 23 - 24)**

Purpose:

To receive and note a report from the Council's Returning Officer following the local elections held on 2 May 2024.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

1. Note the Returning Officer's Report on Elections held on 2 May 2024.

10. **Appointment of Members to the Council's Committees, including Substitute Members (Pages 25 - 34)**

Purpose:

To establish the Council's committees for the 2024/25 Civic Year and appoint members to committees and working groups:

- To establish the Council's committees as defined in Part 3C of the Council's Constitution, for the Civic Year 2024/25;
- To establish the allocation of seats to political groups based on political proportionality;
- To appoint members to the Council's committees, working groups external committees for the Civic Year 2024/25;

Recommendations:

That Council resolves to:

1. Agree to establish the Council's Committees as defined in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, for the Civic Year 2024/25;
2. Determine that, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the Act"), the Council shall continue to apply the political balance provisions under the Act to committees as shown in Annex A;
3. Agree to reduce the size of the Audit and Governance Committee to 11 Councillors (from 17);
4. Agree to include a rule in the Constitution (Part 3C) that no Members of the Executive will sit on the Audit and Governance Committee;
5. Authorise officers to undertake a recruitment exercise for up to 2 Independent Persons to become non-elected Members of the Audit and Governance Committee;
6. Appoint councillors to serve on the Council's committees, working groups and external committees, as set out in Annex B (to follow) for a term of office expiring at the next Annual Meeting of the Council;
7. Note the arrangements for substitute members set out in part 5 of the report.

11. **Scheme of Officer Delegations**

Purpose:

To adopt the [Council's Constitution](#) and agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other

than those relating to Executive functions as required by the Constitution at the Annual Council meeting.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

1. Adopt the Council's Constitution and agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions, as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution.

12. **Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Pages 35 - 40)**

Purpose:

To consider recommendations made to Council by the Independent Remuneration Panel, from its meeting held on 23 April 2024.

Recommendations:

The Council's Independent Remuneration Panel recommend that Council resolves to:

1. Agree that the Vice-Chair of a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee be paid a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) of 0.5x the basic allowance paid to all Councillors, reducing to 0.25x basic allowance if there is more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
2. Agree to backdate the payment of the SRA paid to the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to first meeting of the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee (8 November 2023).

13. **Appointment of a Temporary Parish Councillor to Fulbrook Parish Council (Pages 41 - 44)**

Purpose:

To agree the appointment of a temporary member of Fulbrook Parish Council, enabling the Parish Council to become quorate.

Recommendations:

That Council resolves to:

1. Agree to make an order under Section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act') appointing Councillor Hugo Ashton as a temporary member of Fulbrook Parish Council, enabling the Parish Council to become quorate;
2. Note that the appointment shall be effective until Fulbrook Parish Council is quorate (i.e. it has three members of the Council in place, excepting the temporary appointee);
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance to make orders and make temporary appointments to Town/Parish Councils as required, under the powers in Section 91 of the Act.

14. **Dates of Future Meetings**

- Wednesday 24 July 2024 – 2.00pm;
- Wednesday 25 September 2024 – 2.00pm;
- Wednesday 27 November 2024 – 2.00pm;
- Wednesday 29 January 2025 – 2.00pm;

- Wednesday 26 February 2025 – 2.00pm;
- Wednesday 26 March 2025 – 2.00pm;
- Wednesday 21 May 2025 – Annual Council – 2.00pm.

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Council.

Held in the Council Chamber, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB, at 2.00pm on
Wednesday 13 March 2024.

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, Duncan Enright, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, Jeff Haine, David Jackson, Edward James, Natalie King, Andrew Lyon, Charlie Maynard, Martin McBride, Michele Mead, David Melvin, 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, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Bill Oddy (Assistant Director – Commercial Development), Phil Martin (Assistant Director – Business Services), Andrew Brown (Business Manager – Democratic Services), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer), Maria Harper (Democratic Services Assistant), Sharon Ellison (Electoral Services Manager), Janice Bamsey (Principal Planning Policy Officer), Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager), Astrid Harvey (Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer), and Heather McCulloch (Community Wellbeing Manager).

Other Councillors in attendance: Nil.

CL.147 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from the following Members:

Councillors Dan Levy, Liz Leffman, Lysette Nicholls, Mark Walker, Nick Leverton, Alaa Al-Yousuf, Colin Dingwall, Mark Johnson, David Cooper and Jane Doughty.

Councillor Adrian Walsh was absent from the meeting.

CL.148 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members of the Council.

CL.149 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Liam Walker stated that although under the previous meeting minutes relating to the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024/2025 made correct reference to Rule 23.2, Part 5A of the Council's Constitution, they had originally been advised during the meeting that he would be unable to speak on that agenda item, as a result of leaving the room during the debate.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 28 February 2024, 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 agreed unanimously by Council.

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Council **Resolved** to:

1. Agree the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 28 February 2024, as a true and accurate record.

CL.150 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Andrew Coles, Chair of the Council, welcomed all attendees to the meeting, and thanked members of the public for their attendance.

The Chair advised that due to a technical difficulty experienced with the webcasting platform in the Council Chamber, the meeting would not be live streamed to the Council's website. The Chair further advised that the meeting was being recorded and would subsequently be uploaded to the website at the earliest opportunity.

The Chair stated that all members had received an e-mail from the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive, in which clarification was given that the Chair's Fundraising Quiz would take place on Friday 17 May 2024. Members were reminded of their invitation to the quiz night, which would be in support of the Chair's chosen charities.

The Chair paid tribute to the work of Reverend Canon Toby Wright, who would leave the West Oxfordshire district in pursuit of a role as Dean of Wells Cathedral. The Chair stated that Canon Wright had been a stalwart in his services to the district, and that they would leave West Oxfordshire with the wishes of the whole council, the district and its residents.

The Chair also paid tribute to the work of Janice Bamsey. Janice Bamsey was a member of the Council's Planning Policy team and would retire from the Council after 38 years' service. The Chair gave an overview of Janice Bamsey's career within the Council, and expressed gratitude for their work, stating it was only fitting that formal recognition of their work was given by Council and its Members. The Chair invited Janice Bamsey to the front of the Chamber where they were presented with a bouquet of flowers in recognition for their service. A photograph was taken of the Chair presenting Janice Bamsey with the flower bouquet, and the Chair wished them a very long and happy retirement.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, reminded all members of the importance of online training regarding cyber security. The Leader encouraged members to complete the online training if they had not already done so, adding that it was vital for all forms of ICT, not just for Councillor email accounts. The Leader reminded members to liaise with officers if they were experiencing any difficulties whilst undertaking the training.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, gave an update regarding the West Oxfordshire Small Business Grant Scheme. The Deputy Leader stated that 41 applications had been received from different organisations around the local economy, with 36 applications successfully passing Counter Fraud checks thus far. The Deputy Leader further highlighted that all applicants had been invited to a session with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), with 34 successful applicants being awarded a grant of £5,000, to help further grow their businesses and employ further staffing resources.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for the Environment, announced that on Thursday 21 March 2024 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, a session would be hosted by the Council's Climate Team, along with colleagues from local Town and Parish Councils, and delivered by Wild Oxfordshire, to launch the updated Oxfordshire Community Town and

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Parish Council Nature Recovery Guide. The Executive Member stated that funding for the guide had been received from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, reminded Council that an online briefing on Health and Well-Being would take place on Thursday 14 March 2024 at 6.00pm, with the Council's Community Wellbeing Manager, Heather McCulloch. The Executive Member encouraged members to join the virtual briefing if they were able to do so.

Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, provided Council with updates regarding regeneration work being undertaken at leisure locations in Chipping Norton, including refurbishment work at Chipping Norton Leisure Centre. The Executive Member stated that sign off on the works was imminent and that staff were very happy with works nearing completion.

The Executive Member also shared updates regarding the Open-Air Swimming Pool in Woodstock, giving an overview of the wide range of activities that were available and confirmed that the venue would be open throughout the summer months between May and September 2024.

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, provided Council with an update on the Homelessness Prevention Grant. The Executive Member stated that the fund would allow local authorities to make further provisions for the prevention of homelessness, as well as funding for the provision of temporary accommodation. The Executive Member gave an overview of funding received from Central Government which included an additional £215,177 towards prevention measures in West Oxfordshire.

CL.151 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation at the meeting.

CL.152 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.153 Recommendations from the Executive

There were no recommendations from the Executive to Council.

CL.154 Polling District and Places Review

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which updated members on the requirement to conduct a review of the Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places within West Oxfordshire, to put in hand the necessary initial steps, and note the suggested timetable for the review.

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

Council Resolved to:

1. Carry out the statutorily required review of the Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places within West Oxfordshire;
2. Agree that, in accordance with the statute, the Acting Returning Officer for the Parliamentary Constituency of Witney; be requested to submit his representations on the review, to include information as to the location of polling stations (both existing and proposed) within Polling Places (both existing and proposed);
3. Agree that the information in this report as to the processes and the timetable for the review be noted;
4. Agree that consultation responses and representations be considered at the meeting of Council to be held 25 September 2024 /or 27 November 2024.

CL.155 Recommendations of the Constitution Working Group

Councillor Mathew Parkinson, Chair of the Constitution Working Group, introduced the report, which presented recommendations from the Constitution Working Group arising from a meeting held on 13 February 2024.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, rose to propose an amendment to recommendation 1 as listed on the original report, whereby additional wording would be added to the resolution, to reflect an increase in the membership of the Constitution Working Group from 7 to 9 Members, owing to its extensive work programme, allowing the group to formulate draft recommendations to Council in relation to work of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright, and agreed to by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Constitution Working Group

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to the work of the Constitution Work Group, highlighting both the importance of the group's work, and the resolve to ensure that the Council's constitution was as tidy as it possibly could be.

In debate, Members queried proposed amendments to Public Participation Rules to clarify the rules for speaking at Development Control Committee and Area Planning Sub-Committee meetings, and if there was a potential duplication in the routine order of business at ordinary meetings of Council.

Officers confirmed that amendments were proposed from the rules as they were laid out, and that Chair's of the Development Control and Area Planning Sub-Committees could exercise their discretion if and when appropriate. Officers further confirmed that Member Questions would come immediately after of Public Participation in the order of business at ordinary Council meetings.

Councillor Mathew Parkinson proposed that Council agree the recommendations as listed on the report, inclusive of the additional wording proposed by Councillor Andy Graham and seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright. This was seconded by Councillor Michele Mead, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

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Council **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the changes to the Constitution Working Group Terms of Reference to include responsibility for oversight of electoral matters (Annex A) and:
 - a. Increase the size of the Constitution Working Group to 9 members.
 - b. Amend the second paragraph in 3.0 in the Terms of Reference to read “The Constitution Working Group will also formulate draft recommendations *in relation to* the Local Government Boundary Commission for England *review* for consideration by the Council including...”.
2. Adopt the Draft Webcasting Protocol for inclusion in the Constitution as the new Part 6N (Annex B);
3. Agree an amendment to Article 5 of the Constitution to include at 2E.2 that committees will appoint a Vice-Chair at their first meeting following Annual Council (Annex C);
4. Agree an amendment to Part 5A Rule 17.2 to remove the requirement for the Chair to have cast a deliberative vote in order to use a casting vote (Annex D);
5. Agree to amend Part 5A Rule 3.2 to add Member questions to the business for ordinary Council meetings (after public questions) (Annex E);
6. Agree to amend the Public Participation Rules to clarify the rules for speaking at Development Control Committee and Area Planning Sub-Committee meetings (Annex F);
7. Note the progress the Constitution Working Group has made in during 2023/24 and the items to be carried forward into next year, as set out in Annex G.

CL.156 Motion A: Supporting Our Farmers in West Oxfordshire - Proposed by Councillor Liam Walker, Seconded by Councillor Alex Wilson

Councillor Liam Walker introduced the motion, which sought the Council’s commitment to support local farmers and food producers across the West Oxfordshire district. The Motion also sought to promote the engagement and emphasise partnership working between poultry and arable and livestock farmers, to ensure they could continue to enhance the countryside and contribute to UK food security.

Councillor Rosie Pearson rose to propose and introduce an amendment to the motion, which had been circulated in advance. The amendment sought to continue to engage and work in partnership with poultry, arable and livestock farmers, and with horticulturalists and agroecologists, to ensure they could continue to enhance the countryside, contribute to the nation's food security, protect and enhance biodiversity and improve soils.

Councillor Pearson thanked Councillor Liam Walker for proposing the original Motion to Council, and for their work in bringing attention to the subject matter. Councillor Rosie Pearson further highlighted that the amendment would make the Motion stronger, helping to further enhance sustainable levels of food production, soil enrichment and overall carbon reduction, as well as increasing overall income for farmers.

The amendment was not accepted by Councillor Liam Walker, who stated that they felt that the amendment negated the original motion. Councillor Walker also highlighted that the simplicity of the motion had been taken away by the amendment.

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Councillor Liam Walker sought clarity from the Director of Governance as to whether the amended motion negated the original motion by means of an additional resolution, and amendments to the original resolutions. The Director of Governance stated that in their view, the amended motion did not negate the original motion.

In seconding the amended motion, Councillor Lidia Arciszewska highlighted that the amended motion would emphasise the existing partnership work was ongoing between local farmers, food producers and the Council. Councillor Arciszewska stated the importance of collaborative, partnership working with FarmED, the NorthEast Cotswold Farming Cluster, and Cotswold National Landscape. Councillor Arciszewska gave an overview of the work, which had taken place in conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council and the Environment Agency since the West Oxfordshire Alliance took office in 2022, highlighting that external and national pressures, such as the UK's exit from the European Union, inflation and the energy crisis, were also within the reasons why an amendment to the motion was necessary, and urged members to support the amendment.

In the debate on the amended motion, members were keen to emphasise that the original motion as put, aimed to focus on local issues affecting West Oxfordshire rather than issues on a national scale. Members also stated that there seemed to be some confusion as to the point of the original motion, and highlighted that the original motion had been tabled to assist local farmers and their work.

Members also stated that there was a lack of evidence of the work undertaken to work constructively with farmers across the district, and that no reference to this had been made at any Executive or Cabinet meeting since the change of control within the Council in 2022, except for the adoption of the West Oxfordshire Food Action Plan in March 2023. Members urged the Executive to highlight work carried out so that it could be publicised more widely.

Members highlighted the work of the West Oxfordshire Food Action Plan that had recently been discussed and adopted by the Executive, and a number of members further highlighted the work of FarmED and other local partnerships, adding that the work of the UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity funds would also go some way to helping local farmers.

Members also highlighted a rise in the amount of bureaucracy created on a national scale that was affecting both local farmers and farmers more generally, which had in turn prevented them from doing their work to the highest possible standard. Members made reference to Brexit, checks on goods at land borders, access to European Union markets, access to labour resources and seasonal farming staff, European competition, and policy hangover from the European Union. Members stated that farmers would get a much better deal if the UK were still inside the customs union.

Members also raised the importance of local food groups, local food banks and local charities, which had all played their part in ensuring that surplus food from supermarkets and other food outlets had found their way to those people who needed it the most. Members made particular reference to the 'Chippy Larder', adding that the ongoing Cost of Living Crisis had only escalated demand over recent months. Members also stated that the extra demand was driven by a lack of general support from central government, adding that there was a substantial increase in the number of families who were struggling to put food on the table.

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A number of Members stated that they would support the amendment to the motion, as it added depth to the motion and strived to allow actions to be carried out and enhanced work to get underway.

Members also made reference to work ongoing across the County of Oxfordshire, adding that grant funding had been received to drive down levels of rural crime, which was having a severe impact on farmers being able to carry out their work in an efficient and timely fashion.

Members also highlighted health implications that were associated with the motion, adding that a reduction in general consumption of salts and sugars would be far more beneficial to the human diet than 30% reduction in the consumption of meat. Members also stated that the focus more generally should be on encouraging farmers to produce cost effective good quality foodstuffs. Members agreed that there would be both health and environmental benefits to proposals made in the amendments, but that these would be on an individual basis.

Members also highlighted that whilst the current membership of the Council did not include any farmers, previous members of the Council had undertaken work within the farming sector and members highlighted that their contribution to the Council overall was of great significance adding that it should not go forgotten.

A number of members also made reference to the 'Get Fair About Farming' campaign, which sought to make further progress in highlighting the work of local farmers, given the increasing monopoly that supermarkets had on food supply chains. Members also indicated that wherever possible, food should be acquired from good quality local producers which in turn would go a long way to supporting the work of local farmers within not only West Oxfordshire but across the country.

In summing up the debate on the amended motion, Councillor Rosie Pearson thanked Members for their contributions to the debate on the amended motion, and stated her disappointment in the attitude of opposition members in relation to the wider context of the amendment. Councillor Pearson highlighted the improvements made to the motion by the amendment, stating that an original resolution would set up a battle ground between those who did and did not eat meat as part of their diets. Councillor Pearson also described her surprise in that the word soil was not mentioned in the original motion, which was found to have a vital role enhancing biodiversity. Councillor Pearson summed up by stating that the Alliance were not dismissing the original motion, emphasising that the amendments to the motion which strengthen it in the round.

Having been proposed, seconded and debated, and the amendment was put to a vote. There were 28 votes in favour, 8 votes against, and 2 abstentions. The amendment was carried.

Councillor Andrew Beaney rose to state that at the time of the next General Election, West Oxfordshire would have 3 MPs rather than 1, and subsequently proposed an amendment to resolution 5 of the substantive motion, whereby the wording would state "**Call on all West Oxfordshire District's MPs to support**", rather than "**Call on our MP to support**". This was seconded by Councillor Liam Walker, who accepted the amendment proposed by Councillor Beaney as the proposer of the substantive motion.

Councillor Alex Wilson, seconder of the substantive motion thanked members for their contributions to the debate, and expressed disappointment at the amendment, urging that going forward, amendments to the wording of future motions could be agreed in advance with the proposer and seconder.

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The substantive motion, inclusive of the amendment to resolution 5, was put to a vote. There were 37 votes in favour, 0 votes against and 1 abstention. The vote was carried.

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

West Oxfordshire District Council is committed to supporting local farmers and food producers across our district. WODC will continue to engage and work in partnership with poultry, arable and livestock farmers, and with horticulturalists and agroecologists, to ensure they can continue to enhance our countryside, contribute to our nation's food security, protect and enhance biodiversity and improve our soils.

Council Resolves to:

1. Continue to work to support local farmers by developing policies, including planning policies, which are sympathetic to diversification opportunities, including market gardens and medium-scale agroecological growing, and by promoting local produce during the Back British Farming campaign week;
2. Be a well-informed voice of reason in the national conversation around diet, recognising that the National Food Strategy recommends a 30% reduction in meat consumption, but also recognising the role that non-intensive livestock can play in restoring soils and providing part of a balanced diet;
3. Provide food at Council events, where practical, which is sourced from local suppliers, including a selection of food for those who have chosen a plant-based diet, as well as good quality plant-based food as well as good quality meat, fish, dairy, fruit, and vegetables;
4. Continue to work with Good Food Oxfordshire, and implement our West Oxfordshire Food Action Plan, working with farm shops and local food businesses to shorten supply chains and look at food hubs so that local food is affordable to all, reducing the food miles on our plate and supporting our producers;
5. Call on all West Oxfordshire District MPs to support the Get Fair about Farming campaign, which demands regulations ensuring supermarkets stick to fair buying agreements, and call on the government to end the uncertainty over the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) which will replace Basic Payments, and to support farmers in the transition to more sustainable forms of agriculture.

CL.157 Motion B: Local Authority Mental Health Challenge - Proposed by Councillor Alex Wilson, Seconded by Councillor Michele Mead

Councillor Alex Wilson introduced the motion, which sought to highlight challenges that people experience with mental health and challenge the Council and Oxfordshire County Council to do more to tackle the stigma attached to challenges people across the district and county faced regarding mental health. Councillor Wilson further highlighted the importance of ensuring that the challenges faced by those suffering from mental health stigmas was better, more widely understood, adding that the appointment of a Council 'Mental Health Champion' (MHC) would be pivotal in providing such support.

In debate, members stated the importance of the work a MHC would provide to both Council and residents of the district. Members also alluded to external training, including mental health first aid training, that had been received on the matter, highlighting the connection between a

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greater understanding of mental health challenges and member casework. Members also made reference to challenges faced by themselves in the past, highlighting the importance of the motion and how much it was welcomed.

Members also referred to ongoing work surrounding mental health, including the work of a Youth Needs Assessment which highlighted challenges faced amongst younger people in the community. Members also stated the importance of remembering that it was not always clear what individuals went through, and that the motion would help to lead to a better understanding.

Members also cited the importance of the work of the Council's Community Wellbeing Team, and highlighted the ongoing importance of their work in relation to tackling mental health challenges in the district, would link brilliantly to the work and awareness generated by a Member MHC.

Members also referred to potential, future work of championing resolutions and addressing mental health challenges, whereby Group Leaders would discuss the issue in more detail at a later date, adding resilience and strength to tackling mental health problems head on. Members also referred to challenges faced as a result of professional endeavours outside of the Council, stating that challenges faced by individuals would only grow if action was not taken to highlight the issues at hand.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Michele Mead welcomed the unanimous support for the motion and that it was warming to hear the keenness of members to help to highlight the challenges faced surrounding mental health. Councillor Mead also stated her gratitude to members for coming together in a united fashion to support the motion, and that politics had no part to play in addressing the subject matter.

Councillor Alex Wilson thanked members for their overall contributions and for their understanding as to the importance of the motion, and supporting those affected by the subject matter.

Councillor Alex Wilson proposed that the motion as set out on the agenda paper, be adopted by Council. 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:

One in four people experience a mental health problem of some kind each year. One in six report experiencing common mental health problems in any given week in England. To put this into context, on the last census in 2021 there was a population of 114,200 in West Oxfordshire, meaning that 19,033 people are going through this on a weekly basis. What is being done here and at County isn't enough.

We can play a crucial role in improving the mental health of every member of our community, and to tackle some of the widest and most entrenched inequalities in health, as well as the misconceptions that are applied with these. This administration and others must make this a priority across all local authority areas of responsibility, as the current level of support locally is not good enough for those who are in need.

We ask the administration to appoint a Member as "Mental Health Champion" (MHC).

The MHC will advocate for mental health issues in council meetings and policy development, will reach out to the local community to raise awareness of mental

health issues and challenge stigma, and will listen to people with personal experience of mental health and get their perspective on local needs and priorities.

The MHC will scrutinise areas that have an impact on people's mental health such as Housing needs, developments, and other areas, will look at fostering local partnerships between agencies to support people with mental health problems more effectively, and will identify at least one priority each year for focused work.

The MHC will respond to occasional requests from the challenge coordinator for updates on activities undertaken in the role of member champion, and will have access to advice and support from the mental health challenge national partners, to resources on the challenge website, and an annual meeting with other member champions to share information, experience, and ideas.

We also ask the Council to Identify an existing officer to function as lead officer for mental health.

The officer would:

- Advise the member Champion on current issues and priorities;
- Support strategies initiated by the member champion;
- Raise awareness among council staff about mental health issues;
- Seek external support for activities led by the council to promote mental health and wellbeing;
- Provide information to the member champion to support their work;
- Liaise with mental health challenge national partners to secure information and advice.

The lead officer will also have access to the benefits described above for member champion, will support positive mental health in all areas of our community, work with local partners to offer effective support for people with mental health needs, tackle discrimination on the grounds of mental health in our local community, and proactively listen to people of all ages and backgrounds about their needs for better mental health.

Council Resolves to request the Leader of the Council to:

1. Sign the Local Authority Mental Health Challenge;
2. Appoint a member as "Mental Health Champion" (MHC);
3. Identify an existing officer to function as lead officer for mental health.

The Chair drew the meeting to a close by thanking Members for their attendance and for their contributions during the meeting. The Chair also highlighted that the meeting was the last meeting of Council during the current municipal year, and took the opportunity to wish those members who would seek re-election to the Council at the next round of local elections well with their campaigning.

The Chair also paid tribute to those Members who were standing down at the next round of local elections, and thanked them for their service to West Oxfordshire District Council.

Council

13/March2024

Councillor Harry St. John rose to thank the residents of North Leigh for their support during their term of office, and thanked the work of officers for their continuing hard work, adding that their support was invaluable and should not go unnoticed by others.

Councillor St. John also paid tribute to the work of Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP), adding the impact of their work had been keenly felt by many across the district, and also on a national level.

Councillor St. John summed up by thanking Members of the Council, both past and present, for their resolve in striving to do what was right by residents and thanked them for their support over the time they were a Councillor.

The Meeting closed at 3.40pm.

CHAIR

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Questions by Members – Council – 13 March 2024

<u>Written Question</u>	<u>Written Answer</u>	<u>Verbal Supplementary Question</u>	<u>Verbal Supplementary Answer</u>
Q1. Councillor Liam Walker to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:			
Can you please update Council on the Motion passed for improving mobile signal in West Oxfordshire?	Gareth Elliott, Director of Policy and Communications at Mobile UK, has been invited to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 10 April 2024 to give a presentation on the current situation regarding the mobile phone industry, coverage, capacity, and future plans to improve the overall network.	N/A	N/A
Q2. Councillor Liam Walker to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:			
Can you please update Council as to the letter sent to the Cabinet Member for Highways and any further response received about junction safety improvements at Barnard Gate after the Motion to full Council was passed?	<p>Officers have written to Councillor Andrew Gant (OCC Cabinet Member for Transport Management) on my behalf, to make him aware of the debate Council had regarding the A40 at Barnard Gate, and the resolutions that were agreed. I have also offered to meet with the Councillor Gant to discuss the issue.</p> <p>Councillor Gant has been made aware that Council meets on 13 March 2024 and has been asked for an update before the meeting.</p>	Yes, just to see if he has had a response from Councillor Gant ahead of this meeting?	<p>Yes, I have had a response. I have also actually had a meeting with Councillor Gant on this matter, as it is an important one for us as a district. As a result of that meeting, I asked for further details so that we could hear what the intention was, so I'm going to read, you, if you'll bear with me, the response:</p> <p>“The junction is included in our list of collision problem sites, with a record of two serious, and three slight injury collisions in the 5-year period 2018-2022 (the last 5-year period for which full data is currently available); Data for 2023 is largely complete with a serious injury collision being recorded in November.</p> <p>Having discussed with officers, I can confirm that we will include consideration of this junction within our Vision Zero work and associated capital programme as</p>

			<p>appropriate. In addition, in terms of the specific requests, I can confirm that we will carry out a safety assessment of the junction to help inform any short or longer-term action that may be deemed beneficial or necessary.</p> <p>Any immediate action identified is likely to be a short-term restriction, with any wider more permanent physical changes needing to be considered against other Vision Zero infrastructure improvement demands.”</p> <p>He finishes to state that he would be happy to meet with me further, to discuss the concerns, options and priorities, and so I kind of think that this is a reasonable response at this stage, and I kind of think that we can actually go a bit further, and I intend to take up the offer, in order to do so.</p>
<p>Q3. Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:</p>			
<p>Can you tell us please how many bookings have been received for the hire of the newly refurbished Council Chamber?</p>	<p>A small officer group led by Councillor Tim Sumner, who has Executive responsibility for the Agile Working Project, has been set up to work through the logistical and other associated issues involved with formally hiring out the newly refurbished Council Chamber, prior to the space being actively marketed.</p> <p>The Chamber has already been used successfully to host a Town and Parish Forum and Planning Appeal</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

	<p>Hearings with the Planning Inspectorate.</p> <p>The Council has already been approached by a number of organisations who are interested in using the facility.</p>		
Q4. Councillor Alex Wilson to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council:			
<p>The Swift Brick Motion was brought to the Council months ago, and it was put to be scrutinised, however this has not gone to Scrutiny and has not returned to this chamber. Please could the Executive clarify why this has not gone further and if there are any other motions that have been brought to this Council and not actioned?</p>	<p>The Swift Brick Motion was considered by the Climate and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 23 March 2023. The Committee agreed a recommendation to the Executive that officers include within the current review of the Local Plan specific policies in respect of Swift nesting sites, as per the motion.</p> <p>The Executive responded to the recommendation on 21 June 2023, with the following comment: “The Local Plan review will consider a range of policy options relating to nature recovery and biodiversity net gain including the use of measures such as swift bricks to encourage a reversal in their well-documented population decline.”</p>	N/A	N/A

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Ward	Party	Votes	Electorate & % Poll
Chadlington and Churchill	Caspar Morris	Conservative	210
	Nigel Simon Ridpath	Liberal Democrats	342 Elected
	Chris Tomlin	Labour	55
			37.99%
Charlbury and Finstock	Gareth Dore	Conservative	270
	Flora Gregory	Green Party	124
	<i>Liz Leffman</i>	Liberal Democrats	785 Elected
	Robin Puttick	Labour	153
			3045
			43.91%
Chipping Norton	Ivan Aguado Melet	Liberal Democrats	116
	Peter Burns	Conservative	362
	Amy Long	Green Party	197
	<i>Geoff Saul</i>	Labour & Co-op	1071 Elected
			5698
			30.85%
Eynsham and Cassington	<i>Andy Goodwin</i>	Liberal Democrats	996 Elected
	Nicholas Goodwin	Green Party	160
	Sean Grace	Conservative	455
	Nick Relph	Labour	389
			5067
			39.63%
Freeland and Hanborough	Nell Davies-Small	Labour	152
	Dan Eisenhandler	Green Party	90
	Roger Faulkner	Conservative	587 Elected
	Sam Newman	Independent	102
	Marie Jacqueline Stimpson	Liberal Democrats	558
			4016
			37.15%
Hailey, Minster Lovell and Leafield	Andy Bailey	Labour	109
	Paul Eaglestone	Conservative	595
	Paul Marsh	Liberal Democrats	606 Elected
	James Robert Styring	Green Party	73
			3451
			40.28%
Kingham, Rollright and Enstone	Arron John Baker	Green Party	448
	David Heyes	Labour & Co-op	182
	<i>Alex Wilson</i>	Conservative	475 Elected
			3227
			34.68%
Milton under Wychwood	Adam Peter Clements	Liberal Democrats	400 Elected
	Timothy John Robert Eden	Green Party	22
	<i>Jeff Haine</i>	Conservative	292
	Sian O'Neill	Labour & Co-op	42
			1810
			41.99%
North Leigh	Richard John Kelsall	Labour	73
	Hannah Stephanie Massie	Liberal Democrats	303
	Frances Mortimer	Green Party	37
	Sarah Veasey	Conservative	487 Elected
			1856
			48.71%
Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt	Stephen John Cosier	Liberal Democrats	860 Elected
	Marion Louise Harley	Labour	97
	<i>Lysette Nicholls</i>	Conservative	672
	Alma Ann Tumilowicz	Green Party	48
			3744
			45.25%
Stonesfield and Tackley	Genny Early	Green Party	523 Elected
	Kate England	Labour	145
	Gareth Daniel Epps	Liberal Democrats	497
	Sharone Parnes	Conservative	390
			3439
			45.51%
Witney Central	Rae Cather	Green Party	93
	<i>Andrew Stanley Coles</i>	Labour	800 Elected
	Serena Martin	Liberal Democrats	109
	Abdul Mubin	Conservative	518
			4399
			34.76%

**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
ELECTION RESULTS SUMMARY - THURSDAY 2 MAY 2024**

Witney East	<i>Duncan Shaw Thomas Enright</i>	Labour & Co-op	1019	Elected	
	Harriet Marshall	Green Party	129		5781
	James Robertshaw	Conservative	932		39.46%
	Sophie Stephanie Roell	Liberal Democrats	183		
Witney North	Michelle Ann Coulson	Liberal Democrats	390		
	Richard Andrew Langridge	Reform UK	215		3029
	Georgia Jonathan Meadows	Labour	136		47.80%
	<i>Andrew Peter Prosser</i>	Green Party	451	Elected	
	Dean Temple *	Conservative	248		
Witney South	David Roy Cox	Heritage Party	99		
	David Edwards-Hughes	Conservative	649		4807
	Stuart McCarroll	Labour & Co-op	706	Elected	34.87%
	Ed Rolison	Green Party	99		
	Peter Daniel Whitten	Liberal Democrats	115		
Witney West	Dan Coulson	Liberal Democrats	533		
	<i>Jane Doughty</i>	Conservative	636	Elected	4913
	Penelope Barbara Ponton	Green Party	76		31.33%
	Sachin David Singh Thorogood	Labour	281		
Woodstock and Bladon	Ian Hudspeth	Conservative	480		
	Mathew Parkinson *	Labour	254		
	<i>Elizabeth Poskitt</i>	Liberal Democrats	618	Elected	3607
	Barry Ivan Wheatley	Green Party	83		39.95%

Overall Turnout 39.65% Electorate 63500

Seats

Candidates		Results	02-May	Total	(Before)
Conservative	17	Conservative	4	13	16
Green Party	16	Green Party	2	4	3
Independent	1	Independent	0	0	2
Labour/Labour & Co-Op	17	Labour/Labour & Co-op	4	11	11
Liberal Democrats	16	Liberal Democrats	7	21	17
Heritage Party	1	Heritage Party	0	0	0
Reform UK	1	Reform UK	0	0	0
Total	69	Total	17	49	49


No. Cllrs seeking re-election 13

No. Cllrs re-elected 9

Persons elected for a four year term to May 2028.

Sitting councillors who sought re-election in the same Ward are shown in italics.

* denotes a sitting councillor who sought re-election in a different Ward

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	ANNUAL COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 22 MAY 2024
Subject	APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES, INCLUDING SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS
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
Purpose	<u>Purpose:</u> To establish the Council’s committees for the 2024/25 Civic Year and appoint members to committees and working groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish the Council’s committees as defined in Part 3C of the Council’s Constitution, for the Civic Year 2024/25; • To establish the allocation of seats to political groups based on political proportionality; • To appoint members to the Council’s committees, working groups external committees for the Civic Year 2024/25; • To make appointments to the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of Council’s committees and working groups for the Civic Year 2024/25.
Annexes	Annex A – Political Proportionalities on Committees 2024/25 Annex B – Committee Nominations 2024/25 (to follow)
Recommendations	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree to establish the Council’s Committees as defined in Part 3 of the Council’s Constitution, for the Civic Year 2024/25; 2. Determine that, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (“the Act”), the Council shall continue to apply the political balance provisions under the Act to committees as shown in Annex A;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Agree to reduce the size of the Audit and Governance Committee to 11 Councillors (from 17); 4. Agree to include a rule in the Constitution (Part 3C) that no Members of the Executive will sit on the Audit and Governance Committee; 5. Authorise officers to undertake a recruitment exercise for up to 2 Independent Persons to become non-elected Members of the Audit and Governance Committee; 6. Appoint councillors to serve on the Council's committees, working groups and external committees, as set out in Annex B (to follow) for a term of office expiring at the next Annual Meeting of the Council; 7. Note the arrangements for substitute members set out in part 5 of the report.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Leaders of political groups have been consulted on allocation of seats to political groups and asked to nominate members.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Part 3 of West Oxfordshire District Council's Constitution defines the structure of the Council's committees and sub-committees, including their size and responsibilities and any restrictions on membership or participation.
- 1.2 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the Act") requires the Council to allocate Committee seats to political groups, in proportion to the size of those groups on the Council. The requirement is for the representation of each group to be proportional on each Committee, and on the total number of seats on committees overall.
- 1.3 Under Section 15 of the Act, the Council must review the representation of the different political groups on committees and other relevant Council bodies at the Annual Council Meeting, or as soon as practicable after that meeting.
- 1.4 Membership of political groups of the Council is reported to the Annual Meeting via the Returning Officer's Report on Elections held on 2 May 2024 agenda item. This informs the proportionality calculation for each committee set out in Annex A.
- 1.5 It is open to the appointing body (in this case Council) to adopt other arrangements and allocate seats on a different basis, other than that prescribed by the Act. Any such decision would have to be agreed without any member voting against. This is known as a 'nem con' vote. Any abstentions from voting would not invalidate the 'nem con' vote.
- 1.6 Committee membership is for one year, with the appointments made at the Annual Meeting.

2. RESTRICTIONS ON COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 Members who serve on the Executive, cannot simultaneously serve on an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

On Tuesday 19 March 2024, the Audit and Governance Committee considered a report which provided a summary of the findings, conclusions and responses from an Audit and Governance Committee self-assessment exercise based on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) toolkit. The report outlined how eleven Members of the Audit and Governance Committee had completed a survey, along with three non-Audit and Governance Committee Members. The key areas in the survey included organisational knowledge, Audit and Governance Committee role and functions, governance, internal audit, financial management and reporting, external audit, risk management, counter fraud, values of good governance and treasury management.

- 2.2 Overall the majority of Members on the Audit and Governance Committee, that responded to the survey, have some or a good familiarity and knowledge of the role / functions of the Audit and Governance Committee and how it fits into the governance of the Council. Although there are some specific areas e.g. The Seven Principles of Public Life, role of External Audit, Fraud, Risk Management and Treasury Management where training would be beneficial to the whole Committee.
- 2.3 Following on from the Self-Assessment Exercise, it was agreed that the Audit and Governance Committee would recommend to Council that the size of the Committee is

reduced to 11 Councillors, up to 2 Independent Members (not Councillors) are recruited to the Audit and Governance Committee, and that Members of the Executive are excluded from sitting on the Committee.

- 2.4 Under the Council's Constitution, Members cannot serve on the Development Control Committee (or its Uplands and Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committees) to determine planning applications, including as a substitute member, unless they have received the required planning training.
- 2.5 Similarly, Members cannot participate in meetings of the Licensing Committee (or its Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee or Licensing Panel Sub-Committee) without having undertaken the required licensing training.

3. COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS

- 3.1 Council may appoint the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of each committee or if Council does not do so, the Chair and Vice-Chair are to be elected at the first scheduled meeting of each Committee. The suggested approach this year is for a Chair and Vice-Chair to be appointed at the first meeting of each Committee.

4. APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES

- 4.1 Committees (rather than Council) are responsible for appointing members to Sub-Committees, under Section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 4.2 Meetings of the committees that are to appoint sub-committees will take place immediately after the Annual Meeting of Council.

5. SUBSTITUTIONS

- 5.1 Where a member is unable to attend a meeting of a committee of which they are a member, they may arrange for a substitute member from their political group to attend in their place. The rules on substitutions for each Committee are set out in Part 3 and Part 5 of the Council's Constitution. Generally, any member of Council may be a substitute member on a committee subject to the restrictions set out above.
- 5.2 Notification of a substitute member must be made to Democratic Services by the Member who is unable to attend a meeting, in advance of the commencement of that meeting.

6. EXTERNAL COMMITTEES

- 6.1 In addition to the Council's own committees, full Council is invited to appoint members to non-executive Oxfordshire-wide bodies.
- 6.2 Council is asked to appoint three members to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel. The purpose of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel is to review and scrutinise plans, proposals, recommendations, decisions to be taken and actions taken in connection with the discharge of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's functions in support of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development and the delivery of the remaining elements of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. The Scrutiny Panel will perform a 'check and balance' and 'critical friend' function to the Future

Oxfordshire Partnership through the review of key policies, decisions and strategic objectives.

- 6.3 The Scrutiny Panel will comprise 18 councillors, three appointed annually by each constituent Council of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Executive members of the constituent councils shall not be members of the Scrutiny Panel. Each constituent council will appoint its members having regard to its own political balance. For West Oxfordshire District Council one seat is allocated to each of the three largest political groups.
- 6.4 The Council is also invited to appoint one member, who can be any member of the Council, to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Joint Committee is made up of 15 members. Twelve of them are Councillors, seven from Oxfordshire County Council, and one from each of the district councils in Oxfordshire. Three people can be coopted to the Joint Committee to bring a community perspective. Unlike other local authority Scrutiny Committees, the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee involves looking 'outwards' and across agencies. Its focus is on health, and while its main interest is likely to be the NHS, it may also look at services provided by local councils which have an impact on health.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Legal issues including the Council's duty to appoint Members to Committees in accordance with the provisions of Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 are contained within the report.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 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.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1 Council is advised to have due regard to the need to promote equality when appointing committees.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 11.1 If Council wishes to change the size or remit of any committees it could pass a resolution requesting that officers bring a report to a future meeting with alternative proposals, following consideration by the Constitution Working Group.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

(END)

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Annex A:

Political Proportionalities on Committees and Sub-Committees 2024-2025

Committee Allocations (For Appointment by Council)

Seats on committees are allocated based on the principles set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Section 15). The allocation of seats to political groups has been reviewed based on the political composition of the Council following elections held on 2 May 2024:

- Liberal Democrat: 21
- Conservative: 13
- Labour and Co-Operative: 11
- Green: 4

Table A: Initial Seat Allocations

Committee	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Total	Balance
Audit and Governance	11	5	3	2	1	11	0
Development Control	24	10	6	5	2	23	-1
Licensing Committee	11	5	3	2	1	11	0
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	24	10	6	5	2	23	-1
Performance and Appointments Committee	5	2	1	1	0	4	-1
Total seats allocated (real entitlement)	75	32	19	15	6	72	-3
(rounded entitlement)		32.14 (32)	19.90 (20)	16.84 (17)	6.12 (6)		

The Conservative Group has an overall under-allocation of 1 seat. The Labour and Co-operative Group has an overall under-allocation of two seats. One seat remains unallocated on each of Development Control, Overview and Scrutiny, and Performance and Appointments.

Steps to Allocate Remaining Seats:

1. Of the three committee seats available, the Conservative Group has the strongest proportional entitlement to an additional seat on the Performance and Appointments Committee (0.39) (as opposed to 0.37 on Development Control and Overview and Scrutiny).
2. The Labour and Co-operative Group has the strongest proportional entitlement to additional seats on Development Control (0.39) and Overview and Scrutiny (0.39) (as opposed to 0.12 on Performance and Appointments Committee).

3. Seats are allocated as follows:
 - a. Conservative Group gains one additional seat on Performance and Appointments Committee.
 - b. Labour and Co-operative Group gains one additional seat on each of Development Control Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Table B: Final Seat Allocation After Adjustments

Committee	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Total	Balance
Audit and Governance	11	5	3	2	1	11	0
Development Control	24	10	6	6	2	24	0
Licensing Committee	11	5	3	2	1	11	0
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	24	10	6	6	2	24	0
Performance and Appointments Committee	5	2	2	1	0	5	0
Total seats allocated (real entitlement)	75	32	20	17	6	75	0
(rounded entitlement)		32.14 (32)	19.90 (20)	16.84 (17)	6.12 (6)		

Sub-Committee Allocations (For Appointment by Committees)

Seats on sub-committees are allocated to groups by the appointing committee. Members of sub-committees must be members of the appointing committee. The initial allocations on sub-committees are as follows:

Sub-Committee	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Total	Balance
Miscellaneous Licensing (for appointment By Licensing Committee)	5	2	1	1	0	4	-1
Standards (for appointment by Audit & Governance Committee)	5	2	1	1	0	4	-1

Lowlands and Uplands (for appointment by Development Control Committee)	<p>The Uplands and Lowlands sub-committees must have a minimum of 11 members, with the Chair of the Development Control Committee being appointed to both sub-committees and all other members of the Development Control Committee being appointed to either the Uplands or Lowlands sub-committee, depending on the ward they represent.</p> <p>Where wards cross the Lowlands and Uplands boundary the ward member may be appointed to either sub-committee.</p>
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The licensing and standards sub-committees each have one seat vacant after all groups have received their full proportional entitlement of seats.

Steps to Allocate Remaining Seats:

1. Of the four political groups, the Green Group has the strongest proportional entitlement to the unallocated seat on both the licensing and standards sub-committees (0.41), higher than the Conservative Group (0.33), the Liberal Democrat Group (0.14) and the Labour and Co-Operative Group (0.12).
2. The Green Group gains one seat on each of the licensing and standards sub-committees.
3. Appointments to the Lowlands and Uplands Sub-Committees were discussed at a Group Leader’s meeting on 13 May 2024. The intention is to appoint to these sub-committees based on ward rather than political balance, as in previous years. This requires a nem con vote at the Development Control Committee (i.e. with no member voting against).

Sub-Committee	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Total	Balance
Miscellaneous Licensing (for appointment By Licensing Committee)	5	2	1	1	1	5	0
Standards (for appointment by Audit & Governance Committee)	5	2	1	1	1	5	0
Lowlands and Uplands (for appointment by Development Control Committee)	<p>The Uplands and Lowlands sub-committees must have a minimum of 11 members, with the Chair of the Development Control Committee being appointed to both sub-committees and all other members of the Development Control Committee being appointed to either the Uplands or Lowlands sub-committee, depending on the ward they represent.</p> <p>Where wards cross the Lowlands and Uplands boundary the ward member may be appointed to either sub-committee.</p>						


External (Outside) Bodies

Council is invited to appoint members to certain external committees. Appointments to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel should be made with regards to the political balance of the Council. The seat on the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee does not have to be appointed based on political proportionality.

The Conservative group has declined to take up a seat on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. The seat was offered to the Green group to ensure that three groups are represented on the panel.

External Body	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Total	Balance
Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel (real entitlement)	3	1 (1.29)	1 (0.80)	1 (0.67)	0 (0.24)	3	0
Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1			1		1	0

(END)

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	ANNUAL COUNCIL – 22 MAY 2024
Subject	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Andrew Brown – Democratic Services Business Manager. Email: andrew.brown@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Max Thompson – Senior Democratic Services Officer. Email: max.thompson@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	To consider recommendations made to Council by the Independent Remuneration Panel, from its meeting held on 23 April 2024.
Annexes	Nil.
Recommendations	<p>The Council’s Independent Remuneration Panel recommend that Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree that the Vice-Chair of a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee be paid a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) of 0.5x the basic allowance paid to all Councillors, reducing to 0.25x basic allowance if there is more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee; 2. Agree to backdate the payment of the SRA paid to the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to first meeting of the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee (8 November 2023).
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO

Consultees/ Consultation	Independent Remuneration Panel. Director of Governance.
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Prior to 5 October 2023, West Oxfordshire District Council had three Overview and Scrutiny Committees (Economic and Social, Climate and Environment and Finance & Management). On 27 September 2023, Council agreed to replace the three overview and scrutiny committees with a single 24-Member Overview and Scrutiny Committee with effect from 5 October 2023. The reasons for the change were to:
- a) Properly embed pre-decision scrutiny as part of the work of overview and scrutiny and the executive decision making process;
 - b) Ensure effective scheduling of meetings;
 - c) Facilitate effective work planning and improve efficiency e.g., removing the need for reports to be presented to multiple committees, or for joint meetings of two committees to be held.
- 1.2** Currently, there are no provisions for the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance to the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The current member allowances scheme for 2023-27 was adopted when the Council operated three overview and scrutiny committees, which met c. 4-6 time per annum. In agreeing to change the structure of overview and scrutiny committees Council resolved to request that the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel ("The Panel") considers whether the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be paid a special responsibility allowance, and if so, at what level and any backdating to be applied, and report back to Council.
- 1.3** The Panel was invited to consider this matter at its meeting on 23 April 2024. It was not possible to hold the meeting sooner due to the Panel being inquorate following the resignation of a Panel Member. However, following a successful recruitment exercise, on 23 February 2024 two new Panel Members, Ben Russell and Graham Russell, were appointed by the Director of Governance under authority delegated by full Council on 18 January 2023. The Panel now has 4 members which is above the minimum requirement of 3 members. Janet Eustace and Michael Paget-Wilkes are the other Panel Members.

2. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCE FOR THE VICE-CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 2.1** The Independent Remuneration Panel meeting on 23 April 2024 considered a report from the Democratic Services Business Manager, allowances data for the South East England region, and of other neighbouring authorities (e.g. Cotswold District Council), a working copy of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Plan and the Members' Allowances Scheme 2023/24 to 2026/27. Group Leaders and the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to make representations to the Panel but chose not to.
- 2.2** The Panel considered the role and responsibilities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and noted that:

- Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee take place in the week prior to each meeting of the Executive, to enable timely pre-decision scrutiny of Executive decisions.
 - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is empowered to scrutinise the decisions of the Council's Executive and to consider any issues or decisions that affect the district or its people.
- 2.3** The Panel considered the role and responsibilities associated with the position of Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and noted that this role involves presiding at meetings in the absence of the Chair and assisting with leading the function and supporting the smooth running of the Committee. This includes attending pre-meetings, having an organisational role together with the Chair between meetings, and signing off any reports or recommendation to the Executive that arise from meetings. Unlike the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Vice-Chair has no statutory responsibilities in relation to Executive decision making (e.g., where the Executive wishes to take key decisions or enter private session without providing the required 28 days' notice).
- 2.4** The Independent Remuneration Panel concluded that the organisational and leadership role of the Vice-Chair of a large and busy committee which meets monthly does warrant the payment of a special responsibility allowance (SRA).
- 2.5** In considering the level of the SRA for the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Panel reviewed the SRAs paid for other roles as set out in the Members' Allowances Scheme 2023/24 to 2026/27. The Panel noted that SRAs are not paid for other committee vice-chair roles and that some committee chairs receive an allowance of 0.25x basic allowance. However, those committees (e.g. Licensing Committee) tend to meet infrequently on an ad hoc basis to discharge their responsibilities whereas the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meets monthly. The Panel considered that a special responsibility allowance of 0.5x basic allowance would be appropriate in view of the workload of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the role played by the Vice-Chair, including in between meetings.
- 2.6** The Panel recommend that should the Council increase the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the SRA should reduce to a ratio of 0.25x basic allowance, which would be lower than the SRA of 0.5x basic paid to the Chair of each overview and scrutiny committee.
- 2.7** The Panel recommend that the special responsibility allowance paid to the Vice-Chair of the single Overview and Scrutiny Committee is backdated to 8 November 2023, as that was the date of the first meeting of the new committee, when the role was first appointed and the responsibilities started.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1** Council is required to "have regard" to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel but may choose to not agree the recommendations with reasons, therefore not making alterations to the current Members' Allowances Scheme.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A reduction in the number of overview and scrutiny committee chairs from three to one resulted in a small saving in the SRA paid to members (at 2x £2,611). This saving would be partially offset if a Special Responsibility Allowance were introduced for the Vice-Chair, as recommended by the Panel.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council is required by The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to make a scheme for the allowances to be paid to members before the beginning of each year. A scheme must include provisions for paying a basic allowance, special responsibility allowances, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling and subsistence allowance and co-optees' allowance. A scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index but may not rely on an index for a period of more than four years.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1 There are no equality impacts associated with this report.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS


- 8.1 There are no climate or ecological impacts associated with this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

(END)

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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	ANNUAL COUNCIL – 22 MAY 2024
Subject	APPOINTMENT OF A TEMPORARY PARISH COUNCILLOR TO FULBROOK PARISH COUNCIL
Wards Affected	Burford
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Andrea McCaskie – Director of Governance. Email: andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Max Thompson – Senior Democratic Services Manager. Email: max.thompson@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	To agree the appointment of a temporary member of Fulbrook Parish Council, enabling the Parish Council to become quorate.
Annexes	Nil.
Recommendations	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree to make an order under Section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act') appointing Councillor Hugo Ashton as a temporary member of Fulbrook Parish Council, enabling the Parish Council to become quorate; 2. Note that the appointment shall be effective until Fulbrook Parish Council is quorate (i.e. it has three members of the Council in place, excepting the temporary appointee); 3. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance to make orders and make temporary appointments to Town/Parish Councils as required, under the powers in Section 91 of the Act.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Fulbrook Parish Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND MAIN POINTS

- 1.1** A Parish Council must be quorate in order to operate and make decisions. The statutorily prescribed quorum for a Parish Council is one third of its membership, subject to a minimum of three.
- 1.2** Section 91 of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act') gives the Council the power to make an Order appointing temporary members to a Parish Council, where that Council cannot function because of the number of vacancies. This power is one which cannot, under the applicable Regulations, be taken by the Executive, and is only exercisable by Council.
- 1.3** Following resignations, Fulbrook Parish Council, which sits within the Burford Ward, is no longer quorate, having two parish councillors for the 5 positions and therefore unable to act. The Act states that this Council 'may by Order appoint persons to fill all or any of the vacancies until other Councillorstake up office'. Therefore, West Oxfordshire District Council may appoint up to three temporary members. It is suggested however that making one appointment would be appropriate as Fulbrook Parish Council has a number of individuals interested in becoming parish councillors, which can occur via co-option once the Parish Council is quorate.
- 1.4** It is considered that it would be appropriate for the member of this Council who represents the Burford Ward, Councillor Hugo Ashton, to be appointed to the temporary position. Should Councillor Ashton be unable or not willing to take on the role, the approval of the third recommendation set out below in paragraph 1.5 would enable the Director of Governance to make an alternative appointment. The appointment would cease to have effect as soon as the parish council is otherwise quorate.
- 1.5** Council is also recommended to delegate authority to the Director of Governance (DoG) 'To make orders and make temporary appointments to parish councils as required under the powers in Section 91(1) of the Local Government Act 1972'. This is requested for reasons of expediency, and therefore delegated authority to the DoG will ensure that Town/Parish Councils remain inquorate for as short a period as possible, and that the convention shall be to appoint the District Councillor/s whose ward incorporates the inquorate town/parish council.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1** The Council is not obligated to make temporary appointments, however if it does not do so, Fulbrook Parish Council may not be able to function until after its next scheduled elections in May 2026.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1** There are no financial implications associated with this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** The report takes account of the statutory power contained in the Local Government Act 1972.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1** By not appointing a temporary member, Fulbrook Parish Council may not be able to function until after its next scheduled elections.

6. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** There are no climate or ecological implications associated with this report.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

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