

24 September 2024

Tel: 01993 861000

e-mail: democraticservices@westoxon.gov.uk

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will be held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 2 October 2024 at 5.30 pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Joy Aitman (Vice-Chair), Thomas Ashby, Adam Clements, Julian Cooper, Steve Cosier, Rachel Crouch, Genny Early, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Levertton, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Paul Marsh, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, Elizabeth Poskitt, Carl Rylett, Sandra Simpson, Ruth Smith, Alistair Wray, Liam Walker, Mark Walker and Alex Wilson

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

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

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**
To receive any apologies for absence and temporary appointments. The quorum for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is 6 Members.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations from Members of the Committee on any items to be considered at the meeting.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 10)**
To approve the minutes of the meeting held 4 September 2024.
4. **Chair's announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
5. **Participation of the Public**
To receive any submissions from members of the public, in accordance with the Council's Rules of Procedure, anyone who lives in the district or who pays council tax or business rates to the Council is eligible to read a statement or express an opinion at this meeting. You can register to speak by sending your written submission of no more than 750 words to democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk by no later than 10.00am on the working day before the meeting.
6. **Responding to External Consultations (Pages 11 - 14)**
Purpose:
The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested detail on how West Oxfordshire District Council assesses which external consultations it responds to.

Recommendations:
That the Committee resolves to:
 1. Note the content of the report;
 2. Agree any recommendations it wishes to submit to the Executive.
Invited:
Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council
Astrid Harvey, Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer
7. **Report back on recommendations (Pages 15 - 16)**
For the Committee to note the Executive's response to any recommendations arising from the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.
8. **Executive Work Programme (Pages 17 - 26)**
Purpose:
To give the Committee the opportunity to comment on the Executive Work Programme.

Recommendation:

That the Committee agrees which items on the Executive Work Programme should be subject to pre-decision scrutiny and the priority order of those items.

9. **Committee Work Programme (Pages 27 - 32)**

Purpose:

To provide the Committee with an updated Work Programme for 2024/25. Also included is the TOPIC work plan scoring criteria which is intended to aid the Committee in prioritising items for inclusion in its work plan.

Recommendation:

That the Committee notes and comments on the work programme.

(END)

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 3

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB
at 5.30 pm on **Wednesday, 4 September 2024**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Joy Aitman (Vice-Chair), Thomas Ashby, Adam Clements, Julian Cooper, Steve Cosier, Genny Early, Natalie King, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Paul Marsh, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, Elizabeth Poskitt, Carl Rylett, Ruth Smith, Alistair Wray, Alex Wilson and David Jackson

Officers: Madhu Richards (Director of Finance - online), Phil Shaw (Development and Sustainability Business Manager), Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager), Alison Borrett (Senior Performance Analyst), Andrew Brown (Democratic Services Business Manager), and Christine Elsasser (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Councillors in attendance: Councillors Andy Graham, Alaric Smith, Hugo Ashton

33 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rachel Crouch and Liz Leffman, Mark Walker, Sandra Simpson and Liam Walker. Councillor David Jackson substituted for Councillor Liz Leffman.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Stuart McCarroll and Ruth Smith.

Councillor Natalie King left at 18:52.

Councillor Alaric Smith left at 18:56.

Councillor Thomas Ashby left at 19:03

Councillor Julian Cooper left at 19:49

Councillor Nick Leverton left at 19:55

34 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received from Members of the Committee.

35 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Dan Levy proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 17 July 2024, be approved by the Committee as a true and accurate record. This was seconded by Councillor Steve Cosier, was put to a vote and it was unanimously agreed by the Committee.

It was noted that the word 'Chair' be used instead of the word 'Chairman'.

36 Announcements from the Chair

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and explained that Item 7 would be postponed to the next meeting because the lead officers had been unable to attend the meeting.

37 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

38 Development Management Improvement Programme - Progress Update

The Business Manager Development & Sustainability introduced the report that outlined the progress with the implementation of the Development Management Improvement Plan (DMIP) and outlined areas of current/future improvement.

It was explained that a series of improvements had been made or were proposed to be undertaken and were contained in a Development Management Improvement Plan (DMIP). The report identified the progress that had been made and then also set out further potential changes and improvements that could be made alongside the repatriation of the planning function to West Oxfordshire District Council.

The many changes were contained in the report; however, in reference to paragraph 4.16 it was to be emphasised that there were a series of other areas that would be examined for improvement.

The Executive Member for Planning thanked the Business Manager Development & Sustainability and his team for the report and the improvements thus far. He wished to add that the recruitment of staff and funds had been approved and that recruitment was currently underway.

The following points and suggestions were by the Committee:

- It was suggested that persistent planning enforcement complaints should be dealt with in a different way and if there could be alerts to notify people that Officers had attended the site. The process was explained, and the system was often misunderstood. Legally the question was not whether a development conformed to the plans that had been approved, it was whether it was causing harm.
- Ecology Officer capacity was the largest concern currently due to changes in requirements around biodiversity net gain. There would likely be a business case done to reflect that anticipated need. Recruitment would be done to ensure employees would be directly employed by West Oxfordshire District Council.
- There were plans for progression within the planning team and for succession planning to ensure career development and retention of staff.
- IT and moving to a cloud-based system would be examined once planning services were in house and the Publica split was complete.
- Proactive monitoring may be required for the larger strategic sites to ensure various housing requirements would be met. The Council had some years ago employed a proactive enforcement officer across planning and building control which had proven to be very effective and had fulfilled its purpose. The reintroduction of a similar resource would be beneficial.
- It was also suggested that the financial implications and pressures on local authorities be considered as a recommendation at a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Members appreciated the report and suggested that it was very positive to see performance improving.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

Noted the existing/proposed improvements to the Development Management process, alongside the direction of travel for future improvements post repatriation of the Planning Service to the Council.

Agreed to submit the following recommendations to the Executive on 11 September 2024:

04/September2024

1. That a business case is developed and considered for a proactive enforcement officer post.
2. That training is offered to elected Members on planning enforcement, including the legal framework and the role of Members.

39 Responding to External Consultations

This item was postponed to the next meeting.

40 Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter One

The Executive Member for Finance introduced the report that detailed the Council's financial performance for Quarter One 2024-2025.

It was explained that at quarter 1 (Q1) there was an overall overspend £257,013 against the profiled budget for the period. The key factors driving this revenue position were income shortfalls in garden waste and development management, the delayed Elmfield office letting and increased expenditure in respect of the materials recycling contract.

The recycling contract with Suez expires at the end of September 2024 and with the new contract, if approved at the Executive meeting on 11 September 2024, there would be a budget saving of £300,000 from 2025/26 (£62,000 in 2024/25).

The further circumstances around the Elmfield office letting and other points were explained; the table in the report set out the summary revenue monitoring position for 30 June 2024 against profiled budget by service area.

The following points and suggestions were noted by the Committee:

- Regarding green waste, income recognition would be added to the quarter two report. The Chief Accountant spoke to the team about the mechanics of enabling people to purchase green waste licenses year-round for a 12 month period..
- It was requested that if there were further significant amount increases in the Publica Transition budget spend that full Council be informed. **Action Point: The Finance Director informed Members that significant changes to the Publica Transition budget would be highlighted to the Executive and brought to Council as appropriate.**
- In terms of section 2.25 of the report, where capital works requiring approval were summarised, it was requested if a further breakdown of costs could be provided and also which sites were getting which funds. **Action Point: The Finance Director would enquire with the asset team if there was any commercially sensitive reason not to provide that information. The information would be shared with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members if possible.**
- There was a query on whether Universal Credit benefit recipients could receive a reduced cost for their garden waste subscription.
- There was also concern raised on how Council assets had come into disrepair; it was explained that there was a big piece of work to be done on this, along with looking at which assets should be sold, etc. It was explained there were some properties that had not been inspected because Officers had not been able to enter properties. It was understood that there was a requirement for assessments to take place regularly on Council assets and this would be part of the strategy going forward.
- There were comments made on affordable homes within the Cottsway Housing Association and the inconsistency of rent costs in the area. It was suggested that housing associations should be scrutinised on how they determine rents.

04/September2024

- Homelessness spend on page. 43 was queried. **Action Point: The Finance Director would provide information on Homelessness, the Afghan Resettlement Programmes and Homes for Ukraine to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
- In reference to the performance in Leisure, the quarter one figures had improved due to a better relationship with GLL and payments being made on time.
- The CCTV upgrades remained incomplete. **Action Point: The Finance Director would provide information to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee once received from the Assistant Director of Communities.**
- SI06 money allocations would be provided for in the next quarter.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report and it was agreed that there were no recommendations to the Executive on 11 September 2024.

41 Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter One

The Leader introduced the report that provided the detail of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2024-25 Quarter One (Q1).

It was explained that this was a relatively positive report and that on page 50 of the report pack one could find those service performances that were below target. The Senior Performance Analyst explained some of the reasons for the sections of service areas that were below target.

The following points and suggestions were noted by the Committee:

- The allowance rate for planning applications allowed was queried and it was explained that the wording "supported" would be clarified to explain that those were application whereby the inspectorate had sided with the Council.
- It was queried if there was information on a breakdown of the leisure centres and where the variances were within them. **Action Point: The Senior Performance Analyst agreed to provide a breakdown of leisure centre performance to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
- It was explained that housing benefits numbers had been decreasing and the system migration was meant to be phased with the various stages being brought forward. There would be a compare and contrast on this in later reports.
- Regarding FOI requests, it was explained that they tended to come from research studies, and it would be a blanket across the three councils; there was a varying degree with one hundred and eighty for the quarter for West Oxfordshire District Council on various topics.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report and it was agreed that there were no recommendations to the Executive on 11 September 2024.

42 Proposed Reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the Planning System

The Planning Policy Manager introduced the report that considered several proposed changes to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and to agree West Oxfordshire District Council's response to those proposed changes.

04/September2024

It was explained that the Government was consulting on a series of proposed changes. This included several specific changes to the NPPF and several broader reforms relating to planning fees, local plan intervention and the thresholds used for determining applications under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime.

The consultation was running from 30 July – 24 September 2024 and the Government had indicated that a new version of the NPPF would be published before the end of the year. The purpose of this report was to provide an overview of the proposed changes together with an initial Officer response, highlighting, where possible, any implications for West Oxfordshire. Annex A provided a more detailed suggested draft response to each of the specific questions included within the consultation document.

The Executive Member for Planning suggested that further comments would be added to the response around the need to ensure the right infrastructure was sought e.g. water and sewerage infrastructure, more leniency on building regulations to enable the Council to specify requirements for net zero homes, suggesting that 5-year land supply calculations be based on permissions granted, and various other requests. Any comments were welcome and would be considered in the response made.

The following points and suggestions were to be noted following Member's questions and queries:

- Concern was raised over the lack of clarification of flooding because there appeared to be no guidance and no clarification. It was explained that the government was not proposing changes to the current regime around flood risk. There was the question of whether it did enough and whether this was a short-term or long-term approach. In terms of water quality, it was felt that a more holistic approach was required.
- There was concern raised over the vagueness of what grey belt land was and it was explained that the remedy for a clear plan was likely to get a new Local Plan put in place with an updated development scheme. This would ensure that any delay was kept to a minimum; the timetable was currently being examined.
- One of the points in the process was to change how developers work and national development plans would still be included; it was suggested that one would hope that a more centralised strategic approach would be undertaken.
- Every opportunity should be taken to put forward a point of view after every question.
- There was a question of how the point could be made that the housing numbers for West Oxfordshire District Council were often not the real numbers for the district which had to help to address Oxford's unmet housing need. The Planning Policy Manager agreed that the method and new formula was flawed, and it seemed like urban numbers were decreasing whilst rural areas were increasing; where growth was difficult to achieve and supporting infrastructure was lacking.
- The Planning Policy Manager suggested that a letter could be provided by the Council to the government in addition to the responses to the consultation questions.
- It was confirmed that strategic working would be undertaken with other councils where possible and joint working between the authorities had been quite successful and effective in Oxfordshire. The Leader explained that there was a piece of work to show the impact and importance of collective working and meaningful partnerships.
- The Local Plan required scrutiny and the Council should stand up to the inspectorate.
- Housing stock should be proportionate to population; what was required was not only infrastructure, amenities, and transport; but it was also important to ensure to make sure

04/September2024

the funding was available to create functioning communities. The Planning Policy Manager suggested that this could be included in the letter.

- Classification of land was vital to the food supply and it was asked if this could be added to point 83 so that the land could be retained for that purpose. The Planning Policy confirmed it would be linked to the response.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the report and agreed all Councillors were encouraged to send the Planning Policy Manager and the Executive Member of Planning any further suggestions prior to the Executive meeting on 11 September. A general letter would be put together expressing the view of West Oxfordshire Council once all comments were received.

43 Report Back on Recommendations

There were no recommendations to the Executive arising from the previous Committee meeting.

44 Executive Work Programme

The Committee AGREED that the Infrastructure Funding Statement would be subject to pre-decision scrutiny and an alternative plan would be worked out because the Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation was delayed.

The Committee Work Programme was noted and the above be actioned.

45 Committee Work Programme

The Committee Work Programme was noted with the addition of a bi-yearly report on Nature Recover.

The Committee also requested that consideration be given to how Members could scrutinise the Housing Associations, picking up some issues that had been raised earlier in the meeting.

The Committee also suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was itself subject to a review to ensure it is operating effectively. The Business Manager for Democratic Services advised that a review would be taking place as part of the work of the Constitution Working Group, 12 months on from the new committee structure being implemented. The Committee's views would be sought as part of this exercise.

Action Point: There was a suggestion from a Member that the Nature Recovery Plan be added and that a bi-yearly report be brought back against KPIs and that a Housing Association report be added to a future meeting.

The Meeting closed at 8.01 pm

CHAIRMAN

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2 OCTOBER 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>RESPONDING TO EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</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>Astrid Harvey, Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer Email: astrid.harvey@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested detail on how West Oxfordshire District Council assesses which external consultations it responds to.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Nil</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That the Committee resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the content of the report; 2. Agree any recommendations it wishes to submit to the Executive.
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • 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
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees Consultation</p>	<p>Cross service officer engagement to seek examples of recent responses to external consultations.</p>

I. EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

- I.1** West Oxfordshire District Council receives a wide range of consultations from a variety of bodies that deem it to be a relevant consultee. These include, but are not limited to, Central Government bodies, other Local Authorities within and beyond Oxfordshire, the Cotswold National Landscape, Thames Valley Police, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Care Board, and organisations from within the Community and Voluntary Sector.
- I.2** External bodies may send consultations directly to Senior Officers within the service that is most relevant to the matter or topic under consultation or they may be sent to the Council Leader, relevant Executive Member or Chief Executive Officer who will delegate the consultation request to the relevant Service.
- I.3** On receipt of a consultation, Senior Officers will assess the consultation against criteria in order to determine if a response is required and to undertake the consultation response. The assessment criteria include:
- The impact on and/or significance of the proposal to the District;
 - Whether the Council is statutorily required to submit a consultation response;
 - The value to be added by the Council submitting a consultation response;
 - Whether the consultation relates to a matter the Council wishes to influence;
 - How relevant the consultation is to the services the Council is responsible for; and
 - How relevant the consultation is to progressing the strategic priorities of the Council.
- I.4** In undertaking the assessment against the criteria above, Senior Officers may engage with lead Members to inform their judgement of the significance of the proposal or matter. Usually this would be the Executive Member with portfolio responsibility for the matter being consulted on.
- I.5** Consultations received by the Council fall in to three categories.
1. Operational matters
 2. Those directly relevant to an Executive Portfolio
 3. Those that require a report to the Executive for decision because the matter is so significant to the Council.
- I.6** Examples of external consultations responded to by the Council include:
- Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan, (September 2023).
 - 2024 – 25 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, (January 2024).
 - Proposed legislative changes to the Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015), (March 2024).

- Neighbouring authorities Local Plan consultations: Cherwell Local Plan, (November 2023), and Oxford Local Plan, (January 2024).
- Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, (February 2023).
- Botley West Statutory Consultation, (February 2024).
- Serious Case Reviews (ad hoc) in relation to Safeguarding statutory requirements, (most recently April 2024).
- International Migration Resettlement Schemes, (January 2024).

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1** No specific budget is allocated to support the resourcing of the Council's capacity to respond to external consultations. Careful assessment of the consultation against the criteria above allows for a judgement over the resource implications of responding to external consultations to be made.

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1** Where the Council is statutorily required to respond to an external consultation it will always fulfil this legal obligation.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1** Not applicable

5. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 5.1** Not applicable

6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Not applicable

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1** Not applicable

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1** None.

(END)

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Executive response to recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Development Management Improvement Programme – Progress Update

Context

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report it had requested as part of its work plan titled “Development Management Improvement Programme – Progress Update”, on 4 September 2024. The Committee commended the quality of the report and the progress that has been made.

In response to questions about enforcement, the Committee heard that some years ago the Council had employed a proactive enforcement officer which had proven to be a very effective resource, and considered the reintroduction of this function would be beneficial.

The Committee also discussed the legal framework the Council has to operate within when dealing with enforcement cases and felt that it would be very beneficial if training on planning enforcement was offered to all Members.

Item	Recommendation	Agree (Y / N)	Comment	Responsible Executive Member	Lead Officer
Development Management Improvement Programme – Progress Update	I. That a business case is developed and considered for a proactive enforcement officer post.	Y	This is an agreed action. Historically there was such a post and the evidence was that it assisted in driving up the number of applications as agents volunteered prospective changes as opposed to not applying or replying retrospectively. As such	Councillor Hugo Ashton – Executive Member for Planning	Phil Shaw – Business Manager, Development Management



			there will be a likely increase in fee income but possibly not enough to cover costs. A business case will be made following the repatriation of the service and the completion of the existing round of recruitment.		
	2. That training is offered to elected Members on planning enforcement, including the legal framework and the role of Members.	Y	This is an agreed action. A provisional date has been set for early next year alongside a training session on modern design.	Councillor Hugo Ashton – Executive Member for Planning	Phil Shaw – Business Manager, Development Management

**EXECUTIVE WORK PROGRAMME
INCORPORATING NOTICE OF DECISIONS PROPOSED TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE
SESSION AND NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MAKE A KEY DECISION
1 OCTOBER 2024 – 31 JANUARY 2025**

By virtue of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, local authorities are required to publish a notice setting out the key executive decisions that will be taken at least 28 days before such decisions are to be taken. The Regulations also require notice to be given of any matter where it is proposed that the public will be excluded during consideration of the matter.

This Forward Plan incorporates both of these requirements. In the interests of transparency, it also aims to include details of those items to be debated by the Executive that relate to either policy/budget formulation, matters which will be subject to a recommendation to the Council, and other matters due to be considered by the Executive. This programme covers a period of four months, and will be updated on a monthly basis. The timings of items may be subject to change.

It should be noted that although a date not less than 28 clear days after the date of this notice is given in each case, it is possible that matters may be rescheduled to a date which is different from that given provided, in the cases of key decisions and matters to be considered in private, that the 28 day notice has been given. In this regard, please note that agendas and reports for meetings of the Executive are made available on the Council's website at www.westoxon.gov.uk/meetings five working days in advance of the meeting in question. Please also note that the agendas for meetings of the Executive will also incorporate a necessary further notice which is required to be given in relation to matters likely to be considered with the public excluded.

There are circumstances where a key decision can be taken, or a matter may be considered in private, even though the 28 clear days' notice has not been given. If that happens, notice of the matter and the reasons will be published on the council's website, and available from the Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB.

Key Decisions

The Regulations define a key decision as an executive decision which is likely –

- (a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or*
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the authority".*

The Council has decided that a cost or saving of an amount greater than £150,000 is necessary to constitute expenditure or savings which are significant for the purposes of this definition.

Please note that if a matter is approved by the Council following a recommendation from the Executive, that decision will not be a key decision.

Matters To Be Considered in Private

The great majority of matters considered by the Council's Executive are considered in 'open session' when the public have the right to attend.

However, some matters are considered with the public excluded. The public may only be excluded if a resolution is passed to exclude them. The grounds for exclusion are limited to situations where confidential or exempt information may be disclosed to the public if present and, in most cases involving exempt information, where in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. The definitions of these are set out in the Council's Constitution.

Documents and Queries

Copies of, or extracts from, documents listed in the programme and any which subsequently become available are (subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure), obtainable from the following, and this contact information may also be used for any queries.

Democratic Services – Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk Tel: 01993 861000.

West Oxfordshire District Council: Executive Members 2024/25

Name of Councillor	Title and Areas of Responsibility
Andy Graham (Leader)	Leader of the Council: Overview of all Executive Portfolios; Policy Framework; Town and Parish Council Engagement; Council Plan; Strategic Partnerships (including Pan Regional Partnership, Future Oxfordshire, South East Councils and OXLEP); Oxfordshire Leaders; Publica and Partnerships Authorities and Ubico; Democratic Services; Communications; Legal Services; Counter Fraud; Emergency Planning; Assets of Community Value; Customer Services.
Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader)	Economic Development: Economic Development; Business Development; Visitor Economy; Town and Village Regeneration; Customer Services.
Alaric Smith	Finance: Finance & Management; Council Tax and Benefits; Asset Management; South West Audit Partnership; Performance Management; Capital Investment Strategy; Strategic Housing Investment; Financial Aspects of Major Projects; Customer Services.
Hugo Ashton	Planning: Local Plan; Government Planning Policies and Guidance; Development Management; Ensuring Planning Policies meet 2030 Requirements; Customer Services.
Tim Sumner	Leisure and Major Projects: Conservation and Historic Environment; Leisure Provision (including Swimming Pools); Culture and Heritage; Public Art; Agile Working; Car Parking; Customer Services.
Rizvana Poole	Stronger, Healthy Communities: Voluntary Sector Engagement; Health and Safety; Community and Public Health; Refugee Resettlement Programme; Young People; Equality and Diversity; Customer Services.
Geoff Saul	Housing and Social Welfare: Housing Allocations; Homelessness; Provision of Affordable Homes; Sheltered Housing Accommodation; Safeguarding – Community Safety Partnership; Crime and Disorder; Neighbourhood Policing; Scrutiny of Police and Crime Commissioner; Customer Services.
Lidia Arciszewska	Environment: •Flood Alleviation/Natural Flood Management and Sewage; Environmental Partnerships – WASP and Evenlode; North East Cotswold Cluster; Waste Collection and Recycling; Landscape and Biodiversity; Air Quality; Land Use, Food Production and Farming; Street Scene (Cleansing, Litter and Grounds Maintenance); Customer Services.
Andrew Prosser	Climate Action and Nature Recovery: Energy Advice; Renewable Energy and RetroFit Investment; Biodiversity (Across the District); Carbon Neutral by 2030; Fossil Fuel Dependence Reduction; Local, National and County Liaison on Climate Change; Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Rollout; Customer Services.

For further information about the above and all members of the Council please see www.westoxon.gov.uk/councillors

Item for Decision	Key Decision (Yes / No)	Open or Exempt	Decision – Maker	Date of Decision	Executive Member	Lead Officer
Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24	No	Open	Executive	9 Oct 2024	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Waste Fleet Purchase	No	Open	Executive	9 Oct 2024	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Bill Oddy, Assistant Director for Commercial Development Bill.Oddy@publicagroup.uk
Long Term Empty Properties	Yes	Open	Executive Council	9 Oct 2024 27 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Council Tax Premiums – Second Homes and Long Term Empty Properties	Yes	Open	Executive	9 Oct 2024	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Public Health Funeral Policy	No	Open	Executive	9 Oct 2024	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Adoption of Asset Management Plan	Yes	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Claire Locke, Assistant Director – Property and Regeneration claire.locke@publicagroup.uk
Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy)	No	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects - Cllr Tim Sumner	Rachel Biles – Strategic Leisure Lead rachel.biles@publicagroup.uk
Annual Monitoring Report	No	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk

Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Two	No	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Collaboration Agreement	No	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Emma Cathcart, Head of Service, Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit emma.cathcart@cotswold.gov.uk
Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/2026	Yes	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Funding for Works at Carterton Investment Property	Yes	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Jasmine McWilliams, Assets Manager jasmine.mcwilliams@publicagroup.uk
Climate Change Strategy	Yes	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
Westhive Criteria	No	Open	Executive	13 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Heather McCulloch, Community Wellbeing Manager heather.mcculloch@publicagroup.uk
Mid-Point Review of Car Parking Strategy	No	Open	Executive	11 Dec 2024	Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects - Cllr Tim Sumner	Susan Hughes, Business Manager for Support and Advice Susan.Hughes@publicagroup.uk
Knights Court Business Case	No	Open	Executive	11 Dec 2024	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Business Manager Assets & Council Priorities - Andrew Turner andrew.turner@publicagroup.uk

Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Two	No	Open	Executive	11 Dec 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Draft Budget 2025 – 2026, Version One	No	Open	Executive	11 Dec 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Affordable Housing Delivery Update	No	Open	Executive	11 Dec 2024	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Michael David, Housing Delivery Programme Manager michael.david@westoxon.gov.uk
Contract Award for the Parking ICT system	No	Fully Exempt <i>Commercially Sensitive Information</i>	Executive	11 Dec 2024	Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects - Cllr Tim Sumner	Maria Wheatley, Shared Parking Manager maria.wheatley@publicagroup.uk
West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 – Preferred Options Consultation	No	Open	Executive	15 Jan 2025	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Draft Budget 2025 – 2026, Version Two	No	Open	Executive	15 Jan 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Environmental Services Review and Ubico Contract	Yes	Open	Executive	15 Jan 2025	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Bill Oddy, Assistant Director for Commercial Development Bill.Oddy@publicagroup.uk
Provision of an Empty Property Lending Scheme	Yes	Open	Executive	15 Jan 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk

Budget 2025 – 2026	No	Open	Executive Council	12 Feb 2025 26 Feb 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Three	No	Open	Executive	12 Mar 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Three	No	Open	Executive	12 Mar 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 – Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft Consultation	No	Open	Executive	12 Mar 2025	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Key Decisions Delegated to Officers						
Allocation of S106 Monies to Witney Town Council to Design, Build and Operate a New Third Generation (3G) Pitch at West Witney Sports Ground	Yes	Open	Executive Assistant Director - Communities - Andy Barge	11 Sep 2024 Before 31 Mar 2025	Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects - Cllr Tim Sumner	Rachel Biles rachel.biles@publicagroup.uk Assistant Director - Communities - Andy Barge andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Dry Mixed Recycling Bulking and Haulage Contract	Yes	Part Exempt	Executive Assistant Director - Commercial Development - Bill Oddy	11 Sep 2024 Before 31 Mar 2025	Executive Member for Environment - Cllr Lidia Arciszewska	Simon Anthony, Business Manager - Environmental Services Simon.Anthony@publicagroup.uk Assistant Director - Commercial Development - Bill Oddy bill.oddy@publicagroup.uk

Standing Delegation: Settlement of Legal Claims	Yes	Open	Interim Head of Legal Services - Helen Blundell	Before 31 Dec 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham, Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Helen Blundell, Interim Head of Legal Services helen.blundell@fdean.gov.uk
Review and Repurpose Earmarked Reserves to Mitigate against Four Main Financial Risks	No	Open	Director of Finance - Madhu Richards	31 Dec 2024	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Allocation of New Initiatives Funding	Yes	Open	Chief Executive & Head of Paid Service - Giles Hughes	Before 31 Mar 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Allocate Funding from the Project Contingency Earmarked Reserve	Yes	Open	Director of Finance - Madhu Richards	Before 31 Mar 2025	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Other Business for Council Meetings						
Recommendations from Constitution Working Group	No	Open	Council	25 Sep 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk
Appointment of Independent Persons	No	Open	Council	25 Sep 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk
Polling District and Places Review	No	Open	Council	27 Nov 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Sharon Ellison, Electoral Services Manager sharon.ellison@westoxon.gov.uk
District Boundary Review - Council Size Proposal	No	Open	Council	27 Nov 2024	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk

Long Term Empty Properties	Yes	Open	Council	27 Nov 2024	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service mandy.fathers@publicagroup.uk
Review of Members' Allowances Scheme	No	Open	Council	29 Jan 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk
Community Governance Reviews	No	Open	Council	26 Mar 2025	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 1 OCTOBER 2024 – 31 JANUARY 2025

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Council currently operates the Strong Leader and Executive form of governance. The Council has appointed one Overview and Scrutiny Committee which has the power to investigate Executive decisions and any other matters relevant to the district and its people, making recommendations to the Council, Executive or any other Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council. Overview and Scrutiny has an important role in holding the Executive to account and in contributing to policy development.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee operates a work plan which is agreed annually but provides for flexibility to enable the Committee to respond to emerging issues or priorities. The work plan will include a mix of Executive reports that have been selected for pre-decision scrutiny, and reports on other Council services, topics or issues which have been specifically requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In setting and reviewing its work plan, the Committee will be mindful of the constraints of the organisation and may prioritise based on the following considerations (TOPIC criteria):

Timeliness: Is it timely to consider this issue?

Organisational priority: Is it a Council priority?

Public Interest: Is it of significant public interest?

Influence: Can Scrutiny have meaningful influence?

Cost: Does it involve a high level of expenditure, income or savings?

Call in

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider any “call-in” of an executive decision that has been made but not yet implemented. This enables the Committee to consider whether the decision made is appropriate given all relevant information (but not because it would have made a different decision). It may recommend that the Executive, an Executive Member or the Council should reconsider the decision.

Item	Executive Member	Lead Officer
Wednesday, 2 October 2024		
Responding to external consultations	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Wednesday, 6 November 2024		
Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Climate Change Strategy	Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery - Cllr Andrew Prosser	Hannah Kenyon, Climate Change Manager hannah.kenyon@westoxon.gov.uk
Annual Monitoring Report	Executive Member for Planning - Cllr Hugo Ashton	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager chris.hargraves@publicagroup.uk
Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Two	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Wednesday, 4 December 2024		
Knights Court Business Case	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Business Manager Assets & Council Priorities - Andrew Turner
Affordable Housing Delivery	Executive Member for Housing and Social Care - Cllr Geoff Saul	Charlie Jackson, Assistant Director - Planning and Sustainability charlie.jackson@publicagroup.uk

Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Two	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Draft Budget 2025 – 2026, Version One	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Wednesday, 8 January 2025		
Supporting market town and village centres	Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development - Cllr Duncan Enright	Sam Stronach, Economic Development Manager Sam.Stronach@westoxon.gov.uk
Draft Budget 2025 – 2026, Version Two	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Wednesday, 5 February 2025		
Budget 2025 – 2026	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Wednesday, 5 March 2025		
Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Three	Leader of the Council - Cllr Andy Graham	Alison Borrett, Senior Performance Analyst Alison.Borrett@publicagroup.uk
Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Three	Executive Member for Finance - Cllr Alaric Smith	Madhu Richards, Director of Finance madhu.richards@westoxon.gov.uk
Community Grants	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy	Andy Barge, Assistant Director for Communities

	Communities - Cllr Rizvana Poole	andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Wednesday, 16 April 2025 - no items currently scheduled		

'TOPIC' Scoring Criteria for Scrutiny Work Plan Items

Criteria

Description

Scoring

T imely	Work plan prioritisation should take account of work in other areas, and avoid duplication. Key questions to ask include: Is now the best time to consider this issue? Are legislative or policy changes afoot? Is the issue due for inspection or auditing?	Is it timely to consider this issue? No - 0 Somewhat - 1 Yes - 2
O rganisational Priority	Work plans should take account of the Council's overall vision for the area. Committee's should ensure that a good proportion of their work relates to the Council's plan and priorities. This is key in demonstrating how Scrutiny can add value to the Council.	Is it a council priority? No - 0 Somewhat - 2 Yes - 3
P ublic Interest	Councillors' representative roles are an essential feature of Scrutiny. They are the eyes and ears of the public, ensuring that services meet local needs. The interests of local people should therefore influence and guide the issues chosen for scrutiny.	Is it of significant public Interest? No - 0 Somewhat - 2 Yes - 3
I nfluence	Scrutiny Committees have varying levels of influence, depending on the issues they review. They are better placed to influence council services than external agencies. Will your input drive outcomes and change, or be unwelcome and lack impact?	Can we have meaningful influence? No - 0 Somewhat - 1 Yes - 2
C ost	Services or decisions which incur a high level of income, expenditure or savings should be prioritised. Effective scrutiny of financial matters is a cornerstone of good scrutiny, and significant spending plans should not go unscrutinised.	Is the issue costly? No - 0 Somewhat - 1 Yes - 2

The TOPIC scoring system has been developed to assist the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in prioritising work plan items. Criteria led work planning has been advocated by national governance experts and organisations alike, premised on the objective prioritisation of items against pre-set criteria. TOPIC can be used as a reference guide for councillors in selecting items, or it can be rigidly applied as a scoring system. How strictly the criteria is applied will depend of the number of items suggested and the resources available.

Whilst the scoring system aspires to be objective, it cannot necessarily take account of the nuances and complexities of all issues, and Committees should use their best judgement in agreeing which items to take forward.

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